



# Seven Hills West Public School

Respectful, Safe, Responsible Learners

## COVID-19 UPDATE 16 MARCH

Dear Parents/Carers,

The situation in regard to COVID-19 continues to evolve with an increasing number of countries having sustained community transmission. The Australian and New South Wales Governments, working closely with health experts, are moving to limit the spread of the virus. Schools have been asked to consider their daily operations and take reasonable proactive steps in order to support the wider societal effort. This is part of the government-wide strategy to 'flatten the curve' of confirmed cases so that our health services can meet the needs of those who require care when they need it. It is important to remember that the current advice from Australia's chief health officers is to keep schools open.

This is a comprehensive update with a substantial amount of information. Please take the time to familiarise yourself with the content enclosed and contact me if you have any queries.

Please be assured that the school remains a safe place for students to attend and that the recent Federal Government's advice of prohibiting planned mass gatherings does not apply to schools.

### **SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS**

Students who fall into any of the categories below are excluded from school for a minimum of 14 days and are required to let the school know by telephone.

- Those who have travelled internationally (to any country) and arrived back in Australia from 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 are required, by law, to self-isolate for a period of 14 days.
- Those who have travelled prior to 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to China, Iran, South Korea or Italy are required to self-isolate for a period of 14 days.
- Those who are confirmed cases of COVID-19 are excluded from school and are required to obtain a medical clearance to return.
- Those who have come in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 are excluded from school for a period of 14 days. Close contact is defined as a person who has spent significant time either face to face (15 minutes) or in an enclosed space (2 hours or more) as someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

### **STAYING HOME DUE TO ILLNESS**

Although coronavirus is at the forefront of our minds, students may still become unwell with other ailments. Students who are sick, no matter their condition, should stay home from school. Absences of 3 days or more should be accompanied with a medical certificate.

### **STAYING HOME DUE TO CONCERN ABOUT INFECTION**

Schools remain safe places for students to attend, unless notified otherwise. Our infection control procedures are effective and students are expected to attend school unless they are in an exclusion category or sick. Students who stay at home out of general concern will be marked on the attendance register as explained/unjustified.

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## STAYING HOME DUE TO CHRONIC MEDICAL CONDITION OR COMPROMISED IMMUNITY

Parents of students with a chronic medical condition or immunosuppression who are concerned about the spread of the virus, or parents who have a condition themselves, should contact me directly to discuss options which will both protect the student's health and wellbeing but facilitate ongoing engagement with the curriculum. Absences for these students, after communication with me, will be approved.

## LOCAL OPERATIONAL CHANGES

In response to recent advice, Seven Hills West Public School will be making some changes to its operations. Most of these changes are simple and precautionary only.

### 1) *Encouraging Good Hygiene*

Students and staff are being reminded of good hygiene practices, including:

- a) **Washing hands regularly** and thoroughly; additional soap is available to students and foaming dispensers have been installed in all toilet blocks. Teachers will cease lessons earlier than usual before recess and lunch time to enable enough time for students to wash their hands.
- b) **Sneezing into elbows or a tissue**, and disposing of the tissue straight away and then washing hands.
- c) **Staying home if unwell.**

Teachers are administering lessons with their home classes about good hygiene.

### 2) *Encouraging Outdoor Learning*

The spread of germs and infections is less likely outdoors. Teachers will utilise outdoor learning environments where appropriate.

### 3) *Temperature Checking in Sick Bay & Students Sent Home if Unwell*

When students attend the sick bay, they will be assessed and if unwell, will be sent home. We have acquired a non-touch thermometer in order to measure students' temperatures. This will support decision-making.

### 4) *Cancellation or Postponement of Many School Events*

Until further notice, the following events are cancelled:

- a) **All school assemblies** – this includes regular fortnightly Wednesday assemblies as well as our planned Harmony Day / Anti-Bullying Day activities. We will still teach students the important messages associated with Harmony Day and the National Day of Action Against Bullying, and we still ask students to come to school in orange or cultural dress on Thursday. This will be revised returning to school in Term 2 and updates will be shared with the school community.

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- b) **Inter-school sport** – this includes weekly PSSA competitions, knock out competitions and trials for zone representative teams. Sport and physical education lessons within school will continue.
- c) **Excursions and camps** – The following organised excursions will not go ahead this term and may be rescheduled for later in the year:
  - a. Long Neck Lagoon student leader day
  - b. Kindergarten Zoo excursion
  - c. BFoPA Choir Rehearsal
  - d. Premier's Sporting Challenge dayOrganisation for the Stage 2 camp and Stage 3 camp are both suspended until further notice. As we cannot predict with certainty whether camps will go ahead, we advise parents to put money aside as if they proceed as planned, payment may be required in one lump sum instead of instalments.
- d) **Special Events** – Special events such as the Easter Hat Parade will not go ahead. Teachers are planning a virtual ceremony to mark ANZAC Day on the first day of Term 2 in classrooms. At this stage, we are not anticipating on holding a full school ANZAC Ceremony.

## **5) No 'Lines' in the Morning, After Recess or Lunch**

Students will continue to be supervised within the playground from 8:30am. When the bell sounds at 9.00am, students will be directed to walk straight to their classrooms. Teachers will provide supervision and support of students

## **6) Opening Windows to Improve Ventilation**

Staff members will leave windows and where possible doors open to improve ventilation of enclosed spaces.

## **FACE MASKS**

There is no need for students or staff to wear face masks. Students or staff who are unwell should be at home.

## **EXTENDED TRAVEL LEAVE**

When seeking leave from school for 5 days or more due to travel, parents are required to submit an extended travel leave request. As principal, it is my obligation to determine whether travel at that time is in the best interests of the student. Given the current restrictions on travel and advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs, it is unlikely that any requests will be granted at this time.





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## RESPONDING TO ALLEGED RACISM

Racism and other forms of discrimination are unequivocally prohibited at school. However, we know at times students are not aware of the power of their words and harm that they cause. I am aware of a small number of cases where students have felt marginalised because of others' comments about race and links to COVID-19. Students and parents are reminded to report any cases of racism directly to me or the relevant Assistant Principal. The school's Anti Racism Contact Officer (ARCO) is Ms Mitchell and she will be able to provide support for all students with the aim of her intervention being educative and restoring of potentially damaged relationships.

The current COVID-19 situation is unlike any that schools have managed before. I sincerely thank the community for the trust and understanding that are being demonstrated.

The Department of Education continues to work closely with NSW Health to monitor and respond to developments and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and staff.

All of the operational guidelines outlined in this correspondence will be reviewed at the commencement of Term 2.

Please contact me if you have any queries or would like further clarification.

Regards  
Mrs A Dziubinski  
Relieving Principal  
17.03.20

