

25 February 2022

Kia ora koutou,

New Zealand's COVID-19 response continues amid much larger numbers of daily cases. You may well have seen the headlines in the media about the numbers of cases being seen in schools. Please don't be alarmed by this. It is only natural that as cases in our community increase, they will appear in our school. We have really good systems in place to respond to this and to keep any spread of the virus to a minimum.

You may have seen Dr Jin Russell in the media noting [research from New South Wales about their recent Omicron outbreak](#) showing that spread within the school setting is very low (less than 4% of cases at school infected someone else when at school). We have seen that in New Zealand too. This is why we remain open at Red. It's great for a child's wellbeing and learning to be at school with their friends and school staff, and we have very good systems in place to keep everyone as safe as possible.

This said, please continue to keep a really close watch of your whānau for anyone with symptoms. If students are unwell, please keep them at home and get advice about getting a COVID-19 test.

With Phase 3 of the Omicron response, only confirmed cases and their household contacts need to self-isolate.

Everyone else, including those who may have had close contact with the case but aren't in the household, must continue to monitor really closely for any symptoms of COVID-19, but do not have to isolate.

Rapid antigen tests (RATs) are now being used to diagnose COVID-19 as well as PCR tests. This means that you will get an almost immediate test result back if a RAT is used.

Please contact the school if your child or anyone in your household tests positive for COVID-19. If anyone in your family is confirmed as having COVID-19, you are expected to notify your close contacts yourself.

Transmission of COVID-19 is still most likely to happen in your home – so please keep doing all those good things to keep your whānau safe. Wash your hands, get lots of fresh air, cover any coughs and sneezes, clean surfaces regularly, and seek advice if anyone is not feeling well.



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And please wear a mask when you are out and about. There is information online to help your family [prepare to isolate](#) if you need to.

The most important advice we can give to keep your whānau healthy is to only visit other places and households if it is really important, and remember to do all the things in the paragraph above.

Getting three doses of the vaccine will really help you to keep everyone healthy too. Research has shown that compared with being unvaccinated, three doses of the vaccine will mean you are 67% less likely to be infected with Omicron and 97% less likely to get Delta. If you don't get COVID you can't pass it on.

Vaccination for children 5+

Next Wednesday 2nd March, Puhinui School is hosting a pop up Covid vaccination event at Puhinui School (auditorium) from 2:30 – 4:30pm. An invite is extended to any children aged 5+ and their whānau who are due for their Covid vaccination to come along. There will be registered nurses there to give Covid vaccines, including boosters, to those who are due. They can even look up to see if you are due, in case you're not sure! Please note that the nurses will not be able to vaccinate anyone who is unwell on the day, awaiting Covid test results or a close contact of someone with Covid.

Nurses can also offer catch ups of other vaccinations that you may have missed, including younger siblings, intermediate age children who missed out on their HPV or Boostrix during lockdown, or anyone overdue their MMRs.

We have made the decision to continue with our rostering home cycle next week. Click here to read our [newsletter yesterday](#), (or check our social media pages) for the details of who is home on what day.

Finally, we know how hard the impacts on COVID-19 have been for many families in New Zealand. If you know of a family in your community who is struggling, please encourage them to reach out for support for example to access food, medicine, or access financial support: [Help is available – COVID-19 Health Hub](#).

If you have any concerns about sending your child to school, please do get in touch. We are here to help.

Aku mihi,

The team at Papatoetoe High School