

Mater Maria Catholic College COVID19 Update

17 March 2020

Dear Parents & Caregivers,

At this stage we have been blessed that the COVID19 virus has not had a direct impact on the College community. To date we have not had a diagnosed case nor had any students or staff that have been directed to self-isolate due to close contact with a diagnosed case. We do currently have a couple of families following the Government guidelines of self-isolating due to returning from overseas – from all reports they are well. We hope and pray that this continues.

We are in unfamiliar territory in dealing with a pandemic like this which is causing a number of people to feel anxious and concerned not only about our health but also livelihoods. With the constant media attention and discussion of this issue, many students can become confused, concerned and anxious themselves. Attached is an excellent resource from SchoolTV on how to talk to your children about coronavirus to reassure them that all will be alright -

https://schooltv.me/wellbeing_news/special-report-coronavirus

We have been and will continue to speak to our students to reassure them that the impact of this pandemic will be over soon. Please contact your child's Year Coordinator should your child need support at this time?

If your family requires any type of support, please contact us.

The Government has announced major new measures to respond to COVID19 that have implications for our community. While schools are open, we have made some very important changes to maximise the health and safety of students and staff. They are explained below:

New social distancing measures and increased focus on hygiene:

- *All school assemblies, year assemblies and large gatherings have been cancelled - **the school day will continue to start at the normal time for roll marking, information sharing and pastoral care – it is important to maintain normal routines.***
- *All interschool activities, which may include sporting events, debating and public speaking competitions are cancelled until further notice - **practical PDHPE and Yr 7/8 Activities lessons will continue with modified activities to increase social distancing.***
- *All excursions and camps are cancelled until further notice - **excluding the Gold Duke of Edinburgh expedition due to the nature of the activity and the number of students involved.***
- *All school events which are held in the community, for example, visits to pre-schools, nursing homes, libraries or shopping centres are cancelled until further notice.*
- *Staff are restricting the number of face to face meetings they attend to essential meetings only - email and video conferencing is being used to ensure information is shared and understood.*

- *Students will be sitting in individual desks where possible, maximising the space within each room.*
- *Students are encouraged to avoid physical contact with one another e.g. handshakes, hugs.*
- *The College has extended the cleaning contract to include thorough disinfecting of high touch surfaces.*
- *Daily checks of bathroom soap dispensers will occur and we are encouraging regular hand washing for 20s with soap.*

Preparation for 'Learning from Home' -

At this stage the school is open to students and staff. All students should be attending school unless they:

- have been restricted by the guidelines set by Government health departments,
- are showing signs of illness
- have other health conditions that require isolation
- have family members with health issues that need to be considered

Please inform us should any of the above situations apply to your children. We are keen to support everyone in our community.

Whilst the school is in normal operation, teachers have been asked to update their Google classroom pages regularly so absent students can follow what their classes are doing. Students working from home can email their teachers questions however, please be aware that an immediate response is unlikely due to teachers being busy focusing on the students who are in the classroom. Teachers will support their students' learning as quickly as they can. There are a lot of free resources that students can access online and we are currently creating resource banks for each subject.

As a staff, we are currently working on and testing strategies to continue teaching and learning from home. As well as Google classroom, we are looking at a video conferencing solution, online resources that are already available and screen capture software that can be used by teachers to produce resources. A more detailed plan will be provided should the Government make the decision to close schools.

Please ask your children to show you their Google classroom pages and ensure they have access to their online textbooks. If there is an issue with either of these, please inform the school immediately, so we can help resolve these matters. We will be reminding students to empty their lockers at the end of each day to ensure that their resources are at home should the College need to close for any reason, we ask that you remind your children to do this.

Communications -

In times like this, it is important that we have regular communication. We will continue to use the newsfeed and email functions in *Compass* to keep you updated.

Can you please inform us if:

- you have changed your email address or mobile numbers
- you are unable access '*Compass*'



- you are not receiving information from us.

Copies of all major correspondence can be found on our website. You can access this at <https://matermaria.nsw.edu.au/portal/correspondence/> and the password is **2020matermaria**.

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 COVID-19 response, please direct all correspondence to the Principal through the Principal's PA, Mrs Deborah Fitzgerald (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.

Please keep in your prayers those impacted by the virus, our wonderful health professionals who are caring for us and the decision makers who are doing their best to manage the situation.

Yours sincerely

Marc Reicher
College Principal
Mater Maria Catholic College