

Management of COVID-19 outbreaks in Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Schools in South Australia

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Government of South Australia
SA Health

Aim

Recommendations for schools, early childhood education and care (ECEC) and out of school hours care (OSHC) settings to self-manage multiple cases in a single class/room.

Scope

Schools, ECEC services or OSHC services.

Trigger point

Five COVID-19 cases in a single classroom/room over seven days (using the date each positive swab was collected). *

Public health actions

Public health actions are recommended but not mandated. This advice should be applied to classroom contacts** in schools, ECEC and OSHC services.

This advice is not intended for students/children or staff identified as 1:1 SSO contacts or workplace contacts. Cases are required to [isolate for 7 days](#) and follow instructions from SA Health.

In the event of **five COVID-19 cases in a seven-day period** (using the date each positive swab was collected) in a single classroom/room, schools and services* should inform parents/guardians of the number of cases in the class/room and implement the following:

1. Staff and all students remaining in the class/room obtain an initial PCR test. Students can attend school/service whilst awaiting their result if no symptoms are present. Staff can continue to attend on a Rapid Antigen test-to-stay regime (if applicable).

The aim of this action is to actively find and remove infectious case/s from the class/room, while minimising disruption to learning and care.

- a. If the school or service identifies that the initial PCR tests resulted in four or fewer cases, no action is required. If the school or service identifies that the initial PCR tests resulted in **a further five cases**, schools / ECEC can consider a circuit breaker where the class/room is closed for three school days. Staff and students obtain a second PCR test prior to returning to the class/room.

The aim of this action is to reduce transmission by stopping children interacting in the class/room.

Asymptomatic children of essential workers / vulnerable children may continue to attend on a Rapid Antigen test-to-stay regime and where the school/service has the resources to provide continuing education or care services on-site.

- b. *As an alternative to a circuit breaker, schools/services may have an arrangement in place to implement a test-to-stay regime in specific circumstances, such as Year 11 or 12 students (see notes below***)*

Test-to-stay regime: child/students conduct daily Rapid Antigen Tests for seven days after the last exposure to the case/s (see notes below****). Any positive tests must be [reported to SA Health](#).

2. Provide comprehensive COVID vaccine health promotion materials to all families attending the school/service (particularly in the impacted year level/age group) regarding importance of vaccination and how to obtain vaccination (if the children in the class/room are aged five or above).

The aim of this action is to reduce the number of children in the class/room who are susceptible to becoming a COVID-19 case during any future outbreak.

3. Review ventilation in the classroom (e.g., fully open windows/doors where possible) and consider the use of Air Purifier with HEPA filter until 7 days have passed since a positive case detected. Ensure that comprehensive information is provided to the teacher to ensure the use of the device is maximised (i.e., follow the manufacturer instructions).

The aim of this action is to identify class/rooms where improved ventilation may reduce the likelihood of the COVID-19 virus spreading from person-to-person.

Monitoring by SA Health

A school/service undertaking any of the public health actions described above (public health action 1, 1a, 1b and/or 3) is required to notify SA Health within 24 hours.

Governments schools, ECEC and OSHC services co-located on government sites notify SA Health through the Department for Education.

All other schools and services notify SA Health using the Weekly Update section on the Case Notification Form.

SA Health will monitor for additional cases and will provide tailored public health advice as required. SA Health will also respond to specific requests or concerns from education and care services.

NOTES:

**A different trigger point may be applied on a case-by-case basis in special school settings and class/rooms with vulnerable children (e.g. immunosuppressed, living with a disability, high proportion from a vulnerable population) and/or physically small class/rooms in consultation with Department for Education and SA Health.*

- *If a child or staff member has recently recovered from COVID-19, they are not considered classroom contacts for eight weeks after being cleared as a positive case – they may continue to attend the school/service and are not required to obtain testing.*
- *A child with symptoms who does not get tested is considered a potential case and is not to attend school for standard isolation period (7 days). Should the child return a negative PCR test within the 7-day isolation period and their symptoms have resolved, they can then return to school.*
- *If PCR testing is not available (e.g. in a remote setting), further advice about suitable arrangements can be sought from Department for Education and SA Health*

To enquire about the test-to-stay regime for your school please contact the Department for Education or SA Health.

Where test-to-stay is being employed – Student A's class has had 10 COVID-19 cases. Student A was last exposed to a case in the classroom on 1/3/22. Student A's parents were informed that Student A's class has had an outbreak on 3/3/22. Student A continues attending school on the test-to-stay regime.

- *Student A will conduct a Rapid Antigen Test every morning from 4/3/22 to 8/3/22 (inclusive), including weekends.*
- *If Student A becomes symptomatic at any time, they will stop attending school and obtain a PCR test.*
- *If Student A delivers a positive Rapid Antigen Test at any time, they will [report to SA Health](#) and follow SA Health's instructions.*