



Huia Range School

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18th March, 2020

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

All principals are receiving constant updates from the Ministry of Education, about coronavirus and its possible impact in our schools, in terms of our tamariki and their whanau and the whole community.

At this stage we are being told schools are safe and we need, as a community, to constantly reinforce the hygiene suggestions on the back of this page.

Meanwhile we have received very strong messages about physical distancing (see over the page) and meeting in large groups, including less than 500 people.

This afternoon, after consulting with all schools, the decision was made to cancel the upcoming interschool swimming sports, in the interests of student, staff and visitor health.

Following this decision, I have made the decision to postpone our school swimming sports. I already know some parents are really happy with this decision and other parents definitely are not!

I am hopeful that as a school we will be able to hold these sports at a later date this year. I recognise this is exceptionally disappointing for some children, who have put in real effort to improve and were hoping to compete well and, if they were good enough, to win a cup.

Over the page is information received this evening from the Secretary of Education Iona Holsted. Her work position is directly below the Minister of Education.

Here at school, we are protecting the health of our community by following the advice of the Ministry of Health <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>. This is a very fluid situation and we will be changing our systems as advised by the Ministry of Health / Ministry of Education.

If you are concerned about your child and would like to discuss your concerns with me please don't hesitate to contact me - however I'm not the expert on coronavirus.

If you want to talk to an expert the Healthline is available 24 hours a day on 0800 358 5453.

Kia kaha - and stay calm
Nga mihi nui

Robyn Forsyth
Principal

From the Secretary of Education:

Please continue to focus on prevention of spread including through:

- Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and drying thoroughly - before and after eating as well as after attending the toilet
- Covering coughs and sneezes with clean tissues or with an elbow
- Putting used tissues in the bin
- **Staff and students need to stay home if they are unwell in any way.**

Physical Distancing

Yesterday we provided advice about considerations and possible approaches to school assemblies. (*basically advised yesterday not to hold assemblies or to only gather in smaller groups - Robyn*). Some people have asked why assemblies are different to classroom situations. The simple answer is that assemblies are not always core to providing education, and could be reduced or rearranged without impacting on learning.

Remember that personal hygiene, and reducing unnecessary physical contact (eg. hugs, handshakes, hongi) are still the most important things to do to stop the spread of any virus.

Please note that we are deliberately using the term “physical distancing” rather than “social distancing”. Maintaining social connection is as important as ever to people’s wellbeing during this time, if not more so. If you have students who are required to self-isolate, you could encourage their peers to maintain social contact with them through phone calls, email, pen-pal letters, class video calls, or age-appropriate social media.

Encouraging student attendance

We know that some parents have concerns about their children attending school at the moment, some of which may be due to what they are seeing in the media about other countries.

There’s a simple rule here – if students are unwell (whether or not their illness relates to COVID-19) they should stay at home. Students who are not unwell should continue to attend school.

It may be worth reminding your parent community that while we are seeing large-scale school shutdowns elsewhere in the world, in New Zealand we still have no community transmission. Consequently any decisions about school closures will be made on a case by case basis. In the meantime, unless students are unwell themselves, then parents should keep sending them to schools and early learning centres as these environments continue to be safe and the best place for them to continue their learning.