

Covid-19 Parent Update 4

Dear Parents/Carers,

I have previously sent home information about the coronavirus that identified system initiatives and management advice from the Health Department via the Department of Education. I will continue to do this as such advice and notifications come through to the school.

This update has its focus upon what we are doing as a school to minimise the risk of exposure to Covid-19. There is much talk and conjecture about schools being closed. Any decisions around this are made at the highest levels of government due to the ramifications that would follow. Most likely, I will find out about a decision to close schools shortly before you do.

We have made sure that every person in our school has access to hand sanitiser in classrooms and in the toilets, as well as tissues in the classroom. Teachers are regularly reminding children about personal hygiene and how to wash their hands properly. Posters have been placed around the school as reminders on how to protect others from sneezes and coughs. Teachers have also discussed this with the children as part of the extra hygiene lessons.

The idea of social distancing (avoiding shaking and holding hands and maintaining some distance during social interactions) is gathering pace, as is determining the need for groups to gather for non-essential events. The advice in this area has seen the cancellation of some events, **for this term**, that our school was to be involved with. They are as follows:

- Interschool Swimming Carnival (this Friday);
- Young Writers Workshop (today, but may continue in Term 2);
- Have Sum Fun Maths Competition (this Saturday, may be re-scheduled to later in the year);
- Year 3 Big Swamp excursion (next week, cancelled for the time being);
- Tree Street Art Safari (this Saturday - where we were one of the stations)
- School Volunteers, including Hands Up 4 Kids (to cease for the foreseeable future);
- Pre-primary Easter Hat Parade (last Thursday of term); and,
- Bunbury RSL ANZAC Day Parade (April 25)

We also need to make some adjustments to how we organise aspects of our day and school programmes to reduce the number of children clustered closely together. The changes are as follows:

- **Assemblies** – (this week and week 9) classes will perform their item for their parents and it will be recorded and shared with all the other classes, but no children will attend. Merit certificates will be given out in class.
- **Lunch** – children will eat lunch in smaller groups:
 - Rooms 1 – 4 on their veranda area (where they already eat their recess food);
 - Rooms 5 – 8 in the existing lunch area; and,
 - Rooms 9 – 13 on the grass area at the front of the school.

Should the weather not suit these arrangements, the children will eat in their classroom. These arrangements may be adjusted once we see how they are working.

The requirement to self-isolate if you returned from an overseas trip after 9pm on Sunday adds to the complexity of everything. If you know of parents/carers or children who will be returning from overseas in the coming days, please let them know about the requirement to self-isolate and the potential fine if they fail to do so. Some families who returned just before the deadline have chosen to play it safe and self-isolate, just in case. It is my belief that the 9pm deadline was put in place so that there would be a clear starting point as opposed to everyone was safe from the virus before 9pm.

Some parents/carers are making the decision to keep their children home from school. Generally, this is for three reasons:

1. The child or a family member has an underlying health issue that puts them (or the family) in a much high risk category;
2. The family has recently returned from overseas; or,
3. They are taking precautionary steps simply to lower the risk of exposure.

This will mean:

1. Where a child is away due to the first two reasons, their teacher will provide some work and guidance to the parent/carers for them. It will not be 5 hours of work. The information will come to parents via See Saw (years K – 4) or Connect (years 5 and 6). Children already have access to Mathletics, Reading Eggs and Eggspress at home and this would be incorporated in any plans that teachers prepare.
2. Where a child is being kept home for reason three, parents/carers will have the same access to the online programs but will not be provided with additional work by teachers.

If the school is closed by the department, I believe that they have committed schools to make arrangements to provide work as described in point one above. However, I am not sure if and how this would happen at this point in time.

There are other non-student based events planned over the coming weeks which are also being looked at for their viability and risk minimisation.

What we need parents/carers to do over the coming weeks is to minimise the risk by considering the social distancing concept and keeping their child home if there is the slightest indication that they might not be well. The social distancing would mean:

- Avoiding waiting around in tight clusters;
- Greeting people without shaking hands;
- Choosing not to go into your child's classroom unless absolutely essential to do so; and,
- Drilling your child about personal hygiene.

If your child has a cough or sniffles, it does not mean they have Covid-19. However, given the level of concern within the community, the reaction of others toward them may be hurtful. It is regarded as good practice and social consideration that a child who has symptoms of the onset of a cold or the flu should avoid sharing it with their classmates.

One final reminder – this letter represents the state of play today. We all know that this will change as the virus spreads further into the state and its communities. We will do the best we can within the constraints we work within to keep the children safe.

Kind Regards,
Shane Doherty
Principal
March 17 2020

Covid-19 Symptoms

Most people infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience more serious illness and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness rises with age: people over 40 seem to be more vulnerable than those under 40. People with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.

People with COVID-19 may experience:

- fever;
- flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue; or
- shortness of breath.