

School Excursions to the Australian Capital Territory COVID-19 Protocols Accommodation Checklist

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Background to the School Excursion Protocols

Following advice from the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Chief Health Officer on how schools should operate in 2021, the National Capital Educational Tourism Project (NCETP) commissioned advice from [Aspen Medical](#) on how schools can travel safely to Canberra.

The NCETP has published [\[School Excursion COVID-19 Protocols\]](#) addressing school excursions (from departure to return, including travel, accommodation, and visits to attractions), in line with ACT COVID-19 regulations.

The NCETP has developed [\[Checklists\]](#) to aid different industry sectors to follow the COVID-19 Protocols, however one of the key aspects all industry sectors should be apprised of is the importance of cohorts.

School Children as a Cohort

Maintaining separate cohorts during travel and excursion activities mitigates the risk of COVID-19 transmission into the broader community.

A cohort is defined as a group of people with shared characteristics (e.g. a school class, a year level) that has been established within a school environment.

A cohort should move as 1 unit while maintaining physical separation and distance from other cohort groups or members of the public.

Movement of a cohort during an excursion could, for instance, take the form of:

1. 2 x classes (~ 50 children) plus adults who already share a common space within the school environment.
2. They are transported as 1 cohort by bus to a community venue where they are not required to maintain 1.5 metre physical distancing within their established cohort, but are required to practice physical distancing from other cohort groups (e.g. another school group) and members of the public.
3. During this time, a high level of personal hygiene, including hand hygiene and cough etiquette, should be maintained.
4. Precautionary measures such as designated toilets and eating areas should be considered to ensure this cohort does not mix with other similar cohort groups at a venue.
5. The return journey should consist of the original cohort of children and adults on board the same bus with the same driver used to transport the group to the venue.

Hygiene Practice

1. School children do not need to follow strict adult physical distancing guidelines, but should follow good hygiene practices including:
 - Regularly washing hands and using hand sanitiser.
 - Not sharing drinks or food.
 - Coughing or sneezing into the crook of an elbow, or a tissue which is immediately discarded.
 - Monitoring of symptoms and isolating children with fever, cough, sore throat, or lethargy.

Accommodation Checklist

Shared Accommodation

Accommodation providers must have a COVID-19 Safety Plan specific to their operations.

1. Shared Accommodation – Health & Wellbeing

- 1.1. Ensure staff and customers who are unwell are excluded from the premises.
- 1.2. Ensure staff complete a health screen before each shift.
- 1.3. Ensure customers/guests complete a daily health screen.
- 1.4. Provide staff with information and training on COVID-19, including advice related to when to get tested, physical distancing and cleaning.
- 1.5. Encourage each adult within a bus cohort not to share a room with anyone else.¹
- 1.6. Where possible, for each bus cohort, use separate doors for:
 - 1.6.1. entry and exit
 - 1.6.2. check-in
 - 1.6.3. baggage storing points.
- 1.7. Reduce crowding wherever possible.
- 1.8. Promote physical distancing with markers on the floor in areas where people are asked to queue (e.g. reception and hand hygiene stations).
- 1.9. Where reasonably practical ensure all venue staff always maintain 1.5 metres physical distancing (including at meal breaks) and assign workers to specific workstations.
- 1.10. Review regular deliveries and request contactless delivery and invoicing where practical.
- 1.11. Manage group activities in common areas (e.g. movie rooms, games rooms) to ensure appropriate physical distancing.

2. Shared Accommodation – Physical Distancing

- 2.1. Ensure bus cohorts are physically distanced from each other at all times.²
- 2.2. Encourage teachers and drivers to physically distance from each other and from students – students within a bus cohort do not need to physically distance from each other.
- 2.3. Do not allow the use of recreational areas such as play equipment.

¹ A bus cohort is considered to be the travel group for each individual bus trip, including bus driver, teachers and students.

3. Shared Accommodation – Hygiene & Environmental Cleaning

- 3.1. Adopt good hand hygiene and cough etiquette practices.
- 3.2. Ensure hand hygiene facilities are available to customers and staff.
- 3.3. Ensure bathrooms are well stocked with hand soap and paper towels and contain posters with instructions on how to wash hands.
- 3.4. Make hand sanitiser available at key points and encourage frequent use.
- 3.5. Consider strategies to reduce the number of surfaces touched by customers.
- 3.6. Clean public areas frequented by staff or customers at least daily with detergent/disinfectant.
- 3.7. Clean frequently touched areas and surfaces several times per day with a detergent/disinfectant solution or wipe.
- 3.8. Maintain disinfectant solutions at an appropriate strength.
- 3.9. Use disinfectant solutions in accordance with manufacturer instructions.
- 3.10. Ensure staff wear gloves and face mask when cleaning.
- 3.11. Ensure staff wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after cleaning.
- 3.12. Engage a professional cleaning service with expertise in Environmental Cleaning & Disinfection to decontaminate all relevant areas if a potential COVID-19 case is identified.

Food Services & Dining Rooms

4. Food Services & Dining Rooms – Health & Wellbeing

- 4.1. Exclude from the premises staff and customers who are unwell.
- 4.2. Ensure staff complete a health screen before each shift.
- 4.3. Ensure customers/guests complete a daily health screen.
- 4.4. Provide staff with information and training on COVID-19, including advice related to when to get tested, physical distancing and cleaning.
- 4.5. Make staff aware of their leave entitlements if they are sick or are required to self-isolate.
- 4.6. Assign 1 staff member as a COVID-19 Safe Hygiene Marshall, who will utilise distinctive clothing (e.g. a high vis shirt or badge) and be responsible for ensuring all aspects of the COVID-19 Safety Plan are being adhered to, including overseeing physical distancing and cleaning, and ensuring the accuracy of recordkeeping.

5. Food Services & Dining Rooms – Physical Distancing

- 5.1. Each bus cohort is to be physically distanced others within a dining room.
- 5.2. Encourage teachers and drivers to physically distance from each other and from students – students within a bus cohort do not need to physically distance from each other.
- 5.3. Ensure no contact or mingling between bus cohort groups and groups at other tables.
- 5.4. Move or remove tables and seating to support 1.5 metres of physical distance between cohorts.
- 5.5. Reduce crowding and promote physical distancing with markers on the floor where people are asked to queue, (e.g. at entrances to dining rooms and at food service and beverage stations).
- 5.6. Where possible, ensure venue staff maintain 1.5 metre physical distancing (including at meal breaks and in office or meeting rooms).
- 5.7. Assign workers to specific workstations.
- 5.8. If a premises has multiple food and drink areas staff should work in an assigned area and not work across different areas.
- 5.9. Stagger start times and breaks for staff members, where practical.
- 5.10. Consider physical barriers such as plexiglass around counters where there are high-volume interactions with customers.
- 5.11. Review regular deliveries and request contactless delivery/invoicing, where practical.

6. Food Services & Dining Rooms – Hygiene & Environmental Cleaning

- 6.1. Adopt good hand hygiene practices and cough etiquette.
- 6.2. Where possible, restrict the use of public access to bathrooms in dining room.
- 6.3. Visitors should use bathrooms in their allocated accommodation.
- 6.4. Reduce the number of surfaces touched by customers, wherever possible.
- 6.5. Do not supply self-serve buffet style food service areas, communal snacks, communal condiments, or self-service options (e.g. beverages or toast).
- 6.6. If condiments are offered they should be single-serve items.
- 6.7. Ensure food is served by staff in a controlled environment if buffet style food service is provided.
- 6.8. Design food service areas to be protected from cross-contamination, including through implementing measures such as sneeze guards.
- 6.9. All meals prepared for offsite activities (e.g. packed lunches) must be provided in single-use packaging for each person (there should be no shared meals or cutlery).
- 6.10. Ensure cutlery and tableware is cleaned with detergent and hot water, or with a commercial grade dishwasher.
- 6.11. Maintain disinfectant solutions at an appropriate strength.
- 6.12. Use disinfectant solutions in accordance with manufacturer instructions.
- 6.13. Ensure staff wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after cleaning.
- 6.14. Clean frequently used indoor hard surface areas at least daily with detergent/disinfectant.
- 6.15. Clean frequently touched areas and surfaces several times per day.
- 6.16. Clean tables, chairs, and any table settings between each bus cohort group.

Management of Suspected & Confirmed Cases on Excursions

1. Schools are encouraged to develop their own management plan for a sick child or positive case, in line with state health department guide.
2. If a Teacher or a child becomes a suspected COVID-19 case during a school excursion, or is experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (fever, cough, sore throat or lethargy) they should be isolated in an appropriate space under the supervision of 1 Teacher.
 - Standard precautions should be adopted when providing care / first aid to a person suspected of having COVID-19.
 - Gloves, masks and, if available, a protective gown or apron should be used, including when dealing with blood or body fluids/substances.
 - Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) used should be double bagged and disposed of.
 - Wash hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitiser before and after providing care / first aid.
3. Teachers should contact the Australian Capital Territory Public Health Unit (ACT PHU) and the National Coronavirus Helpline (1800 020 080 – operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) for advice and comply with all directives given by the ACT PHU, then contact the NCETP.³
4. All children in their cohort should be tested for COVID-19 and remain quarantined at the accommodation where they are staying until results are known.
5. Teachers should not conduct COVID-19 testing themselves.
6. If tests are positive the ACT PHU will advise on quarantine options.
 - Teachers will remain with their cohort and maintain duty of care in contact with parents/guardians/carers.
 - Teachers should create a list of potential close contacts.
 - A Parent/Guardian/Carer will be able to come to Canberra and isolate with their child.
7. All venues visited will be notified, under the direction of the ACT PHU , and with the support of the NCETP.
8. Schools returning home must contact their state health department before travel and heed advice provided to them.
9. If a cohort has travelled by bus it may return home by bus (if the destination can be reached without stopping), and then isolate for 14 days.
10. Coach drivers will be encouraged to wear PPE and must isolate on return.
11. Schools that have used mixed transport must liaise with the ACT PHU to quarantine in Canberra.
12. A deep clean of the cohort's accommodation must occur, under the supervision of the ACT PHU.
13. Where tests are negative a cohort can resume its excursion itinerary.
14. A child with symptoms should remain separate to avoid passing on illnesses, and should be collected by a Parent/Guardian/Carer as soon as possible.

³ AHPPC <https://www.health.gov.au/news/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc-advice-on-reducing-the-potential-risk-of-covid-19-transmission-in-schools>