**Quick guide: Risk assessment and controls**

*This quick guide complements the* [*Risk assessment for COVID-19*](https://temahau.govt.nz/covid-19/advice-schools-and-kura/covid-19-protection-framework-schools-and-kura#risk-assessment-and-planning-for-covid-19) *guidance and is adapted from the* [*Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 practical guide.*](https://assets.education.govt.nz/public/Documents/Ministry/Initiatives/Health-and-safety/Tools/Health-and-Safety-at-Work-Act-2015-practical-guide.pdf)

*It can be used to support your risk assesment and health and safety review.*

**Role of the board as PCBU**

The Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) is usually a legal or corporate entity, including a self-employed person. In a school the PCBU is the board.

As the PCBU, the board holds the primary duty of care to ensure the health and safety of everybody involved with the school “so far as is reasonably practicable”.

The board usually delegates the implementation of health and safety policy to the principal, who develops appropriate procedures and practices to ensure obligations and expectations are met. The board may delegate any of its functions or powers but can never delegate its accountability.

Even if your school already has good health and safety management in place, with the changes to the vaccine mandate and My Vaccine Pass, it is recommended that you review it and ensure that it reinforces an active culture among all those at the school, including ākonga.

A formal risk assessment enables the board to understand what the significant hazards in their school are. More importantly, it helps the board to focus on the significant risks, rather than using their resources trying to manage every risk.

**Managing risks**

Risks must be managed by taking action to eliminate them, and if that is not reasonably practicable, minimising them. Eliminating a hazard will also eliminate any risks associated with that hazard.

* Hazard = a situation or thing with the potential to cause death, injury or illness
* Risk = the likelihood that death, injury or illness might occur when exposed to a hazard

Risk assessment involves considering the **severity of consequences** if a person is exposed to a hazard, combined with the **likelihood** of it happening. The level of risk will increase as the likelihood of injury/illness, or it’s severity, increases.

A risk assessment can help determine:

* how severe a risk is
* whether existing control measures are effective
* what action you should take to control the risk, and
* how urgently the action needs to be taken

**Assessing risks**

The information below can help you to assess the **severity** of the consequences and the **likelihood** of injury or illness occurring, and then to assess the risk for each hazard.

Table

Description automatically generatedNB this content is copied directly as an image from the [Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 practical guide](https://assets.education.govt.nz/public/Documents/Ministry/Initiatives/Health-and-safety/Tools/Health-and-Safety-at-Work-Act-2015-practical-guide.pdf) (Tool 13 on page 57). Page 50 as noted below, refers to the guidance document.

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**Risk register template**

Refer to the above information to determine Likelihood, Consequence and Risk Rating. The content in *Red* below will not necessarily reflect your own risk setting. **It is an example only.** See further below for considerations to inform your thinking about risks in your own school context.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Risk description | Potential Harm | Consequence | Likelihood | Risk rating | Eliminate, isolate or minimise | Risk controls | Training or information required | Date checked |
| Exposure to Omicron variant of COVID-19 | For the majority of people it will be a mild to moderate illness that can be managed at home. Commonly, children have mild or no symptoms of COVID-19 with a short duration of illness.  The incidence of severe or fatal disease in children is significantly lower than in adults.  A very small proportion of the population are at risk of hospitalisation and for a very small proportion COVID-19 can lead to death. | *Minor to moderate – for majority*  *Major to critical – for those at very high risk of severe illness* | *Likely*  *Rare* | *Medium*  *Medium - High* | Icon  Description automatically generated*Minimise*  *Minimise* | *See the* [*Risk Assessment guidance*](https://temahau.govt.nz/covid-19/advice-schools-and-kura/covid-19-protection-framework-schools-and-kura#risk-assessment-and-planning-for-covid-19) *for a list of controls that you can implement at the different framework settings. You may already have many of these controls in place at Red under the framework and will have a highly vaccinated staff.*  *For example, in a primary school setting:*   * *Staying away if unwell and getting tested* * *Monitoring for symptoms and asking those unwell to go home* * *Using well-ventilated spaces* * *Good hygiene and cleaning* * *Encouraging and supporting all staff and eligible students to get vaccinated including booster doses* * *Grouping students to minimise spread across different classes* * *Masks required for children, students and staff in years 4 and up, when indoors (unless exempted)* * *Limiting onsite visitors to only those who are essential* * *Limiting large gatherings* * *Holding higher-risk activities outdoors, where possible*   *For children with multiple chronic conditions and staff or children who have an* [*underlying medical condition*](https://covid19.govt.nz/prepare-and-stay-safe/people-at-higher-risk-of-severe-illness-from-covid-19/#who-is-at-higher-risk-of-covid-19) *which puts them at higher risk from COVID-19, and regardless of their own vaccination status:*   * *develop an individual plan to support safety onsite* * *encourage staff to wear a medical-grade mask when indoors regardless of year level (and as required when at Red as noted above)* * *staff working in regular close contact with children/young people at higher risk when indoors, will be required to be vaccinated* * *encourage them to seek advice from GP or other health professional about how to best manage risk* |  | xx/04/22 |
| Poor lifting technique | *Could lead to a back injury* |  |  |  |  | * *Develop and review policy regularly* * *Training needs analysis including lifting/manual handling* * *Identify tasks that require lifting* * *Seek assistance for heavy lifts* * *Provide a trolley* * *Refer to WorkSafe publication, Code of Practice for Manual Handling* |  |  |
| Storing and using chemicals e.g.  solvents  paints  fire  fumes  inhalation | *Risk of injury, illness or in worst case, death.* |  |  |  |  | * *Develop and review policy regularly* * *Replace toxic chemicals with non-toxic substitutes if possible* * *Store hazardous chemicals in locked cupboard* * *Use with good ventilation* * *Comply with The Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO) Act 1996* |  |  |

**Key considerations for COVID-19**

Any risk assessment will need to reflect your own school context including:

* Traffic light setting for your region
* Volume of cases in your region / community
* Vaccination status of your community
* For areas where there have been high numbers of cases, a proportion of your population will have natural immunity (through COVID-19 infection)
* Knowing which individuals may be at higher risk from COVID-19

Determining community vaccination status:

* The Unite Against COVID-19 website has [a map showing vaccination rates around New Zealand](https://covid19.govt.nz/news-and-data/covid-19-vaccination-rates-around-new-zealand/) to help inform your planning. You can drill down to the equivalent of a suburb (Statistical Area 2) and by ages 5-11 and 12+.
* This data is also published in [spreadsheet form by the Ministry of Health each week](https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-data-and-statistics/covid-19-vaccine-data#download). Open the first spreadsheet “COVID-19 vaccination data through xx xxx 2022”. Go to the tabs ‘TLA’ and ‘SA2 All Ethnicities’ or ‘SA2 Māori and Pacific Peoples’.

Omicron is a very infectious variant of COVID-19. Those who are vaccinated and boosted are less likely to get COVID-19 than someone who is not vaccinated, however both vaccinated and unvaccinated people can get COVID-19 and can pass it on.

As of 31 March, there has been 659,175 COVID-19 cases reported in New Zealand. Of those, 0.017% have been in ICU, 0.045% have died with COVID-19 and 0.773% have been hospitalised.

The consequences of exposure to COVID-19 can therefore be extremely serious for a very small proportion of individuals exposed to COVID-19. You will know who those individuals are in your school and will already have a plan in place to support their attendance onsite as appropriate. Advice from their GP or other health professional can support that plan.

Go to the Unite Against COVID-19 website for the latest advice on [who is at higher risk of severe illness](https://covid19.govt.nz/prepare-and-stay-safe/people-at-higher-risk-of-severe-illness-from-covid-19/#who-is-at-higher-risk-of-covid-19).

For those most at risk of severe illness, your risk assessment may determine that people who are in close contact with that person, as part of a wider suite of measures, will need to be vaccinated. This should be a last resort and all other practical controls that can be implemented, should be, before making this decision.

In deciding what controls to implement, employers will need to consider what is reasonably practicable. Employers should first consider the controls that are least intrusive to employees before requiring vaccinations.

The public health justification for requiring vaccination is when the risk of contracting and transmitting COVID-19 at work is higher than it is in the community. This is the basis on which some Government vaccination mandates have been retained.

**Monitor and review**

Once the controls have been implemented, they must be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure they are effective. The relevant school leader is expected to do this in consultation with workers. The regularity will depend on the risk rating.

The principal collates all risk registers on a regular basis for board reporting. The PCBU has to consider what is reasonably able to be done in relation to ensuring health and safety, taking into account and weighing up all relevant matters such as the likelihood of, and consequence of harm occurring, and the availability and suitability of ways in which to eliminate or minimise the risks.