

Good Morning Ms Millis

Thank you for your letter of 4 May 2020 to Dr Jeannette Young, Chief Health Officer asking for Queensland to exercise flexibility with standard education attendance policies for children with rare diseases during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chief Health Officer has asked that we respond on her behalf.

We apologise for the time it has taken for a response. As you can appreciate this is a fast-paced situation and Queensland Health is actively managing the frontline actions required to prepare and protect the community from COVID-19. You can keep up to date with COVID-19 information and responses at: <https://www.covid19.qld.gov.au/>.

You would now be aware that Queensland students in all year levels could return to school from Monday 25 May 2020. However the Queensland Department of Education acknowledges that some parents or carers may feel that their child should not attend school during this COVID-19 pandemic. Parents and carers in this situation are requested to contact their school to discuss alternative arrangements.

You may be interested in reading the answers to *Frequently asked questions for parents* at: <https://qed.qld.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media/novel-coronavirus/frequently-asked-questions-for-parents>. Similar information for parents and carers of children in early childhood education and care (kindy or childcare) is available at: <https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/news/covid-19-information/frequently-asked-questions>.

The following information from the first link above addresses concerns you raised about protecting school age children with rare diseases from the risk of contracting COVID-19 if they were to attend school.

It is acknowledged that some parents or carers may still wish to keep their children home from school due to special circumstances, medical vulnerability, or concerns about the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

If you choose to keep your child at home, you remain responsible for their supervision, learning, safety and wellbeing at home or elsewhere.

The [learning@home website](#) will remain available and will continue to be updated throughout Term 2, with new resources for students in Prep to Year 10. Students will also be able to view the curriculum-based television programs on 3 different stations. View the [program information](#) on the learning@home website.

Parents and carers of students with health support needs are encouraged to consult their health practitioner when deciding if their child should attend school.

When students have a medical reason for needing to remain at home or in isolation, schools will make arrangements to support their learning at home just as they would for any extended student medical absence.

If you do not intend for your child to return to normal school attendance from Monday 25 May 2020, you must notify the school and discuss with your child's teacher an appropriate approach to continuing their learning.

Information to assist parents communicate about COVID-19 with their children is also available at: <https://education.qld.gov.au/student/Documents/coronavirus-fact-sheet-for-parents-and-carers.PDF>. This fact sheet includes tips to respond to anxieties that children may be feeling about COVID-19 and ways to ensure children have a range of enjoyable activities and interactions and to reduce their exposure to the continuous COVID-19 media coverage.

We trust that the above information has allayed your concerns about unnecessary mandatory school attendance pressures and that your members are comfortable making a decision about school attendance that is in the best interests of their child's ongoing health.

Kind regards
CHO COVID Correspondence team