

Kia ora koutou,

Minister Hipkins has today confirmed that all our students in Years 9 & 10 are able to return onsite from Wednesday 17 November.

We know learning kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face), is the best option for children and young people. It's important for them to connect with their friends and teachers and it helps their social, physical, and emotional wellbeing. And so, we look forward to starting to bring the rest of our students back on site.

Although more students will be onsite than of late, our region remains at Alert Level 3 step 2 and we know there are active cases in our region.

Therefore, we will be following **all** the public health measures that are required so that we can keep everyone onsite (and their whānau) as safe as possible.

From the start of this outbreak vaccination rates have been climbing steadily and Aucklanders are doing a wonderful job to get vaccinated. As of 10 November, 95% of eligible Aucklanders (90% in Counties Manukau) have received one dose of the vaccine, and 88% their second dose (81% Counties Manukau). At the start of the current outbreak those numbers were 42% and 25% respectively.

Higher vaccine rates, including in those aged 12-19 are **one** reason why we can bring our junior students onsite now too. Public Health has also advised that they consider that with the other public health measures that are being put in place, including the requirement to wear face coverings for years 9-13, the risk of infection is low at school.

The greater risk for transmission will come from travel to and from school, including from any bad behaviours that might creep in off-site such as students congregating outside school on their way to and from home, and by any ignoring of the health measures we all need to follow in our region.

Public health experts at the Ministry of Health have reviewed our existing health requirements needed to operate at Alert Level 3 step 2. These include:

- staff and children who are unwell must stay at home, and get Covid tested
- children at higher risk of severe illness remain home, where possible
- staff who are at high risk of severe illness AND are not yet fully vaccinated are advised to remain at home
- mandatory mask wearing for staff and students
- only essential visitors will be permitted onsite – visitors are asked to wear a face covering when onsite
- good hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette
- classrooms to be well ventilated
- high touch surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected each day
- physical distancing will be adhered to wherever practicable, particularly between adults
- physical distancing of two metres will be in place from people we don't know
- QR code posters for the COVID app will be displayed
- a contact tracing register in place for everyone coming onsite including students and staff, through the attendance register, school timetables and our visitor register.



PAPATOETOE
HIGH SCHOOL

Nicholson Avenue
Papatoetoe
Auckland
New Zealand

PO Box 23088
Hunters Corner
Manukau
2155

Ph 09 278 4086

Vaughan Couillault
Principal
MEdLM, PGDipSM,
BCom, DipTchg

To support the return of our junior students, the additional measures that have been agreed by Cabinet to apply at Alert Level 3 step 2, based on public health advice are:

- face coverings will be required on school transport for people aged 12 and over
- time outdoors for students and staff will be maximised, including breaks, lunchtime, before and after school (unless the weather does not allow), and rooms will be aired during breaks
- exercising and singing will take place outdoors
- groups meeting indoors, including assemblies or staff meetings, will be avoided, and
- exams can go ahead (this will be for senior students at our school), but physical distancing will be maximised within the space available, with a minimum of 1.5 metres between desks.

You can be confident that this approach is designed to keep children, teachers, and our community as safe as possible.

But it's important everybody continues to play their part. Please follow all the Alert Level 3 step 2 requirements – stay at home if you are unwell, get tested if you have any symptoms, even mild ones, maintain your bubble, and keep track of where you have been. And finally, please do support everyone you know who is eligible to get vaccinated. [Find a walk-in and drive-through vaccination centres nearest you.](#)

People can access their COVID-19 vaccination record by registering for [My Covid Record](#) which is now available,

And finally, at this stage we intend to operate junior classes on a slightly revised timetable to recognise the change in routine that next week will bring for many. At this stage, we anticipate operating our normal timetable times, but with the change being students will be released to go home at 1.30pm each day from 17-19 November (Wednesday- Friday). We will be sending an email to you all on 16 November with any last-minute reminders and details.

To assist us as we plan for the return of our students in year's 9 & 10 please click [here](#) to indicate via a very simple survey, if your son/daughter will be returning to school from the 17 November.

As always, we are here to answer any questions that you may have, and you are welcome to contact any one of the team. Click [here](#) to be redirected to our contact's page.

Ngā mihi,

The team at Papatoetoe High School



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