

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Mater Dei acknowledges its duty of care to provide a safe environment for employees and also to the students, children, young adults, parents, carers, supporters, volunteers, visitors and contractors to our School, Preschool, Playgroup and NextPath Continuous Learning and Assessment and Therapy Programs across our Camden and Narellan sites. This policy aims to minimise risk and disruption to the day to day life and function of the organisation through minimising the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. SCOPE

This document applies to all Mater Dei Programs and their participants including employees, students, children, young adults, parents, carers, supporters, volunteers, visitors and contractors and outlines the roles and responsibilities of all parties.

3. BACKGROUND

The Australian Government has implemented strict public health guidelines and advice to minimise the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus) and keep our communities safe.

The NSW Government has implemented a number of Public Health Orders to protect the most vulnerable groups in society. A number of these have applied, and continue to apply, to Mater Dei and its Programs. The Public Health Orders which currently apply to Mater Dei are:

- *Public Health (COVID-19 Self-Isolation) Order 2022 (the **Self Isolation PHO**)*
- *Public Health (COVID-19 Vaccination of Education and Care Workers) Order (No 3) 2022, and*
- *Public Health (COVID-19 Care Services) Order (No 4) 2022.*

Mater Dei is committed to adhering to Public Health Orders in place from time to time and implementing guidelines as far as reasonably practicable in accordance with advice from the Government and regulatory bodies.

4. WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause respiratory infections. These can range from the common cold to more serious diseases.

The COVID-19 virus is a new disease not been previously identified in humans. Due to a lack of immunity in the community, this means it can spread quickly and widely.

Common symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- fever
- respiratory symptoms including cough, sore throat or shortness of breath



Other symptoms can include runny nose, acute blocked nose, headache, muscle or joint pains, nausea, diarrhoea, vomiting, loss of sense of smell, altered sense of taste, loss of appetite or fatigue

5. HOW IS COVID-19 SPREAD?

COVID-19 is most likely to spread from person to person through:

- close contact with an infectious person (including in the 48 hours before they had symptoms)
- contact with droplets from an infected persons cough or sneeze, or
- touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles, tables, hand rails etc) that have been contaminated by an infected person and then touching their mouth or face.

There are mandatory self-isolation and testing requirements for people who are a “close contact” or “household contact”. The definitions of close contact and household contact and the self-isolation rules can be found on the NSW Health Website.

Close Contact and Household contact

A close contact is now a person identified as a close contact by an authorised contact tracer. A household contact is a person who lives with someone who has COVID-19. Close contacts and household contacts are required by NSW Health to isolate for 7 days unless the person has previously tested positive to COVID and ended their isolation for this within the past 12 weeks (unless they develop new covid symptoms).

Even though close contact isolation rules have changed in the community, close contacts are NOT permitted to attend disability settings including Mater Dei. Staff and students whom are close contacts MUST not attend Mater Dei or its Programs for 7 days from the time the household member tests positive.

If you have been in contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 but are not a close contact or household contact, you should assess your own personal risk in accordance with NSW Health guidance – see [Information for people exposed to COVID-19 | NSW Government](#). You should watch carefully for symptoms and get tested immediately if you have any symptoms.

6. WHEN TO GET TESTED FOR COVID-19?

If you have been identified as a close contact or household contact, get tested immediately and self-isolate. You should also test if you have symptoms of COVID-19, even if you are not a close contact or household contact.

Follow any Program specific testing and isolation directions from Mater Dei via your Deputy Principal, Director or Program Manager and advice from NSW Health. Please note testing and isolation requirements may vary according to your



vaccination status and exposure. Mater Dei (and its Programs) identify as a high risk setting for the purposes of self-isolation and limitations on activity for a period of time after exposure or testing positive.

7. HOW CAN WE PROTECT OUR STUDENTS, CHILDREN, YOUNG ADULTS, FAMILIES, STAFF AND VISITORS?

The best way to protect our children, young adults, families, employees, volunteers and visitors to Mater Dei is for our educators and employees to continue to implement **effective testing, hygiene and cleaning practices** at all times.

Rapid Antigen Testing is one measure to help protect the health and wellbeing of our children, students, young adults and staff and Mater Dei community. All staff have been given specific advice on RAT requirements in relation to their Program by their Director or Program Manager.

Mask Wearing continues to be a requirement for all staff (including Assisted Travel Drivers and Support Officers) who provide direct supports to students in our school and also for all staff working in our NextPath Program. For staff in these roles, masks should be worn at all times indoors and outdoors when physical distancing is not possible.

Vaccinations Mater Dei has a COVID-19 Vaccination Policy for all workers which requires vaccination and boosters in accordance with Government recommendations. The requirement for Mater Dei staff is to be fully vaccinated as defined in the relevant Public Health Orders (PHOs) or have a valid medical contraindication. We strongly encourage our students and their families to be vaccinated including our primary aged children. Vaccinations are not mandated for students. Vaccination evidence for students and participants is not required and will not be recorded.

Hand washing is a vital strategy in the prevention of spreading many infectious diseases including COVID-19.

We ask that all our employees, students, young adults, parents, carers, supporters, volunteers and visitors continue to practice good hygiene by engaging in regular hand washing whilst at Mater Dei, at our Camden and Narellan sites and also when at home. Our educators have instructed, students, children and young adults on our process for hand washing and we ask that this process continue at home for consistency, and as a precautionary measure in all settings.

Physical distancing is another national strategy to slow the spread of COVID-19. Where possible we ask that our employees, young adults, parents, carers, volunteers and visitors practise the physical distancing measures recommended by the Australian Government and NSW Health department and regulatory bodies when on site at Mater Dei and our Camden and Narellan sites and also when at home and out in public until otherwise directed. It is important to recognise that physical distancing is not required by students in classrooms or early childhood education programs and cannot be practised in all situations (e.g. when toileting or changing babies, children or students or in the case of student or participant travel by taxi) and the aim is to generally reduce the potential for transmission. Whilst adults must adhere to 1.5 metre physical distancing rules, our early education, primary and high school students need not.



Contact tracing is the process undertaken by NSW Health of identifying all people that a person who has tested positive to COVID-19 has come in contact with. Mater Dei is required to keep track of any visitors on site via traditional means at Reception for all our Programs as a condition of entry. We will work cooperatively with the Public Health Unit, contract tracers and authorities should a positive case be identified for Mater Dei or its Programs.

Working in Partnership with Families, Carers and Supporters

In addition, Mater Dei will continue to help prevent the spread of any and all diseases by monitoring our children, students and young adults' health in partnership with our families, carers and supporters. We therefore request that:

- each and every one of our families, carers, supporters and/or young adults advises us if your child (or young adult) is unwell or tests COVID positive
- register a positive RAT test result with Service NSW service.nsw.gov.au or the Service NSW app
- you keep your child or young adult at home if they are COVID positive and self-isolate in accordance with advice from NSW Health or until symptom free to avoid contact with other people to reduce contamination

8. OUR PROTECTION AND RESPONSE MEASURES

At Mater Dei, we have taken all necessary and reasonable steps in relation to the wellbeing of staff, our children, students and young adults across all Programs. We have also taken reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of parents, carers, supporters, volunteers and visitors when on site.

Risk assessments have been conducted and continue to be monitored to ensure appropriate controls are in place, and that we operate in a Covid Safe environment in accordance with NSW Public Health Orders, NSW Health advice and guidance and the advice of our various regulatory bodies.

We will continue to review our current Policies and Procedures related to hygiene practices in response to the pandemic and ongoing health advice and have registered each Mater Dei Program as COVID Safe with the appropriate COVID-19 Safety Plan.

Mater Dei has a Mandatory Vaccination Policy for all staff and requires all staff across of our Programs be fully vaccinated (with 2 doses of COVID-19 vaccination as well as booster where due) or have a valid medical contraindication certificate exemption to attend work at either of our Camden or Narellan sites in accordance with Public Health Orders. A risk assessment will be conducted before a worker with a valid medical contraindication can attend work.

In accordance with our Risk Assessments and Safety Plans, we have a number of controls/protection measures in place and will continue to communicate these expectations and responsibilities in an ongoing way to all parties and asked that all staff, students, children, young adults, volunteers and visitors comply with the following procedures to minimise spread of the virus and risk of further infection. These include:

- washing our hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds:



- before preparing food
 - before eating
 - after using the toilet
 - after coughing, sneezing and disposal of a used tissue
 - after completing cleaning tasks, gardening etc
 - providing staff in high risk roles with appropriate PPE including robes and face shields where appropriate
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- adhering to physical distancing measures as appropriate, including the passing on of government recommendations that parents, carers and supporters keep their children at home (when and wherever appropriate in accordance with government advice)
 - considering external advice from our regulatory bodies Catholic Schools NSW, the Department of Education, NDIA and employer associations regarding meetings of large groups, assemblies, student excursions and external sport providers, structured work placements, swimming, community access, canteen, external professional development activities, prayer gatherings and communication meetings for staff as well as fundraising activities and/or limiting numbers of people who can attend, opting for virtual meetings or cancelling these until further notice where appropriate
 - facilitating remote, blended learning and tele-health models (when appropriate) to prevent the risk of infection
 - requiring that children, students, young adults and staff with compromised immune systems and greater vulnerability to respiratory illness, as well as children that are on prescribed medications for specific disabilities that can cause immune-suppression take advice from their medical professionals before attending School or Early Childhood, Continuous Learning and Assessment and Therapy Programs
 - where reasonable and/or practical to do so, enabling staff to work from home (where appropriate) in accordance with Government and/or external advice provided there is no disruption to the School or our Early Childhood, Continuous Learning and Assessment and Therapy Programs
 - requiring that anyone who has travelled overseas self-isolate in accordance with Public Health advice in place from time to time and until they are symptom free prior to returning to Mater Dei, our Camden or Narellan sites or any of our School, Early Childhood, Continuous Learning and Assessment and Therapy Programs. We also ask that staff, students, parents, carers, supporters and visitors keep us informed of any overseas travel. *Please refer to Section 9 of this Procedure for further information*
 - requiring that coughing and sneezing be into the crook of our (flexed) elbow in accordance the National Strategy, and the



- disposal of used tissues straight into the bin (as opposed to the storage of used tissues in your pocket, sleeve or handbag etc)
- not allowing the sharing food and/or drinks on the premises
- asking that sick and unwell staff, children, students, young adults, parents, carers, supporters, siblings and visitors or anyone experiencing respiratory symptoms consistent with COVID-19 remain at home and not come to our School or Programs until symptom free or if they have persisting symptoms beyond the 7 day isolation period, are medically cleared to do so
- immediately sending home any member of staff, student, child, young adult, parent, carer, supporter, volunteer, visitor or contractor who is unwell or showing symptoms of COVID-19
- regularly disinfecting learning, teaching and assessment resources, restrooms, touch points and surfaces, door handles, hand rails etc
- reviewing parent/carer drop off procedures and access to the School, Preschool and Playgroup to minimise risk to our children, families, educators and staff.
- notifying staff, parents and carers as soon as possible in the event that we become aware of a positive case on either of our two sites and taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of all students, children, young adults, parents, carers, supporters, volunteers, visitors and contractors (subject to clauses 10 and 11).

We also require that all volunteers, parents, carers, supporters and visitors complete a "*COVID-19 Health Declaration*" prior to coming into Mater Dei or its respective Programs. Where appropriate Management reserves the right to refuse the entry of that person to the School, our Camden and Narellan sites and our Early Childhood, and NextPath Continuous Learning and Assessment and Therapy Programs. Instead they will be directed to seek immediate medical advice and health screening and/or to isolate in accordance with NSW Health advice.

Furthermore, and as part of the Declaration, we ask that staff, parents, carers, supporters and visitors keep Mater Dei informed of any changes to their child, young adults or own health situation, should they receive a positive diagnosis or be a close contact or household contact of a positive COVID-19 case. This will enable us to undertake the appropriate reporting and prevention control and minimise the risk of further infection to others.

In accordance with our internal infection control procedures, we reserve the right to check the temperature of children, students, young adults and staff, should they be exhibiting symptoms, as a way of ensuring the health and safety of our Mater Dei community. Anyone exhibiting a temperature will be asked to leave the premises. Staff and students will not be permitted to return to Mater Dei Programs until they have completed mandatory periods of self-isolation and/or received a negative COVID result and are symptom free. If symptoms persist, staff and students should remain in isolation until 24 hours after symptoms have resolved. If a person continues to have symptoms after this time, they are able to leave isolation with a medical clearance.



In the interests of good hygiene, Mater Dei has installed hand sanitiser units upon entry and in high volume and readily accessible locations within the School and in classrooms as well as in our Camden and Narellan sites for the use of our employees, students, young adults, families, carers, supporters, volunteers and visitors to help stop the spread of Coronavirus and other infectious diseases.

Mater Dei will keep doors and windows open to increase ventilation where possible provided there is no foreseeable risk to health and safety. We have purchased a number of air purifiers for classrooms in accordance with public health advice.

Furthermore, we will work in collaboration with the Public Health unit, contract tracers and relevant authorities if there is a positive case identified at Mater Dei or its Programs.

9. IF AN EMPLOYEE, CHILD, STUDENT, YOUNG ADULT OR VISITOR HAS TRAVELLED TO ANOTHER COUNTRY, WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

Mater Dei requires that any employee, child, student, young adult, parent, carer, supporter, volunteer, visitor or contractor who has travelled into Australia by air or sea to comply with department of health requirements for testing and isolation.

At present this includes:

- travelling directly from the airport to their home or accommodation
- self-isolate until they receive a negative result from a COVID-19 rapid antigen test taken within the first 24 hours of arrival
- not visiting or attending high risk settings including Mater Dei (or other aged care, disability care, healthcare, and correctional facilities unless they are seeking personal care or are a resident of a facility) for at least 7 days after arrival.

In the event of a positive test, travellers need to follow the regular isolation requirements for testing positive and comply with any other state and territory travel restrictions.

All international arrivals should ensure they follow the [NSW Health guidelines for all international arrivals](#)

Further information can be obtained from <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/travel-restrictions/international-travel-rules>

10. HOW TO RESPOND IF AN EMPLOYEE IS TESTED FOR COVID-19 OR RETURNS A POSITIVE TEST RESULT

If an employee tests positive to COVID-19, the employee is required to:

- advise their Director or Program Manager as soon as possible after receiving their positive test (PCR or RAT) result and notifying Service NSW in the case of a positive RAT test
- self-isolate in accordance with NSW health advice for 7 days (if symptoms persist after this time remain in isolation until 24 hours until symptoms have resolved. Should an employee



continue to have symptoms after this time, they are able to leave isolation after this time with a medical clearance).

Once notified Mater Dei and/or NextPath Directors and Program Managers will act quickly to prevent further spread of the disease. This requires:

- asking the employee who they may have been in close contact with during the last two days while infectious in the workplace, then
- conducting a contact risk assessment. Further information can be found at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/management/people-exposed-to-covid#toc-what-are-some-examples-of-high-and-low-risk-exposures>
- confidentially notifying any employee, volunteer, parent, carer, supporter, young adult, visitor or contractor that may have come into casual contact with that staff member of the need to be tested if they have any symptoms of COVID-19
- notifying Safe Work NSW in the event of staff hospitalisation or any fatality where the worker contracted or is likely to have contracted COVID-19 at Mater Dei.

Please note, Directors and Program Managers should seek to protect the employee's privacy and confidentiality and simply advise that there is a confirmed case rather than to identify the employee by name.

11. HOW TO RESPOND IF AN ENROLLED CHILD, STUDENT OR YOUNG ADULT IS TESTED FOR COVID-19 OR RETURNS A POSITIVE TEST RESULT

Any child, student or young adult who tests positive to COVID is required to follow NSW Health requirements under the Self-Isolation Public Health Order for testing positive including:

- Immediately notifying their Principal, Deputy Principal, Director or Program Manager of any positive result to a COVID test (PCR or RAT)
- Reporting their positive RAT result to Service NSW
- Following the self-isolation rules for people who test positive to COVID-19.

Self-Isolate

Currently, the requirement is:

- isolate for 7 days (with their household) following the positive test
- leave isolation after 7 days (and can return to Mater Dei) unless symptoms are still present (including, a sore throat, runny nose, cough, or shortness of breath).
- If symptoms are still present, remain in isolation until 24 hours after symptoms have resolved. If the child, student or young adult has other symptoms (eg fever, headache) which are not getting better, they are able to leave isolation with a medical clearance.
- Please note masks are recommended for students and staff who have recovered from COVID-19, completed their 7 day isolation period and are no longer showing symptoms for an additional 3 days (from days 8-10 after receiving a positive COVID-19 result).

The child, student or young adult is asked to self-isolate in accordance with NSW Health advice or until symptom free.



After receiving notification of a positive test result for a child, student, or young adult the Deputy Principal, Director or Program Manager will act quickly to prevent further spread of the disease. This requires:

- asking who their child or young person may have been in social contact with while infectious at Mater Dei or its Programs during the last two days
- Using <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/management/people-exposed-to-covid#toc-what-are-some-examples-of-high-and-low-risk-exposures> to conduct a contact risk assessment, then
- confidentially notifying any employee, volunteer, parent, carer or contractor that may have come into casual contact with that child or young person of the need to self-isolate in accordance with NSW Health advice
- notifying any person who has been exposed to someone with COVID-19 that there is an active case and they must follow NSW health advice regarding testing and isolation in place from time to time, monitor for symptoms and assess their personal risk

Please note, Mater Dei will seek to protect the child, student or young adult's privacy and confidentiality and simply advise that there is a confirmed case rather than identify the child or young person by name.

12. WHAT LEAVE IS AVAILABLE TO EMPLOYEES WHO ARE REQUIRED TO SELF-ISOLATE FOR ANY REASON?

Employees who are required to self-isolate or quarantine will be able to access available personal/carer's leave if they are unwell or an immediate family or household member requires their care during that period. Other leave options include annual leave, long service leave or unpaid leave. Mater Dei will discuss with any employee in this situation the leave options available to them.

13. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information about this document can be sought from your CEO/Principal, Deputy Principal, Director, Program Manager or HR Manager.

14. PROCEDURE HISTORY

Version	6.0
Publication Date:	27 April 2020
Contact:	CEO/Principal, Deputy Principal, Director, Program Manager or HR Manager
Review Date:	10 May 2022
Next Review Date:	10 August 2022