

19 March 2020

Dear Parents/Caregivers

I'm writing to update you with regard to the Covid-19 Coronavirus. As you will be aware the situation is rapidly changing. New confirmed cases of Covid-19 were announced this week taking the total confirmed cases for New Zealand to twenty. It is important to note that as of today New Zealand continues to have no community transmission of the virus. This means that the virus is not spreading in the community beyond people who have had direct contact with a traceable source of infection. The policy decisions being made by the Government give us time to plan for future scenarios.

Following the weekend's announcement to require all people travelling to New Zealand to self-isolate, the Prime Minister has announced a ban of larger gatherings of people in a bid to head off the worst of the coronavirus outbreak. She also confirmed that New Zealand's schools will remain open for the time being.

Actions for everyone

Everyone can take steps to protect themselves and the community from Covid-19. These include:

- Staying home if you are sick. Inform the attendance officer.
- Hand hygiene – washing hands regularly with soap and water, or cleansing with hand sanitiser.
- Covering coughs and sneezes (with your elbow or a tissue) and then performing hand hygiene.
- Clean surfaces regularly.

In School Actions

- We are ensuring that there is a good supply of soap and hand drying materials in our school bathrooms.
- We are asking students, staff, whānau and visitors to the school to avoid handshakes, hongi, hugging and other physical contact.
- We are reviewing all upcoming school events and school trips through a Covid-19 lens and will make case by case decisions in the interest of student and community health and wellbeing as the Government's guidance evolves.

In the last two weeks we have cancelled or postponed, the Europe 2020 trip to Italy, France and Belgium, sports exchanges with Mahurangi College and Pukekohe High School, the Tongan trip to Rotorua, the Samoan Po Siva, the Pasifika Fono, and the Jazz Band Camp.

- In line with the government advice on larger gatherings we are stopping school assemblies until further notice.
- Most upcoming national and regional sporting events have been cancelled. We are currently receiving advice about how weekly sports events and practices should be treated.

Self-Isolation

Some parents have contacted the school that they have chosen to self-isolate their children (who are not ill and haven't been in close contact with someone with Covid-19) as an extra precaution.

Current health guidelines are that only people, who are recent arrivals in New Zealand, are suspected of having Covid-19, or who have been in direct close contact with a person confirmed to have Covid - 19 are required to self-isolate. Close contact is defined as anyone who has been in face to face contact with the person suspected of Covid-19 or has been within two metres of the person for longer than 15 minutes.

Learning if students are unable to attend school

We are working on what will be needed to ensure students are able to continue learning if they are unable to attend school due to their own need to isolate and/or should Mt Roskill Grammar School be closed for a period of time due to Covid-19.

Please be aware that the school is not fully equipped to provide distance learning beyond the current access to resources such as Education Perfect and existing online resources such as Google classroom. We are finding out about students' ability to work on line from home and working with staff to consider how we would maintain students' learning in different scenarios such as partial or full closures.

Prevention is a priority

If your child is showing signs of illness such as coughs or colds, please keep them at home. Colds and flus are common in schools and by staying away, seeking medical attention and practising good hygiene, we can all keep any spread of illness to a minimum.

Talking to students about Covid-19

Given the rise in the number of reported cases, some young people may experience distress. As a trusted adult, you can help reassure and educate them about Covid-19 – it can be good to talk to them now, so they can understand the illness and be reassured. [A useful resource for parents, caregivers, whānau and teachers talking about the virus with children and young people can be found here](#). This can also be downloaded as an [information sheet](#)

Keeping informed

If you have any specific concerns about Covid -19, contact your GP or the 24-hour Covid -19 health line number - 0800 358 5453. You can also visit the Covid -19 page at www.arphs.health.nz. The Ministry of Health website <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus> remains an excellent source of information on COVID-19 for New Zealand.

We will continue to update you via email, the website and the school app if there are changes affecting our school. We appreciate your support over the coming days.

Ngā mihi nui

Greg Watson
PRINCIPAL