

16th March 2020

Good morning everyone,

I'm writing this morning to clarify the school's response to the Prime Minister's announcement on Saturday about the coronavirus (COVID-19). You will have seen what has been happening across the world since January, and we have now reached the point in New Zealand where we have to take serious actions to protect ourselves and the vulnerable people in our community. It is a collective responsibility, and we all have a part to play.

As you will know, all those who enter New Zealand from anywhere in the world (other than the Pacific islands) are now required to self-isolate for 14 days. This includes New Zealand citizens and residents. The Government have also announced that large events are very likely to be cancelled, and the Prime Minister also talked about some principles that would apply when deciding which events needed to be cancelled. These included events where it would be difficult to contact trace people should an infected person be present.

Finally, the Prime Minister talked about the need to introduce some "social-distancing" measures. All of these measures are intended to 'flatten the curve': in other words, to make inevitable further infections manageable. I'm going to repeat here what the Prime Minister said on Saturday and which we have also repeated many times: there is currently no community transmission in New Zealand. Everything we are doing is precautionary.

Pinehurst has already had a series of strong measures in place, and we are strengthening these further from today. Some of the below are already in place. All of our decisions are based on two simple principles:

Keeping our children and their families safe. Our first responsibility is always to keep our children safe, but we also have the responsibility to keep families safe. Even though COVID-19 usually does not lead to serious illness for children, they can carry the illness and infect other people.

Maintaining a full educational experience for students. In other words, doing as many of the things as we normally do as we possibly can. This is good for children's wellbeing as well as their education.

So:

1. In order to support simple social distancing measures, we will not be shaking hands or greeting with any kind of physical contact in school. We will be working with students on these.
2. Students and staff will be expected to wash or sanitise hands on entry to all rooms (classrooms, offices or public areas such as Reception, the Library or College 4 Study Area). This is to reduce the chance of infection.
3. We will be "deep cleaning" certain public areas of the school according to a set schedule. We started this last week, and will be stepping this up. Other enhanced cleaning will be continued.
4. All students who have been overseas will be required to self-isolate for 14 days. This includes anyone who has come from overseas since March 3rd.
5. All students who have been in close contact with anyone who has been overseas are required to self-isolate until 14 days after the overseas contact has passed. This includes anyone who has come from overseas since March 3rd.
6. All parents of students who are on self-isolation should contact Alex Reed to confirm that they are self-isolating and when they will be able to return.
7. The School is withdrawing from all indoor sports competitions with other schools until the end of Term 1, although in-school practices will be able to continue.
8. The School has already cancelled visits to Polyfest and the Museum. We will not have any school visits to public places where there are likely to be significant numbers of people from other places.

9. The School is withdrawing students from all indoor inter-school competitions and zone days for the rest of term. This includes the North Harbour swimming competition.
10. No students who are not Pinehurst students will be able to take part in activities on the school site.
11. We are postponing Open Days and Experience Days until next term.
12. We will postpone or cancel any School Assemblies or events involving more than 50 students in any indoor space.
13. We are asking all of our community to think twice before attending any large event outside school, especially if these are unticketed.
14. We are also repeating what we said last week: my strong advice is that you do not travel overseas at this time. Our staff have been told the same thing.
15. There should be nobody in school who is unwell in any way. Please keep students at home if they have any symptoms.

We may make further decisions as time goes past, and we will continue to inform you about each of these decisions as we make them. They will all be based on the same principles outlined by the Prime Minister this weekend. Our procedures will be in place until the end of this term, and we will reassess before the start of Term 2.

Our school is a safe place, and any events we are involved in outside school are small-scale and fit within our school policies. Year 7 and 9 Camps are still taking place as these involve just our own students, and the Year 8 Leadership Camp will also go ahead for the same reason. I would urge all parents to ensure that their children are at school and taking part in school events. **It is good for the health and wellbeing of children to be getting on with things as normal, and to enjoy what they are doing as far as possible.** If things change and we have to close the school, we are ready to do so, and to implement our full online programme. But we are not at that point yet, and we hope that we do not reach that stage.

Please, as ever, ask me if you have any questions at all.

Kind regards
Alex

Alex Reed
Executive Principal
Pinehurst School

Phone: **+64 (0)9 414 0960**
Mobile: **+64 (0)21 194 8584**
Email: **Alex.Reed@pinehurst.school.nz**

pinehurst.school.nz



Our place

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