

Wednesday 8 September 2021

Kia ora Parents and Caregivers

This is my final COVID update to confirm information from the Ministry of Education, along with our starting arrangements.

The Ministry has restated that at Alert Level 2 there is low risk of community transmission and schools are open for all students. The **only exceptions** are children or young people who are sick or have any COVID-19 symptoms, are in self-isolation, those who have been asked to stay at home by health authorities while awaiting the result of a test, and those who choose to remain at home because they are at a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and are not fully vaccinated.

All the required safety precautions for Alert Level 2 will be in place at school, following the recommendations from the public health experts. This means we will regularly clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces, encourage everyone to frequently wash their hands, and cough and sneeze into their elbow. As an extra for UHC, we will have hand sanitiser available to students and staff in all learning areas and places in the school where students gather.

While physical distancing is not a requirement in schools, we will be doing our best to keep students from congregating in very large numbers and keeping spaces well-ventilated. Our canteen will restrict the numbers of students who can be in that space at any one time.

Specific information:

Upper Hutt College will reopen for all students, on Thursday 9 September, starting with Ako time at 8.40am. The normal Thursday timetable will then follow.

- All students have been sent information about our reopening tomorrow.
- School buses will be running as normal.
- Public transport will require all students to be wearing a face mask.
- **Face coverings** are not required to be worn in school. The Director General of Health has recommended that children over 12 years wear a face covering at school – just as older children are required to wear face coverings in some other places. The decision to wear a face covering is up to you and your whanau - whatever your decision is, it will be respected. A number of staff and students will be wearing masks (we will not be supplying these to students unless they are visiting our counsellors). Please note, we will not permit students to wear any face coverings that may have gang connotations and will provide a disposable mask.
- For most day-to-day activities at schools, the rules for gatherings do not apply. Schools are exempted from physical distancing requirements when people are there to receive, provide, or support education services.
- The canteen and Library will be open.

As we move towards the end of this term and into Term 4, some key events and activities have been changed (and might change again, depending on Alert Level):

- Senior Exam week is now in the last week of term – Week 10, Monday 27 Sept – Friday 1 October.
- There are NO changes to the holiday period.
- Sports & Cultural Prizegiving is now on Thursday 21 October.
- Parent-Teacher meetings for senior students – Thursday 21 October TBC.
- Year 11 Drama Production runs Tuesday 2 – Friday 5 November.
- Last day for senior students (not doing AOP) is Friday 12 November.
- Senior Prizegiving is now on Wednesday 17 November.
- NZQA exams start Monday 22 November.

As we return to school, we know that there are many students who have enjoyed their time of Learning@Home, who have taken up the learning tasks and activities set for them and made the most of the flexibility that lockdown and Level 3 has given them. We also know that there are other students who have had their ups and downs, who have struggled to engage with their learning consistently, may have been focussed on other issues at home – sometimes even struggled to get out of bed!

When we speak with our students on their return, check in with them to see how they are, give them the support and understanding they need (and yes, sometimes even the hard conversations they deserve), please know that we have their wellbeing in mind always. If you have any concerns at all, please do not hesitate to contact the Ako teacher, Dean or myself. We are all looking forward to getting back to school and back on track.

Finally, whatever lockdown and Level 3 has brought to you and your family, I hope you are emerging safe, and well and I wish you all the best over the upcoming weeks. Thank you for your messages of support, your patience, goodwill and support of your children in their studies. Now... does anyone want to become a teacher? 😊

Ngā mihi nui

Judith Taylor
Principal