

Kia ora koutou,

Minister Hipkins has today confirmed that all our students in Years 11 to 13 are able to return onsite from Tuesday 26 October.

This is very good news as we know how important face-to-face support and engagement will be for our senior students, so that they can complete their studies and continue to the next level.

Although more students will be onsite than of late, our region remains at Alert Level 3 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 at 18 October, 89% of eligible Aucklanders have received one dose of the vaccine, and 71% their second dose. 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 are able to bring our senior students onsite now.

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 (for those small numbers of students we already have on-site). These include:

- staff and children who are unwell must stay at home, and get tested for COVID-19
- 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, timetable and visitor register.



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To support the return of our senior students, the additional measures that have been agreed by Cabinet to apply at Alert Level 3, 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, 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 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.

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

At the moment schools are being used as community vaccination sites (ie vaccinating staff, students and whanau) using a DHB vaccination team or other team as agreed by the DHB, [information can be found here](#).

Please do support everyone you know who is eligible to get vaccinated. We intend to support the local health authorities to operate a vaccination centre on our school site over the weekend of October 30-31. We are looking forward to reconnecting with the clinical team from *Whanau Ora* to help support your vaccination needs.

[Find a walk-in and drive-through vaccination centres nearest you.](#)

And finally, at this stage we intend to operate classes as per our regular timetable. We may do things a little different on Tuesday 26, but we will get back to you with any altered detail later in the week. With the return of students next week, please note that bubbles of a particular size are no longer a public health requirement whilst students are on-site and at school.

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 contacts page.

Ngā mihi,
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