

1 March 2022



Our Lady of Mercy College

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Thank you for your ongoing support in assisting the College to safely manage the COVID-19 risk within our College. In the main, most students are wearing their mask appropriately and cooperating with the necessary guidelines.

Given the changing nature of the pandemic and associated conditions, I believe that it is timely to advise and clarify certain aspects of these guidelines.

Masks

1. Students must wear a mask when they enter a building at the College.
2. Students have responsibility for supplying their own mask.
3. Students are encouraged to carry a spare mask in their bag as a necessary contingency.
4. The College has a small supply of masks for emergency situations.
5. Parents are required to wear a mask when on the College grounds.

Close Contacts

Yesterday, CEWA provided further clarification regarding mask wearing and the identification of close contacts should a Covid-19 Positive case occur at the College.

Students are aware that if they are outside, they are not required to wear a mask. Similarly, students are not required to wear masks when eating or drinking. However, regardless of the circumstances, if anyone (staff or student) is not wearing a mask for longer than 15 minutes and they have close social contact (face to face –less than 1m – 1.5 m) with a Covid-19 positive case, they would be identified as a close contact and required to isolate for 7 days. Health and Physical Education Studies and activities are not included as they are not considered to be close social contact.

My belief is that students are largely unaware of the potential impact of not wearing a mask whilst outside and being in close social contact with their friends.

Scenario:

Six students sit closely together in a group in the open air to eat recess and chat. They take their masks off to do so. They spend 16 minutes together with their masks off. One student is subsequently identified as a positive case. All six students will be required to isolate for 7 days.

Solution(s)

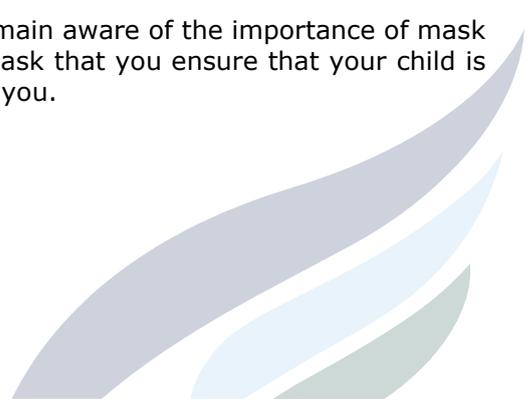
- Wear a mask
- If in close social contact, ensure that the time is broken by a period of mask wearing
- Maintain social distancing

Given this new clarity, I have asked Pastoral Care Group teachers to please explain these details to the students. I expect that the students will not like the news, but our goal is to keep the students safe, well and able to attend school.

I write to seek your support in ensuring that your children remain aware of the importance of mask wearing for their health and the health of others. Further, I ask that you ensure that your child is aware of the new information which I have communicated to you.

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Catholic Education Western Australia has been working closely with the Education Department and the Health Department and has provided the following information:

Was the COVID-19 positive person at school/care services during their infectious period?

Key information	Relevance
<p>Did the person spend more than 2 hours in a classroom environment where masks were not worn by both the person who tested positive and the people in that classroom?</p> <p><i>For primary schools/care services, this likely includes the class but would exclude single period specialty classes, such as physical education and art. If the student has been appropriately wearing a mask during the exposure period then they would not be considered a close contact.</i></p> <p><i>For secondary schools, it is unlikely that any classes will meet this criterion.</i></p>	<p>This will assist in identifying close contacts</p>
<p>Did the person spend more than 15 minutes face-to-face with a staff member or student, where masks were not worn by both the person who tested positive and their potential contacts?</p> <p><i>This will include members of a close peer group who eat lunch with the COVID-19 positive person. This will not include when face-to-face contact is brief, such as playing basketball in a physical education class.</i></p>	<p>This will assist in identifying close contacts</p>

I am always appreciative of the support of parents and guardians as we continue to work together to ensure the health and wellbeing of your child(ren) during these challenging and changing times.

Regards,



Rob Crothers
Principal