MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

COVID-19 update Monday 23 March

Thank you to all of you who have shown considerable leadership in the last few weeks.

This is an unprecedented event, and will continue to challenge us all.

I iterate the words of the Prime Minister – be kind, keep safe, and look after each other.

I look forward to working with you and those staff who are interested in developing our distance learning options.

We apologise sincerely for the delays in getting this information to you. We have been working with a range of agencies to be able to provide the following information.

Government announcement – moving to Alert Level 3 for 48 hours and then Level 4

The Prime Minister has today announced we are moving to Level 3 for the next 48 hours and then from Thursday 26 March we move to Level 4 in the COVID-19 Alert Level structure for a further period of 4 weeks where people are instructed to stay at home.

For Tuesday and Wednesday, the expectations are that teachers will come to work to teach the children of essential workers, including children of teachers, and to prepare online work.

They will not be able to access the school site from midnight Wednesday and will work from home. Those staff already identified as over 70 and/or vulnerable to COVID-19 should remain at home but can work from home as needed.

Schools will be open for Tuesday and Wednesday this week for children of essential workers. Please ensure you continue to support good hygiene practices with these students and also undertake physical distancing.

All other children will be at home. You will need to provide them with learning opportunities there to the greatest extent practicable. This could be either as a pack of materials, or for those with online learning already in place, implement your online learning programme.

The Ministry will be working over the next few weeks to provide support for distance learning. We would be pleased to connect with teachers interested in working with us.

Depending on how many children of essential workers arrive at school tomorrow morning, you may want to work with a neighbouring school to support their learning.

The exceptions to this are those schools where there is a case of Covid-19 that affects them. They will remain closed for a defined period based on health advice and which includes children of essential workers.

Essential workers
A list of essential businesses can be found here - https://covid19.govt.nz/government-actions/covid-19-alert-system/

School holidays brought forward
School holidays are being brought forward so that they are completed within the 4 week period. Holidays will now begin from Monday 30 March to Tuesday 14 April inclusive (a reminder that the Tuesday after Easter Monday is always a closed day for schools).

At the end of the school holidays, schools will be open for distance learning but not physically open for staff to work at the schools.

Please note the instruction to stay home (Alert Level 4) will continue beyond the new school holiday period but schools will be technically open for distance instruction. Teachers will be working offsite.

Supporting learning from home
We are asking that where possible you put together small packs for your learners. Packs could include reading material and familiar activities for your learners. Where eLearning is established ensure your learners have passwords and access to the things they need.

Today we have launched *Learning from home* and *Ki te Ao Mārama,* two new websites to support teachers, learners, parents and whānau so that learning for children and young people can continue.

The websites include resources for parents and whānau, teachers and leaders. Resources span the learning pathway from early learning through to senior secondary, and more resources will be added as they're developed.

The information and resources are available at https://www.learningfromhome.govt.nz/ and https://www.kauwhatareo.govt.nz/ki-te-ao-marama/

More resources will be added as they're developed. Hard copy packs are being prepared for learners and whānau who don't have connectivity at home.

The website will help you to get through the next few days as we move to remote learning. This will help you and your staff to get ready, support you to be working from home, and maintain wellbeing.

Over the next two to three weeks we will be working on next steps to support distance learning where it is most needed and as part of contingency planning in case the 4 week period is further extended.

We are working to establish online learning and distance learning options to support all children's ongoing learning. These will be made available by the end of the school holidays.

Children with special needs
Ministry staff will be available to ring and Skype with families who require assistance with children who have special needs.

Residential special schools
Please continue to house and support those students who are not able to safely return home.

International students

Many of you will have international students who are in Homestay or Hostel accommodation. Please continue to house and support those students.

School hostels

For students who are not able to go home please make arrangements for them to be cared for in the hostel. Host families may be required for international students.

You will need to consider available staff, and others you may be able to call on to cover supervision and other essential services. If you have staff who are included in the vulnerable category and therefore are struggling to maintain adequate staffing levels, **the Ministry is able to provide funding to support additional relief staffing to help keep your hostel open.** Please contact the Resourcing Contact Centre at resourcing@education.govt.nz about how to apply.

School transport

- All school buses and SESTA mobility services will run as normal on Tuesday 24 and Wednesday 25 March but only for students of parents working in to provide those workers with time to make arrangements for their children
- After Wednesday, no school transport will operate as schools will be closed until further notice.

School-led construction projects

- If you currently have an active construction project, contact your external project manager to arrange the suspension of this work. Your property advisor is available to support you
- You have 48 hours to ensure the site is safe, tidy and secure. This includes where possible contractors removing their tools and valuable materials from site
- Where possible we would ask for any unprotected works that can be, are reasonably protected. The Ministry will cover the cost of all reasonable works you need to do to protect the site
- Your Property Advisor will be in contact with you throughout the duration of the suspension
- We are working with other Government agencies to determine an appropriate response to support industry and ensure economic activity is maintained in the context of the current pandemic. Further advice will

follow in due course on resolving contractual and commercial issues with our contractors and consultants.

Staffing provisions and payroll

Boards should continue to pay all staff the same number of hours as they would if the school was operating as usual. This applies to all staff, including non-teaching staff with variable hours, and day relievers who you use.

Payroll

You need to ensure that in all circumstances you are still able to process the payroll each fortnight. Take the following actions over the next 48 hours:

- Set-up as many people as possible on autopay. This will ensure payments continue to be made if you are unable to process a fortnightly pay run.
- If you have day relief teachers who work in your school on a regular basis set them up on autopay for the number of days they usually work.
- Move your non-teaching staff this fortnight to autopay. If you enter a timesheet for these staff identify how many hours you would have expected these staff to work each week for the remainder of term 1 2020 if your school has been open as usual. Use this to set up regular autopaid hours.
- Ensure that, where possible, there are at least three authorised users who can process the fortnightly pay in Novopay and/or Ed Pay. Ideally these people will have had experience in running the pay at least once. If you need to set up a new authorised user please send an instruction to EDPay on a Novo5 form. Usually the Novo5 form requires a Board signature however, in these circumstances this can be omitted if required and added at a later date.
- Ensure you are able to run the pay if you can't get into the school office because your school is closed. Test the remote access arrangements from the location that your payroll administrators will be working.
- Fixed terms agreements will continue to end on the date agreed in your fixed term letter of offer and as set up in Novopay. Think about how you will re-employ staff for term 2 and put plans in action to do this over the next two weeks.

How will the payroll work?
In the first instance you will be asked to run your fortnightly pay as normal.
If this is not possible please contact mailto:support@novopay.govt.nz. We will then ensure your staff on autopay are paid as normal. If you have staff that you have not managed to put on autopay then you should let us know.

What can we ask staff to do?
Over the next 48 hours your staff should continue to be at school to support children of essential workers. Advice about how to avoid COVID-19 in the workplace should be followed. This is available here: https://covid19.govt.nz/

If a staff member has to self-isolate they should work from home, and if this is not possible, or be provided discretionary paid leave. Sick and domestic leave should be provided where a staff member or their dependant/s get sick. Refer here for more information: http://www.education.govt.nz/school/health-safety-and-wellbeing/student-and-staff-health/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/information-for-staffing-provisions/

Staff who have the care of dependant/s should be provided with discretionary paid leave.

Each staff member's requirements will be different and you should discuss with each person how much they are able to work and how much leave they require.

Letter template for your community
You may wish to use this as a basis for a letter to your school community.

Kia ora koutou

With today's announcement by Government, we are implementing with urgency our plan to support your child's learning from home. We appreciate this is a sudden and significant change, and will be heavily disruptive to many people in our community.

For children of essential workers, we look forward to seeing your child here at school tomorrow morning at [add time (and location if relevant)]. You may wish to check if you are considered an essential worker - https://covid19.govt.nz/government-actions/covid-19-alert-system/ *however those roles include doctors, nurses, ambulance drivers and police. We continue to ask that children who are not well, do not attend school.*

For all other children, we will be supporting their learning from your home in the following ways:

- *through online learning…*
- *provision of a learning pack for the remainder of the week*
- *include how teachers will engage with them at home*

- *include how parents and caregivers can contact the school if there are any issues for their child*

If you need to have your child cared for by someone else you will need to identify that person or people as part of your self-isolated group. This will need to be done by midnight Wednesday and the group must remain the same for the whole 4 week period. The caregiver's own group (eg, their partner and children), your child and your own group (eg, your parents and other children) become one group. This group needs to be limited to minimise any risk of spread and should be no more than 20 people.

Your child will be looking to you for guidance about this decision. Parents, caregivers, whānau and teachers will have a particularly important part to play in reassuring children at this time. If you haven't already done so, you may wish to read the information put together by the Ministry of Education to support your conversations with your children – Talking to children about COVID-19

As noted by the Prime Minister these restrictions are our best chance to slow the virus in New Zealand and to save lives. We all have a clear role here to slow the spread of COVID-19.

We will continue to communicate with you over the coming days. Thank you for your ongoing support of our school staff and school community. Our regional staff will be in touch with you soon to determine how we can best support you.

Ngā mihi

Next steps

We will continue to provide you with updates over the coming days. Our regional staff will be in touch with you soon to determine how we can best support you.

Please contact your regional office if you require specific support – Local Ministry Office contacts

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