



RETURNING TO SCHOOL **PREFACE**

As educators we understand the best learning environment for students is in the classroom and we are looking forward to welcoming back our staff and students to their classrooms in Term 4. We know that while there will be excitement, there will also be some uncertainty about being back together at school.

As a school and as part of the Department of Education we have worked with NSW Health on our COVID-safe plan to return to school sites and have put in place effective practices: vaccinations for all staff on site, mask wearing, reduced mingling of staff and student groups, ventilation in classrooms and continued good hygiene and cleaning. We are confident that this, in combination with support from our school community, will minimise risk and help to keep students learning face-to-face next to their peers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of education in NSW. Our students, educational leaders, teachers, staff and families have shown remarkable resilience and flexibility throughout this period.

While the pandemic has affected everybody differently, there are some clear learnings and common themes emerging from NSW and around the world. We know that nothing can replace face-to-face learning with an expert teacher and there is a need for students to return to school as soon as it is safe for them to do so. Being at school with their teachers and peers is also vital for student wellbeing, as well as their social and emotional development.

Principles underpinning our return to school approach

- Our key priority is the safety and wellbeing of our students, staff and school communities.
- We will always be guided by the latest Australian Health Protection Principal Committee and NSW Health advice and will keep all settings under review as that advice changes or is updated.
- Existing infection control protocols at schools, combined with new COVID safety measures will help to maintain the health and safety of our students, staff and school communities. These include:
 - mandatory vaccination of all staff on school site, and vaccinations strongly encouraged for all eligible students, where applicable
 - effective ventilation in all learning spaces, as well as use of outside spaces
 - learning in small cohorts, with physical distancing and reduced mixing of students
 - minimal onsite visitors
 - staggered start, break and end times
 - strict hygiene procedures, including sanitiser use and intensive cleaning.
- As students return to face-to-face learning we will balance the wellbeing of students with the return to classroom teaching and learning.



Roadmap to return to face-to-face learning

For most parts of NSW still under stay-at-home orders (mainly Greater Sydney), NSW Health advice is that it is safest for students to return in stages rather than all at once. Students in Kindergarten and Year 1 will return first, given the importance of developing their foundational learning in the early years and their disrupted experience to date.

Students will return to face-to-face learning with NSW Health-approved COVID-safe settings on Level 3 plus school sites in the following order:

- **18 October – Kindergarten, Year 1**
- **25 October – Years 2, 3, 4, 5, 6**

ONCE SCHOOL RESUMES NO 'ONLINE LEARNING' PLATFORMS WILL BE AVAILABLE

IT IS THE SCHOOL'S EXPECTATION THAT ALL STUDENTS WILL PHYSICALLY ATTEND SCHOOL

Returning Borrowed Devices

Once school begins we would like to have all laptops and iPads that were borrowed out to families within that week.

Please return to the front office and sign relevant documentation.

Entering the School

We ask that, wherever possible, the community **DO NOT** enter school grounds. During the 'Drop Off' in the morning we ask that you 'drop off' your child/ren at the appropriate gate. (Maps and explanations located further on in the document).

During the Afternoon Pick-up, adhering to the correct collection time, we ask that you enter the school via the main gate and exit the school at one of the other side gates as quickly as possible. (Maps and explanations located further on in the document). No mingling or group chats.

If you do need to enter the school, such as dropping off a device', **YOU MUST GO TO THE FRONT OFFICE** and ensure you wear a mask, maintain 'Social Distancing', use Q Code sign on and adhere to size limits in enclosed areas.

Canteen

The canteen will only be available for 'online orders' via the **Qkr! App**. No purchasing onsite.



The Cohort model

To support a safe learning environment for students, all schools will be required to adopt a cohort model. This will reduce the opportunity for transmission in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 and reduce the number of close contacts identified during contact tracing.

- In the early stages of returning to school (Kindergarten and Year 1), students will be placed into year/stage-based cohorts. Ideally this will be their normal class, grade and or stage.
- Classroom teachers will ideally be the allocated teacher for their cohort. The following members of staff may be asked to provide additional support: EAL/D, LAST, community languages teachers, teacher librarians, casual teachers, and SLSOs.
- Each cohort will be allocated a learning space and will complete all lessons and break times with their allocated cohorts.
- Break times, playground access and canteen access will be staggered by cohort.
- In some schools (such as smaller schools, or those with a stage-based class structure), school leaders may choose to amalgamate smaller classes to form one cohort, while adhering to class size policy. Students must then remain in this cohort.
- Schools will manage the year-based cohort model in a way that best meets the needs of their students, if core cohort principles are maintained.

Learning delivery

The expectation is that all teachers and students will return to face-to-face learning aligned with the staged return to school for Level 3 plus settings from 18 October. Areas across NSW (mainly in Regional NSW) that are removed from stay-at-home rules returned to face-to-face learning at the end of Term 3, under Level 3 settings, and will continue to do so in Term 4.

Masks

The current Public Health Order requires all persons over the age of 12 to wear a face mask indoors and outdoors across both 'stay-at-home areas' and 'areas of concern'. While the Public Health Order does not require students to wear a face mask while they are in school, the department taken the following positions based on health and safety grounds that face masks are required by staff and students under the indicated settings.

Under Level 3 plus settings when schools return to sites but are still under stay-at-home rules, masks are required for staff and students in Year 7 and above indoors and outdoors (unless exercising or eating). Masks are strongly recommended for primary students indoors (unless exercising or eating).



Revised Mask Wearing Settings

The current Public Health Order requires all persons over the age of 12 to wear a face mask indoors and outdoors across both 'stay at home areas' and 'areas of concern'. While the Public Health Order does not require students to wear a face mask while they are in school, the department has taken the positions based on health and safety grounds that face masks are required by staff and students under the indicated settings.

COVID safe schools framework	Staff	Students
Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No masks required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No masks required
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Masks recommended indoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Masks recommended indoors for all students K-12
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Masks required indoors and outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Masks required indoors and recommended outdoors for Year 7 and above (unless exercising or eating)Masks recommended indoors and outdoors for primary students (unless exercising or eating)
Level 3 Plus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Masks required indoors and outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Masks required indoors and outdoors for Year 7 and above (unless exercising or eating)Masks recommended indoors and outdoors for primary students (unless exercising or eating)
Level 4	<div>Staff directory - Opens in a new tab</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Masks required indoors and outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Masks required indoors and outdoors Year 7 and above (unless exercising or eating)Masks strongly recommended indoors and outdoors for primary students (unless exercising or eating)



Ventilation

In preparation for all students and staff returning to school, the Department has well-advanced an audit of the suitability of all learning spaces including libraries and halls to ensure all schools continue to operate in the safest ways possible in the COVID-19 environment.

Contact your Asset Management Unit with your queries about the status of the audit of your school, including the progress how to access the audit report.

Natural ventilation is the best form of ventilation, So, as much as possible, open windows and doors to improve airflow. Using fans and air conditioners can also help.

To improve ventilation in indoor settings schools should:

- open windows and doors, where possible
- use ceiling and exhaust fans to assist with creating good air movement
- regularly service air conditioners not covered under the maintenance contract
- alert the maintenance contractor immediately where ventilation systems covered under the maintenance contract stop working.
- If you have any concerns, questions or need support in relation to mechanical ventilation systems please contact your local Asset Management Unit for assistance.

NB – EACH CLASSROOM WILL BE RECEIVING AN AIR PURIFIER.



Activities that are not permitted or on hold

- singing, chanting, group repetition and choirs (except for HSC preparation and assessment purposes as outlined above)
- sport (except for sport within existing PDHPE classes, provided this limits student mixing)
- bands and ensembles
- interschool activities and events including interschool sport, gala days, trials, knock outs and carnivals
- special religious education/special education in ethics/voluntary student activities
- community language schools
- assemblies
- school performances, productions, concerts, speech nights and award presentations
- excursions, camps, field trips and principal-endorsed activities for students
- international excursions
- student visits to aged care facilities
- community events (fetes, grandparents' days etc.)
- playgroups
- P&C activities, including meetings (unless held online only)
- all external providers and specialist programs not directly related to educational outcomes and support, including community use of school facilities (such as markets and all after school activities) unless delivered online only
- school holiday programs (noting that vacation care programs on school sites may continue under current guidelines).



Bell Times

In order to meet Departmental requirements regarding keeping students in cohorts we have had to adjust the bell times to ensure grades/stages are kept separated throughout the school day.

COHORT 1

RECESS TIME: 10:40am

KINDERGARTEN

YEAR 3

YEAR 4

LUNCH TIME: 12:50pm (Eating time – 12:30pm)

KINDERGARTEN

YEAR 3

YEAR 4

COHORT 2

RECESS TIME: 1:50pm

YEAR 1

YEAR 2

YEAR 5

YEAR 6

LUNCH TIME: 11:40pm (Eating time – 11:20pm)

YEAR 1

YEAR 2

YEAR 5

YEAR 6

- Each teacher will be on duty with their grade.
- Playground spaces have been separated for each grade.
- Canteen will be open only for orders. No purchasing on the day.

Morning Routine

Due to the need of 'social distancing' and the separating of cohorts we have had to adjust the morning routine in order to accommodate these Departmental changes.

Class	Time	Student Entry Gate	Playground Location
Kinder	8.40am	Admin Gate (1)	D Playground
Year 1	8.40am	Admin Gate (1)	D Playground (Next to admin admin)
Year 2	8.40am	Admin Gate (1)	A Playground
Year 3	8.40am	Main Gate (2)	COLA
Year 4	8.40am	Main Gate (2)	E Playground (Basketball Court)
Year 5	8.40am	Main Gate (2)	C Playground
Year 6	8.40am	Q Block Gate (3)	Grass

- Parents are asked to drop the children off at the specified gates and allow the children to walk into the school and to their allotted playground.
- Between 8:40am – 8:55am students will be directed to the playground.
- From Approximately 8:55am students will be directed to their classrooms. This will help ease the congestion in the playground.
- Executive will be stationed at the gates.



Afternoon Routine

The following are the scheduled times and locations for parents picking up their child/children in the afternoon. These times will be staggered in 10 minute intervals to ensure parents can social distance and be onsite for the shortest amount of time.

Parents are asked to enter the school via the Rowe St Main Gate. (Please see the attached map) To avoid crowding please come at the allotted time for your child's class. Please note that if you have children in different classes, all siblings will join your youngest child's class and be ready for pick up. eg if you have a child in Year 1 and Year 3, your child in Year 3 will be sent down to join their sibling's year 1 class at pick up time.

There are 2 main pick up places: D playground (behind the Kindergarten, Year 1 Block A) and Grass playground (behind Stage 3 Q Block) After entry through main gate, you will need to go directly to your child's pick up place, collect your child and exit via the Admin Gate 1 or Q Block Gate. (See maps)

Class	Time	Location	Parent Entry Gate	Parent Exit Gate
Kinder (+older siblings)	2.40	D Playground	Main Gate (2)	Admin Gate (1)
Year 1 (+older siblings)	2.40	Grass	Main Gate (2)	Q Block Gate (3)
Year 2 (+older siblings)	2.50	Grass	Main Gate (2)	Q Block Gate (3)
Year 3 (+older siblings)	2.50	D Playground	Main Gate (2)	Admin Gate (1)
Year 4 (+older siblings)	3.00	D Playground	Main Gate (2)	Admin Gate (1)
Year 5 (+older siblings)	3.00	Grass	Main Gate (2)	Q Block Gate (3)
Year 6	3.10	Classroom	Main Gate (2)	Q Block Gate (3)

Late Pick Ups

Any students who are not picked up at their designated time, will be taken to the seats along the outside of the Administration block. Parents will then be directed to this area to collect their child, and then will exit via Admin Gate (1)



Afternoon Routine

Wet Weather Variation

In the event of inclement weather, times will remain the same, however locations will vary.

Class	Time	Location	Parent Entry Gate	Parent Exit Gate
Kinder (+older siblings)	2.40	E Playground	Main Gate (2)	Admin Gate (1)
Year 1 (+older siblings)	2.40	Hall Cola	Main Gate (2)	Q Block Gate (3)
Year 2 (+older siblings)	2.50	Hall Cola	Main Gate (2)	Q Block Gate (3)
Year 3 (+older siblings)	2.50	E Playground	Main Gate (2)	Admin Gate (1)
Year 4 (+older siblings)	3.00	E Playground	Main Gate (2)	Admin Gate (1)
Year 5 (+older siblings)	3.00	Hall Cola	Main Gate (2)	Q Block Gate (3)
Year 6	3.10	Classroom	Main Gate (2)	Q Block Gate (3)

- The call for Wet Weather, if need be, will be made at **2:00pm** and announced via Szapp for the community and via the intercom system for the school.

EASTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL- MORNING

KEY

→ = Year 6

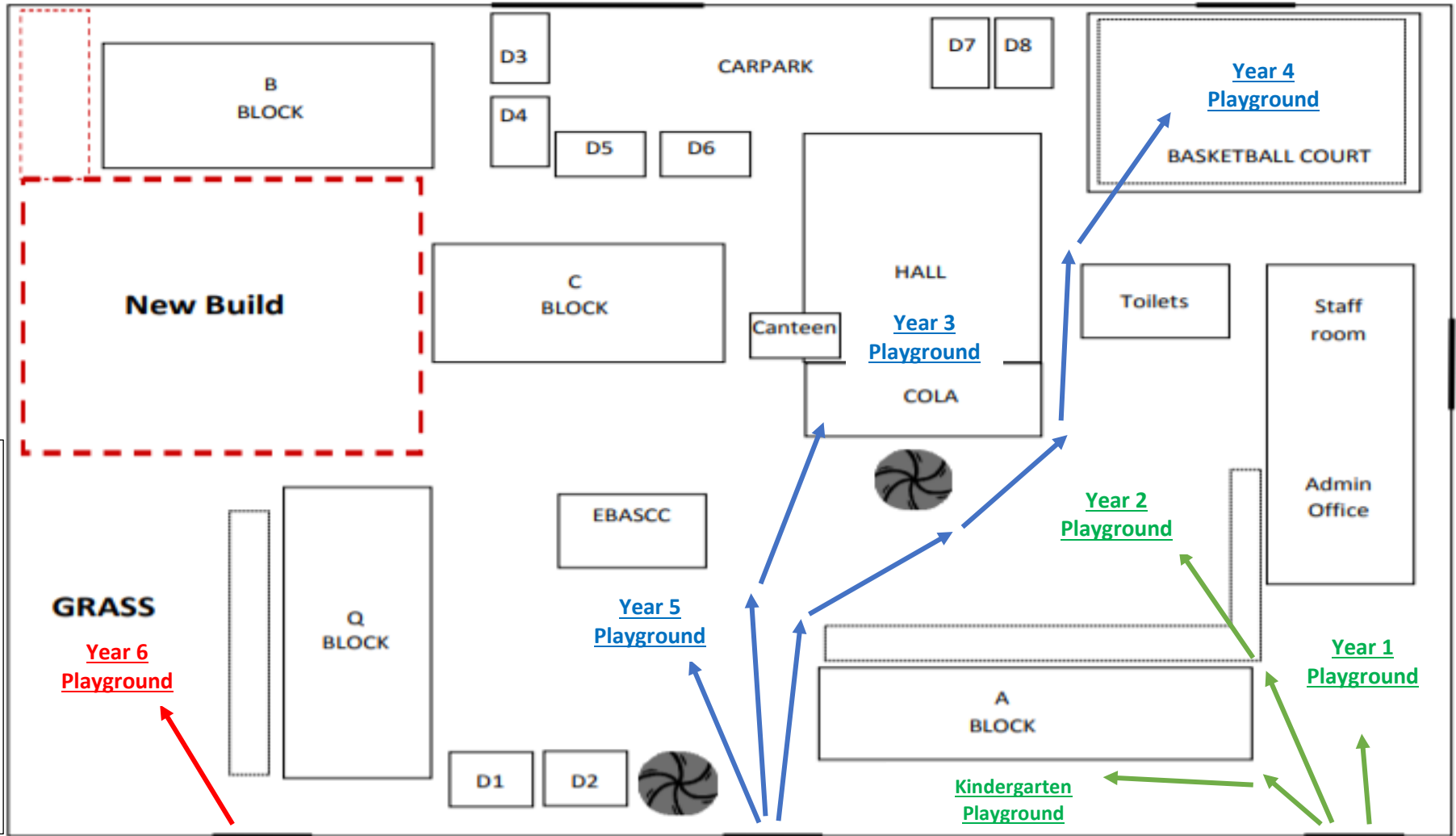
→ = Year 3, Year 4 and Year 5

→ = Kindergarten, Year 1, Year 2

NO PARENTS WILL BE PERMITTED ONSITE.

PLEASE DROP YOUR CHILD/REN AT THE GATE AND EXIT THE AREA QUICKLY, TO AVOID CONGESTION.

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.



Gate 3 – Q Block Gate

Gate 2 – Main Gate

Gate 1 – Admin Gate

8:40am – 9:00am	Year 6 To assigned playground
9:00am – 9:10am	Year 6 Straight to classrooms

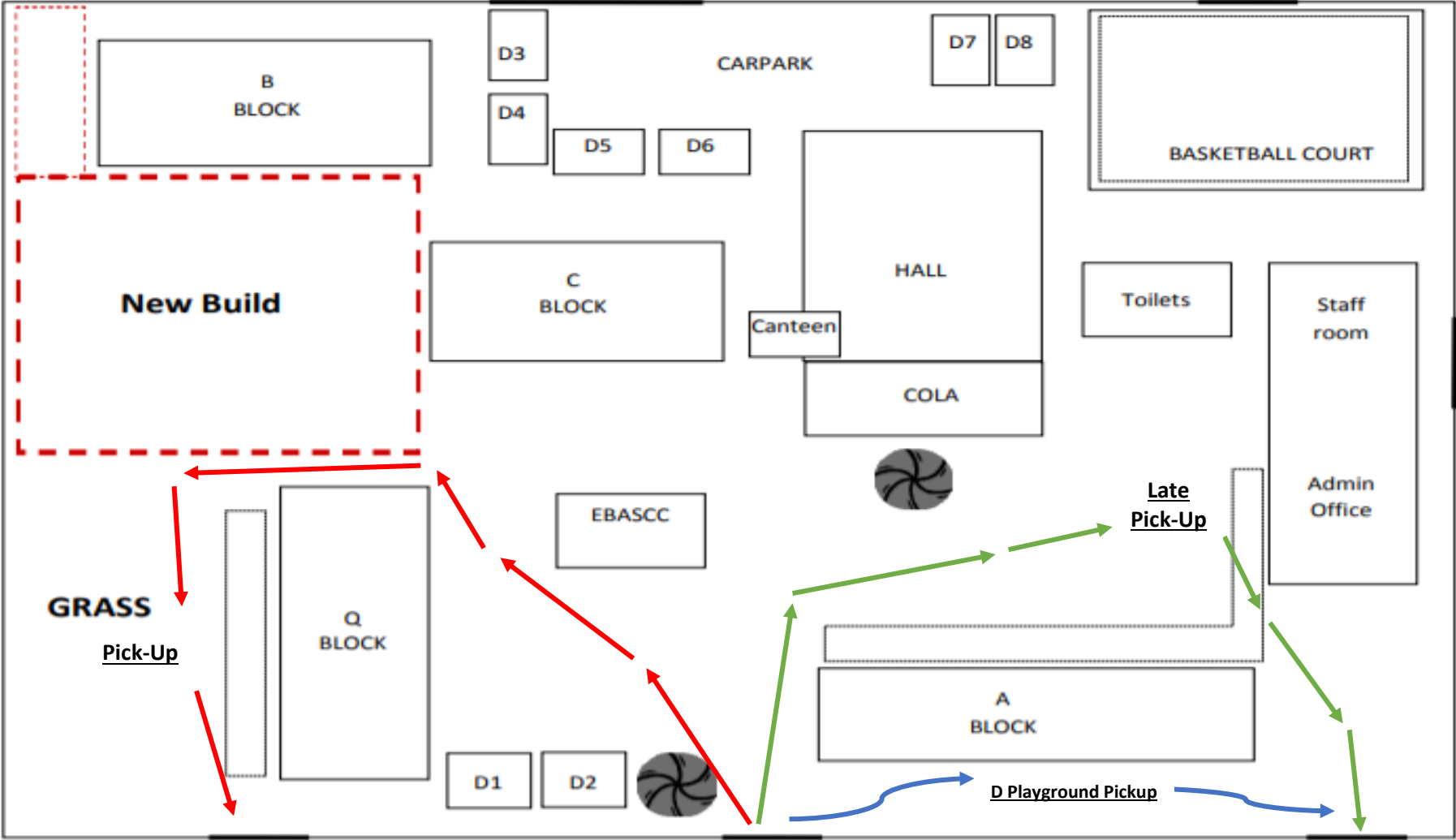
8:40am – 9:00am	Year 3, Year 4 and Year 5 To assigned playgrounds
9:00am – 9:10am	Year 3, Year 4 and Year 5 Straight to classrooms

8:40am – 9:00am	Kindergarten, Year 1, Year 2 To assigned playgrounds
9:00am – 9:10am	Kindergarten, Year 1, Year 2 Straight to classrooms

ROWE STREET

EASTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL- AFTERNOON DISMISSAL

- KEY**
- = Grass Pickup
 - = D Playground Pick-up
 - = Late Pick-up



Gate 3 – Q Block Gate (Exit Only)

2:40	Year 1
2:50	Year 2
3:00	Year 5
3:10	Year 6

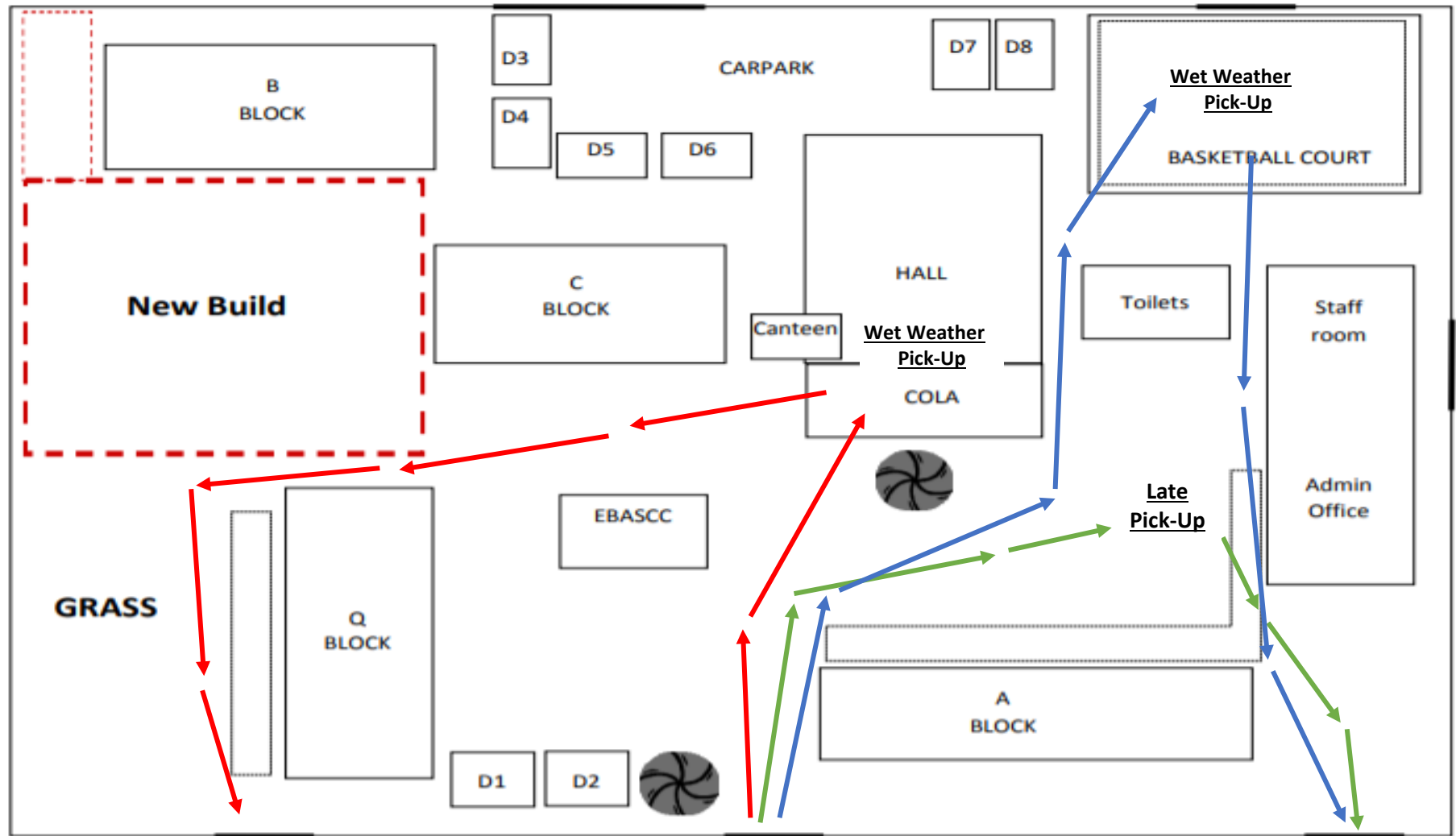
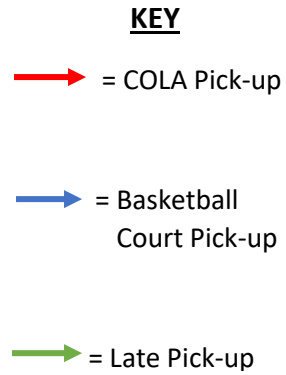
Gate 2 – Main Gate (Entrance Only)

2:40	Kindergarten & Year 1
2:50	Year 3 & Year 2
3:00	Year 4 & Year 5
3:10	Year 6

Gate 1 – Admin Gate (Exit Only)

2:40	Kindergarten
2:50	Year 3
3:00	Year 4

EASTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL- AFTERNOON DISMISSAL - WET WEATHER



Gate 3 – Q Block Gate (Exit Only)

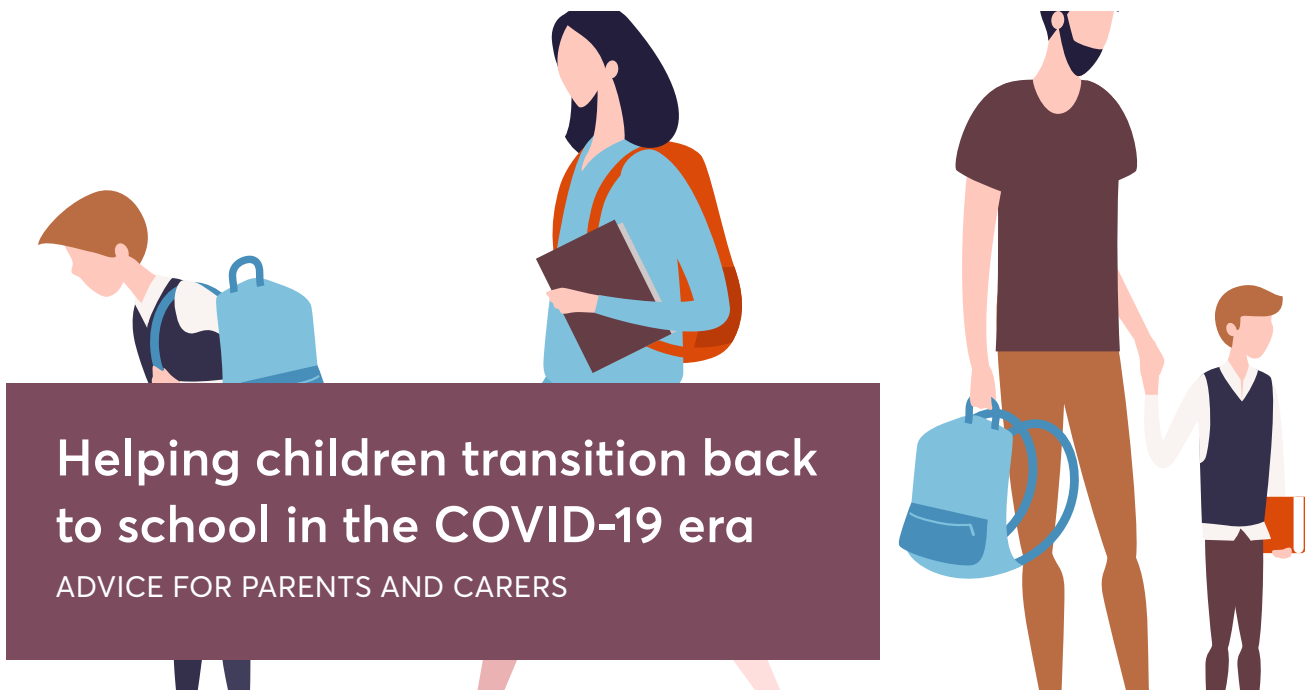
2:40	Year 1
2:50	Year 2
3:00	Year 5
3:10	Year 6

Gate 2 – Main Gate (Entrance Only)

2:40	Kindergarten & Year 1
2:50	Year 3 & Year 2
3:00	Year 4 & Year 5
3:10	Year 6

Gate 1 – Admin Gate (Exit Only)

2:40	Kindergarten
2:50	Year 3
3:00	Year 4



Transitioning back to school in the COVID-19 era can present many challenges for parents and children. Many parents have reported that learning from home has given their child the opportunity to work at their own pace. Many children have also benefitted from the 1:1 support which has helped with learning.

The shorter school day and flexibility for rest breaks has also meant that fatigue has been less of an issue. In addition, anxiety has improved for some children as a result of these factors. Given this, it is no wonder that returning to school comes with a mix of relief and excitement along with a new set of stresses for children and parents.

Reassure your child that it is safe to go to school

Many parents had conversations with their children about the importance of learning from home to keep them healthy and safe. Some children may now worry about the safety of returning to school.

To help your child feel safe, have a conversation with them explaining that:

- the decision to return to school is based on medical advice
- children do not usually get sick from COVID-19
- everyone at school is working hard to make sure that children are safe
- anyone who is unwell will stay at home
- the government is keeping an eye on things – if it starts to be unsafe, decisions about what to do will be made
- reassure your child that it is normal to have mixed emotions such as excitement, relief, worry and anger
- discuss what they are looking forward to and what they are worrying about
- reinforce good hygiene practices.

After school, it will be important to:

- talk to your child about their day, including what they enjoyed, what they felt worried about and what they are looking forward to tomorrow
- schedule extra family time as your child is likely to have missed being at home with you
- your child may feel more fatigued and will benefit from quiet activities to recharge.

Prepare your child for changes to usual school processes

Your school may have made changes to their normal processes. Your school will communicate these changes with you – these may vary across schools. To help prepare your child:

- talk to your child about upcoming changes - the more they understand the changes, the more comfortable they are likely to feel about them
- write social stories with your child about changes to routine
- ask to have an extra online 1:1 session between the teacher and/or learning support worker and your child before going back to school
- see if there are any strategies that home learning enabled that you might be able to take to the classroom
- ask your child what will make their transition back to school easier and see if this can be accommodated by your child's teacher, for example, knowing the class seating plan or the first activity of the day may help.

Re-establish normal routines in the lead up to school

- **The week before:** Return children to their usual wake up and bedtime routines, as well as breakfast and morning snack/lunch.
- **The day before:** Involve your child in packing their bag and preparing their uniform - this leaves you plenty of time to notice if anything is forgotten.
- **The morning of:** Allow more time than usual to get ready.

Some schools may not allow parents to walk children to their classroom. This may make it harder for some children to separate from parents. Prepare your child for this by:

- discussing what might be different about the drop off and pick up procedures and how you will manage it as a family
- talk through the new procedure and role play or write social stories
- reassure your child that there will be plenty of staff to help take them to their classrooms
- ask your child if there is anything that will make this easier for them, such as arriving to school with a buddy or taking a special item that helps them feel 'brave'.

Returning to school before siblings

Younger children returning to school earlier than other family members may feel disappointed that their siblings are continuing with home learning or may feel disconnected from the family. You can help your child by:

- reassuring them that it is ok to feel disappointed
- explaining that all children will be returning to school soon
- allowing your child to pick a fun activity to complete when they get home from school so that they have something to look forward to
- avoid scheduling any 'fun' activities with other family members or friends whilst your child is at school.

Tips for children with cognitive and behavioural challenges

As children adjust to the new routine, cognitive and/or behavioural difficulties may seem more challenging. The following strategies can help children with an acquired brain injury (ABI) or other neurodevelopmental difficulties to avoid these issues as they transition back to school

- Fatigue may be more problematic for these children either as a direct consequence of their difficulties or due to the extra effort it takes for them to readjust to change. Consider slowly increasing your child's attendance at school to help combat fatigue – you may consider shorter days or rest days.
- Speak to the school about incorporating more rest breaks throughout the day for your child.
- Speak to your school about reducing or eliminating homework until your child has settled back into a routine.

- Ensure that your child is linked in with the learning support and wellbeing team.
- Educate staff who are either new or unfamiliar with your child about their brain injury or neurodevelopmental disorder – For example, ABI is often the ‘invisible’ injury and those working with your child should be made aware of their needs, as well as strengths and weaknesses.
- As children readjust to the pleasures and challenges associated with school, they may show greater difficulties with emotional regulation and challenging behaviour – remember, this is likely to be part of the readjustment phase and should improve with time.
- Your child may need your help to regulate. You may find it helpful to create a calm corner with a ‘tool box’ of calming and distracting items, as well as adding some relaxation strategies into the daily routine. Exercise can also assist.

Finding extra support

If you need extra support or clarity in regards to your child’s needs and learning challenges, referral to an appropriate psychologist for a detailed assessment and advice may be warranted. For example, a paediatric neuropsychologist can provide a differential diagnosis and strategies, and direct you to an appropriate special education tutor or any other healthcare specialist that may be required.

There are number of ways to access a psychologist.

You can:

- use the Australia-wide Find a Psychologist™ service. Go to findapsychologist.org.au or call 1800 333 497
- ask your GP or another health professional to refer you.

Acknowledgments

This resource was prepared by the:






A clinical neuropsychologist is a psychologist who is trained to understand brain-behaviour relationships (across the lifespan):

- a) To assess thinking/brain abilities and difficulties to clarify diagnosis and identify the client’s care needs and priorities
- b) To provide targeted intervention or rehabilitation for people with thinking/brain-related difficulties or disorders
- c) To adapt or modify treatments to take into account the effects of thinking/brain difficulties

The APS has other information sheets in this series to support children and teens with learning difficulties and disabilities. To access, visit: psychology.org.au for more.

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