

EOTC and Outdoor Education Under the Protection Framework for the remainder of 2021

What does it mean for EOTC and Outdoor Education?

Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) and Outdoor Education (OE) are hugely valuable components of an authentic rich curriculum. It's great that schools can offer students and staff opportunities to reconnect with each other, have rich learning experiences, and enjoy the benefits of being in nature.

Units of work or programmes that involve time away from school or in the outdoors can continue if managed appropriately.

Your school already has a plan for managing Health and Safety, and in particular, the public health requirements for COVID-19. The guidance below helps highlight how these requirements relate to EOTC and OE.

The key controls for schools and all workplaces are:

- ensure people with COVID-19 symptoms or feel generally unwell stay away from school
- maintain physical distancing (in schools this means children, young people, and staff maintaining a physical distance so that they are not breathing on or touching each other)
- enable good hygiene practices, including mask use where relevant
- keep track of people that enter your school
- ensuring that all school staff, contractors (employed directly by the school), and volunteers comply with the mandatory vaccination requirements.

Please note that while schools (outside of Auckland) are maintaining their current Level 2 setting for the remainder of 2021, if your region is at the Red setting you are encouraged (but not required) to apply the health mitigations in the COVID Protection Framework. For example, the wearing of face coverings for staff and students those in years 4 and above indoors. Large activities with students should not go ahead in Red regions unless held outdoors.

Offsite curriculum-related activities, particularly those using external providers, should align with requirements for the relevant settings in the COVID Protection Framework.

Key considerations for EOTC and OE

Those unwell stay home

- School staff are to observe students before leaving on EOTC events, checking for symptoms, and asking those presenting as unwell to go home. Have a robust plan in place for all those involved if a student reports they are feeling unwell during an event.

Physical Distancing

(Note there will not be a physical distancing requirement at any COVID Protection Framework setting, but at Red, keeping a one metre is recommended between different groups when inside and where practicable, however you may wish to maintain the higher level of requirement below for the rest of this year).

- Students and staff should maintain a physical distance so that they are not breathing on or touching each other. Where practicable 1 metre can be used as a guide. There are situations where physical distancing is not possible, such as some team activities. In these situations, extra emphasis on hand washing and drying (or cleansing with hand sanitiser) before and after activities and regular cleaning of equipment is very important.
- Physical distancing from members of the public should be maintained at 2 metres. Some examples where maintaining physical distance is difficult but must be appropriately managed are:
 - narrow public walking tracks
 - inside venues where members of the public are present
 - exiting a bus in the city
 - entrance ways to public buildings such as libraries and museums
 - mountain biking, when gathering at trail heads or sections of a trail.

Good hygiene practices

- Coughing into their elbow
- Trying to avoid touching their faces
- Hand washing and drying
- Regular cleaning of commonly touched surfaces (e.g., minivan door handle).
- Exercise caution with common touch points (e.g., gates or doors) and wash or sanitise hands after touching these surfaces.
- Ensure these touch points are regularly cleaned or consider if they can be minimised (e.g., door latched open).

Contact Tracing

- Contact tracing registers must be in place that identify which students attend EOTC or OE events, and when and who they have contact with during the day. This includes any changes during the activity.
- The register needs to record any other people the students/staff are in contact with during the event, as well as recording any volunteers involved or any staff working for an external provider (e.g., the librarian or guide at the museum).
- Include transport details in your contact tracing information.

Equipment

- Playgrounds (including in public parks) can be used, with an emphasis on hand washing and drying (or cleansing with hand sanitiser) before and after use.
- Shared supplies and equipment can be used if students and staff are undertaking regular hand washing and staying away if sick. Where practical, equipment should be regularly cleaned.
- You should avoid sharing mouth guards, blindfolds, whistles, hats, any guards or protective covers over the face or nose.
- Where you provide school helmets for activities (such as climbing, mountain biking or kayaking), helmets should not be swapped between students during the activity. Helmets should be treated with a non-contact spray sanitiser (particularly the touch points like the buckles and shell of the helmet) between groups. Students should wash and dry their hands or use hand sanitiser before and after using helmets. SteriGENE is a highly effective non-toxic and non-corrosive disinfectant that can be used on helmets.

- If you provide any school clothing (such as waterproof jackets or thermals) these should only be used by the student they are allocated to during the activity and, washed and dried between activities.
- Equipment such as life jackets, wetsuits and kayak paddles should not be swapped between students during the activity and should be disinfected or dried between groups.
- You should wash and dry your hands or use hand sanitiser before and after using playground equipment or equipment/gear.
- When cleaning the equipment between groups is not practical, e.g., ropes, hand holds on climbing walls, particular emphasis should be placed on washing and drying your hands or using hand sanitiser before and after the activity.
- Changing rooms can be used but encourage spacing in them. Sanitise and wash hands on entry and exit.

Activities

- Activities such as singing, dancing and shouting are considered higher-risk and should be done in well-ventilated areas or outdoors.

Volunteers

- Volunteers can be used to support EOTC or OE activities if they are meeting all the public health requirements and are recorded in your Contact tracing register (make sure you have up to date contact information for them).
- Volunteers on EOTC events must comply with the mandatory vaccination requirements (first dose by 15th November, fully vaccinated by 1st January). Ensure their details are record on the school's Vaccination Register or their My Vaccine Pass is checked before the event.

Transport

- Keep a record of each vehicle used and the students and staff that travelled in it, to enable contact tracing.
- Have hand sanitiser available for each student to use as they board the vehicle.
- Masks are required for students 12 and older on public and school transport (including school vans). Masks are not a requirement in private vehicles but should be considered when volunteers or staff are transporting children that are not their own.

Face coverings

- Consider the use of masks for your event.
- Masks are required (for students 12 and older) when visiting indoor locations that are open to the public while you are there such as libraries, museums, and shops.
- At Red consider the wearing of face coverings for staff and students Uthose in years 4 and above) when indoors.

Along with your usual risk management approach for EOTC or OE activities you will need to consider:

- [Symptoms of COVID-19](#) (which may be like other illnesses in the early stages)
- The importance of protecting those vulnerable to respiratory illness. Do you know who on your staff, in your volunteers and in your student population may be at greater risk?
- Whether, in the event someone was to become ill, you have the facilities to be able to respond, including the ability to isolate that person while you seek advice from a medical professional.

- Whether you have access to appropriate personal protective equipment and the ability to clean hard surfaces if someone were to become ill with infections such as flu, gastro bug, or COVID-19.

Working with External Providers

Work closely with the provider (PCBU) to agree to your health and safety plan for the event.

Together, you should consider and discuss:

- Contract tracing, you must keep an accurate record of attendance, including all the students, staff and volunteers that are present, the provider should record that your school was onsite.
- Symptoms of COVID-19 (which may be like other illnesses in the early stages).
- How to protect those students, staff or volunteers that may be at greater risk to respiratory illness? Include individual plans for those vulnerable to serious illness with COVID-19.
- The management of a situation in the event someone was to become ill. Do you have the facilities to be able to respond, including the ability to isolate that person while you seek advice from a medical professional?
- Do you have appropriate personal protective equipment and the ability to clean hard surfaces if someone were to become ill with flu, gastro bug, or COVID-19?
- Physical distancing requirements (the school takes its physical distancing requirement with it but must maintain 2 metre distancing from members of the public).
- Good hygiene practices (e.g., will they provide hand sanitiser in common spaces?). Soap, water, and the ability to dry hands must be provided in bathrooms.
- Any catering considerations. Clarify with your provider their systems for food handling and deliveries (you will need to be reassured they have processes in place to meet public health requirements and are approved to provide those services). If you or the provider will be preparing food on site you must check the [Ministry of Primary Industries](#) and ensure your school, the provider and any suppliers meet all health and safety requirements before the event.

It is vital that all students and staff understand how crucial it is to:

- Practice physical distancing with people they don't know
- Frequently wash and dry hands
- Cough into their elbow
- Not touch their face
- Notify a staff member at the first sign of feeling unwell
- Adhere to general cleaning processes and cleaning duties following provider protocols
- Adhere to protocols for food preparation, food handling, kitchen dining room/cleaning and dining protocols set by caterers or the provider.

Use Form 6 (EOTC External Provider Agreement form) from the [EOTC Tool Kit](#) to guide and record your discussions with the provider.

External providers and their staff are not covered by the mandatory vaccination requirements for Education unless they are working on the school site. If they are working on the school site they must be vaccinated (first dose by 15th November, fully vaccinated by 1st January).

However, schools and kura are encouraged to check on the vaccination status of External providers as part of your COVID-19 health and safety assessments.

External providers may choose to implement the use of My Vaccine Pass under the COVID Protection Framework. This will affect any students that are eligible for vaccination that don't have a My Vaccine Pass.

You should contact and discuss this with your external providers.

Ideally, where providers are requiring students to have My Vaccine Pass the school would check and record that students have valid vaccine passes as part of the event planning process and then be able to confirm with the provider that all the students have valid passes.

For those of you with a mix of students who are aged over and under 12, you may want to check if the provider will be requiring proof of age as part of that process or whether this can also be part of the event planning done by the school.

Links

Ministry of Education:

[COVID-19](#) Information and advice for students, whānau, and the education sector
[School Bulletin](#)

Good hygiene practices will continue to be a priority at Alert Level 2 as the best way to minimise potential spread of COVID-19. The [COVID-19.govt.nz](#) and [Ministry of Health](#) websites are a good source of information including:

- [Hand washing](#)
- [Cough and sneeze etiquette](#)
- [Cleaning surfaces](#)
- [Wearing face coverings](#)

Department of Conservation: [DOC's response to COVID-19](#)

Sport NZ: [Information for the Sport, Recreation and Play sector](#)

FAQs

Can I take my Outdoor Education class tramping on public conservation (DOC) land?

Note DOC has not yet updated its guidance for the Protection Framework

Yes, at Level 2 you will be able to go hiking, mountain biking, four-wheel driving, and boating. Hunting is also allowed on public conservation land at Alert Level 2. You can also check trap lines if your school is involved in pest control.

It will be vital you travel safely and look after yourself and others when outdoors. This includes:

- ensuring contact tracing
- keeping 2 metre physical distancing from members of the public
- not leaving home if unwell
- hand washing, and
- coughing into your elbow
- consider mask use, including those places where people aged 12 and over are required to wear one.

Students and staff should maintain the same physical distancing with each other as they do at school, so that they are not breathing on or touching each other, where practicable using 1 metre as a guide. If physical distancing is not practical, then the emphasis should be placed on good hygiene practices.

It is important everyone takes responsibility for their own COVID-19 hygiene and cleaning requirements:

- be prepared to undertake additional cleaning when using huts, toilets, and campsites
- you will need to carry your own cleaning and protective equipment to safely use shared facilities (including toilets)
- leave facilities clean and fit for use by others.

If you arrive at a hut that is at capacity, or that you have not booked (if it's a Bookable hut), you will need a tent to ensure the ability to social distance.

Check [DOC's response to COVID-19](#) for the most up to date information and the individual huts and tracks you are planning to use for any DOC alerts before you go.

Should our school permit overnight experiences e.g., multi or overnight camps at managed facilities (i.e., External providers such as Hillary Outdoors), tenting at public conservation land?

Overnight camps offered by external providers can go ahead. You need to work closely with the provider to ensure all the health and safety requirements are agreed upon, including how they are meeting the required public health measures.

Longer and overnight tramping is permitted, although these should still be easy trips within your group's ability and to places you've been before. Tents are allowed. At all huts appropriate physical distancing is required.

DOC have further advice on specific public health measures to take and the availability of their facilities, see [DOC's response to COVID-19](#).

Can we go tenting?

Yes, you can use tents. However, you should consider strategies to reduce the risk of sharing a tent overnight, such as reducing the number of students per tent to allow more space per student (trying to avoid breathing in each other's faces), top and tailing sleeping positions can help. Careful health checking pre camp will also help reduce the risk.

The emphasis should be on good hygiene, including hand washing or sanitising hands and leaving the tent if you need to cough or sneeze (or using your elbow). Tents should be aired out if possible and zippers sanitised between groups. Records should be kept of which tent each student was in.

Is there a maximum number of students that can stay at an external provider's facilities?

Yes, the number will depend on the current setting the provider is working under (Red, Orange, or Green) and whether they are requiring My Vaccine Passes or not.

You will need to discuss this with the provider to ensure the provider can meet their requirement under the Covid Protection Framework.

Is it OK to travel to complete assessments for our senior OE students?

Yes, travel between regions and around New Zealand is allowed at all levels of the Covid Protection Framework. Ensure you are following transport recommendations, including sanitising hands as you get into and out of vehicles and mask wearing. Contact tracing requirements must be met, you need to know who is in each vehicle and avoid students swapping between vehicles.

No one should travel if they are feeling unwell or have been asked to self-isolate by health authorities.

Is there a maximum trip length?

No, there is no recommended length of time for trips, that is a school decision.

Can there be interclass mixing? An example is a student who can't attend one trip but can attend another.

Yes, students can mix between classes for a trip. Contact tracing requirements must be met by ensuring records are kept of all students attending any trip, just as you would normally do.

Are we able to transport students in minivans to conduct EOTC and OE?

Yes, minivans can be used. Ensure you are following transport recommendations, including sanitising hands as you get into and out of vehicles and mask wearing (for students 12 and older). High touch points should be cleaned regularly (e.g., the door handles, and steering wheel if swapping drivers). Seats should be sanitised between groups where possible and vehicles should be well-ventilated.

Can groups of more than 10 travel together in a minivan?

Yes, as long as the legal seating requirements of the vehicle are adhered to.

What are the physical distancing requirements when our class is out of the school grounds?

Physical distancing of 2 metres (under current settings, i.e. for the rest of 2021) should be in place from members of the public (to align with public health measures outside the school grounds). Students and staff should maintain the same physical distancing with each other, as they do at school, so that they are not breathing on or touching each other, where practicable using 1 metre as a guide. If physical distancing is not practical, then the emphasis should be placed on good hygiene practices.

Can the students be in physical contact with each other for activities such as caving?

Yes, in these situations extra emphasis on hand washing and drying (or cleansing with hand sanitiser) before and after activity, along with other good hygiene practices is very important.

Are there specific procedures we should now follow for a potential illness on camp?

You should follow the requirements set by your school for infectious illnesses.

If you are working with an external provider, you will need to agree to these procedures as part of your agreed health and safety plan for the event.

Can I get an external provider to provide activities at school?

Yes, external providers will be able to go on site. You will need to work closely with the provider to ensure all the health and safety requirements are agreed between the school and the provider. Everyone will need to ensure they are recorded as being on site (through the timetable and/or visitor register or Covid Tracer app) and following appropriate hygiene and other health and safety measures required by the school, including that any shared equipment will need to be regularly cleaned. External providers that work onsite are covered by the mandatory vaccination requirements for Education.

How do bunkrooms at external provider work?

Where possible students should be encouraged to keep 1 metre physical distance, the emphasis should be on good hygiene, including hand washing or sanitising hands before entering the bunkroom and leaving the room if you need to cough or sneeze (or using your elbow). Keep rooms well-ventilated. Records should be kept of which bunkroom each student was in.

Can I use shared accommodation such as backpacker hostels?

These organisations will have public health guidelines they have to meet to operate. As with working with any external provider, you will need to work closely with the provider to ensure all the health and safety requirements are discussed and agreed to by the school and the provider. Carefully consider the ability to maintain 2 metres (under current settings, i.e. for the rest of 2021) physical distancing from members of the public that are also using the facility.

Are sports trainings and sports competitions considered in this document?

No, [Sport NZ advice](#) should be followed for sport competitions and teams.

How regularly should surfaces and equipment be cleaned?

Ideally between groups of students (i.e. as you would between classes when you are at school). At least once a day would be a minimum, with more frequent cleaning of high touch points (or consideration of how to reduce high touch points). However, this won't always be practical. When it is not practical, put extra emphasis on 'cleaning' the participant.

How does rock climbing work? Do students need to stay a distance of 2 metres from the instructors (as they do with members of the public)?

Rock climbing can go ahead as the instructors aren't members of the public. You will have an agreement with them to deliver services and as part of that agreement will need to outline on how they are going to do this safely. They are not members of the public (and needing to be 2 metres away (under current settings, i.e. for the rest of 2021)) because they are traceable. You would need to include them on your contact tracing records. They become like volunteers and other staff (ideally 1 metre but where this is not practical put the emphasis on good hygiene and double checking everyone is well). If they are contracted directly by the school they will be covered by the mandatory vaccination requirements for Education.

If a participant were to become unwell on a multi-day trip, would you recommend that the trip ends for everyone involved, i.e. a multi-day tramp and all return home to self-isolate or would it be sufficient to send the unwell person home?

As you would do at school, you need to have a plan for isolating the sick student until you can get them home. This could involve get a parent to pick them up at the nearest practical location. The parent/caregiver should call their doctor or Healthline on 0800 358 5453 for advice about getting tested if the student has cold, flu or COVID-19 symptoms.

As at school, you don't need to isolate the whole group but it would be sensible to keep an eye on those in close contact with the sick student to see if they develop any symptoms.

Can I run an event that involves students from a number of different schools?

The exemption from physical distancing requirements in schools and when schools individually visit providers, does not apply for any inter-school activities. Therefore, for curriculum-related learning that brings together participants from more than one school, you must have physical distancing of at least 1 metre between participants wherever practical as well as all of the other required public health measures. E.g., leadership camps. For non-curriculum-related activities, they can go ahead but the rules for gatherings must apply.

What would be best practice for food preparation and meals on camps?

Follow the most up to date advice on food preparation from the [Ministry of Primary Industries](#).