

Covid 19 Update March 20

Dear Parents,

St Thomas's School staff are dealing with an increasing number of queries regarding Covid 19 and its implications for our school community. The Senior Leadership Team receive regular updates from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health which are of a general nature and not specific to St Thomas's School. The only time we will receive specific contact from the Ministry of Health is if there is someone in our community who has had contact with Covid 19. To date, we have had no contact from the Ministry of Health regarding anyone in St Thomas's School.

Social media often spread false and alarming rumours suggesting that someone in the wider community has contracted Covid 19 and then concerned parents contact the school. St Thomas's School Leadership Team will only respond to the Ministry of Health information and instructions and will not become involved in hearsay. If parents have a concern about Covid 19 in the community, please contact the Ministry of Health directly and not the school.

Keeping your child home

At this point, the Ministry guidance is that children should be at school unless there is a specific reason in your family to self-isolate. If there is a specific reason to be self-isolating e.g. advice from your doctor because you or someone in your household have Covid 19 symptoms, then your child will be marked as a 'justified absence'.

However, if you choose not to send your child to school for personal reasons then it will be considered as an 'explained but unjustified absence'. In this case you are responsible for the learning of your own child and teachers are not available to provide resources for you as they are busy with their normal classroom workload. If there are to be exceptions to this, they are discussed with the Senior Leadership Team.

Could Schools be closed?

Yes. This is quite possible, and this instruction would come from the Ministry of Health. Currently we are preparing for such an eventuality and teachers are compiling resources to support students to continue their learning from home. It is important that parents work through a scenario of schools closing to ensure that they are as prepared as possible in the event of this happening.

The Ministry have indicated that they will make decisions around school closures using the following criteria.

1. Cases from multiple families in the same school then the school would close for 14 days
2. Confirmed community transmission in a localised area then local schools close for 14 days and reviewed after 14 days
3. Where there is community transmission at a national level then all schools close for 14 days and reviewed after 14 days

I appreciate that this is a stressful time for everyone in our community and appreciate your understanding and support.

Kind Regards,

Michael