



Coronavirus (COVID-19) Policy

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Context

COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that was originally identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO), has declared the COVID-19 outbreak as a 'pandemic'- a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (effective 11 March 2020). This is mainly due to the speed and scale of transmission of the virus in countries around the world, including Australia.

COVID-19 is transmitted from someone who is infected with the virus to others in close contact through contaminated droplets spread by coughing or sneezing or by contact with contaminated hands or surfaces. According to Department of Health, the time of exposure to the virus and when symptoms first occur is anywhere from 2-14 days.

Symptoms can range from a mild illness, similar to a cold or flu, to pneumonia. People with COVID-19 may experience:

- Fever;
- Flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue;
- Shortness of breath.

We will provide up-to-date information and advice to our staff sourced from the Australian Government Department of Health and State Ministry of Health about COVID-19 as it becomes available. Recommendations and health measures mandated by the Health Department will be strictly adhered to at all times.

We will minimise our staffs' exposure to COVID-19 by adhering to all recommended guidelines from the Australian Government Department of Health and local Public Health Units to slow the spread of the virus. We will implement practices that help to reduce the transmission of the virus, including the exclusion of any staff member that is suspected or has tested positive to having COVID-19. We will implement effective hygiene practices as per our existing policies and procedures.

Legislative Provisions

Public Health Act 2010

<https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/2010/127>

Minimising the transmission of COVID-19

We have implemented risk management planning to identify any possible risks and hazards to our learning environment and practices. Where possible, we have eliminated or minimised these risks as is reasonably practicable.

Effective 15 March 2020, the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee has made recommendations to the general public to help manage the spread of COVID-19. These measures include implementing good hygiene, self-isolation and social distancing.

Immunisation

Whilst there is no vaccination for COVID-19, we strongly recommend that all staff receive the seasonal influenza vaccination.

Hygiene practices

We will ensure signs and posters remind staff and visitors of the risks of COVID-19 and the measures that are necessary to stop its spread including hand washing and hand rub procedures and information about COVID-19.

Compliance

Exclusion/ Self-isolation/ Self-quarantine

- Any person visiting our community language school must confirm that they have not come into *close contact* with anyone with a positive COVID-19 in the past 14 days or travelled interstate in the past 14 days;
- Effective 28 March 2020, **any person** entering Australia from any destination will be required to undertake 14-day quarantine at designated facilities (Australian Government);
- Any staff member, visitor or contractor who has been in close contact with someone who has a positive diagnosis must self-isolate for 14 days;
- Household members of a person who has a confirmed case of COVID-19 must also be isolated from our community language school and the general public;
- The Public Health Unit will provide further information on a case-by-case basis as to the length and place of isolation;
- Any staff member, visitor or contractor who is displaying symptoms such as: fever, coughing, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath, must seek urgent medical attention to determine if they need to be tested for COVID-19 and not attend our workplace.

Implement effective hygiene measures

The national campaign *Help Stop The Spread and Stay Healthy*, launched by the Australian Government, has emphasised that effective handwashing is a vital strategy to help reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds whenever you cough, sneeze or blow your nose, prepare food or eat, touch your face or use the toilet is recommended.

We will adhere to National Regulation requirements and Government guidelines to ensure all staff, visitors and contractors implement best practice.

We will ensure:

- All staff, visitors and contractors must wash their hands with soap and water or use the alcohol-based hand sanitiser provided upon arrival to the workplace;

- Hands must be thoroughly dried using disposal paper and disposed of in the bin provided;
- Disposable tissues must be used to wipe noses, eyes or mouths and disposed of in the bin provided immediately after use;
- Hands must be washed following the use of tissues;
- Hands must be washed thoroughly using soap and water before and after using the toilet;
- Cough and sneeze etiquette must be used - cover your cough and sneeze with your hand or elbow;
- High-touch surfaces - taps, door handles, light switches, will be cleaned more frequently as required using detergent and water followed by disinfectant;
- Cleaning contractors hygienically clean the workplace to ensure the risk of contamination is removed as per [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Principles for COVID-19](#);
- Washroom facilities have adequate supplies of soap, toilet paper and alcohol-based sanitiser.

NOTE: According to the World Health Organisation, COVID-19 may survive on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. (14 March 2020).

Social/Physical distancing

Social or physical distancing is important because COVID-19 is most likely spread from person-to-person through close contact with a person while they are infectious and/or close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes or from touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables). You can also be contaminated via a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection and then touching your nose or mouth.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19 staff are reminded of the following:

- Sanitise your hands at regular intervals throughout the day;
- Avoid physical contact with other people who may be sick- such as older people and people with existing health conditions;
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly (door handles, car seats, mobile phone);
- Promote strictest hygiene measures when preparing food at home and in the workplace.

Notification

We are mandated by law to notify the Public Health Unit or Health Information hotline on 1800 020 080 of any confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19. In addition, we must also notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours.

Management reserves the right to request employees to self-isolate if they suspect they have come into contact with someone who has a confirmed COVID-19 infection.

Confirmed COVID-19

If a staff member is confirmed to have COVID-19, they are unable to attend the workplace and cannot return to work until they have completed a period of self-isolation of at least 14 days. Employees must make a declaration that they are fit for work and have no symptoms of COVID-19 and have been advised they no longer need to be in isolation from their doctor or public health unit.

Full and part-time employees who cannot attend work due to illness can take paid sick leave.

Caring for a family member or emergency

If an employee cannot attend work because they are caring for a family member due to COVID-19, they are entitled to take paid carer's leave. Casual employees are eligible to have 2 days of unpaid carer's leave per occasion. See *Fair Work Act* for entitlements for casual, part time and full-time employees. Reasonable evidence is required to justify the absence.

Self-isolation due to travel

As per the Australian Government's new measures for COVID-19 effective 28 March 2020, any person returning from overseas will be mandated to isolate in a designated facility. The employee is not entitled to be paid unless they use paid leave entitlements - annual leave. Employees are not entitled to use personal sick leave as they are not 'sick'.

Self-Isolation Unpaid Pandemic Leave

Effective 8 April 2020, employees who are required to self-isolate by government or medical authorities or acting upon advice of a medical practitioner may access unpaid pandemic leave. (effective 8 April to 30 June 2020)

This leave provides employees with:

- 2 weeks of unpaid pandemic leave;
- The ability to take twice as much annual leave at half their normal pay in agreement with the Principal/CEO.

Self-Isolation directed by our Community Language School

Where an employee is directed by the Principal/CEO to stay home and self-isolate as they have shown symptoms of a flu-like illness, and the employee is not sick and able to work, we will continue to pay the employee as per their contract. The employee will be requested to complete work from home negotiated with the Principal/CEO.

Self-isolation as a precaution

If an employee wants to stay home as a precaution of contracting COVID-19, they may negotiate to take unpaid leave, annual leave or long service leave with the Principal/CEO.

Employees who are stuck overseas or in quarantine

If an employee cannot return to Australia due to the COVID-19 virus, they must contact the Principal/CEO immediately. The Principal/CEO will negotiate payment considering accrued annual leave, long service leave or leave without pay.