



The Catlins Area School

Te Kura Taumata O Catlins | To be the best you can be

12/03/2020

Kia ora,

The Ministry of Education has asked me to make contact with all families regarding COVID-19. You may have seen that the World Health Organisation has now declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic. As noted by the Minister of Health, this doesn't change what New Zealand is doing to respond to coronavirus.

The Ministry of Health has been working through its pandemic plan since January. You will also know the Government has already implemented a range of measures to minimise the impacts to New Zealand. This includes border restrictions, a requirement to self-isolate on arrival in New Zealand from China, Iran, Italy and the Republic of Korea and immediate and detailed contact tracing of any confirmed cases. It is important to note those four countries account for more than 90% of cases globally and China and the Republic of Korea have significantly declining numbers of new cases.

There are 5 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Zealand. While we expect that more cases will arise, the Ministry of Health says that with continued vigilance the chance of widespread community outbreak is expected to remain low in New Zealand. We all have a role to play in this.

For our school, our pandemic plan is also ready to be implemented if needed. In the mean time we will continue to focus on good hygiene practices. Hand washing and good cough etiquette are very important tools in preventing the spread of illness including colds, flu and COVID-19. When you call the school to say your child is sick, please state the nature of the illness to help us develop appropriate responses.

With that, there is a good video clip from Nanogirl that will help your children to better understand the virus - YouTube clip - Nanogirl (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPsY-jLqaxM>)

One other action we can all take is to be vigilant about our own health and the health of our children. I will be encouraging my staff to stay away from school if they are showing signs of illness such as coughs and colds. I ask that you please do the same with your children. Colds and flus are common in schools and by staying away, seeking medical attention and practicing good hygiene, we can all keep any spread of illness to a minimum. When you call the school to say your child is sick, please state the nature of the illness to help us develop appropriate responses. Our policy for infectious diseases is attached below.

Ngā mihi,

Kate Staniford, Principal



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The Catlins Area School Policy for Infectious Diseases

The school community is susceptible to a wide range of bacterial and viral infections throughout the year. To minimise the spread of infections, our school encourages basic hygiene practices amongst students and staff at all times. We use heightened hygiene practices as appropriate when there is a known presence of, or risk of, a highly contagious and debilitating infection (e.g. influenza virus or norovirus).

Basic hygiene measures

The Catlins Area School promotes basic hygiene measures to help stop the spread of infectious diseases. This includes key messages such as:

- wash your hands regularly
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- cover your coughs and sneezes.

Hand hygiene

Hand hygiene is the best way to prevent the spread of infections – this means washing and drying your hands really well. Reminding students and staff how to wash and dry their hands effectively will help to keep everyone well.

It is important to wash and dry your hands after you have been to the toilet, whenever your hands feel dirty, and before eating or preparing food.

Follow these steps:

- Wash your hands under clean running water – warm water is best if you have it.
- Put soap on your hands and wash for at least 20 seconds. TIP: Singing happy birthday to yourself twice takes about 20 seconds.
- Rub hands together until the soap makes bubbles, rub on both sides of both hands, and in between fingers and thumbs, and round and round both hands.
- Rinse all the soap off under clean running water.
- Dry your hands all over for 20 seconds. Drying your hands is as important as washing them. TIP: Using paper towels is best (or, if at home, a clean, dry towel).

Coughs and sneezes

We remind students and staff to cover their coughs and sneezes. This means using a tissue (and disposing of it immediately), using the inside of your elbow ("the Dracula"), or cupping your hands over your mouth/nose and then washing your hands straight away.

Staying away from school

To stop sickness from spreading, students should be kept at home when they are ill. How long they should be at home depends on their illness.

In the case of some illnesses, the decision about whether to exclude students or staff will be made by the Medical Officer of Health.

The Ministry of Health gives advice on when students and staff should stay away from school when they are unwell with a more serious infection/illness.

More serious illnesses/infections include campylobacter, chickenpox, conjunctivitis, cryptosporidium, gastroenteritis, giardia, glandular fever, hand, foot, and mouth, hepatitis A & B, influenza, measles,



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meningococcal disease, mumps, norovirus, pertussis (whooping cough), skin infections (e.g., school sores, ringworm, scabies), and typhoid.

Outbreak or risk of outbreak / Pandemic

Heightened hygiene practices

We use heightened hygiene practices when there is a known presence of, or risk of, a serious infection/illness (e.g. influenza virus or measles). This will be signalled by Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health advisories. Heightened hygiene practices include:

- informing parents about the situation and what they can do, and what action the school is taking
- reiterating basic hygiene measures
- watching out for symptoms
- limiting times when large groups of people are together (e.g. no school assemblies), and encouraging social distancing where possible
- stepping up school cleaning practices – this applies particularly to hard surfaces, e.g. sinks, handles and door, railings, table tops:
- clean surfaces with a neutral detergent, followed by a disinfectant
- clean surfaces that are touched frequently every day.

If someone at school shows symptoms of a serious infection/illness, they are separated from others while waiting to be taken home. Call Healthline on 0800 611 116 for advice.

Anyone with a serious infection/illness should not attend school while they are infectious. Anyone who is not immunised against the relevant infection/illness and has potentially been exposed to it should also stay away from school.

Immunisations

In the case of an outbreak of a serious infection/illness, it is useful to know who has been vaccinated against the infection/illness. Our school keeps a record of immunisation information to help identify students at risk. We encourage parents to keep their child's immunisations up to date.

In an outbreak, those who haven't been immunised may need to be excluded or quarantined.

If parents are unsure about their child's immunity (or anyone in their family) to a particular infection/illness, they should check with their family doctor. They can also ring 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863) or Healthline on 0800 611 116 for advice.