

Infectious Diseases Policy

Muhammadiyah Australia College



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Table of Content

Purpose	3
Summary	3
Details	4
Prevention of infectious diseases	4
Support for immunisation programs	4
Standard precautions	4
Education on hand hygiene and provision of soap	4
Management of blood and other body fluid or substance exposures	5
Occupational health and safety	5
Control of transmission of infectious disease	5
Send unwell children home as soon as possible	5
Notification of an infectious disease to DET via the Incident Support and Operations Centre	5
Seeking expert advice	6
Exclusion of a child with an infectious disease — Primary school students	6
General responses to influenza, gastroenteritis and other common infections	6
Influenza pandemic response	7
	7
Community communication and additional advice	7
Definitions	7
Communication	8
Related policies	8
Relevant legislation	8

Purpose

This policy outlines the strategies and actions Muhammadiyah Australia College is required to take to prevent the transmission of an infectious disease or control transmission of an infectious disease when a case/s is identified.

Summary

- Primary responsibility for the prevention and control of infectious diseases lies with individuals, families and public health authorities.
- Muhammadiyah Australia College is not expected to provide expert advice or treat students, which is the role of medical practitioners and health authorities.
- When Muhammadiyah Australia College is made aware of student illness that is a medically confirmed case(s) of pertussis, measles, mumps, rubella, meningococcal disease polio, or COVID-19, this should be reported to the Incident Support and Operations Centre. This is to assist DET (with DHHS) to monitor disease outbreak at a school level and to provide further guidance where required.
- In order to reduce regulatory burden for primary schools and children's services and to avoid multiple processing of notifications about the same case, changes made in 2019 to the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations (the Regulations) mean primary schools and children's services are no longer required to notify the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) if a child at their school has a confirmed infectious disease. This notification will come from medical practitioners and pathology providers, who have a duty to notify DHHS if there is a confirmed diagnosis of an infectious disease.
- The College Principal must not allow a child to attend the College in accordance with 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. Diseases and exclusion periods are listed in the DHHS school exclusion table. These diseases include ringworm, chicken pox, conjunctivitis, hand, foot and mouth disease, impetigo (school sores), diarrhoeal illness, influenza and many others.
- As of December 2019, changes to the Regulations mean failure of a person in charge of a primary school to exclude a child with, or exposed to, a specified infectious disease from a primary school, in accordance with the Regulations, may result in an infringement penalty. An existing court penalty also remains.
- Muhammadiyah Australia College has a legal responsibility to help manage infectious diseases in our facilities and has an important role to play in supporting prevention and control of disease transmission.

Details

Muhammadiyah Australia College has a legal responsibility to help manage infectious diseases in the College facilities. The College also has an important role to play in supporting the prevention and control of transmission of infectious diseases through:

- abiding by legislated requirements for school exclusion 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.

Prevention of infectious diseases

Muhammadiyah Australia College is committed to take the following strategies and actions to prevent the transmission of an infectious disease.

Support for immunisation programs

The College supports health authorities and families to prevent and control infectious diseases through the support of immunisation programs and through recording the immunisation status of each student. For more information, refer to the Department's Immunisation Policy.

Standard precautions

Staff and students must 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, for more information, refer to the Personal Hygiene Policy
- the use of personal protective equipment (for example, gloves and masks)
- safe handling and disposal of 'sharps', for more information, refer to the Syringe Disposals and Injuries Policy
- respiratory hygiene (i.e. 'cover your cough' and disposing of tissues in a bin).

Education on hand hygiene and provision of soap

Hand hygiene is considered one of the most important infection control measures for reducing the spread of infection.

The College refers to the Department's Personal Hygiene policy for information on educating students about hand hygiene and the provision of soap.

Management of blood and other body fluid or substance exposures

The College has 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, must be provided for staff to use when dealing with blood or other body fluids or substances.

The College encourages staff to be appropriately vaccinated against preventable infectious diseases as per the Australian Immunisation Handbook recommendations for people working with children.

Control of transmission of infectious disease

The following outlines the strategies and actions that Muhammadiyah Australia College is required to take to control transmission of infection when a case/s is identified:

Send unwell children home as soon as possible

Ensure that unwell children do not attend the College. Isolate children who become unwell during the day and send the unwell child home as soon as possible.

Notification of an infectious disease to DET via the Incident Support and Operations Centre

When the College is made aware of student illness that is a medically confirmed case(s) of:

- pertussis,
- measles,
- mumps,
- rubella,
- meningococcal disease polio, or
- COVID-19,

this should be reported to the Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC). This is to assist DET (with DHHS) to monitor disease outbreak at a school level and to provide further guidance where required. For more information on how to report an incident via ISOC, refer to Reporting and Managing School Incidents (including emergencies).

Seeking expert advice

If the College has questions or concerns about a child with an infectious disease, contact:

Department of Health and Human Services Communicable Disease Prevention and Control
telephone: 1300 651 160 (24 hours) infectious.diseases@dhhs.vic.gov.au (regularly monitored).

Exclusion of a child with an infectious disease — Primary school students

Children with certain infectious diseases, and children who have been in contact with certain infectious diseases, are required to be excluded from the College for a specified period. The DHHS School exclusion table identifies which infectious diseases require exclusion and for what period.

As set out in the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019, Principals of primary school-aged students must not allow 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, 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).

General responses to influenza, gastroenteritis and other common infections

The College considers the following 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 the College with these symptoms, the College will contact the family and arrange for the collection of the child

- good general hygiene remains the best defence against infection and the College encourages children to regularly wash their hands and cover their nose and mouth if sneezing and coughing.

Influenza pandemic response

An outline of key school actions against different stages of an influenza pandemic can be found in the Human Influenza Pandemic Incident Response Procedures (Pandemic Influenza Incident Response Plan). Muhammadiyah Australia College also refers to DHHS advice regarding Pandemic influenza.

Community communication and additional advice

It is not generally necessary to communicate with the broader College community about an infectious disease, unless there is an outbreak or the College has been directed to pursue specific action by health authorities. Doing so can cause unnecessary anxiety in the community. In more general cases, where communication has been deemed necessary, the College will give consideration as to what should be communicated to the College community. It should:

- maintain student confidentiality
- be fact based
- be written in a way not to cause alarm
- inform parents and guardians that a College 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.

Definitions

Hand hygiene

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). For more detailed information about hand hygiene, see: Personal Hygiene in Related policies

Infectious diseases

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

These 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

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.

Communication

This policy will be communicated to our College community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our College's website
- Made available in hard copy from the College Admin office upon request

Related policies

- Student Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Medical Records and Medication Administration Policy
- Emergency Management Plan
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Duty of Care Policy

Relevant legislation

- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)
- Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 (Vic)