

## Our Response to COVID-19 at Mater Maria Catholic College

9 March 2020

Dear Parents & Caregivers,

We have all received much information recently from various health agencies and the general media, updating us on the status and impact of the COVID-19 virus. We understand that people respond in a variety of ways to public health issues like these depending on their past experiences and current state of health. Dr Tony Bracken, the Acting Director from the Catholic Schools Office of Broken Bay, wrote to you last Friday to inform you how our Catholic Schools system is responding to COVID-19. In addition to this communication, I have outlined below the preparation we have taken at Mater Maria in responding to COVID-19 from infection control to our preparation to continue learning should the College or individual students be directly impacted. We are using and will continue to use the information and advice supplied by the federal Department of Health <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov> and the NSW Departments of Health and Education to review and adjust our procedures to protect the wellbeing of all in our community.

### ***How will Mater Maria communicate with parents?***

We will continue to use the newsfeed feature on *Compass* to update parents on any reportable situations as directed by the various government agencies and any changes to our normal school schedule. We will also update the College website regularly to include any information that has been delivered by the Catholic Schools Office via email or communicated from us via *Compass*.

We understand that there is the potential for rumour and speculation about how our community is being impacted by COVID-19 that may alarm some people. We can assure you that we will keep you updated and will communicate with all families in a timely fashion should the need arise.

Should you have a concern or wish to clarify anything, please contact the Principal via Deborah Fitzgerald ([deborah.fitzgerald@dbb.catholic.edu.au](mailto:deborah.fitzgerald@dbb.catholic.edu.au)) at the College to seek clarification.

### ***How should parents communicate with the College?***

If a family needs to inform the school of a particular situation or if there are any queries in regard to the College's management of the COVID-19 response, please direct all correspondence to the Principal through the Principal's PA, Mrs Deborah Fitzgerald ([deborah.fitzgerald@dbb.catholic.edu.au](mailto:deborah.fitzgerald@dbb.catholic.edu.au)). This includes informing the school if you have been asked by a doctor or the Health Department to inform us that your child has been exposed to COVID-19 or is being tested for COVID-19. As always, we will respect the dignity and privacy of others whilst managing these situations.



## **Infection control**

The Health Department states that the virus is most likely spread through:

- close contact with an infectious person
- contact with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze
- touching objects or surfaces (like doorknobs or tables) that have cough or sneeze droplets from an infected person, and then touching your mouth or face

We therefore ask that all members of the College community stay away from school should they be experiencing any flu-like symptoms e.g fever, sore throat, a cough, fatigue and/or shortness of breath. We strongly encourage people with these symptoms to seek medical attention and not return to school until they are cleared by a doctor or have completely recovered and no longer display these symptoms.

Please discuss with your children the importance of good hygiene which includes:

- washing your hands often with soap and water
- using a tissue and cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze
- avoiding close contact with others, such as touching.

We have asked our cleaners to be extra vigilant and include wiping down desks and doorknobs with a disinfectant solution in their normal schedule of cleaning.

The practice of wearing face masks is advised only for those who show symptoms of infection or who have been requested to self-isolate due to having close contact with an infected individual. As described above anyone in this situation should not be attending school. There is no research that shows a significant benefit for healthy individuals to wear masks in the general public.

The following resource provides information about the wearing of face masks:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-on-the-use-of-surgical-masks>.

***Our plan for continuous learning should individuals be restricted from attending school or should the College be closed for a period of time to staff and students:***

### **Teaching Staff Preparation**

Google Classroom will be the main resource used to continue learning for individuals who are absent from school due to illness or the unlikely event that the College is locked-down by the Health Department. Google Classroom is web-based and can be accessed using smart devices and computers that access the internet. The vast majority of our teachers already use Google classroom or google sites to share resources with students, provide feedback and communicate outside of the allocated lesson time. All staff have been requested to have a functional Google Classroom page for each of their classes and to share the details of connecting to this resource with their students. These webpages will be updated regularly with the activities that are occurring in the classroom so that students can catch up work that is missed due to absence for illness or self-isolation. Students who are at home due to COVID-19 can also use email to contact their teachers for assistance and clarification.



## **Student Preparation**

All students should ensure that they are able to access their school emails and electronic textbooks. In the unlikely circumstance that students still have issues in this area, they should see IT support immediately to have these issues resolved.

All students should make sure that they have connected to the Google classroom pages for each of their subjects - if they are having difficulties with this, they should see their teacher.

Students should get into the habit of taking all books, textbooks and other resources home at the end of each school day, just in case they develop flu-like symptoms or the College is locked-down and they are not able to return for an extended period of time.

## **What will lessons look like if the College is in lock-down?**

Should the College be locked-down, all students and staff will remain at home and continue their daily timetabled lessons between 9am and 3.15pm each day via Google classroom and email. The normal daily timetable for each day will be followed, with teachers posting instructions and work on Google classroom, and students completing and submitting work as instructed.

This describes our online learning plan in its most basic form; some teachers may communicate via email with their classes if they will use other methods to connect with students and run their classes.

Should the published assessment schedule be impacted by a whole school lock-down, teachers will provide instructions to students via email about changes to assessment dates or alternative tasks.

Please note it will be the students' responsibility to check emails regularly throughout the day to keep informed.

We strongly encourage you to be community-minded by supporting one another, following the advice and instructions from health professionals and doing what is best for the community to avoid the spread of infection.

As always, we keep those who have been impacted by COVID-19 and all the wonderful health providers we are blessed to have in Australia, in our thoughts and prayers.

Yours sincerely

Marc Reicher  
College Principal  
Mater Maria Catholic College