

22 February 2022

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

I will continue to provide you with updates each day. Some may find this useful, others may just put me to spam...

We had notification of our second positive result yesterday. Previous to Sunday I did not know of anyone who had COVID. We were warned of this, and once again North Canterbury seems at the front of the action. I do believe that as more schools, workplaces and households are affected by the wave, we will become more accepting of this stage of the pandemic.

Yesterday's case revealed no close contacts at school. The student involved followed all processes and wore a mask at all times. Wearing a mask makes a huge difference for us. Once again, our close contact point was actually outside of school. Technically this is not our area to enforce or investigate. This lies with the Ministry of Health, however they are incredibly busy at the moment and we were affected by this.

After hearing, we decided to take immediate action to make sure those students who had attended the party were not at school, most were not. We tried to do this as discreetly as possible, which was not easy. Our informing of the community was a bit shorter in nature and timeframe, as we wished to make sure we ringfenced the participants as quickly as possible. We feel confident that we managed to do this. We are receiving a number of calls regarding contacts in other situations. These should be dealt with by the Ministry of Health by phoning the COVID Healthline. To be honest, you could save your time as the advice will be the same as ours: isolate for seven days, get a test on day five, return to school on day 8 if negative. The School can only respond to confirmed positive cases. We do not respond to close contacts, or the more common contact of a close contact. If you are a contact of a close contact, you continue on as usual and keep an eye on symptoms.

I know that many of our families will be anxious at the moment. This is completely understandable. I do believe that to beat this, we need to change our mindset. The days of stamping it out are over, and we have to learn to live with this. For me personally, I think about the fact we had 640 road deaths over the last two years. This is more than ten times our COVID rate. Yet I still drive to school each day. There are ways to make sure that I am safe on the road: I wear a seatbelt and have a current licence. I drive a car that is warranted. Yet I can never mitigate the entire risk. One thing I do not do is stop driving and stay at home. This situation is no different. We vaccinate, we boost and we wear a mask. The risk is exponentially lower. We need to continue to live our lives. We need to keep coming to school. I understand that some of our children will be experiencing anxiety. I also know that some of our whanau will have people at home with compromised immunity. I am just not sure that removing our

children from school until this “goes away” is a positive approach to managing resilience, wellbeing and life in general. These are questions that we all must ask ourselves, and as parents we need to make these decisions. I pass no judgement.

What I would like our parents and caregivers to do is to be open minded and kind to our staff. Our staff are doing their best to make sure we continue to educate your children. We have made a commitment to those students who are positive or isolating due to either a close contact situation or waiting a test. Our teachers cannot teach in person and teach online. If your child does fall into those categories above, we will do our best to support them. Unfortunately we are receiving a number of emails directly to teachers insisting that they teach their children because they are waiting for this to all go away. These emails are becoming more and more unpleasant. Can we please stop this. As I said yesterday, our classes are online via Google, and work is there. We will not be offering an online environment like we have in the past because the School is still open for instruction.

Mā te aroha ka tutuki  
Bruce

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