

School Excursions
to the
Australian Capital Territory

COVID-19 Protocols

Attractions Checklist

Version: 3

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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.

Attractions Checklist

1. COVID-19 Safety Plans

- 1.1. An attraction's COVID-19 Safety Plan should outline how it will:
 - 1.1.1. manage public entry and exit points
 - 1.1.2. ensure movement of visitors in a single direction
 - 1.1.3. ensure physical distancing requirements are met
 - 1.1.4. develop and deploy appropriate signage
 - 1.1.5. maintain hygiene and infection control measures, including the management and cleaning of high-touch surfaces.

2. Physical Distancing & Hygiene Requirements

- 2.1. Monitor hand hygiene and cough etiquette
- 2.2. Monitor physical distancing of children transported as a cohort by bus/coach from other cohort groups (e.g. another school group) and members of the public.
- 2.3. Monitor physical distancing of 1.5 metres between adults (educators /bus drivers / presenters/guides/employees) and children during excursions.
- 2.4. Monitor wearing of face masks If physical distancing measures cannot be guaranteed at all times, as recommended by the CDC and Health Direct Australia.¹

3. Scheduling of Excursions

- 3.1. Where possible stagger session times.
- 3.2. Arrival and dropoff times for different cohorts should be considered, to limit mixing between different cohort groups, including educators and other adults accompanying school excursions.
- 3.3. Carefully control the entry, exit and flow of patrons or visitors to avoid people congregating in large groups outside their cohort – patrons should leave a venue expeditiously and not mingle.
- 3.4. Obtain the details of a primary contact person (an educator travelling with the cohort) from each cohort group for contact tracing purposes.
- 3.5. Consider giving an introductory talk to each school group cohort before they enter a venue, to avoid potential mixing with other groups and the public in communal areas.
- 3.6. Maintain a unidirectional flow through a venue to minimise the risk of a cohort encountering another cohort group.
- 3.7. Increase the frequency of cleaning in high-touch areas and restroom facilities.
- 3.8. Allow additional time between cohort groups for environmental cleaning of an area, recommended by the Australian Government Department of Health.²

¹ Health Direct Australia <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-how-to-avoid-infection-fags>

² Australian Government Department of Health <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-covid-19.pdf>

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>