



# PUHINUI SCHOOL

## **Covid-19**

# **Special Newsletter**

19 March 2020

Newsletter No. 4/2020

Dear Parents, Caregivers & Families,

*This newsletter is intended to help our community receive appropriate advice on how we are managing the Covid-19 virus from a school and educational point of view. This replaces our normal newsletter.*

This newsletter is in 3 parts:

**Part 1** Direct information from the MOE Ministry of Education (as of 17th March).

**Part 2** Helpful information and topical issues at our school.

**Part 3** Helpful hygiene practices.

**PART 1 CURRENT ADVICE TO SCHOOLS FROM THE MOE 19.3.2020:** *Please read these key points from the MOE to Principals and schools...*

### **The Ministry has confirmed that at this point in time:**

There is no reason that children should not be going to school.

As you have been doing, please continue to focus on prevention of spread including through:

- Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and drying thoroughly - before and after eating as well as after attending the toilet.
- Covering coughs and sneezes with clean tissues or with an elbow.
- Putting used tissues in the bin.
- Staff and students need to stay home if they are unwell in any way.

### **Encouraging student attendance**

We know that some parents have concerns about their children attending school at the moment, some of which may be due to what they are seeing in the media about other countries.

**There's a simple rule here** – if students are unwell (whether or not their illness relates to COVID-19) they should stay at home. **Students who are not unwell should continue to attend school.**

In New Zealand we still have no community transmission. Consequently any decisions about school closures will be made on a case by case basis. In the meantime, unless students are unwell themselves, then parents should keep sending them to schools and early learning centres as these environments continue to be safe and the best place for them to continue their learning.

Schools will continue to be provided with the latest information and guidance from the Ministries of Education and Health, so that Principals and Boards can make well-informed decisions based on their school's particular circumstances.

### **School Closures - Not At This Stage:**

The MOE have stated... we are not expecting widespread school closures. We are planning for temporary closures, like what is happening at Logan Park School, but as the World Health Organisation has confirmed, the risk to children remains low and parents should continue to send their children to schools and early learning centres.

### **No Assemblies until further notice:**

The MOE has provided advice about considerations and possible approaches to school assemblies. Some people have asked why assemblies are different to classroom situations. The simple answer is that assemblies are not always core to providing education, and could be reduced or rearranged without impacting on learning.

### **If there is an identified case at Puhinui School what will happen?**

If we have a confirmed case of Covid-19 the Health authorities will ask the school to close for 48 hours while close contacts are traced and put in self-isolation for 14 days. Casual contacts will also be provided with information so that they know any symptoms to monitor for and where to go to if they become unwell. They do not need to self-isolate.

### **Reminder - Who needs to self-isolate?**

The Government announcement last weekend requires anyone who has arrived from overseas after 1 a.m. on Monday 16 March to self-isolate for 14 days, and to register with Healthline (0800 358 5453). The exception is people arriving from specified Pacific countries who do not need to self-isolate if they are not unwell.

People who arrived from overseas before 1 a.m. on Monday 16 March are not required to self-isolate, if they are unwell, or they have travelled from China, South Korea or Iran. Travellers from those countries need to self-isolate for 14 days from the date of their departure and register with Healthline.

### **PART 2: PUHINUI SCHOOL TOPICAL ISSUES:**

- Firstly, our school will continue to be advised and guided by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health.
- We receive daily postings and will adjust how we manage the Covid-19 outbreak decisively.
- We will respond to any incidences in a measured, balanced way.
- Although we understand parents who have concerns we will listen with empathy. Decisions will be made according to the advice we are given by the MOE and medical experts.
- If you are unsure of what to do, we will refer you to seek advice from health professionals, we are not doctors and we won't advise you on whether your child is sick.
- It is a parents responsibility to seek medical advice, when you are unsure about your child's health. We will encourage you to take a measured, well informed approach to decisions you make about your child/children.
- Swimming continues as part of our curriculum until the end of the term. There is no directive, or evidence to suggest that swimming should not continue. Like all everyday activities, we need to continue practising safe hygiene practices, e.g. keep all personal items in bags, be organised with personal items in tote trays, maintain good toilet and food hygiene procedures etc.
- We continue to practise safe hygiene practices at school. All rooms, toilets and communal spaces are cleaned every evening by our cleaners.
- Remember that personal hygiene, and reducing unnecessary physical contact (eg. hugs, handshakes, hongis) are still the most important things to do to stop the spread of any virus.

### **PART 3: Helpful hygiene and Advice:** *Below are some helpful hints based around good hygiene practices*

**Handwashing to prevent spread:** All schools and early learning services are still in the Keep it Out phase of a pandemic plan. The **preventative measures** the Health sector are encouraging schools and early learning services to practice are those of good hygiene, which include:

- Washing hands with soap and water before and after eating as well as after attending the toilet.
- Covering coughs and sneezes with clean tissues or with an elbow.
- Putting used tissues in the bin.
- Encouraging staff and students to stay home if they are unwell.
- Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, making sure you dry them thoroughly. Singing Happy Birthday twice slowly while washing your hands, should take about 20 seconds. To assist with this messaging, there are a couple of useful videos from the National Health Service (UK) that might help teach good hand washing techniques:
  - Teaches hand washing technique (UK NHS):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9VjeIWLnEg>
  - Hand washing happy birthday (UK NHS):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGJNspLRdrc>
- Parents can ring Healthline (for free) on the 0800 number specifically for health-related calls about COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) 0800 358 5453 at any time.