



PANDEMIC POLICY - Updated 2020

Rationale

It is essential that schools take all practical steps to protect staff and students from a possible influenza / COVID-19 outbreak.

GUIDELINES

Pandemic manager:

Principal and/or the Deputy Principal.

Duties the pandemic manager" may perform include:

- Establishing a system to monitor staff who are ill or suspected of being ill, including contacting staff who are unexpectedly absent from work – has their doctor been notified of their illness? Have they been in contact with anyone? Have "contact" issues been addressed? Is someone able to care for them?
- Ensuring adequate supplies of tissues, medical and hand hygiene products, cleaning supplies and masks. It may be difficult to purchase such products once a pandemic begins.
- The above two points are particularly important during the "stamp it out" stage when you may still be required to remain open but vigilant.

Medical advisor:

Carole Pedersen, Public Health Nurse

Activation of pandemic action plan

The Ministry of Health will widely publicise any changes to the "alert codes", and may signal the need to activate action plans and continuity plans. The Ministry of Education will communicate with schools to assist with keeping regional and local Ministry offices, education agencies, and education sector groups informed of these changes. Schools will most likely find out about changes via email, media or through being contacted by the MOE.

Communication with our community

It is likely there will be anxiety leading up to and during a pandemic and this is likely to contribute to increased absence and/or increased stress to the board, managers, staff, parents/whānau and students.

Ways that we can manage this:

- Communicate early the possibility of a pandemic and your preparedness to manage it – to your board, staff, students, parents and whānau. [Ministry of Health](#) influenza advice might be useful.
- Discuss with staff possible health and safety issues, and leave arrangements for them if they are ill or need to look after dependents.

- Have a comprehensive plan in place which is clearly communicated to your board, staff, students, parents and whānau. Ensure that communications management during the pandemic is part of the plan.
- In activating your plan, provide clear, timely and pro-active communications to your board, staff, students, parents and whānau explaining how you are managing the situation.
- Establish a “communications plan” to circulate important messages. Consider how you might maintain communication with:
 - board, staff, student, parents and whānau
 - other ECE/Schools/TEOs in your area/cluster
 - relevant agencies and community support networks
 - key suppliers and contractors.

The following protection measures need to be followed at all times:

Protection measure	Where applicable
Hand hygiene, cough etiquette, ventilation	Everyone, all the time
Health and safety policies	Everyone, all the time
Social distancing	Everyone, whenever practical stay at least one metre away from other people.
Protective barriers	In situations where regular work practice requires unavoidable, relatively close contact with the public, for example, reception areas.
Disposable surgical mask	Sick people coughing and sneezing Staff having close contact with suspected infected people, for example, in sick bay caring for the sick (this includes first aiders) Also as a possible adjunct to protective barriers.
Disposable masks, eye protection, gloves, gowns, aprons	Health care workers participate directly in close contact patient care when there is a high risk of contact with respiratory secretions, particularly via aerosols (mostly inpatient settings). Unlikely to be necessary in schools.

Restricting workplace entry of people with influenza symptoms

Students who are unwell should remain at home and staff, parents and whānau should be advised not to come into the school when they are feeling unwell, particularly if they are exhibiting any influenza symptoms. Unwell staff and students (through their parents/whānau) should be advised to contact a doctor by phone, and to stay at home until symptoms resolve.

Managing staff and students who become ill

Assess whether the person or child has any of the following:

- High fever (or feel feverish and hot)
- Headache, fatigue and weakness
- Sore throat, cough, chest discomfort, difficulty in breathing
- Muscle aches and pains.
- Been overseas recently to an affected country
- Been in contact with someone diagnosed with influenza.

COVID-19 - Common signs of infection include

- fever
- respiratory symptoms
- cough
- shortness of breath and breathing difficulties

In severe cases COVID-19 can cause

pneumonia,
severe acute respiratory syndrome,
kidney failure and even death.

Fill in the suspected influenza / COVID-19 form . Take names of contacts (those who have been within one metre of them or in an enclosed place for more than 60 minutes). File form in office. A copy needs to be sent to Carole Pedersen and other agencies.

Organise for them to leave school immediately. Suggest they or their family call their doctor by telephone to advise that they have been in contact with a suspected influenza case.

If a sick child cannot leave school immediately because the school is unable to contact the parent, the child will be placed in a designated isolation zone e.g. Sick bay.

Suspected Influenza Notification Form

Details of Affected Staff/Students

Details of Affected Staff/Students

Name:	Site:	Location of isolation:
Job title:	Nationality if visitor to site:	Date of birth: (optional)
Address:		
Telephone no: _____ (W) _____ (H) _____ (M)		
Symptoms noticed:		
Fever <input type="checkbox"/>	Body aches <input type="checkbox"/>	
Headache <input type="checkbox"/>	Fatigue <input type="checkbox"/>	
Dry cough <input type="checkbox"/>	Others <input type="checkbox"/>	Details: _____
Cold <input type="checkbox"/>		
Time of fever on-set: _____		
Time of isolation: _____		
Travel history over the past eight days:		
Countries visited _____		
Flights taken: _____		
Where referred:		
Contact List (See separate page)		

Where referred:
Contact List (See separate page)

Details of Reporter

Name:
Job title:
Telephone no: _____ (W) _____ (H) _____ (M)

Hygiene practices should be elevated in a pandemic to an even higher level than usual.

- Remind staff and students not to share cups, dishes and cutlery; and ensure these items are thoroughly washed with soap and hot water after use.
- Remove books, magazines and papers from common areas.
- Consider ways of cleaning and/or restricting communal use of some play, physical education equipment and office equipment.

Emergency Pandemic Supplies:

Ensure that the school has the following:

- Breathing masks, Latex / non-latex gloves, Paracetamol, Disinfectant, Cleaning fluid, Toilet paper, Tissues, Janola
- Paper towels, Liquid soap/alcohol wash, Chux Cloths.

These supplies will be kept in the Rainbow Room cupboard on a high shelf marked Pandemic Supplies and will be checked monthly by the Pandemic managers.

LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents / Caregivers

The government has announced that New Zealand is stepping up its pandemic influenza / COVID-19 response plans. This means that the situation overseas has changed and New Zealand's borders have been tightened in an attempt to stop the virus getting here.

Our school is talking with health and civil defence officials and we have been advised that there is no reason for alarm. Our school will remain open until further notice. Our own pandemic plans mean that we have systems in place to help us cope if anything changes.

The most important thing you can do as parents and caregivers is reinforce healthy messages:

- Teach your children the importance of hand washing and drying – especially before meals and after toileting.
- Teach your children to use a disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing.

We ask that all children showing flu like symptoms or chest infections be kept home until checked and okayed by a doctor or nurse to return to school. **The symptoms of influenza / COVID - 19 and how they differ from common cold symptoms can be found here**

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public>

The board of trustees and I are working closely with staff to ensure that all students at our school are kept as safe as possible.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me directly. Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Principal

SCHOOL CLOSURE

Closing schools to students would not necessarily mean that facilities would be closed in a quarantine sense. Staff may still go to work, work remotely, or carry out 'alternative duties' for other agencies with their board's pre-approval. Facilities may also be used for alternative purposes such as Community Based Assessment Centres.

The Education Act 1989 gives principals and boards powers to exclude particular students and staff or to close their school in certain circumstances:

- *Section 19* provides that a principal may exclude a student who may have a communicable disease (communicable diseases are specified in the Schedule to the Act. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza or 'bird flu' (HPAI subtype H5N1) was added on 12 February 2004. In practice, schools would generally proceed subject to advice received from health authorities.
- *Section 65E* provides that a board may close a school in an emergency such as an epidemic.
- *The Health (Infectious and Notifiable Diseases) Regulations* place duties on schools, teachers and parents in the case of a pandemic.
- *Regulation 14* provides that schools must exclude teachers and students who have an infectious disease.

Careful exercise of all these powers will be especially important in the "stamp it out" stage. Any decision by the board chair and principal to close the school should be based on advice from health authorities. Though schools in an affected area may be closed to students, schools in unaffected areas will be expected to maintain normal services. Ill-advised action such as an unnecessary closure would make life very difficult for the wider community.

In the event the decision is made to close the school the pandemic manager will use all available communication options to inform the community of the schools closure ie.

- through email
- update any voice message system with the new status of the school
- update the schools website/Facebook page /Twitter etc
- through sms systems e.g. Etap
- signage up at the school gate(s).

If a child arrives at the school during a closure it is the schools responsibility to keep them safe and arrange for their pick-up.

If closure is required during the school day:

- Teachers maintain an appropriate programme in the classrooms, keeping students safe and occupied.
- Teachers are responsible for signing students out to parents or caregivers.
- Teachers may not leave the school until the principal gives permission.

It is important to maintain up-to-date contact lists for students and all staff and students

The school must advise the Ministry of Education of the closure as soon as possible, and apply under Section 65E(2) of the Education Act 1990 to reduce the number of half days it must be open for the year.

