

21 February 2022

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

I am sure many of you have questions with respect to our positive case yesterday. Hopefully this makes things a little clearer for you.

1. CLOSE CONTACTS – the Senior Leadership Team met for over 4 hours yesterday once the case had been confirmed. We wanted to inform our community as quickly as possible so that any close contacts had the opportunity to isolate as soon as possible. This is not a quick process as we had to make sure that we informed the right people at the right time. The last thing we wanted to do was to increase someones anxiety by making a mistake.

We have a set of rules that are provided by the Ministry of Health and Education for defining a close contact. They are extensive. We work through classes, tutor time, breaks and events after school. Just because a student was in a class with a case does not mean that they are automatically a close contact. We are confident that we have identified all close contacts, but of course there can always be situations that are unexpected. The event that actually created the most close contacts happened on Saturday.

Close contacts are expected to isolate for seven day and get a test on day 5. Household members are fine to continue on as usual. If you are a parent of a close contact you can still go to work, though if symptoms begin to appear I would suggest a cautious approach to this.

2. FLOW ON EFFECT – as you can imagine our lines have been quite busy today. Every person that was identified as a close contact has been emailed and a follow up call made. The most common question is from people who are contacts of a close contact. Contacts of close contacts are not required to do anything other than what we are all doing: wear a mask, stay home if you feel unwell and get tested, get vaccinated. To be honest most of us fall in this category at the moment, be it work, school or socially. If you are not a specific close contact it is business as usual.

As to the questions like having a party and kids from Kaiapoi High being there, two things: one, for almost all of our close contacts, Saturday was the exposure event. A party on Saturday night should be way too quick for someone to get COVID and then be able to pass it onto someone else. The risk is low. We also managed to let people know of the situation within 3 hours of being informed. This reduced the possibility of spread greatly, and of course we were in the weekend so that helped too. Second, we cannot answer many of the questions that our parents are presenting to us. If you are unsure, like the question above, please ring healthline.

3. ONLINE LEARNING – almost all of our classes are in a hybrid state of learning already. They have been since day one as we expected this to happen at some point. This is achieved through google classroom. It is not like lockdown though. Our teachers are still at the rockface. They are still attending school and teaching your children. They are not doing zoom meetings. Students that have been identified as close contacts, or an actual contact, have the ability to access this learning and ask questions of their teachers. Students that choose not to come to school and are not a contact have the ability to access the online learning but not the same

ability to receive feedback from the teacher. This is because the Ministry of Education wants students at school, and we support this belief.

4. LETS BE KIND. I know that many of our community will know the person who has tested positive. That person notified us straight away and was extremely helpful with our contact tracing. All they have done is caught COVID from someone else. So lets be kind and not take any notice of the rumours that will no doubt be circulating by people who are not kind. To be honest, this behaviour upsets me more than anything else in this process. I understand that some parents might be anxious about the situation and have questions, but those people who circulate these rumours are simply doing so to increase your tension and anxiety, it makes no difference to where we are and what we are doing. Just to be clear, I do not know of these rumours but I am sure they will be out there if it is like the last time we went into lockdown two years ago.

5. WEAR A MASK. The best thing that you can do for us as a school and community other than being kind is to **make sure your child wears a mask** if they can. I cannot emphasise this enough. Get vaccinated, wear a mask, and come to school. If you are unwell get tested and stay at home.

Well that should cover most questions. To date I know that there are already six other high schools affected. I have no doubt that this number will continue to rise this week. I believe that we are well placed as a country, community and school to deal with the next few weeks/months. It may be a bit chaotic for a time, and then we will hopefully move to a new normal. Already we are seeing high rates but very low hospitalisations. We do need to change our mindset from keeping it out to managing it.

Ma te aroha ka tutuki
Bruce
