

Kia ora koutou,

As the last week of term 1 draws to a close, I want to thank you all again for the support, feedback, engagement, and courage you have all displayed throughout the start of 2022. COVID has again been front and centre in everyone's lives, but as we "ease off the peak" and move into the orange setting of the covid protection framework, I don't believe it would be too indulgent to reflect on the last few months and congratulate yourself for getting through.

You'll be aware that Minister of Education, Chris Hipkins, has announced the move to Orange at 11:59pm tonight. The decision to move to Orange has been made on public health advice and reflects that we are moving past the peak of cases and our health system is able to cope. We are seeing that cases are declining due to high levels of vaccination and natural immunity after infection.

I wanted to give you an update on what the move to Orange means for our school. At Orange, face masks are no longer required at school. However public health advice is that masks continue to be strongly encouraged when indoors. Wearing a mask is a key health measure that slows the spread of COVID-19 in indoor settings. For that reason, we ask that visitors to the school, including parents and whānau, wear a mask whenever they are indoors on school grounds.

We also ask that your child continues to bring a mask to school every day. There may be times that we will ask them to wear a mask (for example, when we are having an assembly in the hall). If there are a high number of cases at school or in the community, we may ask that masks are worn in classrooms for a time. At Orange, students aged 12 and above are still required to wear a face mask on school or public transport.

We will continue to keep all the other health measures in place at school that we know slow the spread of COVID-19. These include ensuring our indoor spaces are well-ventilated, maintaining good hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette, appropriate physical distancing whenever we can and, most importantly, staying home if we are sick.

Next term, in addition to looking forward to a few less restrictions and returning to school life that is a bit closer to normal, we will be consulting on our updated Health and Safety Plan. Our intended timeline is as follows:

- Tuesday 31 May – table first draft of the 2022 Health and Safety plan at the board meeting
- Wednesday 1 June – issue consultation email to commence consultation on the plan
- Friday 1 July – close off consultation
- Tuesday 26 July – table final draft of Health and Safety plan with the board for final approval.

We are all looking forward to the Easter break and we wish you and your whanau every happiness at this time of the year. Keep an eye on our social media pages to catch a glimpse of our international performances tomorrow. We will be in touch again in the second week of the holidays with an update on the first week of term 2.

Ngā mihi,

The team at Papatoetoe High School



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