

**COVID-19 Update: Wednesday 18th March, Week 7**

*“Currently across Marlborough we are planning for the worst and hoping for the best. If in August we all look at each other and say that we may have overreacted with some of our decision making, then we have done our job well.”*

As you will be aware, the situation around COVID-19 is rapidly evolving. There are now eleven confirmed cases in New Zealand and one is connected with a school in Dunedin, as of last night. The Government announcements over the last two days have provided a clear direction for us.

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It is caused by a type of coronavirus. The symptoms are:

- A cough (dry)
- A high temperature (at least 38°C)
- Shortness of breath

These symptoms do not necessarily mean you have COVID-19. They are similar to other illnesses that are much more common, such as cold and flu. Read here for more information from the Ministry of Health: [Health Advice](#)

Below are some of the ways that Witherlea School is responding to this emerging issue:

- *Pandemic Planning is ready with many elements are being initiated*
- *Our School Gala in its original format is cancelled this Sunday 22nd March*
- *No school assemblies till further notice*
- *New hygiene practices are being implemented at school*
- *School is getting ready for ‘Online Learning’ if schools are directed to close*

We receive regular updates from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health regarding COVID-19 and we follow their advice closely. We take a proactive approach to ensuring students and staff remain healthy and safe.

**Student Safety**

- Students and staff should stay at home if they are unwell.
- Please ring the Health line 0800 358 5453 if you develop any of the identified symptoms or you could ring your local GP for advice.
- Students who are unwell in class will be sent to the sick bay, and parents will be notified to collect them and if they present with a persistent cough (can disrupt learning for themselves or others) a temperature and/or vomiting they will be sent home as per usual procedures - they need to be clear of symptoms for 48 hours.
- Teachers will continue to explicitly teach and remind students of good hygiene practices.

**Overseas Travellers**

As of Monday morning, all travellers coming to New Zealand, except for some parts of the Pacific, are required to self-isolate for 14 days on arrival. This includes travellers from Australia. Please contact the school if; your child has been in close contact with a person, including family members, who have

recently returned from overseas so we can decide together the best/safest course of action. I also expect that you would inform us if you or your family intend to travel overseas during the holiday break.

### **Personal Hygiene**

We will teach and remind all students to follow Ministry of Health recommendations to minimise the spread of viruses;

- Wash your hands with soap and water often (for at least 20 seconds)
- **Bring a named hand towel or face cloth in the school;** we are asking all parents and caregivers to supply their children with either a hand towel or face cloth (NAMED) for their school bag to support the recommended hygiene practices
- Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- Avoid personal contact - 1.5 meters
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs, tables, chairs
- Stay home if you feel unwell

Call Healthline on 0800 358 5453 if you have any symptoms and have been to any [countries or territories of concern](#) or have been in close contact with someone confirmed with COVID-19.

### **Mass Events and Physical Distancing**

We will follow the guidelines from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health regarding events with more than 500 people. As such we have decided:

- Our annual school Gala in its usual format is cancelled for Sunday 22nd March
- All assemblies will be suspended till further notice
- School Sausage Sizzle is suspended till further notice
- Any group/mixed class gatherings will need to have students 1.5m apart
- Camps and trips with an overnight component are suspended. At this stage at Witherlea it includes;
  - The COMs Team Leadership Camp
  - Our Term 3-4 School Camps are too far away to make a decision (reviewed next term)
- A number of large school sports events have also been suspended till the end of Term 1, including all Interschool, weekday and weekend school sport. Our students will not be competing in:
  - Interschool Swimming Sports
  - Marlborough Rugby Union: 7's Rugby Interschool
  - Marlborough Volleyball
  - Marlborough Cricket
  - Marlborough Water Polo
  - Marlborough Softball
  - Marlborough Basketball (reviewed end of Term 1)
  - Marlborough Hockey (reviewed end of Term 1)
  - Marlborough Netball (reviewed end of Term 1)

*"The Marlborough Principals' Association has requested that Marlborough schools do not enter any school teams in any Interschool and weekly competitions for the remainder of term 1. We will review the situation at the end of term 1."*

Other sporting groups are being contacted and Marlborough Primary Schools are committed to community safety first

### **Cleaning at school**

We are intensifying our cleaning routine to ensure that high use areas such as door handles, counters, washbasins and shared devices are regularly cleaned.

### **Local and Regional Coordination**

While we are supported with regular updates from the Ministry of Education, we are also in close contact with other schools to ensure consistency of information and practice. Principals from Marlborough Principals Association Executive met this morning to make region wide decisions in line with community safety and recommendations.

### **School Closure and Online Learning**

We are in a good position to be able to continue some form of learning, online, at home, in the event that we are asked to close for a period of time. All Marlborough schools are looking to coordinate resources to ensure we can support our community in many ways.

While this is not a likely scenario at this stage, we believe it is sensible to be prepared. If you have no or poor internet connection at home, could you please ensure that your child's teacher is aware so that learning resources can be provided.

At this stage all schools are currently open and unless directed to self isolate due to contact with COVID-19 or travel to countries stated on the Ministry of Health website then ALL students should be in school. Packs of work will only be provided to students who are required/directed to self isolate and online learning will only occur in the event school closes.

### **Parent Teacher Interviews: Year 2-6**

As our learning in school continues without disruption we will still hold our Parent Teacher Interviews in Week 9 this term. We have an early finish planned on **Tuesday 31st March at 1pm** (School Closed) so that our teachers can have an interview with every child's parents and caregivers (one interview slot per child).

The interviews will go live tomorrow on [www.schoolinterviews.co.nz](http://www.schoolinterviews.co.nz) and the event code for Witherlea School will be sent out via the School App, website and through Seesaw.

We look forward to sharing our Term One Initial Reports with our whanau about your child's learning following the booking of your interview.

Thank you for your ongoing support of our school and for your patience as we work through this emerging situation. As always, do be in touch if you have any queries or concerns.

Ngā mihi nui

*Andrea Harnett*

Andrea Harnett  
**Principal**  
**Witherlea School**