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12 March 2020



St Paul's
Catholic College
Booragul

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Re: COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

I am writing to you about the College and our current response to COVID-19 (Coronavirus). At this point, I am unaware of any persons in our local area who may have the virus or who have recently returned from areas that seem to be known as virus hotspots e.g. China, Northern Italy, Iran or South Korea. Any families that travelled over the Christmas break to areas where they might have come into contact with the virus are obviously clear of any issue given that the incubation period appears to be less than 14 days. We are well past that as we are now 35 days into the term.

We are taking advice from Catholic Schools NSW and the Maitland Newcastle Catholic Schools Office. At this point, the advice is that local (Australian) excursions/sporting trips are able to continue. Obviously if there is advice or we feel that a particular venue might be a risk, then we would make suitable changes to the event.

Our proposed trip to Vietnam at the end of the year has been postponed and we hope to offer a similar experience in 2021.

Any families that are currently planning a trip abroad are asked to consider health warnings and advice from both the Federal and State governments. At the time of writing, the areas of concern include China, South Korea, Iran and Italy. The travel bans in place are for China, South Korea, Italy and Iran.

We have directed staff to have conversations with classes about the importance of hand washing (for 20 seconds) after toilet visits and the appropriate use of hand sanitiser. We will continue with that important health message particularly while this virus is an issue in Australia.

If your child or any of your family become ill with symptoms such as fever, cough, runny nose and/or shortness of breath, we ask that you seek medical advice as soon as possible and that you keep your child at home. Once the medical advice has come back clear, your child will be able to return to school. I ask that you send in a note (email is okay) indicating that there is no issue.

Obviously, the situation remains quite fluid. We will continue to rely on expert advice from our professional organisations and update you as required. It was interesting that the schools in Sydney that have closed due to a student testing positive have now reopened after a thorough clean and use of disinfectant. I also understand that the children at the centre of the issues have mild symptoms and that their close contacts have been placed in quarantine for the appropriate time. This is a measured response that reflects the guidelines from the NSW Government.

I have included a link to the State Government Health Department for your perusal.
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/alerts/Pages/coronavirus-faqs.aspx#1-7>

I thank you for continuing to be vigilant and measured. As further advice comes through. I will continue to update.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Graeme Selmes'.

Graeme Selmes
Principal