

22 July, 2020

Principal Update: Term 3
COVID-19: Actions for symptomatic students & direct/close contacts

Main points

- *Unwell students or staff should stay home and get tested*
- *Definition of direct/close contact*
- *School closure after a positive case*
- *Temperature checks and the wearing of masks*

Dear Parents and Carers

It has been a wonderful start to the term having our students and staff back. Last week many students were making the most of the sunshine and were out in the beautiful grounds. We are making the most of having everyone here at the College as we navigate the challenges of COVID-19 in Victoria.

This letter is to provide an update on actions that the College is taking in response to the latest COVID-19 restrictions based on the advice from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Catholic Education Office Ballarat (CEOB). Whilst many restrictions remain unchanged, there is a need to provide further information, including procedures to be followed when a student or staff member has been in close contact with a symptomatic person or a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Students should not attend school if they or anyone in their household are symptomatic (ill). This may include a cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath, fever, or loss of sense of taste or smell. Those students should immediately get tested for COVID-19 and not return to school until a negative result is known. Follow the links below for information from the DHHS website regarding testing and testing locations.

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/getting-tested-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/where-get-tested-covid-19>

There have been a number of enquiries from families seeking advice on whether their daughter should be tested, based on varying degrees of contact with another person who has been/is being tested. **The current DHHS recommendation for Ballarat is that only people with symptoms, or people who have had direct/close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 service should be tested.** While a test result is pending students should remain at home in isolation until they are confirmed negative.

'Direct/close contact' means having face-to-face contact for more than 15 minutes with someone who has a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) – or alternatively sharing a closed space with them for more than two hours. The following link to the DHHS website contains more information regarding contacts.

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19#how-do-you-define-close-contact>

In the case of a Loreto College student or staff member testing positive after having attended school, closure of the College will be enacted. A clear process will be communicated to parents and carers, including options for your daughter to travel home, or remain at school under strict supervision until the end of the school day. The College will take advice from the DHHS and the CEOB and begin contact tracing immediately. As well, the College will undergo a complete decontamination clean. Classes will be taught remotely via the same platforms on which the first period of remote learning was delivered.

Students and staff travelling to school from a restricted zone within metropolitan Melbourne, are required to have their temperature checked daily. This is a very quick process using a non-contact infrared thermometer and will be conducted indoors.

The Victorian State Government has mandated the wearing of masks for all of Melbourne and Mitchell Shire but this is not mandated for Ballarat. **However, the College supports the wearing of a mask by all students and staff**, particularly given the recent trends of increased spread of the virus across the state. Whilst not compulsory, this action will help keep our teachers, students and families safe from community transmission. Please have a conversation with your daughter about this and consider providing her with a face mask for use in class and on public transport where social distancing cannot be practised.

As you are aware, the College has had to cancel or postpone many assemblies, events and gatherings. We are working with our staff and students to provide some opportunities for interhouse activities within our own College community. Recent cancellations include Ballarat Associated Sports and a staff professional learning day scheduled for Friday 28 August. This day will now be a normal day of classes for all students and staff. Further details on changes will be communicated throughout the term. The Graduation Dinner has been postponed until December with arrangements still to be confirmed.

Finally, I want to thank families for their continued support of the College throughout these difficult times. As mentioned in earlier communication this year, the College is aware of the dramatic impact that COVID-19 is having on our community, not just from a health perspective, but also in relation to the economy. We want to assure families that in genuine hardship cases, there will be an understanding around this unprecedented situation that we are in. We believe that stability in education for our valued students and their families, is crucial at this challenging time. If you currently find yourself in a situation of financial hardship as a result of COVID-19, please contact our finance team by e-mail (accounts@loreto.vic.edu.au) who will deal with your concerns in a confidential manner.

We will all get through this together.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Michelle Brodrick', is displayed on a light blue rectangular background.

Michelle Brodrick
Principal