



School Update No. 8

8 May 2020

Kia ora koutou,

Today the Senior Leadership team have been meeting to discuss Alert Level 2 and what that will look like at Forest Lake School.

The following explains the reasoning behind the decision to open up schools at Level 2.

We have carefully looked at the evidence around COVID-19 and educational settings, and at the experience of other countries in responding to COVID-19 in these settings to inform the public health advice to the education sector in planning for a move to Level 2.

Our experience in New Zealand and overseas with COVID-19 over the last four months shows that it does not infect or affect children and teens in the same way it does adults.

So children and teens have low infection rates, they don't become that unwell if they do get infected, and they don't tend to pass the virus on to adults.

Quality education is a public health intervention in itself, so I am very aware of the benefits of children and young people attending school and early learning, and the need to support children and young people to do this as quickly as we can.

The two key public health principles that support our approach at Alert Level 2 are first to minimise the risk that someone gets infected in the first place, and second to ensure we can identify and contact anyone who has been in close contact with a person, if someone in a school or early learning centre is infected.

Any children, young people and staff should stay at home if they are sick, or should be sent home immediately if they show any symptoms.

Physical distancing is a good precaution to prevent the spread of disease. In an Alert level 2 school environment, this means children, young people, and staff maintaining a physical distance so that they are not breathing on or touching each other, coupled with good hygiene practices (coughing into your elbow, handwashing and drying) and regular cleaning of commonly touched surfaces.

There are situations where physical distancing is not possible, such as some sporting activities. In these situations extra emphasis on handwashing and drying (or cleansing with hand sanitiser) before and after activities and regular cleaning of equipment is recommended.

Schools and early learning services will also maintain registers so that children, young people and staff can immediately be contacted by public health services if there is a probable or confirmed case.

And it is important that parents fully support this approach by doing their bit - keeping children home if they are unwell and seeking medical advice about whether a child may need to be tested; and ensuring great hygiene practices at all times.

Dr Caroline McElnay

Director, Public Health, Ministry of Health

The key principles for [Alert Level 2](#) are to:

- reduce the risk of someone getting infected in the first place
- ensure we can identify and contact anyone who becomes infected
- understand that Level 2 is not business as usual.

Using these principles we will be basing our guidelines for working at level 2.

Schools will be open to all students and year levels at Alert Level 2 from the beginning of the next school week after the announcement is made

Ngaa mihi

Whaea Chris