



27 January 2022

Dear parents and carers,

Welcome to a new school year, an exciting time as our students start or return to their school journey. I want to share how we are building on our experiences of the last 2 years and continuing to safeguard our school community while keeping our school open, where we know the best learning happens.

We will start 2022 with a layered approach to COVID-smart measures that have been developed in partnership with NSW Health to help to minimise transmissions at school. The health and wellbeing of our students and staff remain our priority, and these measures are designed to help to keep our school open and our students learning in the classroom.

These key measures include:

- Rapid antigen test (RAT) kits will be provided to all students to help monitor your child's health and minimise transmission of COVID-19 across our school.
- Wearing of surgical masks indoors is required for all staff and students in Year 7 and above and strongly recommended for all primary students. Masks will be provided by the school if required.
- Only fully vaccinated visitors essential to delivering and supporting learning or wellbeing can come on a school site.
- Up to two parents or carers are allowed to accompany their child into school on their first day of Kindergarten or Year 7 or students starting at a new school.
- Students will be kept in their year groups on school grounds, with staggered drop-off and pick-ups, break times, playground and canteen access to minimise the spread of COVID-19 across cohorts.
- We will continue to use good hygiene, enhanced cleaning, good air flow and ventilation in learning spaces, as well as physical distancing practices.

While this is not going to be a normal start to the school year, we know that being together in the classroom is the most effective way for students to learn and grow. Your child's relationship with their teacher is important, but as we manage potential disruptions to staffing due to COVID-19, they may get to meet more teachers than usual.

### **Rapid antigen testing**

We will distribute packs of rapid antigen test (RAT) kits for all students and staff at the start of Term 1.



The use of RAT kits is an important step to support the health and wellbeing of our students and staff. They are a quick and easy screening tool to help detect COVID-19. It is a simple process of placing a nose or throat swab in a chemical solution, which is put onto a scanning device. Results can be ready within 15 minutes. Use of RAT kits is highly recommended but not mandatory.

Instructions are included in the kits detailing how to use the tests, check the results and dispose of the tests safely. You can also download the instructions through the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) External link website. The user guides will also contain a contact number for the suppliers if you need additional support.

## How and when do I pick up the RAT kits?

Tests will be available to be picked up from the school on Monday 31st January. At this time you will be able to pick up a two week supply (four tests per student) for each student in your household enrolled at Melville High School.

Packs are to be picked up from the top of the stairs at the Nicholson Street entrance. A staff member will be positioned here to provide packs and mark off families who have collected. Please observe physical distancing while waiting to pick up packs.

Pickup times will be in 45-minute windows per cohort. These are as follows:

Year 7	9:00 – 9:45am
Year 8	10:00 – 10:45am
Year 9	11:00 – 11:45am
Year 10	12:00 – 12:45pm
Year 11	1:00 – 1:45pm
Year 12	2:00 – 2:45pm

We kindly request that parents leave the school site immediately after picking up their tests to minimise contact.

## Additional information

- School staff will not be administering the rapid antigen tests to students.
- RAT kits should be collected from school by a parent or carer and the tests completed at home in the morning before attending school.
- Each student will receive an initial supply of 4 RATs to be used twice a week in the morning before attending school.
- If a student or staff member receives a positive RAT result, they need to:
  - record the positive RAT result through the [Service NSW website](#) or [Service NSW app](#)



- notify the school of the positive RAT or PCR result as soon as possible
- follow [NSW Health advice](#) to isolate for 7 days.
- It is recommended that staff and students that return to school after recovering from COVID-19 do not participate in rapid antigen test surveillance for 28 days (four weeks after recovery) following release from self-isolation. This is due to NSW Health advice that people who have recovered from COVID-19 have a low risk of contracting it again in the following 28 days. After 28 days (from week five after recovery) staff and students may resume participation in RAT surveillance.

Negative results **do not** need to be reported to Service NSW or to the school.

## Unwell at school

Any student or staff member who is unwell and/or displays symptoms of COVID-19 will be asked to go home and stay until they can complete a RAT or PCR test.

If symptoms continue, they should stay at home and take another RAT in 24 hours or have a PCR test.

- If the second RAT or initial PCR test result is negative and they are displaying no symptoms OR they are diagnosed as another condition such as hayfever, the student or staff member can return to school.
- In NSW, positive COVID-19 cases are provided a Medical Clearance Notice after 7 days and allowed to leave self-isolation as long as they do not have COVID-19 symptoms.

## What happens when a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19

Under the new close contact rules, schools are no longer included in contact tracing. I will inform the school community when there is a positive case in our school and advise families on public health advice, including monitoring for symptoms.

## Use of surgical masks

All primary and secondary school staff will be required to wear masks indoors.

No vented or cloth masks should be worn. If required, surgical masks will be available at schools.

Secondary school students will be provided with surgical masks as a backup when needed, which they are required to wear indoors.

Masks are also strongly encouraged in outdoor settings where you cannot physically distance. Your child can remove their mask when eating, exercising or playing a musical instrument.

For more information, refer to [Face masks in NSW](#).



## Visitors on school sites and vaccinations

No parents, carers or visitors will be allowed on school site until further notice with the following exceptions:

- Up to two parents or carers are allowed to accompany their child into school on their first day of Kindergarten or Year 7 or students starting at a new school.
- Volunteers or staff operating uniform shops and canteens must be fully vaccinated.
- Visitors supporting school operations and curriculum delivery must be fully vaccinated.
- Allied health partners for the wellbeing of students must be fully vaccinated.

All staff on school sites are required to be fully vaccinated, including having their booster when eligible.

We strongly encourage our students and their families to consider vaccination when eligible. [Find a vaccination clinic](#) to book an appointment near you.

## Other key measures

### Ventilation

We will continue to follow NSW Health ventilation guidelines that natural ventilation is the most effective measure so we will maximise fresh air flow in learning spaces through opening doors and windows.

This approach is strongly supported by expert advice. Where natural ventilation is not sufficient, mechanical ventilation and/or air purification will be used and we will continue to use outdoor settings where possible.

Air purifiers have been provided to schools as a supplementary measure to support common areas in schools and can be deployed at the principal's discretion. These purifiers could be located in areas where high levels of student and staff mixing occurs, such as staffrooms, internal canteens, student centres and music rooms.

### Cleaning

We continue to have enhanced cleaning focusing on high-touch and high-traffic areas.

### Physical distancing

We will continue to follow physical distancing guidelines and maintain 1.5 metres distance wherever possible.

Thank you again for your continued support during this school term.



Andrew Ryder

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