

Starting School in Alert Level Red.

Kia ora Ngunguru caregivers and whanau,

As we look to start the school year, it is evident that Omicron is here and will impact us all. New Zealand is now in Alert Level Red and likely to be there for some weeks. Therefore it is highly likely that we will start our school year in Red. In preparation for these events, there are a few things that you as parents, and we as a school, will need to consider and be ready for. Please find below a synopsis that includes the latest information from the Ministry of Education.

School Covid Response

The school follows the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health guidelines and I have included comprehensive information from these sources. Please find these attachments below but note that information can become out of date very quickly. Some parents will want to read this information carefully so that they are well informed, others may wait to be informed by the school through our usual updates like this one. Regardless, any further information received will be updated to you as soon as possible.

Communication

I intend to continue to keep you updated with regular email and school website posts on how the unfolding Pandemic affects us.

- By email.
- By our Skool Loop app (download from the relevant app store)
- By School Website. There are two key sections pertinent to the COVID-19 Pandemic on our school website. The links to these are below.
 - [The website homepage](#)
 - [COVID-19 Info](#)

COVID-19 immunisation programme for ages 5 to 11 is now available

Parents and caregivers now have the opportunity to protect their tamariki aged 5 to 11 against COVID-19, by being immunised with a child (by a paediatric) formulation of the Pfizer vaccine.

The vaccine used is a children's version of the Pfizer vaccine with a lower dose than used for adults. Children will need two doses of the vaccine and it is recommended to have the first and second dose at least eight weeks apart.

There are a number of websites available with resources that will help explain what the vaccine is, how it works and whether the vaccine is safe for young people.

- [Kids Health](#)
- [Health Navigator](#)
- [The Immunisation Advisory Centre](#)

Evidence of vaccinations

Please note that a school **cannot** require evidence of a child's vaccination status. Nor can a child be excluded from education outside the classroom (EOTC) based on vaccination status.

Preparing for Moving into Alert Level Red

The fundamental changes from where we finished 2021 are as follows.

- Mask Wearing. **All staff and students in Years 4 to 8** will need to wear masks/face covering **when indoors**. Our younger students in Years 1-3 will not need to wear masks/ face coverings. This becomes mandated by the government on the 3rd of February. In the situation of a year 3 and 4 composite class, year 4s will not need to wear a mask. We will be working with relevant students on why and how to wear a mask effectively. This will also apply on bus transport. We are yet to be advised of a date for this.
- Non-essential visitors are not allowed on the school site. This means that **most parents most of the time will be discouraged from coming into the school grounds unless absolutely essential**. Parents will only be permitted to be on site for important and essential activities.
- All adults entering the school must contact trace.
- As a general rule, we ask that drop offs be done outside of the school gate and pick ups within the school grounds 'only if needed'. New parents starting at our school and parents with new entrant pupils are an exception to this initially. There may be other exceptions to this for super anxious kids. Please contact the school if you think your child fits in this category. Staff will continue to give some thought as to how we can continue to ease this situation and we are currently reviewing our morning and afternoon processes.. More information will be given in due course.
- Any visitors on-site **must wear a face covering** and physically distance.
- Children with complex health needs. If you have a child with complex health needs, please consult your Doctor/Health Professional and seek advice about whether it is appropriate for them to attend school. This decision should be made by parents in consultation and on the advice of the child's doctor. Please advise school at the earliest opportunity if this applies to your child.

Events and activities

- In light of the greater risk of infection with a likely Omicron outbreak, we will not be holding events or activities that involve large numbers of students, such as school powhiri or assemblies.
- At Red, singing must held be outside with participants two metres distance.

EOTC

- With careful planning, education outside the classroom (EOTC) activities can go ahead at Alert level Red.
- By 4 February we anticipate that public health orders will be in place so that EOTC providers will be able to offer curriculum-related activities/services to a registered school that does not require all children to be vaccinated
- The provider will essentially be treated as a school premise while the EOTC activity is taking place. This in turn will mean our school camps will be able to go ahead with strict planning.

Stay home if sick and get tested

- If your child is unwell 'stay home' - get a COVID-19 test and remain at home until a negative result is received and they are symptom free for 24 hours.

Care in the Community

Omicron arriving in our communities will be tough for many families across New Zealand. If families do need to isolate, most people will be able to look after themselves with help from friends and whānau. However, some people may need help with things like food and groceries.

Families self-isolating who need extra support can call the COVID Welfare Phone Line on 0800 512 337, it's open seven days a week. MSD will connect callers with someone – they may be from a local community organisation, a government agency or marae-based services or support that iwi have established.

further information is also available here on the COVID-19 website:

- [Isolation and care](#)
- [Getting extra support if you have COVID-19 or are self-isolating](#)

Possible School Closure

The new traffic light system means that there will be no countrywide lockdowns or countrywide closures of schools. However, this does not mean that Ngunguru School will not close from time to time during 2022. Ngunguru School may close when or if an outbreak occurs within our school community.

Without making any sweeping or definitive statements, the school needs to remain flexible, agile and responsive when dealing with any potential COVID outbreak with our school community. A closure may happen while we do the initial contact tracing and decide which staff and pupils would have to isolate. We may shut the school or parts at very short notice.

Another alternative is that we will have a lot of staff sick or on COVID leave. The result could be that despite our best efforts, we cannot staff classes with teachers or teacher aide supervisors. If this occurs, we may have to send some classes home.

I envisage that initial closures will happen in many schools while schools get their heads around just who needs to be sent home to self-isolate. I also envisage that schools would reopen in whatever capacity is permitted by the restrictions they will face once this task has been completed.

To conclude, it appears that we are in for another topsy turvy year with lots of COVID-19 disruption.

We will do our very best for you and your whanau as a staff. Please be patient and kind to our teachers/staff as they are people too.

Working together, we will get to where we need to be, and we will do it by keeping everyone safe and healthy!

Take care of yourselves and each other, and be reassured that we will act responsibly, sensibly and with careful thought to keep your children learning, and safe.

Noho ora mai rā

Rick Sayer

Principal

Attachments:

[CPF-guidance-table-Schools-and-Kura-25.11.21](#)

[Categorisation Table](#)

[Process Sheet](#)

[Step-by-step guide for managing COVID-19 in primary and intermediate schools and kura Version 1.1](#)