

25 March 2022

Kia ora tatou

I hope you've had a good week, and are looking forward to the weekend.

There's quite a bit of information in today's update, so I'll get straight to it:

New cases

There have been four new cases, all in Year 2. Three of the students tested positive at home, one last night and two this morning, in each case after developing mild symptoms. The third student tested positive at school when we tested all Year 2 students this morning. We cannot be certain, of course, but it seems likely that the three cases are connected to the case we had on Monday afternoon, when a Year 2 student became unwell at school and subsequently tested positive.

None of the students had any symptoms while they were at school. And, this morning, we tested all Year 2 students who were in school, and only the student mentioned above tested positive. All the other tests were negative. Two of the students have siblings in Year 6. There are no other siblings.

This is the third "mini-cluster" we have had in school (we have been fortunate so far, helped by our parents acting cautiously and protecting each other): we had one in Year 4 (3 students); one in Year 10 (8 students) and now one in Year 2 (4 students). These seem to be the only cases of in-school transmission we have had. They are inevitable, unfortunately. Our approach is to reduce risk as much as possible but that doesn't mean we can eradicate it. We have now had a total of 60 students (6%) test positive in 30 days since our first case; and we have had 14 members of staff (10%) contract the virus.

Rapid Antigen Testing

- We tested all in-school Year 2 students - one student (as mentioned above) tested a weak positive, though she had no symptoms. All other tests were negative.
- We also tested all in-school Year 6 students. This is because two of the Year 2 students have Year 6 siblings. All Year 6 tests were negative.
- We also tested a small number of returning students and some staff. All tests were negative.

On Monday 28th March, we will test all Year 2 students in the Dance Studio before school. If we have to test additional students, we will let you know as soon as we make that decision. At the moment, we are not planning to test other groups of students.

Primary School from Monday 28th March

As I've been suggesting for a week now, hybrid learning in Primary ends today. **From Monday morning, all students are expected to be at school.**

If students have to self-isolate, either because they have had Covid or because they are a household contact, we will provide online learning through a Year 0-3 or a Year 4-6 teacher. Please note, though, that this is just for students who have to self-isolate. If your child is ill for any other reason,

they should be resting at home, and they won't be asked to learn online. We will give you details of how to access the online learning later today if your child is self-isolating.

There are a number of reasons for this change, as I've previously outlined, but the main one is that we need to restore as much normality as possible for our children. We need to build the special relationship a child has with his or her classroom teacher, and that the teacher has with the child and his or her parents. Our teachers need to be able to focus on the long-term development of their classes, knowing that these will be the children they teach. And our children need the social interaction that comes from being with their friends.

Why now? Because, despite the little cluster of cases in Year 2, we have had low numbers of cases in our school, and because cases will continue to occur in low numbers for many months to come. We cannot continue hybrid learning for months: it will have a serious effect on the students' learning and social development.

All other controls remain in place, including mask wearing in every year group, as well as very good ventilation, sanitising, and communication designed to support parents to keep their children and everyone's children safe.

College from Monday 28th March

All students are expected to be in school unless they are self-isolating, either because they have Covid or are a household contact. This has been the rule for some time, so I'm just clarifying!

Students who have to self-isolate can join in lessons online in the way we have organised work so far this term. If a student is unwell, though, he or she will not be able to join online learning. If a young person is unwell, they need to rest!

I hope everything here is as clear as it can be. As you can see, we're slowly getting to a place of "managed normality". It's important for all of us, and for our children, to make everything as familiar as possible, even though things aren't quite the same. Next term, we will be having more inter-school sports; next week, our Year 13s and Year 8s, tested and keen, are off on a camp. And we will continue to be careful, cautious and determined to give our young people the very best educational experience possible.

Have a lovely weekend
Alex

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