

22 March 2020



Dear Parents, Caregivers and Whānau

Yesterday, there was an announcement by the Prime Minister that New Zealand has now moved to **Alert Level 2 – Reduce Contact** for COVID-19. People over 70 years of age and those with compromised immunity and certain existing medical conditions are asked to remain at home as much as they can from now on and avoid any non-essential travel. Please follow this advice.

There are students in our school with **existing health issues** and I know this will be an anxious time for some parents. Students who fall into any of the categories listed below are more vulnerable.

People who are more vulnerable to COVID-19 fall into the following categories:

- Chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
- Chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
- Chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
- Diabetes
- Problems with your spleen – for example, sickle cell disease or if you have had your spleen removed
- A weakened immune system as the result of conditions, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
- Being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)

Children living with those who are:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 elderly people with an underlying health condition listed (ie anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds)
- those who are pregnant.

These families are asked to keep their child at home to reduce the risk to your family.

Please email covid@sanctamaria.school.nz if your child falls into any of these categories and what their health condition is. Please tell us the Homeroom class your child is in.

If your child is at home and unable to attend school, all their learning can be accessed through the platform of Schoology. They know how to Login to this platform.

The College is also preparing for remote learning and is currently trialling face-to-face conferencing with teachers. Instructions have been given to your children by their teachers. This would be a seamless transition for our students to access their learning online, if the College were to close.

At this time, the school remains open for instruction and we will be open tomorrow (Monday). It is essential to maximise student and teacher contact time, to prepare for any eventual closure. Neither our Board nor I have the authority to close our school. Attached also is the document that shows the decision tool for school responses to COVID-19.

The Ministry of Health will contact me should they wish our school to be closed. This would occur if there was a confirmed COVID-19 case of a student or a staff member of our school.

The National Alert Level is set out in the following table https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/COVID-Alert-levels_v2.pdf

I know that this is a challenging time for us all. Reach out to your usual supports – family and whānau, friends and workmates. Sharing how we feel and offering support to others is important.

If you feel you are not coping, it is important to talk with a health professional. For support with grief, anxiety, distress or mental wellbeing, you can **call or text 1737** – free, anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – to talk with a trained counsellor.

Spend time in places that feel safe and comfortable as much as possible. Keep active – doing usual leisure activities and seeing friends can improve general wellbeing and help distract from distressing feelings.

It is also recommended that sticking to a routine such as having regular mealtimes, bedtimes and exercising is good to do.

Let your children talk about their feelings, and help reframe their concerns into the appropriate perspective. You know your children best. If they have a lot of questions, consider how much extra information would or wouldn't be helpful for them to know before responding.

Children need factual, age-appropriate information about COVID-19 so they can also feel informed and in control. They need to know how they can play a part in avoiding infection and the spread of virus. They also need to feel that any fears that they may have can be talked about and addressed.

Churches are open for individual or family visits for prayer-time.

We will get through this and if you have any further questions about your child's learning or anything to do with school please email your questions to the email address that we have set up on covid@sanctamaria.school.nz

With Blessings



Louise Moore
Principal and Spiritual Leader