

Sunday, 12 July 2020

RETURN TO FLEXIBLE AND REMOTE LEARNING

Most students in Victorian schools in areas under Stage 3 'Stay at Home' restrictions will return to flexible and remote learning for the start of Term 3, limiting the number of people moving across our state to help slow the spread of coronavirus.

On the advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer, students in Prep to Year 10 at government schools in metropolitan Melbourne and the Mitchell Shire will learn from home from Monday 20 July until at least 19 August, following five pupil free days already scheduled for the coming week.

Onsite supervision will be available for students when they are not able to be supervised at home and no other arrangements can be made – including children whose parents cannot work from home, vulnerable children and children with a disability.

These arrangements will significantly reduce the movement of more than 700,000 students, as well as their parents and guardians, across metropolitan Melbourne and the Mitchell Shire to help slow the spread of the virus.

Recognising the need to minimise disruption to Year 11 and 12, these students in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire will return to face-to-face learning from Monday 13 July, as will Year 10 students attending schools for VCE or VCAL classes.

We also understand that remote learning can be an even greater challenge for parents of kids with special needs so all government specialist schools will also resume face to face learning on Monday, 13 July.

All students in regional and rural Victoria, except the Mitchell Shire, will return to onsite learning as normal from Monday 13 July.

Schools will continue to provide multiple entry points and staggered drop-off and pick-ups where necessary, to reduce the number of adults around school grounds at any one time. Schools will also continue to implement physical distancing and cleaning measures for the safety of their staff.

The Government has already invested up to \$45 million in enhanced daily cleaning in government schools, which will continue throughout Term 3.

Those teachers not involved in onsite teaching next week will prepare for a return to remote and flexible learning and teaching, and provide a program of care and supervision for those students whose parents and carers cannot work from home and vulnerable students.

To help our kids work through any mental health challenges they face due to the coronavirus pandemic, a range of wellbeing resources for students, parents and teachers will be introduced. The resources include simple wellbeing activities, and video tips developed in partnership with the Melbourne Football Club. Smiling Mind will also produce resources for senior secondary students to support their mental health and wellbeing.

These resources complement the existing mental health and wellbeing support available to all Victorian government school kids. Secondary school students can access counselling via a voice call or video conference through the headspace counselling partnership or via their school-based mental health practitioner.

Early childhood education and care services can continue to operate, in line with advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer and Australian Health Protection Principal Committee.

Eligible not-for-profit sessional kindergarten services in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire will be offered extra funding to enable them to provide free kinder to children during Term 3.

The Victorian Government will offer funding of \$460 for each eligible child enrolled in a funded kindergarten program within metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire.

For all eligible not-for-profit sessional kindergarten services outside of these areas, funding of \$230 per eligible child will be offered.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

“Keeping kids home from school was a vital part of slowing the spread of coronavirus before, and it will be vital to our efforts again.”

“As a father of three school-aged kids I know it won’t be easy for many parents, but we have to slow the spread of coronavirus to protect students, teachers and all Victorians.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

“I know a return to flexible and remote learning will be a challenge for many, but I am sure our principals, teachers, support staff, students and families will once again do us proud.”