



# Infectious Diseases Policy

## **RATIONALE:**

St James Primary School acknowledge that the responsibility for the prevention and control of infectious diseases rests predominately with parents, carers and public health authorities. It must also be recognised that schools play an important role.

Schools can support the prevention and control of transmission of infectious diseases by:

- » Supporting immunisation programs.
- » Providing prompt and consistent response to detected or suspected cases of disease.

We acknowledge that we are required to request and record the immunisation status of each child (i.e. primary students prior to enrolment and must follow exclusion requirements) as required.

St James Primary School is not permitted to allow any child to attend the school in accordance with the [Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019](#) (the Regulations), if they have been informed the child is infected with, or been in contact with a person with an infectious disease/condition listed in the Regulations; where that condition requires exclusion. [Victorian Department of Health and Human Services School Exclusion Table](#).

We have a legal responsibility to help manage infectious diseases in their facilities and have an important role to play in supporting prevention and control of disease transmission. We cannot be expected to give expert advice or treat students beyond first aid, which is the role of medical practitioners and health authorities as appropriate.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the school's Infectious Diseases Policy is to:

- » Prevent and control the transmission of infectious diseases in the school;
- » Ensure the school is informed about the immunisation responsibilities and exclusion processes during an infectious disease outbreak.
- » Ensure the school complies with CECV and DEET guidelines in accordance with [Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008](#) and the Regulations.

## **Definitions:**

**Exclusion:** The period of time that a student is required not to attend school as the result of being infected or having been in contact with any person with an infectious disease.



Hand Hygiene: 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).

Immunisation: The process where a person is made immune or resistant to an infectious disease, typically by the administration of a vaccine.

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
- » 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.

Vaccine: is a biological preparation that provides active acquired immunity to a particular infectious disease.

Vaccination: is the administration of a vaccine to help the immune system develop protection from a disease.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

### **• Prevention of Infectious Diseases:**

St James Primary School plays an important role in supporting health authorities and families prevent and control infectious diseases through:

- » The support of immunisation programs and through recording the immunisation status of each student.
- » Supporting the prevention and control of transmission of infectious diseases by providing a prompt and consistent response to detected or suspected cases of disease in accordance with the legislative requirements.
- » 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.
- » Staff members 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);
  - Safe handling and disposal of 'sharps', for more information refer to the school's *Blood Spills Policy*
  - Respiratory hygiene.
- » Promoting hand hygiene practices as a control measures for reducing the spread of infection. Where appropriate, the school will display hand hygiene posters and incorporate the teaching of hand hygiene routines into the curriculum and daily school activities.
- » The provision of hand soap and other hand hygiene consumables to support good hand hygiene.
- » The provision of appropriate personal protective equipment (for example, single use 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.

- **Control of The Transmission of Infectious Disease/s:**

St James Primary School will act and respond immediately to control the transmission of infection when a case/s is identified by ensuring the following:

- » Promote that unwell children do not attend your school. Isolate children who become unwell during the day and send the unwell child home as soon as possible.
- » When a school is made aware of student illness that is a medically confirmed case(s) of Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Meningococcal, Polio, or novel Coronavirus, this will be reported to the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) as well as the Department of Health Human Services (DHHS) to monitor disease outbreak at a school level and to provide further guidance where and when necessary.
- » Where the school has questions or concerns about a child with an infectious disease, they will make contact with:
  - Department of Health and Human Services Communicable Disease Prevention and Control telephone: 1300 651 160 (24 hours)  
[infectious.diseases@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:infectious.diseases@dhhs.vic.gov.au) (regularly monitored).
- » As outlined in the [Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019](#) St James Primary School will not permit a child to attend school if:
  - They have been informed that the child is infected with an infectious disease, confirmed by a medical practitioner, that requires exclusion as described in the DHHS 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, where the Chief Health Officer directs a primary school to exclude a child based on material risk of a child contracting a vaccine-preventable disease (i.e. a child who is not immunised to be excluded until advised attendance can be resumed).

Refer to the [DEET Minimum Period for Exclusion - Infectious Diseases](#)

- » St James Primary School will consider the following important points when responding to students affected by common infections:
  - 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.
  - If a child becomes ill at school with these symptoms, schools should contact the family and arrange for the collection of the child.
  - 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.
- » Influenza Pandemic Response
  - An outline of key actions the school will take against different stages of an influenza pandemic can be found in the Human Influenza Pandemic Incident Response Procedures - [Pandemic Influenza Incident Response Plan](#).
  - St James would also refer to DHHS advice regarding pandemic influenza.
  - We ask parents to promptly inform us if any member of their immediate family has been medically diagnosed with an infectious disease.

- **School Community Communication and Additional Advice:**

It is not generally necessary for the school to communicate with the broader school community about an infectious disease, unless there is an outbreak or the school has been directed to pursue specific action by health authorities. Doing so can cause unnecessary anxiety in the school community.

For advice on alerting parents, or displaying signage, in relation to case(s) of a notifiable infectious disease the school will take advice from the Department of Health Human Services (DHHS) Communicable Disease Prevention and Control telephone: 1300 651 160 (24 hours).



In more general cases, where communication has been deemed necessary, the school will give consideration as to what should be communicated to the school community.

When doing so the school will ensure that:

- » It maintains student confidentiality;
- » Is fact based;
- » Is written in a way not to cause alarm;
- » It inform parents and guardians that a school community member/s has been diagnosed with an infectious disease;
- » It names the condition
- » It suggests that they seek medical advice regarding their child's health if they have concerns.

### **Evaluation:**

This policy was created in 2020 by the staff and ratified by the Education Board.

### **References:**

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) – Infection Control

Victorian Department of Education & Training – Infectious Diseases Policy 2019

Victorian Department of Education & Training - Minimum Period for Exclusion - Infectious Diseases 2019

Victorian Government - Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

Victorian Government - Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019