

A COVID LESSON TO SCHOOLS

SUSIE O'BRIEN

A PRIVATE school in Melbourne's inner suburbs is half full and running face-to-face classes while still adhering to coronavirus restrictions.

Term three at Fitzroy Community School has been "one of the best ever", according to principal Tim Berryman. The private primary school has been holding normal classes for 50 students of permitted workers on site since the closure of school campuses under lockdown. Another 70 students are learning remotely from home.

The school is meeting COVID-safe guidelines and allowing minimum staff and no parents on site. Most other state and private schools in metropolitan Melbourne have only a handful of children on site — about 3 per cent, according to education department reports. Even those on campus are learning remotely, along with students at home.

He said even remote learning — a full program with a mix of activities — had been very popular at his school. "We've never had so many people wanting to enrol."

Mr Berryman has written to state politicians arguing all schools — especially those catering for children



Fitzroy Community School principal Tim Berryman enjoys some cricket with students. Picture: JAY TOWN

under 15 — should be open.

"This is not to say that there are no issues to consider, but these can be managed and, even then, to most of the population the risks are exceedingly low," he wrote.

"The most dangerous part of the day for our children and their

teachers will remain getting to and from school, which so far has not prevented us from having schools open. A child is more likely to be hospitalised due to a bee sting than COVID-19."

The letter, which was also sent to all independent school principals,

urges the Premier to "reverse this poorly informed decision".

Mr Berryman said he had "received very few replies" to the letter. Fitzroy Community School, which charges about \$13,000 a year in fees, was established in 1976 by Mr Berryman's parents.