

Friday 11 February 2022

Tēnā koutou katoa,

As Omicron begins to take hold around the country, I want to assure you that we have steps in place to minimise the impacts it will have on our community and our tamariki's learning. You are probably aware that some primary schools in New Zealand are already reporting COVID-19 Omicron cases. Below you can read about the process our school will undertake once we are informed of a positive case.

There are two ways I will be notified of a case:

1. NOTIFICATION THROUGH PUBLIC HEALTH

When there is a confirmed case in the community, public health officials will undertake a case investigation, and work closely with the confirmed case to identify any close contacts, including any connection to a school or early learning service.

Health officials will then contact the Regional Director of Education to provide direction on contact tracing and other relevant information. The Ministry of Education will provide support with communications to our school community, based on this public health advice.

As a result of the case investigation, public health may be able to provide the following information:

- Infectious period OR information that the person was not infectious when at school
- Any known activities onsite during that infectious period
- Isolation end date and testing advice for contacts

2. NOTIFICATIONS FROM STAFF, PARENTS OR CAREGIVERS

A staff member, parent or caregiver will first notify Brent or Carol that they, or their child, are a confirmed case. If this is so, and I have yet to hear from Public Health, I will immediately contact the Ministry of Education, who will liaise with Public Health and then work quickly with our school on the appropriate next steps.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The Principal liaises with the Ministry of Education and Public Health to work through the next steps as identified in the attached document: Cases in Schools Process Flowchart for Roles and Responsibilities Jan 2022. I will work with a designated single point of contact (SPOC) at the Ministry of Education to go through the steps in the flowchart.

Roles and responsibilities in regard to this are summarised here:

Role	Responsibility
Principal / Tumuaki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm with Ministry of Education (MOE) Single Point of Contact if student/staff member is a positive case • Discuss public health risk and contact categorisation with MoE Single Point of Contact and public health • Complete assessment of contacts • Provide list of contacts to National Investigation and Tracing Centre • Send letters to Close Contacts and Casual Contacts (school community)
Ministry of Education Single Point of Contact (SPOC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request information on a case from a public health unit • Provide information about the education facility • Notify school / kura and arrange a meeting • Discuss public health risk and contact categorisation with Principal / Tumuaki and public health • Support Principal / Tumuaki to complete assessment of contacts
Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate case • Confirm positive case was infectious at school • Notify MoE Single Point of Contact of the case at school • Discuss public health risk and contact categorisation • Provide the infectious period, self-isolation end date and testing dates
National Investigation and Tracing Centre (NITC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upload Close Contacts into NCTS • Provide advice to Contacts

Identifying the contacts can take a bit of time to ensure the risk assessment undertaken by public health is based on good information. Our school has good processes in place for making the contact tracing process as easy as possible.

As an interim measure to mitigate risk and if advised by the Director of Education to do so, the following actions can be taken:

- The confirmed case and their household should already be self-isolating.
- As a precaution, those who have been in the same classroom/bubble/room as the confirmed case for the previous 48 hours can be required to stay at home, until public health advice has been received.
- There is no testing requirement at this time for those individuals unless they are feeling unwell and are advised by Healthline or their GP to get tested.
- Our school will be provided with specific guidance based on the public health risk assessment as soon as possible which is likely to require any close contacts to self-isolate and get tested.
- Undertake a thorough clean prior to the other students, children and staff returning onsite.

HOW WILL WE COMMUNICATE WITH YOU?

- Close contacts of a confirmed case will receive direct communication from the school.
- I will inform the Whole School Community once a case is confirmed.

FURTHER PLANNING

We are also currently working on more plans that allow us to keep everyone as safe as possible while providing quality learning for all. We are considering a range of scenarios that may arise and the possible impacts they have on the school community. This includes the number of staff and students absent due to COVID infection or self-isolating and how we will provide hybrid learning (onsite and online learning).

One of the challenges we face is adapting our learning programmes to cater as best we can for having students on-site at school, and at home in isolation. We will be taking a pragmatic approach to this.

COULD WE CLOSE?

There may be a point where the number of staff absent across all the roles in our school creates a situation where we can no longer safely operate. Any decision to do this will be made by the school's Board in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Public Health.

The emergence of cases in our school is going to generate more complexities in an already complex environment. We have plans in place, we will adapt and I'm sure we will learn along the way. Your support over the last two years has helped us make the most of each situation and we know that you will continue to support us as we work through this ever-changing landscape. Let's look after each other and work together to get the best outcomes for all.

Nga mihi nui

Brent McDowell

Tumuaki

Kapiti Primary School



Getting your household ready for self-isolation:

We may start to see more cases of COVID-19 in the community in the coming months. The good news is that most people are likely to have mild to moderate illness and will be able to self-isolate and fully recover in their own homes.

Preparedness is about the steps you can take and the conversations you can have now to help you or your whānau if you need to self-isolate. Everyone should prepare for what they need to do if they get COVID-19.

Tips for household COVID-19 preparedness:

Have a household plan in case someone in your house gets sick and must self-isolate or go to the hospital. This includes room/house plans or options looking at how people who are unwell will be away from other household members

Get some basic supplies like tissues, rubbish bags, bags to separate laundry of people who are unwell, gloves, cleaning supplies, other things you like to have when you are feeling under the weather (throat lozenges etc)

Have a chat with people now about how you will get groceries if you are self-isolating. Talk to friends and family, look at how you will support each other

If you are the main person in the household who looks after bills, pet feeding, internet banking etc make a list of easy-to-follow instructions so your family can support you with this if you aren't well