



11 March 2020

Dear Parent/s

This week there have been a number of meetings that I have attended, in collaboration with health personnel, to continue to strategise Fairholme's response to Coronavirus should it occur within our community, as well as reviewing our precautionary measures. Whilst there is a diversity of public opinion in relation to how Coronavirus is best addressed, it is important that we remain up to date with Australian health authorities' advice. This advice is our starting point- we may also choose to do more, if this is deemed to be in the best interests of our students and staff's wellbeing.

RECOMMENDED SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

As most would be aware, risk in relation to Coronavirus in Australia is currently considered to be low, with health authorities recommending that individuals exercise normal safety precautions in order to minimise risk of infection, and that we follow simple health procedures – particularly in relation to personal hygiene. This is the best defence against the spread of Coronavirus. This includes:

- washing your hands often with soap and water or hand sanitiser
- using a tissue and covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze
- avoiding close contact with others, such as touching, hugging or shaking hands

Accessing this year's flu vaccination through your local GP (or Health Centre for boarders) as they become available, is advised.

Of course, we continue to refer to, collaborate with, and follow the advice of the Queensland Health Department.

WHAT TO DO IF UNWELL

It is imperative that students and staff do not present to school should they have any flu-like symptoms: e.g. – fever, lower respiratory congestion or shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, nasal congestion or cough. The literature suggests that lower respiratory symptoms are more likely, than upper respiratory symptoms.

We will contact day families to collect their child, should these symptoms be present. As I iterate each year during flu season, it is not helpful, if ill, to come to school for one *important* lesson or event, then go home. In a short period of time there are a number of casual contacts who may be affected.

**Any staff member or student who has been in close personal contact with someone who has been diagnosed with Coronavirus will need to self-isolate for the recommended fourteen-day period.*

COULD THE COLLEGE CLOSE?

Looking ahead, should there be a Coronavirus case at Fairholme, all contacts would be required to self-isolate for 14 days and, given the plethora of contacts any student may make whilst infected, the logical course may well be to close the school for a short or longer period of time. You would note that a small number of schools have followed this course of action in southern states. In fact, in August 2016, Fairholme College closed for two school days in response to high levels of influenza within our community. For our boarder families, you may wish to consider options now, should the College be required to close. We will work with you, where options are restricted or problematic.

CONTINUATION OF LEARNING DURING TEMPORARY CLOSURE/ OR PROLONGED STUDENT ABSENCE

We are planning alternate means of learning continuation if such a situation does occur. For Junior School students work will be set and monitored by classroom teachers and communicated through email. For Middle and Senior School students work will be set and monitored via email and through my Fairholme – our learning management system.

EVENTS, EXCURSIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The College is continuing to actively review all planned overseas trips, interstate trips, camps and other excursions. This means that we will assess each activity individually and assess the risks involved in proceeding, or the appropriateness (where applicable) of postponing or cancelling.

HOLIDAY TRAVEL

If you are planning overseas travel you would be aware that post-Easter, there may be required isolation for a two week period for staff or students following travel - at the moment this is limited to Italy, Mongolia, China (including Hong Kong and Macau), South Korea, Japan, and Iran but, by then, there may well be a much more extensive list. Whilst there are no restrictions on domestic travel currently, there has been a significant reduction in domestic air travel because of the believed increased risk of exposure to Coronavirus through travel. For example, Queensland Health workers have been instructed not to fly given exposure to the wider public in flights and airports.

FINALLY

Thank you for your support and understanding. Like our health authorities, we are navigating uncharted territories and seeking to be measured in our responses whilst also observing sensible actions to mitigate risk. We are very much aware that the virus has a virulence that has been strengthened through media interest.

As well as prioritising student and staff wellbeing, we also remain committed to providing on-going access to learning opportunities, irrespective of circumstances.

Yours sincerely

Linda Evans

Dr Linda Evans | Principal