



Dear Year 7 Parents and Carers

As the start of the 2022 school year draws near, I would like to wish you and your family a very happy new year. I hope that the Christmas break has provided you with an opportunity to relax and spend some quality time with your loved ones. For those families that are new to the College, I wish you a warm welcome to the St Edward's Community. For those parents with sons already at the College, I welcome you back and thank you for your ongoing support.

The first day of the school term for Year 7 students is Monday January 31. The current NSW Government Health advice indicates that parents are permitted to drop off their son at the entrance gate on Russell Drysdale Street but are **not** permitted to enter the school grounds. We ask that all students enter the College on this first day by the **Russell Drysdale entrance** and **not** the entrance on Frederick Street. The day will begin at 8.30am in the Edmund Rice Centre, where your son will meet his homeroom teacher, his core class teacher and students in Years 11 and 12 who are in his homeroom class. He will be provided with his timetable of classes, his stationery pack and participate in a range of orientation activities to help him settle into secondary school life. We encourage parents to allow their sons to catch the school bus home at the end of this first day. Careful instructions are provided to students throughout the day to ensure that they catch the correct bus home. Parents who choose to pick their son up from school will be required to wait outside the gate on Russell Drysdale Street for their son to be dismissed.

A National Framework for managing COVID-19 in schools has been established which outlines six guiding principles. The first of these principles is that schools are essential and should be the first to open and the last to close, wherever possible, in outbreak situations, with face-to-face learning prioritised. NSW Government Health has established guidelines to be implemented particularly in relation to the highly infectious Omicron variant. It will remain a priority to continue face-to-face teaching, but there will be restrictions on some of the activities that have been planned for the start of the year as well as further protocols adopted to manage any infections.

It has been widely reported that the rates of infection will reach their peak in the first four to five weeks of term. Please feel assured that we have developed a plan based on the NSW Government advice, implementing all the necessary guidelines to mitigate the risk of infection as much as possible and that the safety and well-being of staff and students will guide our decision making and planning. It is critical that, as a community, we ensure that we follow these guidelines to safeguard staff and students. I will ensure that parents are provided with any relevant changes to this advice as it comes to light. I have provided, as an attachment to this letter, a summary of the advice relevant to parents and carers. Please take time to read and familiarise yourself with this information. It is understandable that families will have many questions regarding the protocols established. An online information evening has been scheduled for **Tuesday February 1 commencing at 6.30 pm via Microsoft Teams**, to provide an opportunity to clarify any concerns. To assist in planning for this session parents who have questions are asked to complete a survey by Friday 28<sup>th</sup> January 3pm, which can be accessed [here](#), indicating two questions that they would like covered in this presentation. A link to the Microsoft Teams presentation will be forwarded to families on the morning of the session.

Starting high school can be an exciting but possibly anxious time for both you and your son - please be assured that the staff at St Edward's will do everything possible to ensure that his experiences are very positive. The Pastoral theme for Year 7 is *Belonging* and is based around welcoming young men into the St Edward's community. Throughout the year, students will be provided with a range of rich religious, learning and extra-curricular activities that introduces them to the history of Edmund Rice Schools and the story of the founding Christian Brothers. Students will become familiar with the Touchstones and College Aspiration Statement which underpin the values integral to all Edmund Rice Schools in our region. Most importantly, students will work with their teachers to establish learning goals based on the College Code for Learning. This Code for Learning outlines the expectations of students at St Edward's in relation to their application and effort to their studies. The Code for Learning can be viewed on the College website in the Curriculum and Learning section.

The Information Night scheduled for Year 7 parents and students on Thursday February 17 must unfortunately be postponed to a date later in the term when the current COVID-19 Health restrictions in schools lighten. Further information regarding the evening will be provided in due course. The focus of this evening is to provide you with an opportunity to meet your son's Core class teacher and find



out a great deal more regarding the Curriculum and Learning expectations of students at the College. It is an important night for you and your son, and I look forward to seeing you there. Further details regarding the evening will be distributed closer to this event.

The College has developed a vibrant and engaging Outdoor Education program which involves students in each Year group attending an overnight camp. This camp had been scheduled for week 5 of Term 1. The current COVID-19 restrictions in place will prevent us from conducting this camp at this time and we will look to reschedule this important experience to a date later in the year.

I welcome all Year 7 students to the College and wish them every success in 2022.

Yours sincerely

Mark Bonnici  
College Principal



## 2022 COVID-19 Return to School Plan

NSW Government Health has released guidelines based on the National Framework for Managing COVID-19 in Schools. St Edward's College has developed our return to school plan based on the advice provided by NSW Government Health and Catholic Schools NSW. The plan contains a layered approach to COVID-smart measures to minimise the transmissions at school. I will continue to provide parents with updated information throughout the year as changes occur. Feel assured that we will do all that is required to maximise the health and safety of staff and students, and this will guide our decision making and planning. I do ask that parents read this and any future correspondence and support the College in our attempts to keep everyone safe.

The following information outlines the measures that will be implemented.

### 1. Vaccinations

All St Edward's Staff are fully vaccinated and will be required to have a booster injection by a date yet to be determined. All contractors attending St Edward's will also need to provide evidence of vaccination. St Edward's encourages parents to follow the NSW Health Guidelines in relation to vaccination of young people, however there is no indication that vaccinations will be mandated for students.

### 2. Signs and Symptoms

Any students or staff who display any signs and symptoms of COVID-19 (listed below) are not permitted to attend school. Parents are required to inform the College if their son is away from school with the symptoms outlined below. The College will take a strong stance on sending home any staff member or student who presents with any of the signs and symptoms as per the Government Department of Health website advice:

- fever
- coughing
- sore throat
- shortness of breath

It is important that if parents and carers are in doubt about the infection status of their son that they keep him home from school and undergo a RAHT or PCR test.

### 3. Rapid Antigen Home Tests (RAHT)

RAHT are considered by NSW Health Policy makers to be a critical strategy in minimising infections within a school setting. The College will be provided with an initial supply of Rapid Antigen Home Tests (RAHT) for all staff and students for the first two weeks of term, with a possibility of extending this process. As the name suggests these tests are to be administered by parents and carers in the home and will **not be** administered by staff at the College.

Where it is not mandatory, parents and carers are strongly encouraged to administer these tests twice a week - **Monday and Wednesday** mornings prior to students attending school as a screening tool. This testing is a critical strategy in mitigating against the risk of infections within the College community and we urge parents to follow this protocol.

In the event that a student tests positive to COVID-19, he is required to follow NSW Health requirements under the Public Health Order for testing positive and self-isolation.

Currently, the requirement is:





- Notify the College of a Positive Test result via the following link on the College Website: [Report Positive Test Result](#)
- Record the positive RAHT result through the Service NSW website or Service NSW app.
- Isolate for 7 days following the positive test
- Leave isolation after 7 days unless they have symptoms (including, a sore throat, runny nose, cough, or shortness of breath). Note: if a person continues to have symptoms, they are able to leave isolation after 7 days with a medical clearance.

Once a person who has tested positive to COVID-19 has finished their isolation period they can immediately return to school as long as they are symptom free.

Evidence of a negative RAHT is not required to be forwarded to the College.

Instructions on how to administer the RAHT are provided within the kit detailing how to check the results and dispose of the tests safely. Parents and carers can also download the user guide of the relevant test received through the [Therapeutic Goods Administration](#) website.

#### 4. Distribution of Rapid Antigen Home Test kits (RAHT)

Parents and carers will be required to collect the initial supply (4 tests) of RAHT's from the College. Only vaccinated parents are permitted on site and evidence of vaccination will be a condition of entry to the College for the purpose of collecting the RAHT.

The RAHT's will be available for collection in the Foyer of the Edmund Rice Centre. Parents and carers can **only** access this venue via the College Entrance on Russell Drysdale Street. No parents will be permitted to walk through the College.

Parents and carers must be wearing a mask on entry, register via the College QR Code which will be available at the entrance and show evidence of vaccination.

Parents and Carers are only permitted to collect RAHT's for their son(s). No parents will be able to collect on behalf of other parents.

The dates and times for collection of these tests are as follows: **(These dates and times may need to be amended if we do not receive the RAHT's in time)**

Friday January 28:	9.00am – 3.00pm
Saturday January 29:	9.00am – 12.00pm
Monday January 30:	10.00am- 1.00pm

*Parents of Years 7, 11 and 12 are encouraged to collect on Friday or Saturday so they commence testing on Monday morning*

#### 5. Household Contacts

There have been changes to NSW Health contact tracing processes for close contacts and the introduction of a 'household contact'.

***A household contact is a person who lives with someone who has COVID-19.***

Only household contacts are required by NSW Health to isolate for 7 days. Previously, those that had been with a positive case for 4 or more hours were also considered a close contact – the definition has been updated and this no longer makes someone a close contact (i.e. close contacts are household contacts only). Therefore, students who are household contacts **must isolate**





for seven days. Please notify the College using the normal notification procedures (Phone 4321 6400 or email: [info@stedwards.nsw.edu.au](mailto:info@stedwards.nsw.edu.au)).

Any other individual that has contact with a COVID-19 positive person is not required to isolate but is advised by NSW Health to assess the level of risk of the contact and respond accordingly. **This means any exposure to COVID at school or socially does not result in a person being deemed a close contact.**

## 6. Updating families of School Community Infections

The College will inform families of any positive cases in year groups within the community. This information will be provided with numbers only and no names included to maintain privacy of students and families. Remembering that exposure to COVID at school does not result in a student being considered a close contact. Parents will be encouraged to monitor their son for any signs and symptoms and administer the RAHT provided. If the result is negative and your son is not displaying any signs and symptoms under the exemption guideline your son can return to school. If the result is positive or he displays signs and symptoms you are required to follow the isolation guidelines and notify the College via [this link](#) and NSW Health via Service NSW portals. If at any stage you have concerns about your son being infected while at school and you decide to keep him home, you are required to notify the College using the normal notification procedures (Phone 4321 6400 or email: [info@stedwards.nsw.edu.au](mailto:info@stedwards.nsw.edu.au)).

## 7. Schools Attendance

The following guidelines relate to student attendance in schools.

All students should be either:

- at school
- at home because they are currently unwell
- are isolating as they have either a positive RAHT, PCR or are a household contact.
- at home because they have a medical certificate which states that they are unable to return to school due to an ongoing medical condition (or in limited cases where a family member has an ongoing medical condition).

If parents or carers believe that their son has a condition which means it is not safe for them to return to school, they are required to provide a medical certificate. If a parent chooses to keep their son home from school due to concerns about contracting COVID-19, their son will be recorded as being absent. Lesson information will be available on the portal and students will be required to complete all work set. Please notify the College using the normal notification procedures (Phone 4321 6400 or email: [info@stedwards.nsw.edu.au](mailto:info@stedwards.nsw.edu.au)).

## 8. Masks

All staff and students are required to comply with the Public Health Order (COVID-19 Mandatory Face Coverings) when travelling to and from school by public transport. Staff and students are required to wear a mask while indoors and moving between classes in corridors and verandas. Students are required to bring their own masks each day and it would be beneficial if they could bring a spare mask each day in the event their mask is lost or broken. Masks are not required while outdoors at recess and lunch and during PE practical lessons.

## 9. Lesson Delivery

One mode of delivery of lessons will be adopted. Teachers will be delivering content to students in class each day as per normal. All work will be available on the College portal for any students who are in isolation or in the event that a parent decides to keep their son home from school due to concerns about infection.





We will be endeavouring to ensure that the College continues with face-to-face teaching rather than revert to Home-Based Learning. This may mean that a variety of strategies will be considered if a teacher shortage occurs due to increased infection rates amongst St Edward's staff. Casual teachers have been engaged and at times it may be necessary to combine classes in larger teaching spaces that have been created for this purpose, with a teacher allocated to supervise lesson content which has been set online. As a last resort the College may have to revert to Home-Based Learning for a short period of time due to excessive staff shortages.

#### **10. Cleaning and Hygiene**

The College will continue to implement the hygiene and cleaning protocols in response to COVID-19. Hand sanitising stations are available for students to access all around the school and they are encouraged to use them at the start of the day, at the end of breaks and in the afternoon. We are relying on students being responsible in maintaining this practice. We will continue to employ cleaning personnel to work throughout the day to clean restroom facilities, high touch areas and unused classrooms regularly. Drinking stations have been modified to allow students to refill their own water bottle and all students are encouraged to bring a suitable bottle to refill throughout the day.

#### **11. Cohort Model of Operation**

We will continue to operate using a cohort model, where year groups will be allocated various areas in the school for use during recess and lunch, and the start of recess and lunch will be staggered to prevent congestion at the canteen lines.

#### **12. Whole Schools Events and Excursions**

We will conduct thorough risk assessments on all activities scheduled. Generally, excursions that were organised for the early stages of the year will be rescheduled to a later date or cancelled if this is not possible. All whole school gatherings such as whole school assemblies and College Masses have been cancelled. These guidelines will remain in place until there is a change in the NSW Government Health advice.

#### **13. Friday Afternoon Activities**

Friday afternoon activities will commence in Term 1 in a modified form due to current restrictions and availability of venues. We will be endeavouring to have as many students as possible in Years 7-10 participate in activities on a regular basis.

#### **14. Parents access to the College**

Parents are not permitted on the College Campus to meet with staff. In the event that you need to pick your son up from school due to illness, you will be required to enter via the entrance on Frederick Street, phone reception on 4321 6400 and your son will meet you at your car.

#### **15. Uniform Shop**

[Cowan and Lewis](#) will continue to operate from their warehouse at Unit 3/6 Bowen Crescent West Gosford, for uniform purchases between the hours 9am-5pm.

