



School Operations at Covid19 RED Light - Message & Update from Curtis Gaylor

As a principal, leading a local response to the Pandemic in a state school must be based on direction from the experts in the field. My expertise and knowledge is education and educational leadership. I am not an expert on Pandemics. Our response does not necessarily reflect my own personal views or beliefs and this can never be an aspect of decision making in a state school.

My leadership responsibility is to enact required procedures and mandates from the Ministry of Health and Education as best as possible to cater for all. This is complicated, difficult and not easy. We must all remember, that like every school community across the country, we have the full range of views on masks, mandates, vaccines, and other requirements at each alert level.

I am pleased to be able to provide the following information which I am hoping will ease the minds of all views across the spectrum of the Covid Response. This is a result of receiving the Ministry of Education's Bulletins, Zoom meetings with our local Ministry office, and communications with many individuals over the past 72 hours.

Red Level operations and if a case emerges at school

- We remain open at all alert levels.
- If a case is confirmed at Dargaville Primary School, we follow Ministry Guidelines, and it will depend on the nature of the case as to whether groups of people isolate, the school shuts, or we continue business as usual.

Masks

It is mandated for children from Year 4 up to wear masks indoors at school and on the school bus. However;

- Children will not be required to wear a mask outdoors when being educated, having lunch, when eating and drinking, or during play time outside.
- If your child is Year 4 but is in a class with children in Year 3, they are not required to wear a mask (this applies to all Year 4 children at Dargaville Primary School).
- There are also exemptions for wearing a face mask including for children or staff who: are deaf or hard of hearing, or if the person has a physical, mental health need or disability, that makes wearing a face covering unsuitable for learning.
- If your child requires an exemption, the parents will need to give written confirmation of this via email to Curtis Gaylor (principal@dargavilleprimary.school.nz),

who will notify the class teacher.

Mask enforcement and 'policing' is not the job of school staff. Our role is to remind, encourage and support all who are able to wear their mask as per the guidelines. If your child is non compliant, this will be managed discreetly. Children will not be punished for not wearing a mask. However, if it is a recurring issue and they can wear a mask, myself, Miss Pickering or the teacher might phone the parent to come to a mutual understanding of how to further support the child to wear their mask.

During the first week of term, our Year 5 & 6 teachers will factually educate their children about the realities of how the mask mandate looks in our school. That is, we will discuss:

- How most people will be wearing one, and some people will not.
- No one is permitted to question why or why not someone is or is not wearing a mask
- That people who mock others for wearing or not wearing a mask will have a meeting with me or Miss Pickering, and consequences may have to be put in place or a meeting / phone call with parents

No staff member will be expressing their opinions on mask wearing or whether or not you should wear one. We also ask that parents, while on site, not discuss this topic.

Discriminatory behaviour towards masked or unmasked will not be tolerated.

Vaccines for children

Children are not mandated to receive the vaccine to be able to attend school. Parents make the decision about whether or not their child will receive the vaccine. Schools cannot and will not give permission for a child to receive the vaccine. Information to the contrary is purely gossip and social media speculation. Vaccinated and unvaccinated children have a right to education.

Parents on site at Red Level

The same procedures remain as they did for Term 4. All parents are required to wear a mask when entering the school to drop children off and scan in. Parents are not to go into classrooms. The exception to this is our new entrants, highly anxious children or other new enrollments.

If parents have a mask exemption, proof of this must be available. Only one parent at a time in the office, masked and socially distanced. If parents do not follow these procedures, we will do our best to remind them of requirements but we cannot enforce them. If parents become argumentative or aggressive, the school can contact police if necessary to put things in place to avoid such situations in the future.



Events and activities

All school based activities for children continue as normal. However, these will most likely be class based only with interaction between classes minimised (when practical). No non-essential visitors are allowed on site. There will be no assemblies of any nature.

We make decisions about off-site activities on a case-by-case situation using a flow chart from the Ministry of Education. Our Senior Camp to One Tree Point is still going ahead. The camp providers have all of their required Health & Safety policies and procedures in place.

It is likely that most other off site events, programmes, activities, sports will be very minimal during Term 1 (while in RED). Information about sports and after school practises on offer in light of RED level will be outlined in separate information in the near future.

Start of year Information

School opens at 8.15am. Children will go straight to their 2022 class. The usual hygiene systems and processes will be in place as they have been at previous alert levels. Remember if your child is sick in any way, keep them at home. Please use either the Portland St or Hokianga Road entrances for drop-off and pick-up. Our Healthy Lunches in School programme will start on day 1. Please remember to send some healthy snacks and a water bottle. Hats are compulsory during term 1.

Thank you for your support and understanding at this time. We will get through this. Please do not hesitate to contact your class teacher, Karah Pickering, or myself, if you have anything you wish to discuss about the Red Alert Level requirements.

Ngā mihi nui

Curtis Gaylor



Principal | Dargaville Primary School

