



# Dandenong North Primary School

PO Box 2080, Dandenong 3175 Tel: 9794 7899 Fax: 9706 7279

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## COVID – 19 INFORMATION FOR PARENTS current on 16/9/2020

The Government has announced a return to school for some of our students in the second week AFTER the school holidays.

On the **12<sup>th</sup> October**, children in Preps, Grade 1 and Grade 2 are supposed to return to on-site learning.

Children in Grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 are not allowed to return to school until further advice from the Chief Medical Officer. This information will be updated as information becomes available. REMOTE LEARNING arrangements will continue for these children. We are very sorry that these children cannot yet return.

Most parents of children in Prep, Grade 1 and Grade 2 will breathe a long sigh of relief. All of us understand that so called “Remote Learning” is second-best learning. Children need the routines, socialization, friendships and relationships of school to thrive in their learning. And of course the skilled teaching and the customised learning “pathways” that can be provided at school.

But - and it is a big but – school will remain open only while our students, our teachers AND our parents remain COVID-free!

If **any** of us becomes infected we will **all** be impacted. We saw what happened when we had a “scare” on the 17<sup>th</sup> August when we had a report of a positive test by one of our students who had not even been at the school for the previous 13 days.

If we hear of a positive case of a parent, student or teacher we are required to inform the Department of Health and Human Services immediately. We then have to provide DHHS with addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses of EVERYONE who has been in contact with the positive case person OR PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT with the “persons who have been in contact”! This can be a huge job in itself. DHHS conducts an investigation and may decide then to undertake “contact tracing”. The contacts may be required to get a COVID test and to self-isolate until the test results are available. If negative those people can return to their normal routines. However, if positive they then must quarantine for 14 days and receive two negative tests at the end of that period before they are considered “non-infectious”.

If DHHS does undertake contact-tracing and instructs ANYONE to get a test, the school will be closed again.

The point of all of this is that in order for the school to remain open we need EVERYONE to be COVID AWARE, COVID SAFE and COVID-FREE.

The most critical times for community infection transmissions by people who are unaware that they are COVID-positive are the drop-off and pick-up times.



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If we were all back, we have 800 students, 130 staff and possibly 1000 parents. That is nearly 2000 people all potentially gathering on a small parcel of land twice a day for periods of about 30 minutes in the mornings and 30 minutes in the afternoons. These time are DANGER times for infection spreading. We only need one infected person to close the other one thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine down.

In many schools, parents are not allowed in the school grounds as a way of minimising risks. We found in the previous re-opening of the school that parents gathering while they waited at entry-points presented a much greater transmission-risk than if they entered via multiple entry-points to drop-off or pick-up areas closest to their child's classroom-building, dropped their children off or picked them up, and left as soon as possible.

It is important for children to be at school before 9.00 am. Late arrivals create additional danger times for possible infections. We tried different start and finish times for different groups of children last time we resumed school, and it did not help with reducing people-movement within the school grounds. However, if there are any late arrivals, they need to be presented to a point outside the Main Office where a staff member would then deliver them to the classroom.

We are aiming to provide a common-sense and cooperative approach to COVID safety as much as is humanly possible. We can only achieve this with the cooperation of EVERYONE.

We need parents to:

- Maintain MINIMUM social distancing of 1.5 metres at all times.
- Wear a face covering CORRECTLY if you expect to be inside the school gates.
- Not to enter any of the buildings so as not to become a "contact trace" in the event of a suspected infection.
- Wear a face-covering at all times. ( Even if they are no longer legally required )
- Leave the school grounds as quickly as possible; and not "socialize" ( gather in pairs or small groups to have a talk ) in the school grounds.
- Be on time - especially in the mornings - to prevent additional contacts being made at the Main Office. Being on time to pick children up is also very important as we cannot have children crowded into the small Main Office area awaiting late pick-ups.
- Make sure your child has a drink container as "bubble -taps" have been disabled.
- KEEP YOUR CHILD AT HOME at the first sign of any illness. The whole school might have to close for anything up to three weeks if just one child attends who subsequently tests COVID-positive. Closures in these instances provide no opportunity for device distribution or work-setting by school staff.
- Comply with any instructions by any school staff member; the reasons for an instruction may not always be apparent, but they will always be in the best interests of our students and your continued access to the school grounds will depend upon your cooperation during this pandemic emergency. Staff are in charge of children while they are on the school grounds and parents are allowed on the grounds provided they understand this.



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A plan of the school grounds and buildings is attached indicating the recommended entry points for the different class, home-rooms. By using the recommended areas you will assist with keeping social distancing to the minimum 1.5m distance.



Our students need their parents to pay attention to all of these safety measures. Anyone who threatens the safety of staff or students by not adhering to this advice will be denied further entry to the school grounds.

Kevin Mackay

16/9/2020