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Learning Co-operative Infection Control Policy

1. Purpose of this policy

- 1.1 The Learning Co-operative is committed to the care, safety and welfare of staff and students.
- 1.2 The infection control policy sets out the principles and framework, which ensure the school discharges its legal responsibilities and supports the care of staff and students. The policy, together with the policy implementation documents listed in section §10, should be read and understood by staff, parents, and students.

2. Principles

- 2.1 The school and its staff have a duty of care towards its students.
- 2.2 Schools have a legal responsibility to help manage infectious diseases by supporting the prevention and control of disease transmission¹.
- 2.3 The school, as employer, will provide a safe working environment and adequate facilities for the welfare of their employees, so far as is reasonably practicable².

3. Aims of the policy

- 3.1 To prevent and control the transmission of infectious diseases.
- 3.2 To provide the framework within which appropriate procedures for the control of infection are set.

4. Legal and regulatory basis for compliance

- 4.1 Duty of Care
- 4.2 *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*³

¹ <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/health/Pages/infectiousdiseases.aspx>. Accessed 13 April 2020.

² *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*. <https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/04-107aa032%20authorised.pdf> as amended 6 April 2020. Accessed 13 April 2020.

³ <https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/06-24aa078%20authorised.pdf> as amended 6 April 2020. Accessed 13 April 2020.

- 4.3 *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017* (Vic)⁴
- 4.4 *Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001* (Vic)⁵
- 4.5 *Health (Immunisation) Regulations 1999* (Vic)⁶
- 4.6 *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic)⁷
- 4.7 *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017* (Vic)⁸
- 4.8 *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic)⁹
- 4.9 *Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019* (Vic) ('the Regulations')¹⁰
- 4.10 Worksafe Compliance Code – First Aid in the Workplace¹¹

5. Key definitions

- 5.1 Schools have a legal responsibility to help manage infectious diseases in their facilities.
- 5.2 As part of the duty of care owed to students, the school and its staff are required to protect children from harm. However, the primary responsibility for the health of students lies with their parents. The school and its staff are not expected to give expert medical advice or to medically treat students.¹²

⁴ https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/bd55ee44-706d-33f0-9dbf-225fac9a22fe_17-44sra002%20authorised.pdf as amended 20 January 2020. Accessed 13 April 2020.

⁵ https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/31480135-f3c4-3f04-9482-629b822217ee_01-041sr.pdf. Accessed 13 April 2020.

⁶ https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/f1878a49-719e-36b3-9770-399f937196ad_99-044sr.pdf. Accessed 13 April 2020.

⁷ <https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/04-107aa032%20authorised.pdf> as amended 6th April 2020. Accessed 13th April 2020.

⁸ https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/9b708566-9b49-380f-a258-4ab48af1c5bd_17-22sra005%20authorised.pdf as amended 20 August 2019. Accessed 13 April 2020.

⁹ <https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/08-46aa041%20authorised.pdf> as amended 6 April 2020. Accessed 13 April 2020.

¹⁰ <https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/19-135sra004%20authorised.pdf> as amended 28 March 2020. Accessed 13 April 2020.

¹¹ Worksafe Victoria is an important reference point for the Compliance Codes and related Occupational Health and Safety legislation. <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/laws/ohs> Accessed 13 April 2020.

¹² <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/health/pages/infectiousdiseases.aspx> Accessed 13 April 2020

Students: communication, exclusion and reporting

5.3 The Regulations¹³ mandate the following:

- a. Parents of primary and education and care children must inform the school if the child is infected or has come into contact with an excludable condition.
- b. Schools are required to exclude infectious children from primary schools and education and care services; the Regulations include information setting out the minimum periods of exclusion (Schedule 7)¹⁴.
- c. Immunisation status certificates must be retained at primary schools.

Changes to the Regulations¹⁵ mean that schools are no longer required to notify the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS Vic) if a child at the school has an infectious disease.

5.4 The *Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001* (Vic) also set out the following requirement:

The principal must notify parents if they form a reasonable belief that the child:

- a. is suffering from an infectious disease; *or*
- b. has been in contact with someone who is infected with an infectious disease and the child has not been immunised against that disease or the immunisation status of the child is unknown.

5.5 The principal must exclude a primary school child if they have been informed that the child has or has been in contact with someone with an infectious disease on the regulated list. An infringement penalty will apply for a failure to exclude the child.

5.6 The school will communicate clear guidelines to parents in relation to their child(ren)'s attendance at school when they have—or have been in contact with someone with—an infectious disease.

¹³ A helpful immunisation and exclusion fact sheet that also includes the table of excludable conditions can be found at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/factsheets/immunisation-exclusions-schools-children-services> Accessed 13 April 2020.

¹⁴ Note: the list of infectious diseases and the minimum period of exclusion appears in two places with slightly different wording: *Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019* (Vic) (as amended 28th March 2020) Schedule 7 and *Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001* (Vic) Schedule 6. The fact sheet indicates that the 2019 Regulations (and as amended) are the authorised version.

¹⁵ December 2019.

Students: immunisation

- 5.7 Parents of primary school children are required to provide the school with an immunisation certificate. The school must take reasonable steps to obtain the certificate and to ensure that it is up to date¹⁶.
- 5.8 Primary schools must keep a record of the immunisation status for each student enrolled in the school, regardless of whether the child is or is not immunised. The school must keep the record for the period that the student is enrolled in the school¹⁷.
- 5.9 Only an Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register can be accepted as proof of immunisation status on school entry¹⁸.
- 5.10 The school must allow authorised officers to access immunisation status records at any reasonable time.

Occupational Health and Safety

- 5.11 The school should be familiar with Worksafe Victoria's compliance code 'First Aid in the Workplace'. The compliance code is drafted with the first aid needs of employees in mind, but the guidance is also relevant to schools in meeting the first aid needs of students including control of infection guidance. Although non-mandatory, 'evidence of a failure to observe the compliance code may be used as evidence in proceedings for an offence under the OHS Act or Regulations'¹⁹.
- 5.12 The school is required to provide and maintain a working and learning environment that is safe and without risks to health, so far as is reasonably practicable²⁰. These responsibilities²¹ include (but are not limited to):
- a. supporting the personal hygiene of students, for example, hand washing, cough etiquette
 - b. making arrangements for the use, handling, storage or transport of spills of blood and other body fluids or substances

¹⁶ *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic), ss 8 (7) (146).

¹⁷ *Health (Immunisation) Regulations 1999* (Vic).

¹⁸ The national register <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/medicare/australian-immunisation-register>. Schedule 2 of the *Health (Immunisation) Regulations 1999* (Vic) prescribes the Immunisation Status Certificate which is an extract of the Australian Immunisation Register (CIth).

¹⁹ WorkSafe Victoria, Compliance Code: First Aid in the Workplace.

²⁰ *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017* (Vic).

²¹ *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic).

- c. providing information, training and supervision to employees to ensure the workplace is without risks to health
 - d. the requirement for the school to monitor the health of its staff.
- 5.13 Protocols for safe work practices need to be in place to reduce the risk of infection. The procedures and practices may cover:
 - a. exposure to blood and bodily fluids
 - b. needles and syringes
 - c. linen and other disposable items
 - d. protective clothing e.g. gloves, face masks
 - e. cleaning, disinfection, sterilisation and hand washing.
- 5.14 The school will arrange that first aid officers undergo appropriate training to ensure they understand how infections are transmitted in the workplace and know what preventative measures to follow.
- 5.15 The school will have procedures giving guidance in responding to a localised or state-wide outbreak of infectious disease or public health emergency involving transmittable diseases, for example, measles.
- 5.16 The school will consider whether first aid officers need to be offered hepatitis B immunisation if they are likely to have contact with blood or bodily fluids.
- 5.17 Members of staff who have an infectious disease or have been in contact with someone with an infectious disease should seek medical care and take appropriate sick leave. Where the school as employer reasonably believes that a member of staff's state of health may make the employee a danger to staff or students, the school may require the member of staff to take personal leave until certified by a medical practitioner that they are fit to return.
- 5.18 The school should be aware of staff and students in the school who have a compromised immune system e.g. as a result of cancer treatment. The school should take reasonable steps to ensure such members of staff and students are not exposed to contact with someone who is medically infectious.
- 5.19 Some medical conditions for which the student is infectious can carry a stigma and potentially lead to bullying and ostracisation. Schools need to take particular care to support students in such a situation and to do everything they can to protect the student's privacy.

6. Scope

- 6.1 The application of the policy is relevant to school staff and parents.

7. Roles and responsibilities

- 7.1 The governing board is responsible for the approval of the Health and Safety Policy and the First Aid policy, of which this policy is a sub section.
- 7.2 The principal is responsible for ensuring the school and staff fulfil their duty of care to students.
- 7.3 The principal is responsible for ensuring
- a. appropriate procedures are in place to manage infection control
 - b. parents have guidelines to help them make decisions about school attendance.
- 7.4 The principal is responsible for notifying the parents of the student if they believe the student has or has been in contact with a person who has, an infectious disease.
- 7.5 The principal is responsible for excluding a primary student if they believe the student has, or has been in contact with a person who has, an infectious disease.
- 7.6 The principal is responsible for ensuring that the immunisation status of children admitted to the school is known and, for those students who have been immunised, that a copy of the Immunisation History Statement has been retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy.
- 7.7 The principal is responsible for the provision of appropriate training for staff and particularly for first aid staff to ensure infection control.
- 7.8 Parents are responsible for notifying the school if the student has, or has been in contact with a person who has, an infectious disease.
- 7.9 Members of staff are responsible for their own health and for adopting safe work practices.
- 7.10 First aid staff are responsible for adopting safe work practices and for raising the awareness of infection control in the school community.

8. Links to other policies

- 8.1 Duty of Care
- 8.2 Enrolment Agreement

- 8.3 Enrolment Policy
- 8.4 First Aid Policy
- 8.5 Health and Safety Policy
- 8.6 Immunisation Policy
- 8.7 Privacy Policy
- 8.8 Record Management Policy.

9. Communication of the policy

- 9.1 The school will ensure all staff are aware of the need to take precautions to avoid the spread of infection.
- 9.2 The infection control policy and procedures will be communicated to first aid staff.
- 9.3 The school will publish guidelines for parents to follow when deciding attendance at school for a child who has an infectious disease.

10. Policy implementation documents

- 10.1 The documents²² setting out the strategies and actions required to implement this policy are:
 - a. protocols for safe work practices
 - b. first aid procedures for the use, handling, storage or transport of blood or bodily fluids
 - c. procedures for parents to notify the school of infectious diseases
 - d. the list of infectious diseases for which the parent must notify the school and the minimum period of exclusion that the principal must apply to the student
 - e. immunisation records procedures.

²² Each school must develop its own implementation strategies and associated documentation. This list is for guidance only.

Policy review

The governing board will review the Infection Control Policy every two years.

This policy was ratified by the School Board on: **11/10/2021**

This policy will be reviewed every two years as part of the ongoing overall policy review process.

Chairperson’s signature:



(MYRA THEISZ)

Date	Version	Approver	Next Review Date
14/10/2021	1	Name: MYRA THEISZ Position: Chairperson of the School Board Signature: 	October 2023