



# COVID-19

Unite  
against  
COVID-19

## Update

19 August 2021

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Kia ora anō,

I am sorry if it feels like death by a battery of bulletins today – but I know there was a lot of interest in hearing as soon as possible about opportunities to get hard materials and/or devices delivered to students, so rather than hold up that information we decided on two editions today.

This second bulletin addresses questions that have been raised with us and other relevant information.

Of significance is the Government's decision to make the Pfizer Vaccine available to 12 to 15-year-olds from Wednesday 1 September (with bookings open from tomorrow). Vaccination dates are now available for all people over the age of 40. There is no shortage of vaccines and more sites will be available over the next few days, now is a good time to get vaccinated – you are allowed out, even during Alert Level 4, to get vaccinated!

High levels of vaccination are a prerequisite to a more porous border and to minimise the risk of further and longer lockdowns.

Earlier today we provided advice that you can directly (or through couriers) deliver devices and hard materials to students' homes. I know that for some families a managed contactless collection system may be needed. I hope to confirm this option tomorrow.

Thank you for your leadership and support for your communities during this uncertain time.

Ngā mihi  
Iona

## In today's bulletin:

- Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine approved for 12 to 15-year-olds
  - Testing for COVID-19
  - Relief teaching costs under Alert Level 4
  - Extension to COVID-19 Regional Support Scheme 2021
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## Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine approved for 12 to 15-year-olds

The Government has approved the Pfizer vaccine for 12 to 15-year-olds in New Zealand, following Medsafe's provisional approval in June.

From Friday 20 August, as parents or guardians become eligible to book for a vaccination, they can also book in a vaccination for any 12 to 15-year-olds in their whānau.

## Testing for COVID-19

Please encourage your staff and your wider community to get tested if they are experiencing any symptoms that may relate to COVID-19.

We have seen a tremendous response from New Zealanders to get booked for the vaccine (more than 200,000 bookings yesterday), and while there are lengthy queues in some parts of Auckland, overall, we aren't seeing record numbers of tests.

It is easy to think that COVID-19 is only in Auckland only – but we need to be vigilant across the country. COVID doesn't respect geographical boundaries.

Early identification of cases is crucial – and testing does that for us.

## Relief teaching costs under Alert Level 4

You may have seen in the School Bulletin dated 17 August, that under Alert Level 4, all staff should continue to be paid their usual salary during the school closure. This includes day relief and timesheet staff who had work booked for this period. [You can find the bulletin here.](#)

This is a reminder that the Ministry already provides funding for relieving costs as part of schools' operational grant instalment, and where applicable Additional Relief Teacher Funding (ARTF).

We expect that most schools will not incur significant additional costs when paying prebooked relievers during Alert Level restrictions as schools should have reasonably budgeted for these costs had the school been open for instruction.

Schools can claim ARTF if relief cover is required for a teacher who is in isolation for a specified period because they:

- have been diagnosed with COVID-19
- are required to be in self-isolation
- are required to care for dependents who are either sick or in self-isolation
- are over the age of 70
- are high-risk due to a compromised immune system or an underlying health condition.

Please note, that the eight-day rule for ARTF applies as standard.

[More information regarding the ARTF policy is available here.](#)

Funding is available for schools who incur repetitive relief teaching costs because of Alert Level changes. The details of this funding are outlined below.

## **Extension to COVID-19 Regional Support Scheme 2021**

In our bulletins dated [6 July](#) and [3 August](#), the Ministry announced the COVID-19 Regional Support Scheme 2021. This scheme provides financial assistance to schools who have incurred repetitive relief teaching costs in 2021 due to Alert Level restriction changes.

Initially, the eligibility criteria for the scheme covered costs incurred during Regional Alert Level 3 restrictions only.

Due to the National Alert Level 4 change on 17 August 2021 for the Auckland and Coromandel regions for at least seven days and three days for the rest of New Zealand, we have now extended the scheme to include COVID-19 related costs during periods of Alert Level 4 restrictions.

Please note that the same eligibility criteria still apply and schools or kura will need to confirm that the relief teaching costs has been, or will be, incurred a second time (for example, rebooking relief teachers for cancelled professional development).

This scheme does not cover other employment costs such as those incurred in relation to permanent or fixed-term employees, support staff, teacher aides or timesheet staff.

To apply for this funding, please contact [resourcing@education.govt.nz](mailto:resourcing@education.govt.nz) or phone 04 463 8383.

Your school must meet the following eligibility criteria to receive this funding:

- the cost must have been incurred during an Alert Level 3 or 4 restriction
- evidence of the cost incurred or confirmation from the principal or board chair that this cost has been, or will be, incurred a second time after the Alert Level restrictions must be provided.

If you have any questions, please email us at [resourcing@education.govt.nz](mailto:resourcing@education.govt.nz) or phone 04 463 838 for further assistance.

## Continue to pay your contractors

As is happening for your teacher aides and other support staff, please continue to pay your regular contractors and service providers such as cleaners, security and grounds maintenance.

If you regularly pay for a service and will need that service to continue after the lockdown, then please continue to pay for that service at a standard rate even if the service can't be provided right now. This will ensure that the businesses that support you are able to keep trading and are there when you need them to provide services to you after the lockdown. If schools don't pay, the government will end up paying twice for these services – once through the operational grant and once through the wage subsidy.

The wage subsidy is not intended to enable the public sector, including schools, to avoid paying for items they would usually pay for and to transfer that cost to the wage subsidy scheme.

## Packaging information for device delivery by courier

If you choose to send your school devices by courier, you will need to pack each device securely, with the device and the charger separately wrapped to avoid damage in transit.

Devices need to be wrapped with packaging material such as bubble wrap and placed in a secure box. The student's address should be written on the top of the box. Include a return address on the bottom of the box, clearly indicating it is a sender address not the recipient address. [See the two illustrations attached for your information.](#)

The UN3481 battery label is also required to be attached to the top of the box as devices contain lithium batteries. [See the battery label template](#) which you can print, cut up and use.

## Suspension process in Alert Level 4

If school boards wish to continue with the suspension process then they will need to ensure they can meet via tele/video conference and that the student, their parents/caregivers and advocates can dial in.

It should also be noted that even if a student is excluded from your school just prior to or during Alert Level 4, the student remains on your roll and you remain responsible for providing distance learning to that student during this period.

Because of the difficulty with face-to-face meetings and because students are currently unable to be enrolled elsewhere while Alert Level 4 is in place, it would be best practice to allow the suspension to simply lapse on the seventh school day or tenth calendar day (according to when the suspension took place) under section 81(5) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and advise the family that this has occurred.

## Student representative elections

We're aware that many schools are currently holding Student Representative elections and others are running by-elections.

The current COVID-19 Alert Level may impact election timeframes and processes. NZSTA is available to support boards and Returning Officers to hold compliant elections. If you have a question or concern about an election process at your school, please email NZSTA at: [electionsAdvice@nzsta.org.nz](mailto:electionsAdvice@nzsta.org.nz)

We're working closely with NZSTA to ensure they can provide answers and support. The NZSTA elections advice inbox is monitored and will respond to all queries as soon as possible.