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Title School Operations at Covid19 RED Light - Message & Update

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Welcome back.
I hope you all had a very relaxing and enjoyable festive season.

MANGAROA SCHOOL

We have now finished 2 days getting our heads around how the traffic light system will look at Mangaroa school. I thought it timely to touch base to explain, simplify and clarify a few things.

As a principal, leading a local response to the Pandemic in a state school must be based on direction from the experts in the field. My expertise and knowledge is education and educational leadership. I am not an expert on Pandemics. This is not about my own personal views or beliefs and this can never be an aspect of decision making in a school.

My leadership responsibility is to enact required procedures and mandates from the Ministry of Health and Education as best as possible to cater for all. This is complicated, difficult and not easy. We must all remember that like every school community across the country, we have the full range of views on masks, mandates, vaccines, and other requirements at each alert level.

I am pleased to be able to provide the following information which I am hoping will ease the minds of all views across the spectrum of the Covid Response. This is a result of receiving the Ministry of Education's Bulletins, zoom meetings with our local Ministry office and principals, and communications with many individuals over the past 2 weeks.

Masks

It is mandated for children from Year 4 up to wear masks indoors at school and on the school bus.

- Children will not be required to wear a mask outdoors when being educated (eg: PE lessons, and Garden to Table), having lunch, when eating and drinking, or during play time outside. However some may choose to and this is their choice and completely fine.
- There are also official exemptions for wearing a face mask including for children or staff who: are deaf or hard of hearing, or if the person has a physical, mental health need or disability, that makes wearing a face covering unsuitable for learning.
- If your child requires an exemption, you can apply for an exemption card. You can show your exemption card when needed.

You can request an official card from the following:

1. Disabled Persons Assembly NZ by contacting them on 04 801 9100 or emailing them at info@dpa.org.nz — for disabled people or if you have a health condition
2. Blind Citizens NZ on 0800 222 694 or emailing them at admin@abcnz.org.nz — for blind, deafblind, low vision, and vision-impaired people
3. Deaf Aotearoa by emailing covid@deaf.org.nz — for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

Source: <https://covid19.govt.nz/prepare-and-stay-safe/keep-up-healthy-habits/wear-a-face-mask/who-does-not-need-to-wear-a-face-mask/> (<https://covid19.govt.nz/prepare-and-stay-safe/keep-up-healthy-habits/wear-a-face-mask/who-does-not-need-to-wear-a-face-mask/>)

You should only request an exemption card if you have a disability or health condition that makes wearing a mask unsuitable.

- Mask enforcement and 'policing' is not the job of school staff. Our role is to remind, encourage and support all who are able to wear their mask as per the guidelines. If your child is non compliant, this will be managed discreetly. Children will not be punished for not wearing a mask. However, if it is a recurring issue and they can wear a mask, the teacher might phone the parent to come to a mutual understanding of how to further support the child to wear their mask.
- Education is the key. This week teachers have spoken to classes to factually educate the children about the realities of how the mask mandate looks in our school. That is, we will discuss:
- How most people will be wearing one, and some people will not.
- No one is permitted to question why or why not someone is or is not wearing a mask

- That people who mock others for wearing or not wearing a mask will have a meeting with Mr Steere or Mrs Harrison, and consequences may have to be put in place or a meeting / phone call with parents

No staff member will be expressing their opinions on mask wearing or whether or not you should wear one. We also ask that parents on site do not discuss this topic. Discriminatory behaviour towards masked or unmasked will not be tolerated. Just like we will not tolerate racism.

Red Level operations and if a case emerges at school

- We remain open at all alert levels.
- If a case is confirmed at Mangaroa School, we follow Ministry Guidelines, and it will depend on the nature of the case as to whether groups of people isolate, the school shuts, or we continue business as usual.

Vaccines for children

Children are not mandated to receive the vaccine to be able to attend school. Parents make the decision about whether or not their child will receive the vaccine. **Schools have not, cannot and will not give permission for a child to receive the vaccine.** Information to the contrary is purely gossip and social media speculation.

Vaccinated and unvaccinated children have a right to education. Mangaroa School will not be a place that has discussions for or against vaccines.

Parents on site at Red Level

The same procedures remain as they did for Term 4. All parents are required to wear a mask when entering the school to drop children off and scan in. Parents are not to go into classrooms. The exception to this is our New Entrants class.

Events and activities

All school based activities for children continue as normal. However, these will most likely be class based only with interaction between classes minimised. No non-essential visitors are allowed on site. There will be no assemblies.

We make decisions about off-site activities on a case-by-case situation using a flow chart from the Ministry. It is likely that most off site events, programmes, activities, or sports will be very minimal during Term 1. Information about sports on offer in light of RED level will be outlined in separate information as we send this out.

The usual hygiene products and processes will be in place as they have been at previous alert levels. Remember if your child is sick in any way, keep them at home.

Thank you for your support and understanding at this time. We will get through this. Please do not hesitate to contact your class teacher or myself, if you have anything you wish to discuss about the Red Alert Level requirements.

Ngā mihi nui

John Steere

Principal | Mangaroa School