



2 February, 2022

Good afternoon Merrimac Families,

Thank you to everyone who has been so supportive as we have transitioned from holidays to supporting essential workers, to online learning for Seniors and now to full on-site learning on the 7 February for all students. Whilst this is an exciting time for us welcoming our students back, there are continuing restrictions in place that we will be adhering to.

As always, I attempt to keep my communication to necessary information and hope that a 'one stop/ one click' letter supports with answering questions and understanding current protocols. If you feel you have missed any communication, it is available on our website.

First Day meeting areas and timetable:

- Yr 7 students will meet at the tennis courts undercover area at back of O Block. Please follow the School Leaders instructions to this meeting area
- Yr 8 & 9 students will access [their timetables online](#) and go straight to class. Please ensure your student has a printed timetable with them or knows where their first class is. Year 8 PNX information will be posted on the wall at the back of the canteen (undercover area at rear of canteen) and Year 9 PNX class information will be posted on noticeboards on the H Block side of Hall
- Yr 10, 11 & 12 students will access [their timetables online](#) and go straight to class. We recommend students have a copy or screen shot of their timetable
- Yr 10 class lists will be placed on the notice board outside the Canteen area
- All new student's Year 8-12 students will go to the hall to begin their orientation after first checking in at Administration. A separate letter will be sent to new families with these details.

UNIFORM:

As we begin the school year it is important to remember our uniform and how we represent ourselves at our school is a priority. As such I remind all families and students of the Uniform Policy and provide an image to support. **Please note that ONLY school hats (as displayed) will be worn by students to, from and whilst at school and in school uniform.** Students who attend with incorrect hats will be required to remove them. Repeated failure to attend to this will be treated as non-compliance and will be dealt with according to the school Code of Conduct. If you would like your student to wear a hat (and we do encourage all students to be sun safe) but are unable to purchase a school one, please [email me](#) to discuss how we can support financial hardship concerns. We are very happy to support families if they need this. Students who are studying sport are required to wear a school hat.



Junior Uniform

Senior Uniform

pride in excellence

Keeping students healthy:

In October 2021, previous Principal, Mr Chris Tobin sent a letter to all families regarding the vaping practices of young people. In that letter he detailed not just health concerns but also the issue of legality and the breach of the school [Code of Conduct](#). I would like to also reiterate this, and thank many members of our community and student body who have informed me of their concerns regarding this. Every student has the right to learn in a healthy and safe environment and those found breaching or flouting our School's Code of Conduct will be dealt with swiftly and with the full force of the governing actions detailed in the policy, available to me as Principal. This will include lengthy suspension and possible exclusion. My expectations are clear for all of our community and students to ensure that we can achieve the great outcomes and experiences our school can offer all young people. Details regarding Vaping are at the end of this letter with links on how to support your young person should they need.

Back to School Plan: [Back to School plan here](#).

As announced by the Premier on Sunday 30 January 2022, the Queensland Government has released the COVID-safe back to school plan.

From Monday 7 February, key features of the plan include:

- The suspension of school camps, excursions, assemblies, and large gatherings (please note that school sport will continue as usual)
- limiting visitors on site, with exceptions for parents and carers of students experiencing vulnerability, students attending early childhood development programs, kindergarten, Prep or Year 1
- staggered drop off times and special drop off zones
- masks supplied and strongly encouraged for students in Years 3 to 6
- mask wearing for all high school students and all staff
- rapid antigen tests (RATs) available in school for students and staff who develop symptoms while on site to take home for testing
- priority access to RATs for students and staff at [Queensland Health testing clinics](#)
- a range of ventilation measures including air purifiers as required

You can access the [Back to School plan here](#), and further information and FAQs on the [Department of Education COVID-19 website](#).

Essential to the success of these measures is that **if your child is unwell or displaying any COVID-19 symptoms, they must not attend school**. I cannot emphasise this message strongly enough – it is critical to keeping our school community safe.

Rapid antigen tests (RATs)

Our school has a supply of RATs which will be provided to any staff or students who, while attending school, develop COVID-19 symptoms. Please note if your child has COVID-19 symptoms while at home they must not attend school.

Your child, if they have COVID-19 symptoms, can visit your local [Queensland health testing clinic](#) and will be given priority access to a free RAT.

Limiting access for visitors

At our school, limitations on parent and visitor access are now in place. Please ensure you are following the staggered access to the uniform store and wear masks when onsite.

For other parents and visitors, there is very limited access to onsite. **We specifically ask that parents of year 7 students ensure their student is aware of where their meeting place is (Courts behind O Block). Staff and student leaders will support year 7s in locating this area.**

Excursions and camps

Excursions and camps scheduled between now and 4 March are cancelled. *This also includes assemblies and events. The Swim Carnival will be postponed to later in the term.*

What if my student is sick?

- To keep our school communities COVID-19 safe, students and staff must not attend school if they are sick or showing [symptoms of COVID-19](#).
- Staff and students should attend their local Queensland Health testing clinic where they will be prioritised to receive a free rapid antigen test (RAT).
- If the test result is negative and the staff member or student is well, they can return to school. If the test is positive, the staff member or student will need to follow Queensland Health [quarantine and isolation requirements](#).

If you become symptomatic at school

- If a student becomes symptomatic at school, they will be immediately isolated in a safe place, and their parents/carer will be contacted to collect their child.
- When the student is collected the parent/carer will receive a **RAT to administer at home**.
- If a staff member becomes symptomatic at school, they will immediately leave the school and be provided with a RAT to administer at home.
- If the test result is negative and the student or staff member is well, they can return to school. If the test is positive, they will need to follow Queensland Health [quarantine and isolation requirements](#).

This plan ensures that staff and students have priority access to RATs at Queensland Health testing clinics.

Face masks

All high school students, including those who are under 12 years of age, need to wear a mask unless they are seated indoors or outdoors or are able to maintain a 1.5 metre distance from others.

Staff (primary and high school) are required to wear masks while standing or moving about indoors, but may remove their mask when seated or if able to maintain a 1.5 metre distance from others while teaching or interacting with students or children.

Masks can be removed when outdoors if 1.5 metres distance can be maintained from others. If your child has an exemption please contact the school so we are aware. You can find out if your child is exempt [here](#).

Please refer to the Queensland Health [mandatory face masks restriction](#) for more information.

This week

For the upcoming week, our school remains open for children of essential workers and vulnerable children, in the same way we were last week. If you need to send your child to school you must ensure your child is well and not displaying any signs of illness.

School staff will supervise any students who attend school.

The following opening hours will apply from 7 February, 2022.

- Administration Office hours – Monday to Friday - 8:00am – 3:30pm
- Finance Payment window hours – Tuesday and Thursday – 8:30am – 2:00pm
- Uniform Shop hours – Tuesday – 8:30am – 12:30pm and Thursday – 8:30am – 2:00pm

As our school transitions to Cashless, we encourage all invoice payments to be made via [BPoint](#) and online ordering for the canteen and uniform shop through [Flexischools](#).

From Monday 31 January, Year 11 and 12 students are commencing remote learning for one week, until the revised formal start of the school year on 7 February. *Merrimac High Seniors have been very responsive to online eLearning. Non-attendees have been contacted as have parents.*

I encourage you to stay informed of the latest developments relating to COVID-19 by regularly visiting the [Queensland Government website](#).

Thank you for your understanding as we continue to work together during this difficult and unprecedented time.

Yours sincerely



Rachel Cutajar
Principal

Vaping

Vaping use is on the rise in Australia. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, e-cigarette use by Australians aged 14 or older more than doubled from 2016 to 2019 and is most common among smokers aged 18–24 at 18.7% (an increase from 6.8% in 2016). ([Lung Foundation Australia](#)).



This increase in popularity has led to many schools seeking advice on how to support students and what advice to give students and parents.

Law

Electronic cigarettes, [whether they contain nicotine or not](#), are smoking products under the [Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998](#) and therefore subject to Queensland smoking laws. They cannot be used in non-smoking indoor and outdoor areas, sold to children under 18 years of age, or advertised, promoted or displayed at retail outlets.

Under the [Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998](#), smoking is [banned](#) at all Queensland state schools and for 5 metres beyond their boundaries. This ban applies at all times during and after school hours, and includes electronic cigarettes.

Vaping and Student Code of Conduct

Every Queensland state school is required to publish a [Student Code of Conduct](#) on the school's website and provide a copy of the document to newly enrolled students and their parents.

It is important that students, parents and school staff are familiar with the Student Code of Conduct, including staff responsibilities to support students to understand and meet behavioural expectations of the school, and guidance on the application, where required, of disciplinary consequences.

The Student Code of Conduct contains information about the [Temporary removal of student property by school staff](#) procedure, including:

- a clear explanation of the items considered inappropriate to bring to school such as e-cigarettes, pod vapes, vape pens, box mods and vaporizers;
 - that state school staff may in certain circumstances remove student property without the consent of parents or students;
 - that student property may be seized by the police.
- For more information please visit <https://education.qld.gov.au/curriculum/stages-of-schooling/alcohol-and-other-drugs>
- [Vaping and Young People for Parents and Carers](#)
 - [Talking about vaping with young people](#)
-