



This week's stories from the media

- Covid cases surge among pupils and staff
- SA's most improved NAPLAN schools
- Your covid questions answered
- Mobile phones banned
- How schools can help address youth self-harm
- Call for parliamentary inquiry into ghost children

SA's Most Improved NAPLAN

Two small public schools battling absenteeism have achieved the state's highest improvements in NAPLAN scores.

An analysis of year 5 results shows Melaleuca Park Primary School increased by 20.52% while Hackham West Primary School in Adelaide's southern suburbs went up by 13.89%.

Hackham West principal Shannon Little partly attributed her school's success to buying a bus to get children to school.

Melaleuca Park has run a breakfast club for a decade and recently opened a community shop providing subsidised food to families.

"We had to improve attendance so, in 2019, we got a 24-seater bus to pick the kids up and bring them to school," she said.

"Our whole focus has been supporting families in getting their children to school."

"Then we have worked very hard to ensure they feel welcome and comfortable when they are here."

[Read Story](#)

Covid Cases Surge Among Pupils And Staff

The number of public school students and staff absent with Covid-19 has surged in the past week as South Australia's latest Omicron wave peaks.

Education Department data shows a spike of almost a third in state school pupils, and almost two thirds more teachers, who have been struck down with covid in the past week.

Figures show as of Friday, 715 infectious students were absent along with 346 staff.

This compares to more than 5600 students and 847 staff away at the height of the third wave at the end of Term 1 earlier this year when 15 schools shut class or had full campus closures.

Salisbury Park Primary school, in Adelaide's northern suburbs, has a compulsory mask policy in place until Wednesday.

Last week some of the schools classes were home schooled due to the rate of virus reaching a special threshold.

Education Department rules state schools can reimpose masks mandates if more than 10 positive Covid-19 cases are detected in a classroom in one week, or when five or more cases in five separate classrooms emerge over a seven-day period.

"While we have seen an increase in reported cases in line with the forecast peak, we are not experiencing any difficulties in managing the situation," CE Martin Westwell said.

The school term has two weeks left.

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Your Covid Questions Answered

Is it safe to send children to school? Kids can attend school safely, as generally they do not suffer severe illness from Covid, UniSA professor of biostatistics and epidemiology Adrian Esterman said.

The main concern is children spreading Covid to their relatives including grandparents and other vulnerable people, he said.

Will schools close due to covid: It is unlikely that a whole school would be forced to close. Somewhere in the region of 80% of have already contracted Covid, making reinfection less likely.

Can schools require covid testing: Students must undertake five rapid antigen tests over the period of a week if they have been a close contact of a positive Covid case.

Will schools mandate masks: schools can impose mask mandates for year 7-12 students and teachers if more than 10 Covid cases are detected in a single class in a seven day period. Mandates can be imposed if five cases in five different classrooms emerge in a week.

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Mobile Phones Banned

Secondary school principals have written to parents detailing how a mobile phone ban will be implemented from the start of the first term next year.

The move follows extensive consultation over the past two months between the Education Department, principals, teachers, school councils, unions, parent groups and students.

Individual schools will be responsible for enforcing the ban, with students being told they must either leave their devices at home or lock them in storage during school hours.

Other measures will include the use of lockable lead-lined pouches for those requiring access during lessons.

Exemptions will be granted for medical reasons or if students require contact with their parents or caregivers, with cards to be issued to eligible students.

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Schools Can Help With Self Harm

More than 6000 NSW kids aged between ten and 14 have visited an emergency service over the past five years due to self-harm, new research has shown.

According to Dr Michelle Tye from the Black Dog Institute and UNSW Medicine & Health, schools can be an entry point to early intervention to prevent future self-harm episodes.

“We need to help schools understand self-harm and how they can help kids develop coping strategies to reduce it,” Tye told Education Review.

“School needs to be delivering programs as part of their curriculum that is specifically designed to discuss self-harm and suicide rather than general mental health.”

[Full Story](#)

End Of Year

Just 14 sleeps until the end of the school year!



Inquiry Into Ghost Children

SA MLC Sarah Game is pushing for a parliamentary inquiry into the welfare of “ghost children” who are chronically absent from school, following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Game said principals had told her that an “urgent” parliamentary inquiry into student absenteeism was needed.

She wants a parliamentary committee to examine the causes of absenteeism, the effectiveness of current programs and the identification of ghost children who disappear from education.

“There has never before been a thorough, investigative committee which looks at the causes and solutions of student absenteeism,” she told parliament.

[Read more](#)