

Monday March 16, 2020



Dear Parents/Carers,

RE: COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS)

There is a lot of information contained in this letter, but it is all focussed on the very important role schools need to play in both protecting the health of our students and staff and in supporting broader efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19. We aim to provide information to you via class Dojo, our newsletter and other means to support you in understanding the current coronavirus issue and how to take steps to protect yourselves and others. As you can understand, while that information is still relevant we also know that the situation is changing rapidly in Australia and there seems to be a degree of inevitability that the coronavirus will impact on all our lives in some way.

This update contains information which will be important over the coming days and weeks. It's important that people don't panic but it's also important to know what the school is planning and what advice we have. Advice about upcoming school events is contained in this letter. Firstly, some definitions we all need to be familiar with:

- **Self-isolate** – remain at home and restrict contact with others for 14 days because you've either been confirmed with the virus or you have come into contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
 - **Self-distancing** – maintaining a distance between yourself and others to minimise the risk of contracting the virus, with a suggested distance of 1.5 metres. This includes limiting physical contact with others.
 - **Close contact** – having, within the last 14 days, at least 15 minutes of face-to-face contact or the sharing of a closed space for more than two hours with someone who has been tested and confirmed as having COVID-19.
1. Due to the current concerns we have assessed all of our upcoming school events and we can advise you that
 - a. **Smile Squad dental program has been cancelled until further notice.**
 - b. **Staggered lunch and recess breaks will be introduced from tomorrow Tuesday 17th March.**
 - c. **Grades 3-6 swimming went ahead today and whilst swimming at local swimming pools can continue, we have taken the measure not to continue for the remainder of the week.**
 - d. **Grade 4 bike ride to the lake this week has been cancelled as it falls within the local excursion category.**
 - e. **Our student leaders and House captains will not be attending the GRIP Leadership conference at the Bendigo stadium on Thursday.**
 - f. **Our scheduled Parents & Friends Group Open Air Cinema event on Friday night will not go ahead as planned. We are aiming to reschedule this event to the same time next year.**
 - g. **School assemblies will not take place until further notice. Information normally shared at assemblies will be broadcast into classrooms at the usual time.**
 - h. **The school athletics carnival planned to be held on Thursday 16th April has been postponed.**
 - i. **We will not proceed with the school's planned Anzac Day Service on Friday 17th April but again will likely broadcast this to classrooms.**
 - j. **The school cross country event planned for 22nd April has been postponed.**
 - k. **Mother's Day and Special person breakfast planned for 6th May has been cancelled.**
 2. An important step all of us should be taking to help stop the spread of any disease is to practice good hygiene.
 - Cover your mouth or nose when coughing or sneezing
 - Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water on a regular basis (particularly before eating and after using the toilet)
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick

- Avoid touching your nose, eyes and mouth.
3. The symptoms of the coronavirus include fever, breathing difficulties, cough, sore throat, fatigue or tiredness. Having a cough or sniffle doesn't mean that you've got the coronavirus. One of the distinguishing features of the virus in comparison with a common cold or flu is breathing difficulties. Students who are unwell with the symptoms above should stay at home and not attend school. If students present with these symptoms we will do what we do with any illness: we will call parents or emergency contacts and we expect the student to be collected from school as soon as possible.
4. **SCHOOL CLOSURES**
No government school is currently closed or in the process of being closed. Schools will be informed directly if there is any prospect that we will be closed, either as a stand-alone school closure or as part of a local or area-based closure. The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) met recently to consider the issue of school closures in relation to the community transmission of COVID-19. The Committee's advice is that pre-emptive school closures are not likely to be proportionate or effective as a public health intervention to prevent community transmission of COVID-19 at this time. For pre-emptive school closures to be effective, prolonged closure is required and it would be unclear when they could be re-opened. If there were still a large pool of susceptible students when schools are re-opened, there would be likely to be re-emergence of transmission in the community. School closures may still be considered late in the outbreak in anticipation of a peak in infection rates, for a shorter period of time. Short-term reactive school closures may also be warranted to allow cleaning and contact tracing to occur. Should evidence change in relation to school closures then the Victorian Chief Health Officer, in collaboration with AHPPC, would of course change also.
5. **CAMPS AND EXCURSIONS**
All camps scheduled to commence from and including Tuesday 17 March must be postponed and rescheduled, or, if there is no other option, cancelled. If you have a camp scheduled to commence tomorrow and are able to cancel it, it is recommended that you do so. Otherwise, no camps can commence from Tuesday 17 March. For the purposes of excursions, a school excursion is defined to include local parks and sporting facilities regularly used by the school, including local swimming pools. All excursions outside the school for purposes such as visits to cultural institutions, art galleries, theatres and sporting events or facilities (other than those local facilities regularly used by the school) planned from and including Tuesday 17 March must also be postponed or cancelled. Like camps, if excursions planned for Monday 16 March can be cancelled, it is recommended that you do so.
6. **INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS**
Everyone arriving into Australia from overseas from midnight tonight (15 March) will be required to self-isolate for 14 days. This obviously includes students and staff who may be returning from overseas excursions or other travel. Importantly, it also includes parents and carers and any other relatives or friends of your students who are returning from overseas travel. As they are required to self-isolate, they must not visit the school to pick up children or for any other reason. Please remind your parents and community members of this. In addition, in response to the New Zealand Government's travel restrictions announced over the weekend, staff and students can no longer travel to New Zealand. This is effective from today, Sunday 15 March 2020.

There will no doubt be more information we need to share in the coming days and weeks. In the meantime, I encourage everyone to remain calm but alert to the risks, to monitor advice through the media and from the school and to practice safe behaviours to prevent the spread of the virus.

Yours faithfully,

Andrew Schaeche

Principal