



NEWHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Infectious Diseases Policy

Purpose

To help prevent and control the transmission of infectious diseases in schools, and to promote health within the school community.

Schools have a legal responsibility to help manage infectious diseases in their facilities.

Schools also have an important role to play in supporting the prevention and control of transmission of infectious diseases through:

- abiding by legislated requirements for school exclusion, infectious disease notification and immunisation status recording
- supporting the personal hygiene routines of students, for example, provision of hand hygiene facilities
- ensuring procedures are in place to safely manage the handling of spills of blood and other body fluids or substances.

Note: Primary responsibility for the prevention and control of infectious diseases lies with individuals, families and public health authorities. Schools are not expected to provide expert advice or treat students, which is the role of medical practitioners and health authorities as appropriate.

Definitions

Hand hygiene is a general term referring to any action of hand cleansing. It includes hand washing with soap and water and using antimicrobial hand rubs (for example, an alcohol-based hand rub).

Infectious diseases are diseases caused by pathogenic microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi; the diseases can be spread, directly or indirectly, from one person to another.

Respiratory hygiene or **cough etiquette** are terms used to describe infection prevention measures.

Practices include:

- covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing (coughing into the elbow rather than hand)
- using tissues and disposing of them appropriately
- attending to hand hygiene immediately after coughing, sneezing or blowing nose.

Standard precautions are the minimum infection prevention and control practices that must be used at all times for all people in all situations. The use of standard precautions aims to minimise and, where possible, eliminate the risk of transmission of infection.

Prevention of infectious diseases

The following table outlines the strategies and actions that schools are required to take to prevent the transmission of an infectious disease.

Strategy	Action
Support for immunisation programs	Schools have a role in helping health authorities and families prevent and control infectious diseases through the support of immunisation programs and through recording the immunisation status of each student.
Standard precautions	Staff and students should treat all blood and other body fluids or substances as being potentially infectious and practice standard precautions whenever dealing with them. Standard precautions include: hand hygiene, the use of personal protective equipment (for example, gloves and masks) safe handling and disposal of 'sharps', respiratory hygiene.
School education on hand hygiene	Hand hygiene is considered one of the most important infection control measures for reducing the spread of infection. Where appropriate, schools should incorporate the teaching of hand hygiene routines into the curriculum and daily school activities.
Provision of soap	Schools have a responsibility to provide soap and other hand hygiene consumables to support good hand hygiene.
Management of blood and other body fluid/substance exposures	Interaction between people at schools should minimise contact with body fluids and substances, including: blood (wet or dry) other body fluids or substances (other than sweat). Schools should have appropriate personal protective equipment (for example, gloves and masks) available for staff to use when dealing with blood or body fluids/substances. Staff members and students should be familiar with and practice recommended standard precaution practices.
Occupational health and safety	Appropriate personal protective equipment, such as single-use disposable gloves, should be provided for staff to use when dealing with blood or other body fluids or substances. Schools should encourage staff to be appropriately vaccinated against preventable infectious diseases as per the Australian Immunisation Handbook recommendations for persons who work with children.

Control of transmission of infectious disease

The following table outlines the strategies and actions that schools are required to take to control transmission of infection when a case/s is identified.

Strategy	Action
Send unwell children home as soon as possible.	Ensure that unwell children do not attend school. Isolate children who become unwell during the day and send the unwell child home as soon as possible.
Notification of infectious diseases	<p>Primary schools are required to notify the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) immediately if a child is suspected of having pertussis (whooping cough), measles, mumps, rubella, meningococcal disease or polio, even if you believe a doctor has already done so.</p> <p>Notification is through Communicable Disease Prevention and Control; telephone: 1300 651 160 (24 hours).</p>
The role of the school, when a child is unwell is outlined on the DHHS website	<p>Schools should also inform this Department of notifiable cases of infectious disease using the IRIS incident alert and include confirmation that DHHS has been notified.</p> <p>Notification of other diseases is not required, however schools can contact the above phone number for further assistance or advice.</p>
<p>Exclusion of a child with an infectious disease: (primary school students)</p> <p>Children with certain infectious diseases, and children who have been in contact with certain infectious diseases, are required to be excluded from school for a specified period. The DHHS School exclusion table identifies which infectious diseases require exclusion and for what period</p>	<p>Principals of primary students must be aware of the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009 exclusion requirements and must not allow a child to attend school if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they have been informed that the child is infected with an infectious disease that requires exclusion as described in the School exclusion table • they have been informed that a child has been in contact with a person with an infectious disease as described in the School exclusion table • during an outbreak, DHHS directs children not immunised by a vaccine preventable disease to be excluded until advised attendance can be resumed.
General responses to influenza, gastroenteritis and other common infections in your school	<p>Schools should consider the following important points when responding to students affected by common infections:</p> <p>Students with cold or flu-like symptoms or vomiting or diarrhoea should be encouraged to seek medical attention, limit contact with others and stay at home until symptoms have passed.</p> <p>If a child becomes ill at school with these symptoms, schools should contact the family and arrange for the collection of the child.</p> <p>Good general hygiene remains the best defence against infection and schools should encourage children to regularly wash their hands and cover their nose and mouth if sneezing and coughing.</p>

	Cases of influenza at your school do not need to be reported to DHHS. However, if further advice is needed, see contact details in Notification of infectious diseases to DHHS (above).
Influenza Pandemic Response	
School community communication and additional advice	<p>When contacting the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regarding a notifiable infectious disease, advice will be provided to be communicated to the school community.</p> <p>In other more general cases, the school should still give consideration as to what should be communicated to the school community.</p> <p>It should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain student confidentiality • be fact based • be written in a way not to cause alarm • inform parents and guardians that a school community member/s has been diagnosed with an infectious disease • name the condition • suggest that they seek medical advice regarding their child’s health if they have concerns. • In those instances when a school may require additional advice, see contact details in Notification of infectious diseases to DHHS

Related Policy

[Health Care Needs](#)

[Personal Hygiene Policy](#)

[Blood Spills and Open Wounds Management Policy](#)

[Head Lice Policy](#)

REVISION HISTORY

For Noting – Does not require School Council Approval

Name Policy					
Version	Date Created	Consultation	Revisions Made	Approval by	Next Policy Review
1	October 2019	28 th October 2019	Developed in line with DET Guidelines	Simone Wood	October 2023
2	November 2023	Tabled at November 2023 School Council	Included links to Personal Hygiene Policy, Blood Spills and Open Wound Management Policy, Head Lice Policy	Simone Wood (Principal)	November 2024

*This policy is written in consultation with DET Guidelines.