



27 January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

Return to School in 2022

Welcome all to the commencement of the 2022 school year. I hope that you had a wonderful summer, full of rest, rejuvenation and time with your loved ones.

You will have heard the recent announcement from the ACT Government that school students in the ACT will return to on-site learning at the start of Term 1 2022. The students at Merici College are returning on the following dates:

Monday 31 January – Years 7, 11, 12 and new students

Tuesday 1 February – Years 8, 9 and 10

I would like to share how, with the support of ACT Health and Catholic Education, we are building on our experiences of the last two years and continuing to safeguard our school community while keeping our school open, where we know the best learning happens.

With the level of transmission of COVID-19 in the community in the ACT, our Back to School plans acknowledge the unavoidable reality that we will see COVID-19 cases in our school. We will start 2022 with a layered approach to COVID-smart measures that have been developed to help to minimise transmissions at school. The health and wellbeing of our students and staff remain our priority and these measures are designed to help keep our school open and our students learning in the classroom.

Please refer to the following documentation attached to this letter for comprehensive information and COVID requirements. These documents can also be viewed here.

1. [Merici College Return to School Plan](#)
2. [Merici College First Days Plan](#)

MERICI COLLEGE	Wise St	GPO Box 154	Telephone (02) 6243 4100	principal@merici.act.edu.au
	Braddon	Canberra	Facsimile (02) 6243 4199	www.merici.act.edu.au
	ACT 2612	ACT 2601		

These measures are based on refreshed ACT Health Guidelines that have been endorsed by the Chief Health Officer and apply to all school settings, outlining risk mitigation strategies that have been developed and refined to enable our school to manage cases as they arise and where possible avoid closure.

COVID Safe measures

You can access a copy of the Back to School plan developed by the ACT Government [here](#). Many of the measures in these Term 1 arrangements are very similar to the measures that were in operation in our school during Term 4 of last year.

Measures include:

- provision of rapid antigen tests
 - two per week for all school staff and students for the first four weeks of term – see below for more information
- compulsory use of masks indoors for all adults in schools and students in Years 7-12
- maximising outdoor learning and ventilation in classrooms to ensure good circulation of fresh air
- increased cleaning across the school, including high touch surfaces
- restrictions to visitors on site during school hours; parents and carers will only be allowed on school grounds for scheduled essential appointments
- restrictions on school events – events that bring large cohorts of students together will not go ahead
- restrictions on excursions – only essential excursions and activities (that form a core component of the curriculum) involving individual classes or year groups will be allowed
- no interstate excursions at this time, with exceptions to be considered later in Term 1 for camps and excursions that are necessary to a student's study program.

While this is not going to be a typical start to the school year, we know that being together in the classroom is the most effective way for students to learn and grow. Your daughter's relationship with their teacher is important, but as we manage potential disruptions to staffing due to COVID-19, they may get to meet more teachers than usual.

Rapid Antigen Testing

We will distribute packs of RAT kits for all students and staff at the start of Term 1.

When the school receives the RAT kits we will contact you regarding how these will be supplied to families.

The use of RAT kits is an important step to support the health and wellbeing of our students and staff. They are a quick and easy screening tool to help detect COVID-19. It is a simple process of placing a nose or throat swab in a chemical solution which is put onto a scanning device. Results can be ready within 15 minutes. Use of RAT kits is highly recommended but not mandatory.

Instructions are included in the kits detailing how to: use the tests, check the results and dispose of the tests safely. You can also download the instructions through the [Therapeutic Goods Administration \(TGA\)](#) website. The user guides will also contain a contact number for the suppliers if you need additional support.

Additional Information

- School staff will not be administering the rapid antigen tests to students.
- Each student will receive a supply of rapid antigen tests (RATs) to be used twice a week or when they display symptoms
- If a student or staff member receives a **positive** RAT test,
 - ✓ parents/carers are required to report this to **ACT Health**. You can find more information on how to do that on the ACT Government's [COVID-19 website](#).
 - ✓ notify the school of the positive RAT or PCR test result as soon as possible by emailing covid@merici.act.edu.au. Please be assured that confidentiality will be maintained
 - ✓ follow ACT Health advice regarding isolating

Negative results **do not** need to be reported to ACT Health or to the school.

Unwell at School

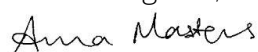
Any student or staff member who is unwell and/or displays symptoms of COVID-19 will be asked to go home and stay until they can complete a RAT or PCR test.

- If a student or staff member displays even mild COVID-19 symptoms, they must take a RAT or get a PCR test and isolate until they receive a negative test result.
- Students must not come to school until they are symptom free, even if they get a negative RAT result.

Thank you again for your continued support during this coming school term.

Parents and carers can be assured that the focus of our College is always on the safety and wellbeing of our students and staff including continuing to provide the best possible education to our students.

With kind regards,



Anna Masters

Principal