



COVID-19 (coronavirus) Update Wednesday 18 March 2020

Dear Weeden Heights PS Community,

I am making sure that I pass on information about the Coronavirus as it is available to me. A lot of information came out late last night so I would like you to know as much as possible.

Update

As you may have heard, Toorak Primary School will be closed for 24 hours from today. A staff member there had tested positive for coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

Additional School Closures

The advice of the Chief Health Officer **remains, at present, that all state schools should remain open**, except in the event of a confirmed case of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Thankfully, I am not aware of any community members with a confirmed case of COVID 19 here at Weeden Heights.

Full advice can be found here on [the Department's website](#).

Declaration of a State of Emergency

The declaration by the Victorian Government of a State of Emergency means that the state now has the power to do the following, among other measures:

- enforce a mandatory self-quarantine period for returning travellers
- enforce a ban on non-essential gatherings of more than 500 people.

The mandatory self-quarantine period of 14 days for travellers returning from overseas does have implications for students and staff. In brief, students who travel overseas will not be able to attend school for 14 days when they return. Similarly, staff who travel overseas will not be able to attend school for 14 days on return. Last week, I contacted all LPS staff who had plans to travel overseas to ascertain details of their trip. These trips have now been cancelled, due to global travel bans. Clearly, staff took heed of the Commonwealth Government's revised travel advice, and reconsidered their planned overseas travel during these coming school holidays. I'm sure many of our school families are in the same unfortunate position.

Incursions

Visitors are still very welcome to come into schools, our school, unless they are speaking to an audience of over 500 people, in which case the guidelines for mass gatherings will be followed.

Futures are Bright at....Weeden Heights PS!

The bonus in our smaller school is that we can still conduct our school assemblies. This is fabulous as it will not disrupt our normal routine which is critical for our students.

Hoax Messages

On Monday there was the first widespread circulation of a hoax message related to schools and COVID-19, which falsely reported to be a statement from the Federal and State Health Ministers that schools would close yesterday. This is unlikely to be the only fake statement to be circulated during the pandemic.

The government does not propose to counter hoaxes at present. There is an obvious risk that they miss one and the lack of a public statement rejecting it may be taken as a form of authentication.

For Victorian schools and their community members, [the Department's COVID-19 website](#) is the **single authoritative source** of advice and information.

Again, the advice of the Chief Health Officer remains, at present, that our school should stay open, except in the case of a confirmed case of coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

If parents make the decision to keep their child/ren at home (due to COVID 19) our school will record this as a 'Code 807 – Parent Choice School Approved'. Please include the word 'COVID-19' in the absence comments.

Any student exhibiting the following symptoms (fever, breathing difficulties such as breathlessness, coughing, sore throat and fatigue or tiredness) **should not attend school**. If we see these symptoms in any child at school we will do the following:

- Reassure the student if they are anxious
- Move the student to a single room away from others, being mindful of the student's wellbeing
- Contact the child's parents/carers to inform them of the advice from health authorities and ask them to come and collect their child.

Thank you everyone for your continued attention to all school communications, in particular Flexibuzz and our newsletter.

Sincerely,

Kylie Campbell
Principal