



What you need to know about our return to school in Term 4

We're excited about our return to face-to-face learning and welcoming students and staff back onsite where we know the best learning happens.

We know that while there will be excitement, there will also be some anxiety and uncertainty about being back together at school. Recent evidence shows that very little COVID transmission happens between children in school settings, and only a very small number of children who contract COVID-19 get seriously ill. However, to support school safety, we are requiring all staff on site to be fully vaccinated. In addition, we have worked with NSW Health and the DoE on our COVID-safe return to on-site schooling and have developed effective practices to support this, including staff vaccinations, mask wearing, reduced mingling of staff and student groups, good ventilation in classrooms and continued good hygiene and enhanced cleaning. We are confident that this, in combination with support from our school community, will minimise risk and help to keep schools open and students learning face-to-face next to their peers.



Key dates for our staged return

While we know there is excitement about the return to school it's important that we stick to the staged return to give us time to be ready to welcome back students onsite. Students will return to face-to-face learning in the following order -

- from 18 October –Kindergarten and Year 1 students
- from 25 October – all remaining year groups.

Online learning will cease for all students, as of their scheduled return to school date. Students who are unable to attend due to immunocompromised medical reasons will be supported on a case-by-case basis and, pending health advice, supported to work from home.



Our school's COVID-safe operations

Our COVID-safe return to school plan is NSW Health approved and includes numerous effective practices to support the health and wellbeing of our students and staff. These practices include vaccinations, mask wearing, reduced mingling of student groups and staff, ventilation in classrooms and continued good hygiene and cleaning.



Keeping student groups together

As we return to school students will be kept in their cohorts to minimise opportunities for transmission of COVID-19 and to enable effective contact tracing and containment. This means minimising interaction between students on school grounds and keeping cohorts together where possible.

School-based implementation of NSW Department of Education planning processes and toolkits acknowledges the difficulties associated with cohorting guidelines in small school spaces with a small teaching staff. Whilst it is not practical to implement staggered lunch or recess breaks at PBPS, students will be encouraged and supported to minimise interaction during play times. Students will remain with their class for all learning experiences when indoors. Shared learning spaces, such as the library, will be utilised by one class at a time. Outdoor learning spaces will be utilised, when practical. A staggered parent pick-up in the afternoons will be utilised from October 25 to ensure that there is minimal student interaction and safe distancing expectations in place for parents who are waiting to pick up children from school.



Mask wearing for students and staff

Masks are required to be worn on school site by staff indoors and outdoors and are recommended for students indoors and outdoors, unless exercising or eating. The school provides masks for all staff and visitors on site, if required, and has a large supply of child-sized masks which can be used by students, if they so choose. Students aged 12 and over must wear masks. Students will be encouraged to bring their own or can access school supplies. Younger students will not be instructed to wear masks and individual preferences will be respected. Staff will wear a mask, at all times, although the DoE acknowledges that, at times, a teacher's mask will need to be adjusted in order to be effectively heard and understood when talking to children, particularly for younger students. At all times, staff will work to maintain appropriate safe physical distancing, should a mask be lowered whilst speaking, where practical and reasonable.



Vaccinations

All staff required on site supporting the return to school will need to be fully vaccinated from 18 October. Then from 8 November all staff, contractors, volunteers and students on student placement on a school site will need to be fully vaccinated, including Outside of School Hours Care staff.



Ventilation

Having open or well-ventilated spaces reduces the risk of transmission of COVID-19 because infectious particles are more quickly diffused in the open air. The department will continue to work with NSW Health to provide us with advice and guidance on maintaining good ventilation in our school and we will make use of our outdoor spaces wherever practical.

All classroom spaces at PBPS have windows which can be opened to allow maximum airflow in classrooms, when practical and weather-dependent.



School activities

During Term 4 many school-based activities will remain on hold until NSW Health advise otherwise. This includes large celebrations like assemblies, presentation days and graduations, arts and sports events. It is possible that all PBPS end-of-year celebrations may need to be approached as a virtual celebration: contingency planning will be put in place, as necessary, should this be the case.



Covid Communication

Parents and students will be notified if a decision is made to close the school due to a confirmed case of COVID-19. During this time we will continue to provide learning from home activities and we will let you know when we can return to face-to-face learning.

At Pretty Beach Public School we have multiple channels to communicate with parents including Skoolbag, email, Seesaw and Facebook. As the school's Facebook page is managed by the Department of Education, alerts and notifications can be pushed out quickly by the department on behalf of the school. If you have not yet joined or followed our school Facebook page, [please use this link](#) to visit our school page. It is essential that all parent contact details are up-to-date. Please call the school to update your details, including mobile phone numbers or email addresses. We encourage all parents to download the School Safety App as a means of staying up to date and accessing support and additional information, if required.



Preschool and out of school hours care

Out of school hours care, vacation care settings and preschools operating on school sites will follow the same COVID-safe guidelines as public schools including the requirement to be fully vaccinated from 8 November.

It is mandatory that all parents use the provided QD code when dropping off and picking up their children from Out Of School Hours childcare (OOSCH).



Orientation and transition to school

Onsite orientations and transition programs are not currently allowed in person on school sites until we are advised differently by NSW Health. We'll share more information in the coming weeks about our school's virtual orientation and transition program.

It is likely that transition events will be largely managed in a virtual environment.