



Monday, 23 March 2020

Dear College families,

Thank you for the support you have shown the College over the past two months. We are in extraordinary times and appreciate the way you are pulling together as a community. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank College staff who have done an extraordinary job in very complex circumstances of keeping students focused on learning while carefully monitoring their wellbeing and sense of safety. As College Principal, I am very thankful for their continued dedication to their highest priority - the students in their care.

By now many of you would have listened to or read an outline of the press conference held by the Premier this morning. The focus of this letter will be to outline the actions the College will be taking as a result of her advice pertaining to schools.

In line with the directions from National Cabinet, NSW Premier Gladys Berejikilian has said at her press conference this morning that NSW [government] schools will remain open until the end of term. For clarity, I am providing statements taken directly from the press conference;

- *"The health advice has not changed," Ms Berejikilian said. "However, for practical reasons in NSW we will be encouraging parents to keep their children at home."*
- *"Already last week we had up to 30 per cent of parents who chose to keep their [children] at home, and we appreciate and anticipate that number will increase," Ms Berejikilian said.*
- *She stressed that "no child will be turned away from school".*
- *"I want to stress that for parents who have no option, for parents that are workers and have no option the school is safe for children to attend, schools will remain open."*
- The Premier also stated that an online program of learning would be available for parents who choose to keep their children home from school, but that it would not be "a separate class for kids who are at home and kids who are at school": all students will essentially be completing the online courses, wherever they are.
- "Schools remain open for their children to be supervised in that online learning environment but for teachers it means one unit of teaching."

In light of this announcement, the advice of the AHPPC (Australian Health Protection Principal Committee), advice from the AIS (Association of Independent School) and advice from CSA (Christian School Australia) **the College has made the following decisions which will take effect as of tomorrow, Tuesday 24 March:**

- The College, including the ELC and OSCH will remain open for the remainder of this term, at least for children of essential services workers and those unable to make alternative arrangements; and,
- The College will deliver online learning for students K – 12 for both students who need to attend the College and those who stay at home.

Should I keep my children at home?

We urge all families to adhere to the advice provided by the Premier this morning. If you are able to work from home and/or have the capacity to have your children supervised in your home, then the College would request that you keep your children at home and connect with our online learning program (see details below) to ensure continuity of learning. However, **if you are an essential services worker or you are unable to make alternative arrangements for your child** then the College will be remaining open in order to facilitate online learning for those students who need to attend the College. We ask all families to continue to engage with NSW Health advice when making decisions for your children regarding attending the College.



Online Learning

For a number of weeks now the College has been investigating and trialling moving to an online learning environment. As of last week students from Year 3 to Year 12 were briefed by their teachers as to how to access and use the College's online learning systems. Teachers of Infants classes have also been planning for learning to continue in an online environment that will be easily accessible by student and parents.

Later this afternoon you will be emailed an overview of online learning for your child by your relevant Head of Years. This overview will contain links to the College's online learning platforms and advice on how to set up an online learning environment at home. Please note that in all of our decision making and planning pertaining to continuity of learning, that it is our intent to provide an equivalent online learning experience whether students learn from home or at the College. However, there are a number of risks that we want parents to be aware of as we move into this uncharted territory. We are doing all that we can to mitigate against these risks but ask that you be patient with us as inevitably we encounter access issues.

Some of our students will find moving to this environment challenging. Please actively partner with classroom teachers as we make this transition. Please also note that if your child has an Individual Plan (IP) the Learning Enrichment team will be actively working with teachers to ensure appropriate support is in place. Any concerns please continue to direct these to the classroom teacher.

Attendance Procedures

Standard College attendance procedures continue to be in place, in that, even in these unusual circumstances the College is required to account for the attendance of every student, every school day. In order to effectively track attendance, students accessing online learning from home will be marked absent using the 'F' code. This code does not affect the student's absence record. Given the high volume of students we are now anticipating choosing to continue their learning from home it would streamline our procedures if we had an indication of your plans for the remainder of this term. Please indicate, using either this [Primary Form](#) or [Secondary Form](#), which days your child will **not be present** at the College and therefore continuing their learning from home. It is important that you fill out a separate form for each child.

If this changes at any point, please notify the College by emailing either primaryabsent@nwcc.nsw.edu.au or secondaryabsent@nwcc.nsw.edu.au. The data we collect from this form will help us to populate our rolls for the remainder of the term and assist us with minimising the opportunity for student truancy. Please be aware that if you choose to have your child continue their learning at home that duty of care now falls to parents.

Social Distancing Measures

The College is implementing a range of social distancing practices to ensure the College is operating in line with current medical advice and leading hygiene practices. In the College:

- Teaching spaces are ventilated by leaving window and doors open;
- Students are directed to wash/sanitize hands regularly;
- Student desks and tables have been separated as far as possible in rooms;
- Some lessons are taught outside or moved to large venues to assist in student distancing;
- In some year levels students will remain at the same desk and chair to limit student movement and teachers will come to the students in those rooms; and,
- All assemblies, chapels and gatherings have been cancelled and alternate communication and connection methods established.

As we review College attendance numbers over the next few days we may also implement staggered morning tea and lunch breaks and allocate specific play areas to student groups.

College Bus Services

Please be advised the College bus services will run as scheduled for the remainder of this week, at which point we will review and provide further information.

NAPLAN cancelled

The decision to not proceed with NAPLAN in 2020 has been taken to assist school leaders, teachers and support staff to focus on the wellbeing of students and continuity of education, including online and remote learning. Further, the impact of responses to the COVID-19 virus may affect the delivery of NAPLAN testing, including the operation of centralised marking centres and the implications for nationally comparable data if an insufficient number of students are available to complete the test.

Keeping Updated

In the interest of ensuring that our community has ready access to updated information on COVID-19 we have established a page on our website. You can access this page by using this [link](#).

Conclusion

Finally, I would like to acknowledge that for some families this circumstance is having a stressful impact. If you feel that there is a way that the College can assist during this time please contact the College to discuss your needs.

A reminder from God's word, *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment"* (2 Timothy 1:7). I have been encouraged many times over throughout the last few weeks as parents and staff have sought to lovingly support one another in the many decisions that have to be made at this time. Thank you again for your patience, encouragement and support.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "fmarlow".

Felicity Marlow
Principal