



SCHOOL EXCURSIONS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

COVID-19 PROTOCOLS ***PARENTS/GUARDIANS/CARERS CHECKLIST***

Background to the School Excursion Protocols

School Excursion COVID-19 Protocols were endorsed by the [ACT Health Directorate](#) in 2020, addressing all components of how schools can travel safely to Canberra from departure to return, including travel, accommodation and visits to attractions.

The National Capital Educational Tourism Project (NCETP) has updated: the Protocols in the light of developments since 2020, following further discussions with [Aspen Medical](#), Teachers, tour operators, national attraction staff and accommodation providers.

The NCETP has also updated user-friendly Guidelines to help schools travel safely to and from Canberra, and Checklists to aid different industry sectors to follow the COVID-19 Protocols.

Important Contact Details – 7 days a week

Capital Territory COVID-19 Helpline	02 6207 7244 8 am – 8 pm
National Coronavirus Hotline	1800 020 080 24 hours a day
National Capital Educational Tourism Project	02 6162 4460 24 hours a day

School Children as a Cohort

Maintaining separate cohorts during travel and excursion activities mitigates the risk of COVID-19 transmission into the broader community.

A cohort is defined as a group of people with shared characteristics (e.g. a school class, a year level) that has been established within a school environment.

A cohort should move as 1 unit while maintaining physical separation and distance from other cohort groups or members of the public – for instance, cohort movement could, take the form of:

1. A year level (~100 children) plus adults who already share a common space within the school environment.
2. They are transported as 1 cohort by coaches to a community venue where they are not required to maintain 1.5 metre physical distancing within their established school cohort but are required to practise physical distancing from other cohort groups (e.g. another school group from a different school) and members of the public.
3. During this time, a high level of personal hygiene, including hand hygiene and cough etiquette, should be maintained.
4. Precautionary measures such as designated toilets and eating areas should be considered to ensure this cohort does not mix with other similar cohort groups at a venue.
5. The return journey should consist of the original cohort of children and adults on board the same coaches with the same Drivers used to transport the group to the venue.

Remaining as 1 cohort will ensure it is unnecessary for these children to adhere to 1.5 metre physical distancing requirements.

Hygiene Practice

School children should follow good hygiene practices including:

- Regularly washing hands and using hand sanitiser.
- Not sharing drinks or food.
- Coughing or sneezing into the crook of an elbow, or a tissue which is immediately discarded.
- Monitoring of symptoms and isolating children with fever, cough, sore throat, or lethargy.

Parents/Guardians/Carers Checklist

1. Pre-Excursion

- 1.1. If a child displays symptoms of COVID-19, or is generally unwell, they should not attend school.
 - 1.1.1. They should undergo testing for COVID-19 and isolate until a negative result is received, in accordance with guidance provided by the relevant jurisdiction.
- 1.2. If necessary, the child's Parent/Guardian/Carer should seek medical advice immediately.
- 1.3. All children and young people with a health care plan should ensure this is up-to-date and that, if required, it provides additional advice on monitoring and identification of the unwell child in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.4. Prior to attending an excursion all attendees should undertake COVID-19 testing, if required by a relevant school policy.
- 1.5. In the 24-hour period before prior to a child joining an excursion a Personal Health Declaration (PHD) must be completed by a child's Parent/Guardian/Carer, which includes a declaration of the current health status of the child.
- 1.6. The PHD requires the Parent/Guardian/Carer of a child to declare if they have visited an exposure site during a designated exposure period (if their State/Territory declares exposure sites).
- 1.7. If any Teacher, Parent/Guardian/Carer, or child due to attend the excursion has visited an exposure site during a designated exposure period their school must assess whether they should attend the excursion.
- 1.8. Part of the PHD includes granting permission in circumstances of Public Health Unit (PHU) engagement, for a child to undergo testing for COVID-19 in accordance with PHU directives and State/Territory management guidelines.
- 1.9. All PHDs and the information they contain are to be collected and managed by the child's school in accordance with privacy requirements.
- 1.10. Before commencing the excursion (e.g. boarding a coach), observation of a child's general wellbeing is recommended to be undertaken by Teachers supervising the cohort.
- 1.11. If a child displays symptoms of COVID-19 they should not take part in the excursion.
- 1.12. If any Teacher, Parent/Guardian/Carer or child due to attend the excursion is a suspected COVID-19 case they should be excluded from the cohort and isolated if they test positive for COVID-19.
- 1.13. The Parent/Guardian/Carer of a child must be contacted immediately.
- 1.14. The excursion should not go ahead.
- 1.15. Schools should not conduct COVID-19 testing themselves.

2. Vaccination

- 2.1. The best method to protect all children who are unable to be vaccinated from COVID-19 is to ensure the vaccination of those around them.
- 2.2. High vaccination rates of adults around school-age children who are unable to be vaccinated will reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission and infection, in a process called cocooning.
- 2.3. All frontline vaccine-eligible adults – such as Teachers, Drivers, attraction staff and accommodation staff – should be fully vaccinated before coming into contact with a school excursion cohort, in line with the AHPPC's advice related to reducing the opportunities for the virus to enter school populations.¹
- 2.4. Unwell students, Teachers, Drivers, attraction staff and accommodation staff should not attend excursion-related sites, regardless of their vaccination status, and should seek medical advice as to whether COVID-19 testing is required.

3. Masks

- 3.1. Mask wearing should be consistent with ACT Government mandates and recommendations related to school environments.²
- 3.2. It is recommended that Teachers, accompanying adults and attraction employees should protect themselves and others by wearing well-fitted masks while at attractions.
- 3.3. Wearing a mask is not dependent on whether an individual is vaccinated or mandated by public health orders.
- 3.4. Masks protect you and the broader community, including those who are unable to get vaccinated, such as young children.
- 3.5. While mask wearing requirements have eased, the Canberra community is strongly encouraged to continue to wear a face mask when entering public indoor settings where it could be difficult to maintain physical distancing.³

¹ AHPPC <https://www.health.gov.au/news/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc-statement-on-covid-19-schools-and-early-childhood-education-and-care>

² ACT Government <https://www.education.act.gov.au/public-school-life/covid-school-arrangements>

³ ACT Government <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/face-masks>

Management of Suspected & Confirmed Cases on Excursions

1. Schools should develop their own management plan for school visits to Canberra, including management of a sick child or a child or staff member who develops COVID-19 symptoms, or has a positive COVID-19 test.
2. If a Teacher, Parent/Guardian/Carer or child becomes a suspected COVID-19 case during a school excursion or is experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they should be isolated from the cohort in an appropriate space until symptoms resolve.
3. ACT Government advice regarding Interstate school excursions should be referred to.
4. Standard precautions should be adopted when providing care / first aid to a person suspected of having COVID-19.
 - Gloves, masks and, if available, a protective gown or apron should be used, including when dealing with blood or body fluids/substances.
 - Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) used should be double bagged and disposed of.
 - Wash hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitiser before and after providing care / first aid.
5. Teachers will remain with their cohort and maintain duty of care in contact with Parents/Guardians/Carers.
 - 5.1. If a person quarantined separately is a child they must be supervised by a Teacher.
6. A Parent/Guardian/Carer will be able to come to Canberra and isolate with their child.
7. Teachers may contact the [COVID-19 Helpline](#) for advice.
8. People exposed to COVID-19 are advised to following the guidance published at [Information for people exposed to COVID-19](#).
9. Where tests are negative a cohort can resume its excursion itinerary.
10. Schools returning home must contact their State/Territory health department before travel and heed advice provided to them.
11. If a cohort has travelled by coach, it may return home by coach (if the destination can be reached without stopping), and then isolate for at least 7 days.
12. A child with symptoms should remain separate to avoid passing on illnesses and should be collected by a Parent/Guardian/Carer as soon as possible.
13. Drivers will be encouraged to wear PPE and must isolate on return, dependent on the quarantine requirements within the relevant jurisdiction.
14. Importantly, Teachers should:
 - Create a list of potential [close contacts](#).
 - [Notify the NCETP](#) so all attractions visited by a school can be notified.