



# Timaru Christian School Procedures

## HS8 Pandemic Management

### Plan and Prepare

Follow this process to prepare your school and your staff for a pandemic.

When the threat of a pandemic is identified via Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Education, the following steps will be undertaken:

1. Staff will be updated and informed of symptoms to look out for.
2. Additional hygiene supplies (soap, towels, disinfectant, face masks, gloves) will be obtained for the school.
3. Staff and students will be reminded about safe hygiene practices eg washing and drying hands, blowing noses, sneezing etc.
4. If a child or adult is suspected of showing those symptoms
  - a. they will be isolated from the rest of the school.
  - b. They will be asked about their symptoms eg aches, pains, difficulty breathing, how hot they feel etc.
  - c. their temperature will be taken and recorded
  - d. adults interacting with them will use protective measures including face masks and latex gloves.
  - e. the parents will be contacted to arrange next steps. This may include the parents collecting them or an ambulance being called for them.
  - f. The room in which they were isolated will be disinfected (walls, floors and surfaces, and bedding will be cleaned).
5. If a pandemic case is confirmed, the school will contact the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health and work with them to determine next steps. These may include, but are not confined to,
  - a. informing all parents/caregivers in the school community, Timaru Christian Preschool and external users of the school buildings via email, text and facebook
  - b. informing all local schools via email
  - c. closing the school, erecting signage on the entrances and exits
  - d. arranging alternative educational activities via email/google classrooms for students to complete at home (see below).

### 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.



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- Paracetamol (tablets).
- Paracetamol (suspension).
- Disinfectant (or a 1% bleach solution).
- Paper towels.
- Alcohol based soaps.

## **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.

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**

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 Years 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.



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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.

## 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:

- 1) Continue monitoring and take no further action, or
- 2) Move to heightened alert status, or
- 3) Close the school to pupils, or
- 4) 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 potential implications
- ▶ Increase vigilance for symptomatic students and staff
- ▶ Isolate and report symptomatic students or staff



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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
- ▶ 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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Signed \_\_\_\_\_



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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.