



Timaru Christian School Procedures

HS8 Pandemic Management

Plan and Prepare

Follow this process to prepare your school and your staff for a pandemic. When you prepare your Pandemic Plan, assign each task to a person or group as appropriate for your school.

Responsible	Action
Principal	Brief staff on the need for pandemic planning. Advise all staff that a Pandemic Plan will be developed, and explain how they can access it.
Secretary	Create a folder that contains the school's completed Pandemic Plan (100 Pandemic Plan) and other resources (110 All Resources). This is a living document that you will keep up to date from now on.
Principal and staff	Introduce and reinforce hygiene practices to minimise the risk of infection.
Health and Safety Officer/Committee?	Train staff in recognising influenza symptoms and in pandemic response processes. Document the training sessions in your plan.
Purchasing Officer	Decide what hygiene supplies are required, and get them in. Document this in your plan and ensure that the supplies are always in place. This is separate from normal first aid kits or sick bay materials.
Senior Management	Decide whether the school will make any school-owned education resources available to parents. Document this in your plan.
Principal	Decide what infrastructural and staffing arrangements you need. Document this in your plan.
Secretary	Compile the Key Pandemic Contacts list and ensure this is filed in your plan.



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Planning assumptions

- 1) If schools have not already been closed by the Boards of Trustees, management will be instructed to close by the regional Medical Officer of Health as soon as a few cases of pandemic influenza are confirmed regionally (or possibly even if there are a few cases nationally). That is, no school will be open to pupils when there are known cases of pandemic influenza in their community.
- 2) During a heightened pandemic alert phase, the school will have to be vigilant for suspected cases of pandemic influenza. If any person is suspected of having the virus the school will isolate them, call an ambulance, and inform the parents. In the meantime, school activities carry on as usual.
- 3) If the case is positive, then the Public Health Department swings into action, and the school and pupils must comply with cluster control and tracking processes. At that point, all schools in the region are likely to be instructed to close immediately.
- 4) Upon the closure instruction, the school implements its pandemic procedures for closure, including communicating with parents, erecting signage, and then organising educational support for parents.
- 5) In preparation for a possible pandemic, the school must have improved hygiene/infection control processes in place as a matter of standard operating practice, and heightened procedures for a pandemic alert situation.



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Minimise Risk of Infection

The school community is susceptible to a wide range of bacterial and viral infections throughout the year. When infections affect a high proportion of students they can have detrimental impacts on student and teacher health, educational achievement, and the wider community.

The spread of infections amongst students can be minimised by applying appropriate hygiene practices.

The policy of this school is to encourage *basic* hygiene practices amongst students and staff at all times, and to apply heightened hygiene practices when there is a known presence or risk of highly contagious and debilitating infections (e.g. norovirus or a pandemic influenza virus).

Familiarise Staff with Symptoms and Processes

The school recognises the importance of staff being able to rapidly identify children with flu symptoms and to then follow processes to isolate those children and take other actions as are appropriate in the circumstances. To that end:

- All staff must engage with this pandemic plan and processes,
- The school will hold training sessions for staff on the pandemic response processes,
- The following documents will be posted in the sick bay:
 - An influenza symptoms list (400 Influenza vs Cold), and
 - A flowchart for actions to take during heightened alert if a person appears unwell (320 If a Person Appears Unwell Poster).

The school will maintain a record of training sessions in its Pandemic Plan.

Basic Supplies

The school will ensure that there are adequate supplies of the following basic hygiene consumables **at all times**:

- Paper hand towels, roller towels, or air towels.
- Toilet paper.
- Soaps.

Note: Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are recommended for classrooms and offices, so that staff and students can easily keep their hands clean without constantly running to the hand basins.



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Additionally, when there are indications of an international pandemic situation arising, and thus potential disruption of the supply chain, the school will stock up on these basic supplies to ensure that it carries a minimum of 4 weeks' supply at any time.

Personal Protection Supplies

Sick patients, and staff with the responsibility for caring for them, **must** wear properly fitted surgical masks.

The school administration ensures that adequate supplies of the following resources are available in the sick bay at all times, specifically to protect anyone caring for someone with suspected pandemic influenza:

- N95 surgical masks (available from all pharmacies).
- Latex gloves.
- Disposable apron.
- Tissues.
- Paracetamol (tablets).
- Paracetamol (suspension).
- Disinfectant (or a 1% bleach solution).
- Paper towels.
- Alcohol based soaps.



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Plan Home-based Education Resources

The school may provide some specific direction for pupils staying at home (in small numbers or en-masse) during a pandemic alert.

It will include in its communications with parents information on education resources they can access or obtain for use in the home.

The decision about what (if any) school owned education resources will be made available to parents is recorded in the Pandemic Plan.

When a Heightened Alert is signaled, classroom teachers will compile an email distribution group for all their students in their laptop computer address books. If an email address is not available, this will be noted, and a phone number will be recorded instead.

Teachers will email class members with age and stage appropriate generic ideas for internet and book-based research for students in Y3 and above.

Teachers will be expected to respond with comments to content sent by students in response to these ideas.

Plan Pandemic Staffing Arrangements

Based on advice from the Ministry of Health, in the event of any confirmed pandemic cases in our region, if Boards of Trustees have not already closed the schools, the Medical Officer of Health will enforce the closure of the school under Section 70 (m) of the Health Act (1956). Therefore, we do not anticipate running normal school activities at any point while the pandemic virus is present in our community.

We expect to send most staff home while the school is closed. Staff will continue to be paid and are expected to work at home on school-related tasks unless they are sick, caring for immediate family members, or on leave. This work may include:

- Planning,
- Monitoring school-related emails and issues,
- Communicating with parents and children via the internet, and
- Suggesting and monitoring internet and book based research for children in year three and above

The school has considered the essential functions that need to continue operating while the school is closed. Therefore:

- The school will be inspected each day, and any issues will be reported to the principal.
- The mail will be collected, opened, and actioned as required.
- Accounts will be paid.
- Payroll issues will be monitored and reported.
- Communication with absent staff will be maintained via email and phone.
- Any other school-specific issues will be resolved as part of the school's Pandemic Plan.



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Prepare Key Pandemic Contacts List

The school recognises the need to maintain relationships with and up-to-date contact details of:

- ▶ Your school's public health nurse.
- ▶ The local Civil Defence Officer.
- ▶ Neighbouring schools (for sharing of information, resources, staff).
- ▶ Suppliers of hygiene related consumables.

The school will ensure these are kept comprehensive and up-to-date, and retain at least one current copy in the Pandemic Plan.

Additionally, staff and parent contact details **must** be kept up-to-date within the school's information systems.

Maintain Preparation

The school will ensure staff, students, and parents stay prepared to respond effectively to a pandemic situation.

Every Term

Responsible

Action

Principal

Review and update the key decisions and information in the Pandemic Plan, including, but not limited to the:

- ▶ Pandemic staffing arrangements
- ▶ Pandemic **hygiene supplies** (check supplies are in stock and not perished)
- ▶ Infection control measures
- ▶ Home-based education resources list
- ▶ Key pandemic contacts

Teachers

Include at least one reminder session on correct hand hygiene and washing in each class's normal teaching.

Office Administrator

Check and ensure that all relevant notices on hand hygiene and washing are visible and up-to-date in all relevant locations.

Date of last review: Term 3, 2016
Date of next review: Term 3, 2019

Signed _____



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Every Year

Responsible	Action
Principal	Make available for public viewing the school's pandemic plans, Encourage parents to promote effective hygiene practices in their children, and
School Secretary	Obtain up-to-date contact details of families Update the school's information systems with the latest contact details of parents.
Principal	Ensure staff are familiar with the pandemic plans and response processes.

Pandemic Response Procedures

In the event of a pandemic situation arising internationally, the school will monitor public information sources and the following web sites for warnings and advice:

- ▶ The New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA).
- ▶ The New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF).
- ▶ Ministry of Health website.

Information can also be gained from the Emergency Preparedness Network.

Depending on the advice received, the school will take one of the following actions:

- 6) Continue monitoring and take no further action, or
- 7) Move to heightened alert status, or
- 8) Close the school to pupils, or
- 9) Re-open the school.

Heightened Alert

The school will move to heightened alert status if public and education sector information suggests a reasonable likelihood of the pandemic virus reaching New Zealand.

Under heightened alert status, the school will:

- ▶ Implement heightened hygiene practices
- ▶ Inform parents of the change of status (310 Pandemic Status Letter), and potential implications
- ▶ Revisit its Maintaining Preparation processes
- ▶ Increase vigilance for symptomatic students and staff
- ▶ Isolate and report symptomatic students or staff

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Isolating and reporting symptomatic people

If a student feels ill or someone observes that another person is exhibiting symptoms of influenza, they should tell a teacher or the school secretary immediately. The teacher or school secretary must then:

- 10) Isolate the person from other students or staff (ideally in sick bay).
- 11) Put on protective equipment.
- 12) Assess whether the person is likely to have influenza. As a guideline, the person may have influenza if they have a fever (temperature over 38 deg C) and one or more of the following symptoms:
 - Headache, fatigue, and weakness.
 - Sore throat, cough, chest discomfort, difficulty in breathing.
 - Muscle aches and pains.

Refer to 400 Influenza versus Cold for more detailed symptom information.

- 13) If the sick person does not appear to have influenza, reassure them. If they are an adult, advise them to see their GP if they are still concerned. If the sick person is a student, advise their parents or whānau to pick them up from the sick bay, monitor their condition, and if concerned, take them to their GP.
- 14) If the sick person does appear to have influenza, treat them as a "suspect case":
 - Call an ambulance and inform them it is a suspected pandemic influenza case.
 - Call the person's parents / next of kin, and inform them of the situation.
 - Reassure the person, but keep them isolated until the ambulance arrives.
 - Await information and instructions from the Medical Officer of Health, who will have been informed by the hospital and ambulance of the situation, and will advise you as to whether the patient has been confirmed to have the virus or not.
 - If it is a confirmed pandemic influenza case, the Public Health Department will advise the school of next steps.



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Closing the School

Closure of the school during a pandemic alert is likely to be in direct response to an instruction from the Medical Officer of Health.

Closing the school to students would not necessarily mean that facilities would be closed in a quarantine sense. Staff may still go to work, work remotely, or carry out 'alternative duties' for other agencies with their board's pre-approval. Facilities may also be used for alternative purposes such as Community-Based Assessment Centres.

Preparing for Closure

- ▶ Maintain contact with your local District Health Board for updates on status.
- ▶ Inform staff to prepare for closure.
- ▶ Inform parents that imminent closure is possible.

Closing the school

- ▶ Notify students and parents.
- ▶ Post "School Closed" notices at entry points and on main buildings (350 School Closed Notice).
- ▶ Close down the school and lock all buildings.

Legal Issues

The Education Act 1989 gives principals and boards powers to exclude particular students and staff or to close their school in certain circumstances:

- *Section 19* provides that a principal may exclude a student who may have a communicable disease (communicable diseases are specified in the Schedule to the Act. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza or 'bird flu' (HPAI subtype H5N1) was added on 12 February 2004. In practice, the school will generally proceed subject to advice received from health authorities.
- *Section 65E* provides that a board may close a school in an emergency such as an epidemic.
- The Health (Infectious and Notifiable Diseases) Regulations place duties on the school, teachers and parents in the case of a pandemic.
- *Regulation 14* provides that the school must exclude teachers and students who have an infectious disease.

The school has legal and moral responsibilities under the Crimes Act and these continue to apply in a pandemic emergency.

Staff Entitlements

Attendance at work

School employees will continue to be paid their normal salary during a pandemic, provided, with the board's pre-approval they:

- come to the school to work (with suitable protection measures in place - including social distancing, personal hygiene, cleaning regimes); or
- work remotely from home; or
- carry out pre-approved alternative duties for the school or another agency; or

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- are on sick leave (using sick leave entitlements, anticipated sick leave or other leave entitlements); or
- are looking after sick dependents (using sick or other leave entitlements or anticipated sick leave).

These sections of the Health and Safety in Employment Act should be considered when dealing with a pandemic.

Section 6: All practicable steps

“Every employer shall take all practicable steps to ensure the safety of employees while at work; and in particular shall take all practicable steps to:

- ▶ provide and maintain for employees a safe working environment
- ▶ provide and maintain for employees while they are at work facilities for their safety and health...”

Section 28: Employees may refuse to perform work likely to cause serious harm

“An employee may refuse to do work if the employee believes that the work that the employee is required to perform is likely to cause serious harm to him or her...”

Independent contractors and volunteer workers have the right to withdraw their labour or services at any time, including when they feel the work environment presents an unsatisfactory level of risk.

If the school is in an area affected by the pandemic, employees have the option of leaving their jobs. They also have the right to refuse to perform work if they believe it is likely to lead to their suffering serious harm. However, their belief must be on reasonable grounds, and they must have attempted to resolve the matter with their board before they can refuse. The right to refuse unsafe work does not apply unless the risks of the work have materially increased. To avoid such situations it is best to have had discussions with staff before a pandemic occurs.

Re-Opening the School

The Ministry of Health will advise schools when it is safe to re-open. If some children develop symptoms of influenza (which could mean a “third wave” of pandemic, as occurred in 1919) local schools should consider reclosing.