



Newsletter

28 January 2022

www.stheliers.school.nz

Dear Parents and Caregivers

Tēnā koutou kātoa

I thank many of you for the kind words following my letter of introduction on Wednesday. It has been a busy few weeks preparing for school and working together with the leadership team to prepare the school for the students' return on Tuesday 8 February. I can see that the culture of the school is strong, and I know that Craig McCarthy has left an impressive legacy over 19 years as principal. He has certainly left big shoes for me to fill. I wish him all the best for his retirement, and I do hope that you get the opportunity to farewell him properly soon.

Our team is feeling refreshed and ready to welcome all students on site very soon. Next week we have several teacher only days to cover professional learning and preparing for the start of the year under government restrictions.

In regard to COVID-19, we have moved fully into the new traffic light framework for all our school activities and events for the beginning of the year. We have reviewed and updated our health and safety plan using the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education to ensure they meet the requirements and that they will work for our school community. It is good to know that at Red, we are able to support everyone learning onsite. Although this is not the plan, it is a summary of the main points so that you can begin preparing your child for school.

Gate Drop offs and Pickups

Unfortunately, parents and caregivers cannot come on to our school site, therefore parents and caregivers will be required to drop off and collect their children at the school gate unless their children make their own way home. Parents and caregivers should wear face masks when dropping off and picking up children from the school gates and remain distanced as much as possible. Staggered pickups and drop off will support this.

All gates will be open in the morning from 8.30am - 8.50am. **Children can enter any gate** and go directly to their classroom. There is no outside play before school to avoid children mixing with other children other than in their room or year group.

At the end of the day there will be staggered leaving times and the use of all gates to reduce the risk of congestion. All children will be ready to leave at 2.45pm at the bell. At 2.45pm older siblings will collect younger siblings from their classroom and exit immediately from the youngest sibling's gate.

All other children will exit through the following gates at the listed times:

Y1 Room 2 gate by caretaker's shed @ 3pm

Y1 Rooms 7 & 8 gate by St Heliers Road Bus Stop @ 3pm

Y2 gate opposite Cigana @ 3pm

Y3 gate by behind R12 @ 2.55pm

Y4 gate by main entrance off Walmsley Rd @ 2.55pm

Y5 gate by main entrance off Walmsley Rd @ 2.50pm

Y6 gate by dance and drama room @ 2.50pm
Y7 gate by senior adventure playground @ 2.45pm
Y8 gate by fitness trail @ 2.45pm

Teachers will supervise these gates.

Parents on Site

All visitors, parents and caregivers who need to visit the office must scan the QR code, then enter and report to the School Office, and sign into the visitors register, **via the main gate on Walmsley Road.**

All visitors, including parents and caregivers, must wear face masks if required to be onsite at school and remain distanced as much as possible and should maintain a safe distance from those who are not part of their household bubble. Siblings of children of other schools should remain offsite.

For parents and caregivers of 5-year-old children who are brand new to school and students who are new to St Heliers School this year, the school will contact you directly with details for the first day of school.

Events and Activities

Large events and gatherings especially when indoors continue to be one of the riskier activities we can undertake. We have therefore reviewed all our events and activities for the upcoming term to ensure we meet the health guidance under Red. Students and staff will remain in their classrooms and while there are no physical distancing requirements in the class there will be distancing requirements between groups. Events such as assemblies inside will not be able to take place.

Ventilation

We have used the Ministry of Education self-assessment tool to review all our ventilation in readiness for the start of the year. Providing good old fashioned fresh air remains the most important thing we can do in our learning spaces to minimise risk for learners and staff (and the same goes for you at home). The board and I want to be proactive in this area and are looking into the purchase of CO2 monitors for every class in the coming weeks to further support our ventilation plan.

Omicron and Testing

We have all seen very large numbers of cases overseas and we will very likely see much larger numbers of cases in Aotearoa than we have previously experienced in the last two years. While Omicron is more transmissible than previous strains, most people who get COVID-19 will have a mild to moderate illness and will fully recover in their own home.

However, some of our community who are immune compromised, are ill or have other vulnerabilities, even when they are fully vaccinated, could be more affected by Omicron. So, we all need to continue to play our part to minimise the spread of the virus.

If you are symptomatic or need to be tested to access a workplace or service, you will be guided at the time on which test is best for you.

Masks

Staff and children in Years 4 – 8 must wear masks when inside at school while we are at Red. Masks are not required for staff and children in Years 1 - 3 although they may choose to wear these. Children will need to bring their own mask with them.

Public health advice is that an appropriate face covering will fit snugly and seal well around facial contours. This can include single use, disposable masks (medical masks) and re-usable fabric masks. Staff will be wearing medical grade masks.

For those of you with children who might be reluctant to wear a face covering, there is some [helpful advice from Michigan Health](#), including using simple, specific explanations about why they need to wear a face covering, adults being the role models, providing small rewards for wearing them, bringing face coverings into play such as drawing face coverings on characters in colouring books, or letting them choose/make the mask.

Children and staff are not required to wear a mask outside although they may choose to do so.

Vaccination for 5 to 11-Year-Olds

Vaccination, including a booster shot, remains an important tool to help prevent the most serious harm from the COVID-19 virus. If children and young adults who have been vaccinated do develop COVID-19, they are far less likely to get seriously ill and less likely to transmit the virus to others. It is not a requirement for students to be vaccinated in order to attend school onsite.

The free five- to 11-year-old vaccination programme is now underway and more than 100,000 children in New Zealand have had their first dose.

Managing Cases in our School

We have a good contact tracing system in place so that if there is a confirmed case who has been at school while infectious, we can quickly identify who was a close contact of that person. We will then quickly advise those contacts of what they need to do.

Only if the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Education advises to do so, would we consider closing and moving to distance learning for everyone. At Red we will keep children learning onsite for as long as we can.

Please make sure your contact details we have on file are up to date, so we can get in touch with you if needed. You can do this by emailing the office at secretary@stheliers.school.nz

Preparing for COVID-19

You can also prepare for COVID-19, making sure you and your household have a plan and know what to do. This will mean your family and community can help each other if needed. Find out more here:

- [Be prepared for COVID-19](#)
- [Download the COVID-19 Readiness Checklist \[PDF, 121 KB\]](#)
- [What to expect when self-isolating at home](#)

Getting Ready to Return to School

The Ministry of Education has some helpful information on their [Parents and Whānau website](#) to support your children to get back to school. There is also a very important reminder about how you can [take care of yourself](#).

There are many other aspects of our safety plan such as staggered and distanced breaks and movement around the school but I felt there was more than enough information for this first letter regarding Covid-19 for the start of the school year. Further information will follow.

While this might all feel a little overwhelming at times, we know that all these measures will help our children return to school, reconnect with friends, and do what they enjoy.

We are also here to help. Please get in touch if you have any concerns or need help in any way. Phone the school office on **09 5758311** or email to secretary@stheliers.school.nz

Noho ora mai

Sean Valvoi
Principal