

Dear Parents/Guardians/Students

COVID-19 Coronavirus – Message from the Principal

I am sure many of you were sad that the *Crab Fest* did not go ahead this weekend gone. It is a great weekend and I am devastated for the numerous businesses that had put hours and hours of preparation and money into getting their stalls ready.

There will be debate over the cancellation of this event but our government is taking bold steps to ensure Australia protects its most vulnerable people; the elderly, the sick and those living with disease or disability that puts them at grave risk should they contract the Coronavirus sweeping the world.

As a community, we must play our part in what is being asked of us in regards particularly to hygiene and social distancing to get ahead of the virus spread in WA. We still have low numbers of people known to have the virus and I believe all can be linked to people returning from overseas or being in contact with someone who has contracted it overseas. This might not be the case for other parts of Australia but the country is still in a good position to make a different outcome to some other parts of the world as we can act before our health system is overwhelmed by cases.

COVID-19 causes symptoms much like a flu and for the majority of us this is not life threatening and often results in mild symptoms. Symptoms include (but are not limited to) fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath. It is very important to note as it stands in Australia right now, unless you have returned from overseas or have been in contact with someone known to have COVID-19, it is not likely to be coronavirus but a common cold or other respiratory disease, should you get these symptoms. (This is why we should not panic or be overly worried about this situation).

So, next question is, so if most people only get it mildly then why is there so much panic and these extreme measures being taken. I mean, what? No spectators at the footy?? And where is all the toilet paper??

COVID-19 is more contagious than the flu, there is no vaccine and because it is new we have no immunity circulating in society for it. It is easily spread through coughing and sneezing but also hangs around on many surfaces, so if it does get away from us because we don't change our habits, many of us will get it, many of us will be just fine but those in high risk groups won't be. 3.2% of people that have got it so far have died. Seems small? Well not if 100's of thousands or even millions get it, that number will be massive. Also, those healthy and young will have less deaths, like less than 1% but I do believe 15-20% of the elderly die.

So, the extreme measure must be taken seriously so we can protect our sick and disabled friends, and our grandparents, or in your case maybe great grandparents. If we take it seriously we can avoid the mass and peak spreading, seen in other countries where even more extreme measures have had to be taken once it is running rampant. So, we all play a part here. If not for us, then for them.



What we are going to do?

1. Wash your hands, wash your hands, wash your hands.

The College toilets have soap and paper towel in them now. There is also a poster showing students & staff how to do it effectively. Let's be honest, there should always be these reminders and products in the toilets but unfortunately some people do some odd and selfish things and waste these items. So, if you are one of those people that do odd and selfish things, if ever there was a time not to, it is now! Let's hope when the virus subsides we can keep trusting our fellow students to continue to behave respectfully in the toilet spaces.

2. Social distancing.

Hard to do in school but not impossible. We have a very large playground luckily; the canteen is a bit tight though. We will be rotating year groups to head to the canteen early to reduce the numbers waiting. Ensure you line up orderly and get through as smoothly as possible. Find a spot with a small number of friends away from other groups. We should spread out as much as we can.

The Prime minister says don't hand shake, high five or hug each other but I also want you to stop with the rough play in the yard. Getting very close to people is not great in terms of catching things, and wrestling on the ground would be too close, don't you think.

We will no longer be having assemblies, even year assemblies, and most of our events will be cancelled for the remainder of term 1 and reviewing for term 2.

3. Stay home and away.

If you have flu like symptoms stay home. If you get them at school, stay a distance from people and let's get you home asap. If you are going overseas, you won't be able to come back to school for 2 weeks when you return. Fair enough. I am sure we will be able to get some work to you.

4. If you cough or sneeze, cover it.

Cough and sneeze into tissues or your elbow. Throw tissues into the bin and wash your hands. I was reading that in Japan last year they had over 2000 deaths from the flu and they were expecting the flu season to be worse this year but their government went very hard with restrictions in the country because of the Coronavirus that not only have they kept it under control to a degree but they have had less flu deaths. Go figure. Lesson in this for us all.

5. Keep your hands away from your face, mouth and nose.

Makes sense don't you think? We don't know what the next steps will be, school closures are still a possibility but I need you to know, although the world is rallying to reduce the impact of this virus, we are in the best position to make a difference if we just do these simple things to ensure our most vulnerable friends and loved ones are kept safe.

Vicki McKeown
Principal

16 March 2020