



Bellingen High School

Principal: Mr Tim Lavery (Relieving)

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Tuesday 19 July, 2022.

Dear parents and carers,

Welcome to the start of Term 3, after hopefully having a safe and enjoyable winter break. I want to give you an overview of how we are continuing to ensure our school remains COVID-safe throughout this term.

As we continue to prioritise student and staff wellbeing while at school, our layered COVID-smart measures will continue for Term 3. These 'baseline measures' are aligned to the NSW Government's general community settings and include:

- staying home and getting tested if unwell, and only attending school when symptom free
- strongly encouraging mask-wearing for all staff and students, particularly in the first 4 weeks of term
- rapid antigen testing for symptomatic students and staff, and close contacts attending school to learn and work
- strongly encouraging COVID-19 vaccinations for students, staff and their families, including a booster shot (when eligible)
- strongly encouraging students, staff and their families to get a flu vaccination
- good hygiene practices
- maximising natural ventilation
- boosted cleaning during the day, with particular attention given to high touch surface areas
- responding to local COVID-19 conditions when necessary, by working with the department's Health, Safety and Staff Wellbeing team.

Continuing these baseline COVID-smart measures allows us to prioritise student and staff wellbeing while giving our learners a consistent and productive learning environment this term.

What's new in Term 3?

As winter continues, our COVID-smart measures have been updated in consultation with NSW Health to provide appropriate protection to our school community.

- The department has updated its policy regarding COVID-19 vaccination for employees following an independent risk assessment of school settings and consultation with unions and relevant stakeholders. While vaccination will no longer be a requirement for our staff from 1 August 2022.

- It is pleasing to see that a recent survey highlighted that more than 99% of the department's active school-based workforce have had at least two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine. We will continue to strongly encourage all our staff to keep up to date with their COVID-19 vaccinations as a way of protecting themselves, students, and our school community.
- Boosted day cleaning. The department has made a slight change to its cleaning process. Cleaning of school sites will now be more concentrated during the day, with an increase in cleaning in school hours, and a subsequent reduction out of hours. Boosted day cleaning will continue to focus on high-touch areas and other hard surfaces, door handles, lockers, light switches and handrails in stairways and movement areas.

What's continuing for Term 3?

- Masks are an effective way of minimising the transmission of respiratory viruses and infections, and protecting our community, especially those who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and flu. We strongly encourage all students and staff wear a mask for the first 4 weeks of Term 3, particularly in indoor settings or when distancing is not possible.
- The latest NSW Health advice also recommends wearing a mask for people who have recovered from COVID-19 and recently completed their 7-day isolation period for an additional 3 days (from days 8 to 10 of mask wearing after receiving a positive COVID-19 result). Additionally, as outlined in the below section on close contacts, mask wearing is mandatory for staff and high school students returning to school as close contacts for 5 school days and strongly recommended for primary school students returning to school as close contacts for 5 school days. Students or staff identified as close contacts who are unable to wear a mask will be supported to learn or work remotely.
- The department will send another round of RATs to our school early this term, which we will provide to you in the form of 1 multipack of 5 RAT kits per student. These RATs can be used as required for symptomatic testing, such as if your child is displaying even mild symptoms
- Students identified as close contacts remain able to attend school providing they are symptom free, notify the school and return a negative COVID-19 test result daily for 5 consecutive school days.
- Additionally, secondary students who close contacts are required to wear a mask for 5 consecutive school days (except when eating/drinking or exercising). Please note that students identified as close contacts are still unable to attend overnight excursions, including camps. Visitors identified as close contacts who are engaging directly with students are required to return a negative COVID-19 test result before attending our school and wear a mask
- We will continue to liaise with NSW Health and the department's Health, Safety and Staff Wellbeing Case Management team to ensure our COVID-smart settings keep up with the latest developments. If local conditions require it, this may mean reintroducing temporary additional COVID-smart measures to act as a 'circuit breaker', including:
 - mandating mask wearing for all staff and students in Year 7 and above (high school settings)

- mandating mask wearing for all staff (primary school settings)
 - postponing or limiting non-essential activities like excursions, indoor assemblies and visitors to the school
 - directing cohorts to learn remotely for short periods of time.
- Finally, it is important to note NSW Health's advice to reduce our risk of not only COVID-19, but other illnesses that may affect our school at this time of year such as the flu and [respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\)](#) both of which can be serious in younger people. We can all protect our loved ones and our community by:
 - staying home and getting tested if unwell or displaying any symptoms
 - keeping up to date with our vaccinations – including the flu vaccine, which is available from your local GP, pharmacy or Aboriginal Medical Service now
 - flu vaccines are free for all children aged 6 months to under 5 years, or for a small charge for those aged 5 years and older
 - getting tested immediately for COVID-19 if you become symptomatic and isolating until you receive a negative result and are symptom free
 - practicing good hand hygiene by washing regularly with soap and water
 - taking a RAT before visiting vulnerable loved ones or going to large gatherings and events.

Yours in Education:

Tim Laverty

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Laverty', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Principal (Relieving)