

13 March 2020

Dear Parents

I wish to provide a further update on COVID-19 and how the School continues to plan in response to this advice. Since I wrote last week, there have been some significant developments and these continue to occur quite rapidly. Yesterday, the USA closed its borders to Europe, this week a number of schools in NSW and Victoria have closed for a period of time, and today the Prime Minister announced that only essential overseas travel should be considered.

As we navigate the impact of the COVID-19 virus, it is important that we pay close attention to expert advice from official sources. We need to respond calmly and thoughtfully as a community to ensure that we minimise the health impacts at School and maximise the capacity of our health, education, and social services to support those most in need. At this stage, it seems likely that the outbreak will continue to spread, so I hope that this email may provide some reassurance about the School's preparations.

At Whitsunday Anglican School our aims are to:

- Protect the health and safety of students, staff, families, and visitors;
- Educate our School community as to the impacts of the spread of COVID-19; and
- Maintain, where possible, educational continuity.

There are several measures to our response, as summarised below. We hope that these measures will not be necessary, but we feel it is important to be prepared. However, what matters most is that we all take sensible precautions, that we maintain perspective and an informed understanding, and that we continue to support each other with care and compassion.

Isolation Measures (to prevent entry of the virus to the School)

This measure has been active since the start of term and it is intended to inhibit the entry of the virus into the School community.

As per Government and Whitsunday Anglican School guidelines, the following mandatory exclusions currently apply:

- Anyone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 must not attend School until medically cleared to return and this must be reported to the School.
- Close contact with anyone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 must also be excluded for 14 days since the last contact with the confirmed case and this must be reported to the School.
- Any student or staff member who has left, or transited through, *Higher Risk* countries (as defined by the Australian Government Department of Health <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>) will need to self-isolate for 14 days from the time you departed the country and seek medical clearance prior to attending School.



- Any student or staff member who has left, or transited through, *Moderate Risk* countries (as defined by the Australian Government Department of Health <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>) will need to self-isolate for 14 days from the time you departed the country and seek medical clearance prior to attending School.
- Any student who has returned from any destination overseas, that is not defined as *Higher Risk* or *Moderate Risk*, will need to seek medical clearance prior to attending School.

Prior to returning from mandatory exclusion or self-imposed isolation, all students and staff are to submit a medical certificate by email to jnk@was.qld.edu.au and on return, must present to the Wellbeing Centre for assessment.

As we look toward the next School holidays, we respectfully ask all students, families and staff to consider their international travel plans, including to currently non-restricted countries, as the Government's mandatory exclusion requirements may change over the coming months, as they have in recent weeks. Thank you to those families who have advised the School of your travel plans.

School Travel and Community Engagement Restriction Measures (curtailing School activities to restrict the spread of infection)

With the increased worldwide spread of the virus, we have recently made a number of decisions to modify School activities in order to restrict the potential spread of COVID-19 within the School community:

- At this stage, and with great regret, we have taken the decision to cancel all School activities involving international travel. As you may be aware the Director-General Department of Education issued a directive on Tuesday 10 March that all school/Departmental international student and staff travel should not proceed until further notice for all destinations other than New Zealand. We were advised by the Anglican Schools Commission on Thursday 12 March that all international student and staff travel not proceed until further notice for all destinations other than New Zealand. This is an informed decision which also accords with decisions taken in other Australian education systems seeking to contain COVID-19 and to minimise risk to Queensland students and staff.
- Similarly, all interstate activities will be subject to consideration on a case by case basis as the virus spread becomes apparent.
- School excursions will be reviewed on a case by case basis.
- Grandparents Day has been postponed to a date to be determined in Term 4.
- Reluctantly, we must also suspend all work experience until further notice.

In the coming weeks, we will monitor the situation closely and will make decisions as far as possible in advance with regard to large scale School events including carnivals, open days and assemblies.

We regret the impact on opportunities so intrinsic to our School's character, let alone on the efforts of so many in preparation, but we trust that everyone will understand that health and safety must be our highest priority.



School Closure Measures (to maintain educational continuity if closure is required)

We hope that this level of response will not be required. However, there are a number of potentially foreseeable circumstances under which it may be necessary to close the School:

1. Quarantine closure: if this applies, for example, because a case of the virus is confirmed in the student, family or staff population of the School, we expect that we will be informed by the Government and will follow Government direction.
2. Preventive closure: if this applies, for example, because the Government closes all schools for a period of time to prevent the spread of the virus, the School will follow Government direction.

Regardless of the type of closure, the following scenarios may apply:

- If closure is for a day, the School will continue to keep parents informed and students will need to stay at home.
- If closure extends for up to a week, teachers will seek to provide means of educational continuity through the School's online platforms.
- If closure extends for more than a week, the School will seek to add more centralised measures suitable to each educational stage or subject area in order to support learning continuity through the School's online platforms.
- Particular provisions for Year 11 and Year 12 continuity and formal assessment requirements will be arranged depending on timing. Given the time pressure, Year 12 continuity will be a priority throughout. The School will seek guidance from the QCAA for all matters concerning assessment.
- WAS Kindergarten, OSHC, co-curricular activities and School events will be suspended.

At a special School assembly, students have been asked to take their laptops and all relevant educational materials home each day.

In most closure scenarios, it is likely to be necessary for boarders to return home or to local guardians or relatives. We therefore ask all boarding families to plan precautionary arrangements in advance in case they are required at short notice. Further information to boarders will be communicated by the Head of Boarding, Mr Brad Allen.

Prevention Measures (to inhibit the spread of the virus and other illnesses)

A number of measures to prevent the spread of infection have been in place since the start of term, but with the increasing distribution of the virus in Australia, we are now reaffirming or increasing the following measures:

- Additional hand sanitiser dispensers have been distributed around the School along with posters highlighting hand washing technique and hand rub technique.
- Explicit instructions on personal hygiene has been given in special School assemblies and appropriate classes.
- All students presenting to the Wellbeing Centre with cold and/or flu symptoms will have their temperatures taken, and if they register a fever, parents will be asked to collect their child. Students will not be allowed back to School until their temperature returns to normal.
- With sincere apologies, we ask all members of the School community to refrain from handshaking, hugging and other forms of social contact at School while the virus remains a concern.
- We have increased campus cleaning routines, but we also ask students and staff to be mindful of keeping School facilities clean.



As we enter the cold and flu season, we also ask everyone to:

- Be mindful of covering coughs and sneezes with their elbows rather than their hands;
- Practise minimising hand contact with their eyes, nose, mouth and face;
- Do not share food and drink;
- Keep hydrated, well-nourished and to seek good sleep; and,
- Stay away from School if experiencing cold and flu symptoms and to seek medical advice if symptoms persist, become severe or are indicative of COVID-19.

We also strongly advise all members of the School community to obtain influenza vaccinations as early as possible, as soon as they become available, in the interest of minimising illness and impact on health services in the coming months.

In addition, we ask all students and staff with specific medical conditions that may be affected by COVID-19 to seek medical advice and to liaise with the School Wellbeing Centre at jnk@was.qld.edu.au if any special measures are required.

Future considerations

Depending on how the virus spreads, we may be challenged in the weeks ahead. No matter how much we prepare, it may also be the case that our plans may need to be revised at short notice. We apologise and ask for your patience and understanding.

Given the likely impact of the virus coinciding with the coming cold and flu season, we also anticipate the potential for higher than normal levels of absence due to illness and family care requirements. Depending on severity, it is prudent for us to expect that this may be beyond the capacity of our staff cover pool, and we may have to implement contingency adjustments to normal teaching practices. Again, we ask for your continued support and understanding.

Please know that whatever eventuates, we will do our best in every way we can to support the health, safety and educational continuity of our community. Likewise, we have every confidence that our community will join together as one to support each other.

To further update our community the School has created a COVID-19 website page to keep you informed. This can be accessed at <https://was.qld.edu.au/2020/03/13/coronavirus-covid-19/>.

In the meantime, we remain focused on ensuring that our students continue to experience and enjoy the outstanding learning environment at Whitsunday Anglican School.

Thank you once again for your support.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Andrew Wheaton'.

Andrew Wheaton
Principal