

EOTC and Outdoor Education under the COVID-19 Protection Framework

Working at **ORANGE**

What does it mean for EOTC and Outdoor Education?

Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) and Outdoor Education (OE) are hugely valuable components of an authentic rich curriculum. It's great that schools can offer students and staff opportunities to reconnect with each other, have rich learning experiences, and enjoy the benefits of being in nature.

Units of work or programmes that involve time away from school or in the outdoors can continue if managed appropriately.

Your school already has a plan for managing Health and Safety, and in particular, the public health requirements for COVID-19. The guidance below helps highlight how these requirements relate to EOTC and OE.

The key controls for schools and all workplaces are:

- ensure people with COVID-19 symptoms or feel generally unwell stay away from school and get tested
- wear masks
- maintain physical distancing
- enable good hygiene practices
- ensure good ventilation (open doors and windows)
- keep track of people that enter your school
- encourage vaccination including boosters where eligible.

Key considerations for EOTC and OE

Those unwell stay home

- School staff are to observe students before leaving on EOTC events, checking for symptoms, and asking those presenting as unwell to go home. Have a robust plan in place for all those involved if anyone reports they are feeling unwell during an event.

Physical Distancing

- Is encouraged, particularly from people you don't know. Wherever possible group your students (e.g., class groups), so they do not intermingle with other groups and keep a minimum of one-metre distance between groups indoors.
- There is no physical distancing requirement between group members, only between groups

- Physical distancing from members of the public should be maintained at 2 metres. Some examples where maintaining physical distance is difficult but must be appropriately managed are:
 - narrow public walking tracks
 - inside venues where members of the public are present
 - entrance ways to public buildings such as libraries and museums
- In situations where physical distancing is not ideal, extra emphasis on hand washing and drying (or cleansing with hand sanitiser) before and after activities.

Ventilation

- Air out rooms between use by different groups or only use rooms which are well-ventilated
- Open windows and doors whenever possible
- Work outside whenever practical.

Good hygiene practices

- Coughing into their elbow
- Trying to avoid touching their faces
- Hand washing and drying
- Regular cleaning of commonly touched surfaces (e.g., minivan door handle).

Equipment

- Playgrounds (including in public parks) can be used, with an emphasis on hand washing and drying (or cleansing with hand sanitiser) before and after use. Consider strategies to minimise congestion
- Shared supplies and equipment can be used if students and staff are undertaking regular hand washing and stay away if sick. Where practical, equipment should be regularly cleaned.

Activities

- Activities such as exercising, singing, dancing and shouting are higher-risk for transmission
- For singing it should be held outdoors or in a well-ventilated space and there should be at least 1 metres between participants where practical
- Volunteers can be used to support EOTC or OE activities if they meet all the public health requirements (make sure you have up to date contact information for them).

Transport

- Keep a record of each vehicle used and the students and staff that travelled in it
- Have hand sanitiser available for each student to use as they board the vehicle
- Masks are required for all students aged 12 and above on public and school transport (including school vans)
- Volunteers or staff transporting students who are not their own children in private vehicles are encouraged to wear masks.

Masks

- Masks are still required (students in Years 4 and above, and all staff providing or supporting their education) when visiting certain indoor locations that are open to the public while you are there such as libraries, museums, and shops. It is important to check the requirements of any venue you are planning to visit.
- Consider the use of masks when working in close proximity outdoors or where physical distancing from members of the public is challenging
- See the Transport section above for mask requirements in vehicles.

Along with your usual risk management approach for EOTC or OE activities you will need to consider:

- [Symptoms of COVID-19](#) (which may be like other illnesses in the early stages)
- The importance of protecting those vulnerable to respiratory illness. Do you know who on your staff, in your volunteers and in your student population may be at greater risk?
- Whether, in the event someone was to become ill, you have the facilities to be able to respond, including the ability to isolate that person immediately and if needed, to get cases home.
- Whether you have access to appropriate personal protective equipment and the ability to clean hard surfaces if someone were to become ill with infections such as flu, gastro bug, or COVID-19.

Case management

Planning will need to include how to respond to cases and Household contacts, whether they are staff, volunteers, or students.

- When cases do arise, they can travel back to their homes to isolate. However, public transport cannot be used to do this.
- Planning must consider how cases will be returned safely to their homes to isolate.
- Caregivers should be made aware before the trip of any likely need for them to come and pick up their child from the venue if that child is identified as a case, possible case or Household contact ([defined here](#)).
- If returning students to their home during the trip is not going to be possible then you will need a plan for cases to isolate in-situ.

Where cases need to isolate in-situ:

- they should be separated from others that are not defined as Household contacts
 - cases can isolate together
 - Household contacts isolating should be separated from others, but they may isolate together
 - Household contacts can isolate with the case, but there is an obvious risk of transmission of the virus if sharing the same room while the case is infectious.
- Anyone who is identified as a confirmed case will be required to isolate for 7 days.
 - Anyone from the overnight trip/camp who is a Household contact ([defined here](#)) of that case is also required to isolate.

On a school camp with multiple tents/cabins, if you share the same room or tent on camp you **would** be a Household contact but you **would not** be a Household contact if you spent time with the case on camp but didn't sleep in the same space.

However, if a smaller group stayed overnight at an Airbnb or house together they **would all** be Household contacts.

All Household contacts are required to follow the steps outlined by Manatū Hauora |Ministry of Health [here](#).

- As a precaution you may choose to ask Close contacts ([defined here](#)) to isolate for a period of time following their last exposure to the case. There is no legal requirement for this to occur. A period of 7 days from their last exposure to the case is recommended should they choose to isolate (this assumes they are isolating separately from the case). Schools should be aware that caregivers have the right to say 'no' their child who is a close contact won't be returning home or isolating.
- Before the trip caregivers should be made aware of how the school will manage any students identified as close contacts.
- Anyone in the group, including close contacts of a confirmed case, who is symptomatic (even if only very mild symptoms) must be encouraged to get tested for COVID-19.

Working with External Providers

Working closely with the external provider to ensure that that requirements for the COVID-19 Protection Framework at Orange are understood and can be met is a very important part of your planning.

It is no longer a requirement for external providers to check My Vaccine Passes as part the of the COVID protection framework. Providers may however choose to require these for their other users based on their individual risk assessments but they must treat all students as vaccinated when they are part of a school organised curriculum-related event.

There is no maximum number of students (capacity limits) for EOTC activities. Some providers may choose to set indoor capacity limits so it is important to check with the provider. Activities with large number of students, if they are to go ahead, should take place in well-ventilated areas or outdoors.

It is no longer a requirement for schools to have a separate defined space at EOTC venue or sole use of a provider's facilities.

An external provider is still able to choose whether to accept school groups on their site, so schools need to continue to work closely with providers to agree the requirements of any visits (students' vaccine status cannot be a requirement).

You and the external provider will need to agree to your joint health and safety plan for the event. Together, you should consider and discuss:

- Keeping an accurate record of attendance, including all the students, staff and volunteers that are present.
- Symptoms of COVID-19 (which may be like other illnesses in the early stages).
- How to protect those students, staff or volunteers that may be at greater risk to respiratory illness? Include individual plans for those vulnerable to serious illness with COVID-19.
- The management of a situation in the event someone was to become ill, including the ability to isolate that person immediately and how cases or possible cases will be returned safely to their homes for testing and/or isolation. If in doubt seek advice from Public Health.
- Do you have appropriate personal protective equipment and the ability to clean hard surfaces if someone were to become ill with flu, gastro bug, or COVID-19?

- Physical distancing requirements (keeping 1m between school groupings and maintaining 2 metre distancing from members of the public)
- Ventilation recommendations
- Good hygiene practices (e.g., will they provide hand sanitiser in common spaces?). Soap, water, and the ability to dry hands must be provided in bathrooms.
- Any catering considerations. Clarify with your provider their systems for food handling and deliveries (you will need to be reassured they have processes in place to meet public health requirements and are approved to provide those services). If you or the provider will be preparing food on site you must check the [Ministry of Primary Industries](#) and ensure your school, the provider and any suppliers meet all health and safety requirements before the event.

It is vital that all students and staff understand how crucial it is to:

- Practice physical distancing with people they don't know
- Frequently wash and dry hands
- Cough into their elbow
- Not touch their face
- Notify a staff member at the first sign of feeling unwell
- Adhere to general cleaning processes and cleaning duties following provider protocols
- Adhere to protocols for food preparation, food handling, kitchen dining room/cleaning and dining protocols set by caterers or the provider.

Use Form 6 (EOTC External Provider Agreement form) from the [EOTC Tool Kit](#) to guide and record your discussions with the provider.

Links

Ministry of Education:

[COVID-19](#) Information and advice for students, whānau, and the education sector

[School Bulletin](#)

[COVID-19 Protection Framework for schools and kura](#)

Good hygiene practices will continue to be a priority as the best way to minimise potential spread of COVID-19. The [COVID-19.govt.nz](#) and [Ministry of Health](#) websites are a good source of information including:

- [Hand washing](#)
- [Cough and sneeze etiquette](#)
- [Cleaning surfaces](#)
- [Wearing masks](#)

Department of Conservation: [DOC's response to COVID-19](#)

Sport NZ: [Information for the Sport, Recreation and Play sector](#)

FAQs

Can I take my Outdoor Education class tramping on public conservation (DOC) land?

Yes, under the COVID Protection Framework you will be able to go hiking, mountain biking, four-wheel driving, and boating. You can also check trap lines if your school is involved in pest control.

DOC no longer require people to be fully vaccinated to use DOC accommodation and premises.

It will be vital you travel safely and look after yourself and others when outdoors. This includes:

- keeping 2 metre physical distancing from members of the public
- not leaving home if unwell
- hand washing, and
- coughing into your elbow
- consider mask use, including those places where people aged 12 and over are required to wear one.

It is important everyone takes responsibility for their own COVID-19 hygiene and cleaning requirements:

- be prepared to undertake additional cleaning when using huts, toilets, and campsites
- you will need to carry your own cleaning and protective equipment to safely use shared facilities (including toilets)
- leave facilities clean and fit for use by others.

If you arrive at a hut that is at capacity, or that you have not booked (if it's a Bookable hut), you will need a tent.

Check [DOC's response to COVID-19](#) for the most up to date information and the individual huts and tracks you are planning to use for any DOC alerts before you go.

How do I deal with a COVID case on my trip if there is just one toilet?

Where it's not possible to have separate bathrooms/toilets, you can put in place other strategies to minimise the risk such as:

- getting students to all have masks to wear to the toilet
- having some signal system in place so if you have a positive case and they are at the toilet the other students know to wait well away and for 10-15 minutes after the positive case has used the toilet
- taking a spray disinfectant with you and spraying the toilet seat and any high touch surfaces after use
- having a separate roll of toilet paper for the positive student
- leaving the toilet door open to ventilate the space.

Should our school permit overnight experiences e.g., multi or overnight camps at managed facilities (i.e., External providers such as Hillary Outdoors), tenting at public conservation land?

Overnight camps offered by external providers can go ahead. You need to work closely with the provider to ensure all the health and safety requirements are agreed upon, including how they are meeting the required public health measures.

Longer and overnight tramping is permitted, and tents are allowed.

Can we go tenting?

Yes, you can use tents. However, you should consider strategies to reduce the risk of sharing a tent overnight, such as reducing the number of students per tent to allow more space per student (trying to avoid breathing in each other's faces), top and tailing sleeping positions can help. Careful health checking pre camp will also help reduce the risk.

The emphasis should be on good hygiene, including hand washing or sanitising hands and leaving the tent if you need to cough or sneeze (or using your elbow). Tents should be aired out if possible between groups. Records should be kept of which tent each student was in.

Is there a maximum number of students that can stay at an external provider's facilities?

There is no legal maximum number of students. However congregation in large numbers is a higher risk for transmission.

Wherever possible group students (for example, by class), and stagger start/finish times to reduce the students mingling.

Is it OK to travel to complete assessments for our senior OE students?

Yes, travel between regions and around New Zealand is allowed at all levels of the COVID Protection Framework. Ensure you are following transport recommendations, including sanitising hands as you get into and out of vehicles and mask wearing. You need to know who is in each vehicle and avoid students swapping between vehicles.

No one should travel if they are feeling unwell or are required to or have been asked to self-isolate by health authorities.

Is there a maximum trip length?

No, there is no recommended length of time for trips, that is a school decision.

Can there be interclass mixing? An example is a student who can't attend one trip but can attend another.

Ideally students would stay within their groupings. If this is not possible, ensure records are kept of all students attending any trip, just as you would normally do.

Are we able to transport students in minivans to conduct EOTC and OE?

Yes, minivans can be used. Ensure you are following transport recommendations, including sanitising hands as you get into and out of vehicles and mask wearing (for students aged 12 and above). High touch points should be cleaned regularly (e.g., the door handles, and steering wheel if swapping drivers). Vehicles should be well-ventilated at all times.

Can groups of more than 10 travel together in a minivan?

Yes, as long as the legal seating requirements of the vehicle are adhered to.

What are the physical distancing requirements when our class is out of the school grounds?

Physical distancing of 2 metres from members of the public is encouraged. If physical distancing is not practical, then the emphasis should be placed on good hygiene practices.

Can the students be in physical contact with each other for activities such as caving?

Yes, in these situations extra emphasis on hand washing and drying (or cleansing with hand sanitiser) before and after activity, along with other good hygiene practices is very important.

Can I get an external provider to provide activities at school?

External providers can provide EOTC at the school as long as they meet all of the requirements for working onsite. If providers do come onsite, you will need to work closely with the provider to ensure all the health and safety requirements are agreed between the school and the provider.

Are there specific procedures we should now follow for a potential illness on camp?

You should follow the requirements set by your school for infectious illnesses.

If you are working with an external provider, you will need to agree to these procedures as part of your agreed health and safety plan for the event.

Can I get an external provider to provide activities at school?

External providers can provide EOTC at the school as long as they meet all of the requirements for working onsite. If providers do come onsite, you will need to work closely with the provider to ensure all the health and safety requirements are agreed between the school and the provider.

How do bunkrooms at external providers work?

The emphasis should be on good hygiene, including hand washing or sanitising hands before entering the bunkroom and leaving the room if you need to cough or sneeze (or using your elbow). Keep rooms well-ventilated. Records should be kept of which bunkroom each student was in. This is important as students that shared a bunkroom with a positive case become Household contacts.

Minimising the time that students spend in bunkrooms should be part of your planning.

Can I use shared accommodation such as backpacker hostels or commercial camping grounds?

These organisations will have public health guidelines they have to meet to operate. As with any external provider, you will need to work closely with the provider to ensure all the health and safety requirements are discussed and agreed to by the school and the provider. Carefully consider the ability to maintain 2 metres physical distancing from members of the public that are also using the facility.

Are sports trainings and sports competitions considered in this document?

No, [Sport NZ advice](#) should be followed for sport competitions and teams. This guidance only considers curriculum-related activities.

How regularly should surfaces and equipment be cleaned?

High touch surfaces should be cleaned daily. Consider cleaning between use of facilities by different groups. However, this won't always be practical. When it is not practical, put extra emphasis on 'cleaning' the participant and people staying away if they are unwell.

How does rock climbing work? Do students need to stay a distance of 2 metres from the instructors (as they do with members of the public)?

Rock climbing can go ahead. You will have an agreement with the instructor to deliver services and as part of that agreement will need to outline on how they are going to do this safely, including whether masks will be worn

Can I run an event that involves students from a number of different schools?

Activities with large numbers of students, if they are to go ahead, should take place in well-ventilated areas or outdoors. Students from other schools are permitted to be onsite and must follow all public health measures E.g., leadership camps.

What would be best practice for food preparation and meals on camps?

Follow the most up to date advice on food preparation from the [Ministry of Primary Industries](#).

If a participant were to become unwell on a multi-day trip, would you recommend that the trip ends for everyone involved, i.e. a multi-day tramp should everyone return home to self-isolate or would it be sufficient to send the unwell person home?

As you would do at school, you need to have a plan for isolating the sick student until you can get them home. Getting the student home could involve getting a parent to pick them up at the nearest practical location.

You should now have access to Rapid Antigen tests for (voluntary) symptomatic testing of students and staff as part of your school supply. Alternatively the parent/caregiver should arrange for testing for COVID-19. A reminder that RAT testing is not always accurate and can provide a false negative result.

Public transport should not be used to transport someone suspected of or confirmed with COVID-19 unless specific advice from public health officials states otherwise. Students that have shared a bunkroom or tent with a positive case are classified as Household contacts and must follow the requirements for Household contacts detailed [here](#). For small groups sharing a Airbnb or house all of those staying there would be considered Household contacts. Close contacts are not legally required to isolate but the school may choose to ask them to. Parents should be informed about the school's wishes around close contacts and picking up unwell students and Household contacts before the trip. If in doubt seek advice from Public Health.