



WEST LEEDERVILLE
PRIMARY

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

COVID UPDATE 14 FEBRUARY 2022

LIMIT IN-SCHOOL GATHERINGS OF STUDENTS AND STAFF TO CLASS GROUPS OR SMALL GROUPS WITHIN A YEAR LEVEL

On Friday 4 February 2022, the Chief Health Officer advised that all WA schools should limit in-school gatherings of students and staff to class groups or small groups within a year level. This is to minimise the number of students or staff that might be impacted if there is a positive case in the school community at some point in the coming weeks.

This announcement was followed on Monday 7 February 2022 with changes to the definition of a close contact and quarantine periods.

WA Public Schools were provided with Operating Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Wednesday 9 February 2022 to help them interpret the new regulations.

In these Operating Guidelines it states the following information.

Definition of a Close Contact in a high caseload environment includes:

- A household member or intimate partner of a person with COVID-19 who has had contact with them during their infectious period; or
- Someone who has had close contact with a person in their infectious period, including:
 - face-to-face contact for 15 minutes or more with an infectious person, where a mask was not worn by the exposed person or the person with COVID-19;
 - sharing a small indoor space or a classroom environment for more than two hours with an infectious person, where masks have been removed for this period;
 - someone who is directed by WA Health that they are a close contact.

*Please note: Primary school children are currently not required to wear a mask.

In addition, the FAQs provided by the Department of Education that accompany the Operating Guidelines state:

- Schools should avoid having all students together at break times where possible, by doing the following:
 - Restricting year groups to certain buildings of the school and play areas.
 - Timetable modifications, e.g. different break times, different drop-offs and pick-up times.

To ensure that West Leederville Primary School is compliant with this advice, we developed a plan that was put in place from Monday 7 February 2022 until further notice:

- Classes will work within their classroom and with their teacher
- Classes will eat their lunch in separate areas of the school
- Students will have playtime with different blocks allocated to different areas of the school,
 - The lower ground floor of our southern building containing the Pre-primary Classes
 - The upper floor of our southern building containing the Year 1 and Year 4 Classes
 - The Heritage Building containing our Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 Classes
 - The upper floor of our eastern building containing Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 Classes
- Staff will eat in different areas of the school and meet via video conference as appropriate
- Assemblies will be cancelled until further notice
- Morning fitness, junior sport and senior sport will be cancelled (students will still have PE lessons and do sport as a class)
- Parents and carers may not enter the school buildings that house students (i.e. classrooms, heritage hall, library etc.)
- Parent and carers should use SeeSaw to message the teacher and/or arrange a meeting via Video Conferencing

In the following pages I have included Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to assist parents and carers with understanding the current guidelines and the way these are implemented at West Leederville Primary School.

As previously announced by the Chief Health Officer, there may be further public health measures introduced in schools in the event that we experience higher caseloads in the community which WA is not yet experiencing.

If you have any questions in relation to this, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

We will continue to provide your child with quality teaching and learning as we take sensible and proportionate actions to respond to the changing environment, we are living in with COVID-19. I know that our community will support us in the coming weeks as we adjust to changes to the way we operate.

Warmest Regards,
Sheri Evans
Principal

Please note: Information included in this letter and FAQs is current as of 2:00pm on Monday 14 February. Information is subject to change at the direction of the Minister of Education Sue Ellery.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Over the last week, I have received a number of emails querying the cohort arrangements at West Leederville Primary School. I thought it would be helpful to share some of the answers with the whole community so that everyone has a clear understanding of what is required and how this has been applied at WLPS.

Can my child still play with other children in their year group who are not in their class?

Yes. We have divided the school into four zones and within each zone are multiple classes of the same year level. Children must eat with their class but they can then play with children from other classes.

Will the cohort and play zone arrangements change in the future?

Maybe. Schools may be asked to introduce further and stricter cohort arrangements if caseloads increase. This could include limits to only in-class interactions, different break times or staggered drop-offs and pick-ups.

Is there enough shade in these areas?

Yes. We have carefully considered each area to ensure there is shade, access to toilets, rubbish bins and drink bottles/water fountains. In each area, the students sit in the shade to eat their lunch and still need a hat to play in the sun.

Is there any play equipment in the zones?

Yes. We have assembled kits for each area with a variety of play equipment such as balls, bean bags, cricket kits, skipping ropes, etc. We have also spent time with students teaching them how to play with the equipment and the types of games they can play – you should've seen our Associate Principals skipping and playing hopscotch with children on Friday! Not an easy task in high heels and a shirt and tie!

Will the children rotate between the zones?

Yes. The children will rotate between different areas where appropriate.

Can the children rotate between areas daily?

Some groups are already rotating between different areas i.e., Year 5 and 6 are in the undercover area and handball courts at recess and are at Cowden Park for lunch.

However, it is not possible to rotate all the zones daily for the following reasons:

- Moving children between zones would also mean changing duty rosters for the supervising teachers.
- We have found that younger children benefit from predictable routines and are less likely to remember their zone if it changes too often and become confused.
- Having different groups using these items at different times during the day would mean an increased number of close contacts in the event of a positive case.

Is there still additional cleaning of high touch surfaces?

Yes. We have a day cleaner circulating regularly to clean high touch surfaces.

Does the school have access to hand sanitiser and cleaning products?

Yes. We have adequate supplies.

Are children still using shared equipment in specialist classes (such as paint brushes, balls).

Yes. The equipment is cleaned after each use.

Are other schools doing different things?

All Public Schools have the same guidelines and FAQs; however, schools may interpret these differently depending on the number students at the school, the size of the school, the location of the school, and the facilities at the school.

At WLPS, we have considered the following factors:

- Natural groupings due to our classroom blocks.
- Limited size of the school site.
- Limited number of classrooms – the school is at capacity with every classroom in use. We do not have the flexibility of some schools who have vacant classrooms due to being under capacity.
- Mixture of straight and composite classes.
- A recent exposure site visited by some families and children.

Private and Catholic schools have more flexibility to interpret the guidelines in a way that suits them.

How will this affect composite classes?

In all cases, children in composite classes are grouped within their zone with other classes with the same year group.

Is the Year 3 and 4 Swimming School still going ahead?

Yes. We have arranged for 'stretchy buses' or a bus for each class to go to and from swimming. If you do not wish your child to participate in Swimming School, please let us know.

Will I be reimbursed my money if I withdraw my Year 3 or 4 child from Swimming School?

You will be reimbursed your Swimming School money. We cannot reimburse your bus money as we have already paid for the buses on the basis of paid students.

Will the Swimming Carnival go ahead?

At this stage, it is not necessary for us to postpone or cancel infrequent special events, such as interschool carnivals, camps, or school balls. Parent attendance may be limited at this event.

Are we concerned about the children's mental health?

Yes. Mental health of our students is always important and a focus for decision making and teaching and learning activities. West Leederville Primary has a range of mental health programs such as Bounce Back, PBS and Flourish. Currently, the children are participating in lessons to promote resilience, to avoid catastrophising, to maintain perspective and strategies to deal with adversity.

What I am hearing in the media is different to what the school is doing?

The school needs to respond to the directions and FAQs provided by the Department of Education WA. Sometimes this information will be well represented in the media and sometimes it will be poorly represented or sensationalised by the media. We will do our best to communicate with you clearly and frequently. Please don't hesitate to contact the classroom teacher if you have any questions or your child is telling you something that doesn't quite seem right.

Will there be more changes to the way the school operates?

Yes – most likely. I don't have a crystal ball but I believe you and your child should prepare for further restrictions and changes to the way the school operates in the coming months.

Will you vaccinate my child without my knowledge or permission?

No. Schools will not be vaccinating children.

Does my primary school child need to wear a mask?

No. Primary school children do not currently need to wear a mask. This may be introduced in the future but it is not currently required. Mask wearing for children in primary schools is optional.

How can I support my child?

Over the coming months, children in schools may experience a range of changes from increased cohort arrangements, different break and play times, quarantine, different teachers, online learning, school closures – and testing positive for COVID or a family member testing positive for COVID.

How we respond to these changes as parents and trusted adults will greatly affect the way our children experience and feel about them. Children are very good at reading their parents emotions and mimicking them, and this will set up mental models for when they experience adversity and uncertainty as young adults and adults.

- Your child may be unhappy, scared, anxious, stressed, lonely or bored – let your child know that these are all normal emotions. Share a story about your own childhood or adult life where you felt this way and the strategies you used to get back to a 'happy place'.
- Remember happiness is not the goal. Children who are raised to believe that the world owes them only 'happy experiences' can find it very difficult to cope with adversity, change and challenge as a young adult or adult. An 'only happy experiences childhood' can have lasting and catastrophic consequences for mental health.
- Point out the positives and opportunities. A new play area could bring new adventures, a new group of friends, a new experience or a challenge to invent a new game.
- Nothing lasts forever. No matter how hard it might feel at the time, things like COVID will eventually pass.
- Help them to see things from different perspectives. While the changes they are experiencing may seem like a big deal, there are a lot of worse things that can happen. I have taught children who have been in refugee camps for many years, children who are homeless, children who have lost their parents or siblings in an accident, children who have cancer and children who don't have anything to eat or anywhere safe to sleep. Understanding perspective is important - even though you can't do all the things you would normally do, the children at WLPS are still very lucky to be safe, to have a home, to have food on the table and to have their family around them.
- Read or watch Dr Seuss '[Oh the places you will go...](#)' This is a great story of the highs and lows of life captured beautifully in Dr Seuss's legendary style. It is a great way to start a conversation about the positive and negative experiences that are part of our lives.
- Don't get angry, lay blame, over emphasise the negatives, catastrophise, or lose perspective as a parent. It is natural for parents to only want the very best for their children and while you may be feeling this way, these feelings and conversations are not beneficial to your children. There are adult only conversations that are too big for children to hear. Remember your children are watching and learning from you all the time.
- Get help – if you need help supporting your child with developing good strategies to maintain a positive mindset when faced with adversity, change or challenge, we have a school psychologist that can mentor parents and carers in this area. Please phone the school for more information.

What if my child tests positive for COVID?

- Remain calm. Assure them that they are ok. Over the past two years your children have seen a lot of scary information through the media about COVID. They may be scared and will need you to be their trusted adult.
- Contact the relevant health authorities.
- Contact the school. The school will be confidential with this information but we need to know.