



# Managing health and safety in schools at Alert Level 1

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## Purpose of this document

This document provides information to support responsible, healthy and safe operations for schools under Alert Level 1.

Schools as a PCBU have obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 to ensure the health and safety of its staff, children and the public. See our [health and safety guidance for boards of trustees and school leaders](#) for further information.

You will already have a plan for managing health and safety; this guidance will assist you to review and update that plan to reflect the public health measures at Alert Level 1. Work with your staff to do this, including your elected health and safety representatives.

## Alert Level 1 summary

There is an extremely low public health risk from the virus at Alert Level 1. With the exception of border controls including testing and quarantine/isolation for new arrivals, Alert Level 1 sees a return to life as we knew it pre-COVID-19. All current restrictions on businesses and services are lifted.

Although New Zealand has made great progress in containing COVID-19, there is still a global pandemic that is expected to continue into 2021 or even longer. It is important we remain vigilant and continue to practice good hygiene to minimise the risk of any community transmission.

There are no specific public health requirements for schools and early learning services at Alert Level 1. The Health and Safety at Work Act continues to apply and all schools and early learning services should adhere to the [golden rules](#).

There are no restrictions on personal movement at Alert Level 1 so all students, children and staff continue to be safe to go to school / early learning, and all students must attend school.

Schools and early learning services are encouraged to support contact tracing efforts by displaying QR Code posters for the NZ COVID Tracer App.

Upon advice from the local medical officer of health, any educational facilities connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 must close on an individual or group basis for 72 hours to allow contact tracing, and then potentially for a further 14 days.

## Health and Safety at Work Act requirements

To meet your requirements under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 during Alert Level 1 you must manage risks and protect staff, children and young people. This means that your leadership, staff, students, and community need to understand what the risks are and what they and you need to do to manage them. How you will do this needs to be planned, thought out and discussed. Your plans should then be detailed in your health and safety plan.

The expectation of the government, community, staff and regulators is that schools will meet the highest possible standards and that Boards of Trustees, management and individual staff actively manage adherence to the safety measures and expectations. It is expected that all involved ensure they are looking out for the health and safety of their colleagues and community, while at work. It is crucial that board members, principals and managers are seen to be leaders in this work.

Workplaces are obliged to eliminate transmission risks where possible and where not, to substitute work practices or provide as high a level of control as possible. A simple example is where possible, propping or wedging a door open rather than focusing on wiping the handles

regularly. It is expected that you maintain or create new practices that meet or exceed the public health measures as they are updated.

Implementing or maintaining infectious disease controls remains vital for the health and safety of workers and other people.

It's important that you discuss your approach to operating safely at Alert Level 1 with staff or their representatives. WorkSafe recommend you talk with your staff about which controls you'll use at this level and how this may differ from what you did at Alert Levels 3 and 2. This means your staff will understand how you intend to manage work safely and what they need to do to help.

WorkSafe also recommend you document your Alert Level 1 approach so it can be shared with others, including your school community. This will also make it easier to regularly review and update your approach. This guidance has been designed to support you in this process.

Please also refer to the [WorkSafe website](#) for further information and advice regarding COVID-19.

## Changes from Alert Level 2

The key change for schools and early learning services is that there are no specific public health requirements at Alert level 1.

Schools are no longer required to keep a contact tracing register, but as is usual practice will continue to keep a visitor register and maintain their attendance register (and will need to work with local health authorities to identify close contacts, should there be a case connected with the school).

Physical distancing is not a requirement but where possible or practicable, is encouraged when you are around people you don't know.

There are no restrictions on numbers at gatherings or on physical activities including cultural and sporting activities, practices and events.

There are key public health measures ([golden rules](#)) for everyone in New Zealand to follow. For schools and early learning services this will mean:

- If people are sick, they should stay home (phone Healthline or their GP and get tested if they have cold or flu symptoms)
- Wash and dry hands, sneeze and cough into elbow
- Regularly disinfect shared surfaces
- Soap, water and the ability to dry hands should be provided in bathrooms.
- Support contact tracing efforts by displaying QR Code posters for the NZ COVID Tracer App.
- Stringent self-isolation of those who display relevant symptoms of COVID-19, test positive for COVID-19, have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19, or have been overseas in the last 14 days – [Ministry of Health information for self-isolation](#)

The specific changes from Alert Levels 3 and 2 are noted in the table further below.

Schools and early learning services must also continue to meet requirements under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.

## Summary of alert levels 1 - 3

The below table summarises the differences between alert levels 1, 2 and 3.

Alert Level 1	Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3
If people are sick, they should stay home (phone Healthline or their GP and get tested if they have flu-like symptoms).	Same as Alert Level 1	Same as Alert Level 1
Wash and dry hands, cough into elbow, don't touch your face	Same as Alert Level 1	Same as Alert Level 1
<a href="#">Schools connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19</a> must close on an individual or group basis for 72 hours to allow contact tracing and cleaning. They could be closed for a further 14 days (but open for distance learning) – you will work with public health units to manage this and the direction to close will come from the Medical Officer of Health.	Same as Alert Level 1	Same as Alert Level 1
Stringent self-isolation of those who display relevant symptoms of COVID-19, test positive for COVID-19, have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19, or have been overseas in the last 14 days – <a href="#">Ministry of Health information for self-isolation</a> .	Same as Alert Level 1	Same as Alert Level 1
There are no restrictions on personal movement at Alert Level 1 - all children should attend school	Children at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g. those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled) are encouraged to take additional precautions when leaving home. Parents, caregivers and students will need to work with the school to develop a plan to manage a safe return to school. Distance learning will continue to be available to those who choose to remain at home.	Children at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 are encouraged to stay home wherever possible.
There are no restrictions on personal movement at Alert Level 1 - all staff are able to work at school	Staff at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 are able to work on-site if they can do it in a safe way. Staff and employers should discuss and agree whether additional control measures can be put in place, whether these workers can work from home, or if not, what leave and pay arrangements will apply.	Staff who are have a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should stay at home. If they want to come to school you may agree to the request only if it can be assured that it is safe for them to do so.

Alert Level 1	Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3
<p>School staff are to observe students on arrival into the classroom checking for symptoms and ask those presenting as unwell to go home (or arrange for parents and caregivers to come and pick up). Please note, this does not mean that temperatures are to be taken.</p> <p>A reminder that Principals at state and state-integrated schools have authority to preclude a student from attending if they believe on reasonable grounds they may have a communicable disease under section 19 of the Education Act – see <a href="#">Guide to Legal Powers</a>.</p>	<p>Same as Alert Level 1</p>	<p>Same as Alert Level 1</p>
<p>Soap, water and the ability to dry hands should be provided in bathrooms.</p>	<p>Hand sanitiser at entry to classrooms and in shared spaces. Soap, water and the ability to dry hands must be provided in bathrooms. If hand sanitiser is in short supply, washing and drying hands with soap is still the most effective hygiene measure.</p>	<p>Hand sanitiser at entry to classrooms and in bathrooms. If supplies are limited, soap and water continues to be most effective for washing hands (20 seconds) in bathrooms.</p>
<p>There are no restrictions on gatherings at Alert Level 1</p>	<p>Schools, like workplaces are not considered to be gatherings under alert level 2. Therefore there are no bubbles and no changes are needed to breaks, start and finish times.</p> <p>If however a school brings others onsite eg hire out school hall, use of buildings by community groups, or events like school productions and school balls then the mass gathering rules will apply</p>	<p>Introduce staggered entry times into classes with one time for school transport, to minimise gatherings of children and/or parents.</p> <p>Breaks, starts and finishes should be staggered and children stay in their bubbles – again, to minimise congregation of students in shared spaces.</p>
<p>Contact tracing registers are not required at Alert Level 1. As is usual practice you will need to continue to record attendance in your SMS and record visitors coming on-site. There is no requirement to include parents and caregivers undertaking drop offs and pick-ups in your visitor register.</p> <p>Schools are encouraged to display QR Code posters for the NZ COVID Tracer App.</p>	<p>Contact tracing registers must be in place and identify which children are in each teaching space, record when and who they have contact with during the day if that changes. This includes recording who the adults are in contact with as well as recording any visitors to the site, including parents.</p>	<p>To support contact tracing students should sit in the same place each day</p>

Alert Level 1	Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3
Physical distancing is not a requirement but where possible or practicable is encouraged when you are around people you don't know.	Children, young people and staff should be far enough away from each other so that they are not breathing on or touching each other, coupled with good hygiene practices and regular cleaning of commonly touched surfaces. There does not need to be a specific measurement but where practicable 1 metre can be used as a guide, particularly between adults. Practice should be sensible.	Physical distancing was 2 metres outside and 1 metre inside previously
Regular cleaning and disinfecting of commonly touched surfaces is recommended	Disinfect and clean all surfaces daily	Disinfect and clean all surfaces daily
PPE is not required or recommended as necessary in any educational facility by the Public Health Service	Same as Alert Level 1	Same as Alert Level 1
Teachers are able to teach more than one group/class of students	Same as Alert Level 1	Where possible, it is recommended that teachers stay with the same school bubble of students
There are no restrictions on physical activities including cultural and sporting activities, practices and events	Physical education classes and break time activities can include access to sports equipment including playgrounds but hygiene practice should be observed before and after playing with equipment. There will also need to be regular cleaning of shared equipment such as balls, sticks etc.  Physical distance is not possible in some sporting activities. In these situations extra emphasis on handwashing and drying (or cleansing with hand sanitiser) before and after activities and regular cleaning of equipment is very important.	Physical education classes and break time activities cannot include sports with <2m physical distance or where the same equipment is touched by different students (balls, ropes, sticks, etc)

## Good hygiene practices

Good hygiene practices will continue to be important at Alert Level 1 as the best way to minimise potential spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses such as colds and flu. The [COVID-19.govt.nz](https://www.covid-19.govt.nz) and [Ministry of Health](https://www.health.govt.nz) websites are a good source of information including:

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

## Staying home if sick

The vast majority of children and young people with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will not have COVID-19.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include new onset or worsening of one or more of the following:

- Cough
- Fever
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
- Temporary loss of smell

These symptoms are similar to a range of other illnesses, like influenza. Having them doesn't mean a person has COVID-19, but you should remain vigilant.

Shortness of breath can indicate pneumonia, and requires urgent medical attention.

Children with asthma, hayfever, allergies, ear infections or other acute or chronic conditions may have similar symptoms.

Before a child is sent home, they should be feeling unwell and there should always be a conversation with the caregiver to determine whether there is another explanation for their child's symptoms that may mean that they do not pose a risk to others and do not need to go home.

## Cleaning

Regular cleaning of high-touch surfaces is recommended.

There is [general cleaning and disinfection advice](#) on the Ministry of Health website.

## Further information

- Worksafe information for COVID-19 – [WorkSafe website](#)
- Alert Level 1 information – [COVID-19 website](#)
- QR code posters for NZ COVID Tracer app – [Ministry of Health template](#)
- Our [Education.govt.nz](#) has education-specific information
- The [COVID19.govt.nz](#) website and [Ministry of Health](#) website continue to be the best places to find information about COVID-19 relevant to New Zealand
- You can keep in touch with your local District Health Board website and stay informed by updated Ministry of Health information on their website - [Public Health Units – Ministry of Health](#)
- For anyone with COVID-like symptoms, they should contact Healthline (for free) on [0800 358 5453](#) or phone their doctor immediately
- Please contact your regional ministry office if you have any questions – [Local Ministry offices](#)