

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are very excited to be able to welcome back our students and their families to the start of the 2022 school year. A special welcome is extended to all our new families starting with us at Kariong Public School. I hope everyone had a lovely Christmas and enjoyed some family time. My apologies for the lengthy communication and as we continue to navigate through these times, we will provide further communication.

Yesterday, the NSW Premier, NSW Health and the Department of Education, (DoE) released the **Back to School Plan for Term 1, 2022**. This new layered approach to COVID-smart measures has been developed to help minimise transmissions at school. The health and wellbeing of our students and staff remain our priority, and these measures are designed to help keep our school open and our students learning in the classroom.

Further advice can be found here: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/advice-for-families>

As with previous DoE and NSW Health announcements, I offer you a summary of the latest advice below.

These key measures include:

- Rapid antigen test (RAT) kits will be provided to all students to help monitor your child's health and minimise transmission of COVID-19 across our school.
- Wearing of surgical masks indoors is required for all staff and strongly recommended for all primary students. Masks will be provided by the school if required.
- Only fully vaccinated visitors essential to delivering and supporting learning or wellbeing can come on a school site.
- Two parents or carers are allowed to accompany their child into school on their first day of Kindergarten.
- Students will be kept in their stage groups on school grounds where possible, including playground and canteen access to minimise the spread of COVID-19 across cohorts.
- We will continue to use good hygiene, enhanced cleaning, good air flow and ventilation in learning spaces, as well as physical distancing practices.

Teacher Absences

While this is not going to be a normal start to the school year, we know that being together in the classroom is the most effective way for students to learn and grow. Your child's relationship with their teacher is important, but as we manage potential disruptions to staffing due to COVID-19, they may get to meet more teachers than usual.

In the event of multiple teachers being absent, and the unavailability of casual teachers (or support staff, executive, retired or from corporate offices), classes may need to be split into other classes for supervision. Split students will be issued with independent work to complete. If more than two classes need to be split, then it will defeat the purpose of physical distancing and isolating grade cohorts. If I know

beforehand, I will inform the community and, in some instances, families may wish their child to remain at home instead of being split into a class of 60 students.

Unwell at school

Any student or staff member who is unwell and/or displays symptoms of COVID-19 will be asked to go home and stay home until they can complete a RAT or PCR test.

If symptoms continue, they should stay at home and take another RAT in 24 hours or have a PCR test. If the second RAT or initial PCR test result is negative, the student or staff member can return to school.

Rapid Antigen Testing

We will distribute packs of rapid antigen test (RAT) kits for all students and staff at the start of Term 1.

The use of RAT kits is an important step to support the health and wellbeing of our students and staff. They are a quick and easy screening tool to help detect COVID-19. It is a simple process of placing a nose or throat swab in a chemical solution, which is put onto a scanning device. Results can be ready within 15 minutes. Use of RAT kits is highly recommended but **not mandatory**.

Instructions are included in the kits detailing how to use the tests, check the results and dispose of the tests safely. You can also download the instructions through the [Therapeutic Goods Administration \(TGA\)](#) website. The user guides will also contain a contact phone number for the suppliers if you need additional support.

How and when do I pick up the RAT kits?

At this stage, no kits have been delivered to Kariong Public School. Another communication will be sent to families about the distribution of RATs shortly. I anticipate they will be delivered by Friday January 28.

- Packs of RAT kits should be distributed to parents or carers before the start of Term 1 to ensure students have the opportunity to be tested before returning to school.
- Refer to the [TGA table with instructions](#) for all approved RATs if needed.
- School staff will **not be** administering the rapid antigen tests to students.
- RAT kits should be collected from school by a parent or carer and the tests completed at home in the morning before attending school.
- Each student will receive an initial supply of 4 RATs to be used twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays. Further RATs will be issued (when we receive them) for the following two weeks to take us to the first four weeks of the term.
- If a student or staff member receives a **positive** RAT test, they need to:
 - record the positive RAT result through the [Service NSW website](#) or [Service NSW app](#)
 - notify the school of the positive RAT or PCR test result as soon as possible
 - follow [NSW Health advice](#) to isolate for 7 days.
 - Negative results **do not** need to be reported to Service NSW or to the school.

If someone in your household is positive with COVID19, your child will automatically become a close household contact and **will not** be able to attend school as per [NSW Health advice](#) and must also isolate for 7 days. Your child will require two negative RATs before coming back to school.

If your child is well, they can complete their learning whilst at home using the DoE's Learning From Home hub here: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/learning-from-home/learning-at-home/learning-packages>. If they are unwell, they should rest and not worry about continuing their learning while they recover.

What happens when a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19?

Under the new close contact rules, schools are no longer included in contact tracing. As the Principal, I will inform the school community when there is a positive case at our school and advise families on the public health advice, including monitoring for symptoms. I will inform families if the positive case was in their child's cohort, but that is all that can officially be done. This is just as we would send out notes informing families of confirmed cases of health concerns such as foot & mouth, nits, chickenpox etc). Our school will not close if this occurs.

Use of surgical masks

All primary and secondary school staff will be required to wear surgical masks indoors. Primary school students are strongly recommended to wear well-fitted masks indoors but this is **not mandatory**.

Cleaning

We continue to have enhanced cleaning focusing on high-touch and high-traffic areas.

Physical distancing

We will continue to follow physical distancing guidelines and maintain 1.5 metres distance wherever possible.

Ventilation

We will continue to follow NSW Health ventilation guidelines that natural ventilation is the most effective measure so we will maximise fresh air flow in learning spaces through opening doors and windows.

Visitors on school sites and vaccinations

The DoE has advised that no parents, carers or visitors will be allowed on a school site until further notice with the following exceptions:

- Two parents or carers are allowed to accompany their child into school on their first day of Kindergarten or starting a new school.
- Volunteers or staff operating uniform shops and canteens must be fully vaccinated.
- Visitors supporting school operations and curriculum delivery must be fully vaccinated.
- Allied health partners for the wellbeing of students must be fully vaccinated.
- All staff on school sites are required to be fully vaccinated, including having their booster when eligible.

Morning drop offs and afternoon pick-ups

Morning drop-offs will be at either Langford or Truscott gates. A staff member will be at the main front gate from 8.25am to ensure all students arrive safely. Staff supervision will be in the playground from 8.25am.

As with previous years, afternoon pick-ups will be staggered with Kindergarten at 2:45pm and Year 1 being dismissed at 2:50pm. This will alleviate some congestion. These students will be supervised and sent to safely to you outside the gates.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the front office from Friday January 28 when staff will be available.

We will continue to provide any information as soon as we receive any relevant communication. Thank you once again for your ongoing support.

I am looking forward to seeing all our students in Years 1-6 when they return on Tuesday February 1, and of course our new Kindergarten students on Friday February 4 after their Best Start appointments earlier in the week.

Thank you

Toni Skinner

Principal