

# Infectious Diseases Exclusion Policy

North Melbourne Primary School

Issue Date: June 2020

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# INFECTIOUS DISEASES EXCLUSION POLICY

## PURPOSE

To outline the strategies and actions that schools are required to take to prevent the transmission of an infectious disease or control transmission of an infectious disease when a case is identified.

## OBJECTIVE

Schools are expected to be safe and healthy places for staff and students to enjoy. Students with infectious diseases need to be managed in a manner that protects their privacy, maintains their health and dignity, and ensures the health and safety of all others. The implementation of this policy aims to:

- provide a safe and healthy working environment for students, teachers, parents/carers and the wider North Melbourne Primary School community
- provide a school environment that is well informed about infectious diseases and how to decrease transmission
- practice correct and safe disease management strategies

## SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- all staff, including casual relief staff and volunteers
- all students, including their parents/carers

## CRITICAL INFORMATION

- Primary responsibility for the prevention and control of infectious diseases lies with individuals, families and public health authorities
- Schools are not expected to provide expert advisor treat students, which is the role of medical practitioners and health authorities
- As of December 2019, changes to the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations mean primary schools and children's services are no longer required to notify the Department of Health and Human Services if a child at their school has a confirmed infectious disease
- a person in charge of a primary school must not allow a child to attend the school in accordance with the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019, if they have been informed the child is infected with, or been in contact with a person with an infectious disease/condition listed in the Regulations; where that condition requires exclusion. Diseases and exclusion periods are listed in the Department of Health and Human Services [School Exclusion Table](#)
- As of December 2019, changes to the Regulations mean failure of a person in charge of a primary school to exclude a child with, or exposed to, a specified infectious disease from a primary school, in accordance with the Regulations, may result in an infringement penalty. An existing court penalty also remains.
- Schools have a legal responsibility to help manage infectious diseases in their facilities and have an important role to play in supporting prevention and control of disease transmission

## POLICY

This policy should be read with North Melbourne Primary School's *First Aid* and *Health Care Needs* policies.

Schools have a legal responsibility to help manage infectious diseases in their facilities.



Schools also have an important role to play in supporting the prevention and control of transmission of infectious diseases through:

- abiding by legislated requirements for school exclusion, infectious disease notification and immunisation status recording
- supporting the personal hygiene routines of students; ie. provision of hand hygiene facilities
- ensuring procedures are in place to safely manage the handling of spills of blood and other body fluids or substances

### Definitions

Hand hygiene is a general term referring to any action of hand cleansing. It includes hand washing with soap and water and using antimicrobial hand rubs.

Infectious diseases are diseases caused by pathogenic microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi; the diseases can spread, directly or indirectly, from one person to another.

Respiratory hygiene or cough etiquette are terms used to describe infection prevention measures. These practices include:

- covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing
- using tissues and disposing of them appropriately
- attending to hand hygiene immediately after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose

Standard precautions are the minimum infection prevention and control practices that must be used at all times for people in all situations. The use of standard precautions aims to minimise and, where possible, eliminate the risk of transmission of infection.

### Prevention of infectious diseases

The following table outlines the strategies and actions that North Melbourne Primary School take to prevent the transmission of an infectious disease:

Strategy	Prevention
Support for immunisation programs	Schools have a role in helping health authorities and families prevent and control infectious disease through the support of immunisation programs and through recording immunisation status of each student
Standard precautions	Staff and students should treat all blood and other body fluids or substances as being potentially infectious and practice standard precautions whenever dealing with them. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hand hygiene</li> <li>• use of personal protective equipment (PPE) - eg. gloves and masks</li> <li>• safe handling and disposal of sharps</li> <li>• respiratory hygiene</li> </ul>
School education on hand hygiene	Hand hygiene is considered one of the most important infection control measures for reducing the spread of infection. The addition of this education into the school curriculum and daily activities reduces the spread of infectious disease and is also promoted through display of available DHHS resources
Provision of soap	North Melbourne Primary School ensures the access to soap and other hand hygiene consumables to support good hand hygiene

Management of blood and other body fluid/substance exposures	Schools should have appropriate PPE available for staff to use when dealing with blood or body fluids/substances. Staff members and students should be familiar with and practice recommend standard precaution practices
Occupational health and safety	Appropriate PPE must be provided for staff to use when dealing with blood and other bodily fluids or substances, and also encourage staff to be appropriately vaccinated against preventable infectious diseases as per the Australian Immunisation Handbook recommendations for persons who work with children

### Control and transmission of infectious disease

The following table outlines the strategies and actions that North Melbourne Primary School supports to control the transmission of infection when a case is identified:

Strategy	Prevention
Send unwell children home as soon as possible	Ensure that unwell children do not attend school. Isolate children who become unwell during the day and send the unwell child home as soon as possible.
Notification of infectious diseases to the Department, via an IRIS alert	When a school is made aware of student illness that is a medically confirmed case(s) of pertussis, measles, mumps, rubella, meningococcal disease polio, or novel coronavirus, this should be reported via the Department's IRIS alert system. This is to assist the Department (with DHHS) to monitor disease outbreak at a school level and to provide further guidance where required
Seek expert advice	If required, North Melbourne Primary School will be in contact with the Department of Health and Human Services Communicable Disease Prevention and Control - ph: 1300 651 160 email: <a href="mailto:infectious.diseases@dhhs.vic.gov.au">infectious.diseases@dhhs.vic.gov.au</a>
Exclusion of a child with an infectious disease: primary school students	Children with certain infectious diseases, and children who have been in contact with certain infectious diseases, are required to be excluded from school for a specified period. The

The DHHS School exclusion table identifies which infectious diseases require exclusion and for what period.

Strategy	Action
Exclusion of a child with an infectious disease: secondary school students	<p>Secondary schools are not bound by the legislative exclusion requirements, which apply to primary schools, but are encouraged to follow the same guidance to ensure the safety of their students.</p> <p>In the event of a public health risk, such as an infectious disease outbreak, secondary schools may be required under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to comply with the directions of the Chief Health Officer or an authorised officer.</p>
General responses to influenza, gastroenteritis and other common infections in your school	<p>Schools should consider the following important points when responding to students affected by common infections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students with cold or flu-like symptoms or vomiting or diarrhoea should be encouraged to seek medical attention, limit contact with others and stay at home until symptoms have passed</li> <li>• if a child becomes ill at school with these symptoms, schools should contact the family and arrange for the collection of the child</li> <li>• good general hygiene remains the best defence against infection and schools should encourage children to regularly wash their hands and cover their nose and mouth if sneezing and coughing; see the <u>Personal Hygiene</u> policy.</li> </ul>
Influenza Pandemic Response	<p>An outline of key school actions against different stages of an influenza pandemic can be found in the <u><a href="#">Human Influenza Pandemic Incident Response Procedures (docx - 242.26kb)</a></u>(Pandemic Influenza Incident Response Plan).</p> <p>Schools should also refer to DHHS advice regarding pandemic influenza.</p>
School community communication and additional advice	<p>It is not generally necessary to communicate with the broader school community about an infectious disease, unless there is an outbreak or the school has been directed to pursue specific action by health authorities. Doing so can cause unnecessary anxiety in the school community.</p> <p>For advice on alerting parents, or displaying signage, in relation to case(s) of a notifiable infectious disease in the school; schools can phone DHHS on 1300 651 160 who may give advice on whether such as action is required.</p> <p>In more general cases, where communication has been deemed necessary, the school should give consideration as to what should be communicated to the school community. It should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintain student confidentiality</li> <li>• be fact based</li> <li>• be written in a way not to cause alarm</li> <li>• inform parents and guardians that a school community member/s has been diagnosed with an infectious disease</li> <li>• name the condition</li> <li>• suggest that they seek medical advice regarding their child’s health if they have concerns.</li> </ul>



## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

All specific infectious diseases related questions and information should be directed to our school nurse.

- Related North Melbourne Primary School Policies:
  - Health Care Needs
  - First Aid
  
- Related Legislation:
  - Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
  - Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019
  
- Resources:
  - Department of Health and Human Services: [School Exclusion Table](#)
  - Better Health Channel: [Head Lice \(nits\)](#)
  
- Other Resources:
  - [Better Health Channel](#): comprehensive Victorian Government health information website
  - [Disease information and advice](#) (DHHS): guidelines for the control of infectious diseases
  - [Role of schools and child care services](#) (DHHS): information on which infectious diseases are notifiable and the role of schools if a child has, or is suspected to have, an infectious disease
  - [Swimming - Keeping the water clean](#): information on when to stay out of the pool if someone has an infection (Better Health Channel)
  - [Victorian Immunisation schedule](#): information on the immunisation schedule, including vaccine eligibility age

## REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated in June and is scheduled for review in June 2024.