

16 March, 2020

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Dear Parents and Guardians

Loreto Ballarat Limited
ACN 610338577

These are uncertain times and the health and wellbeing of our students and staff is of utmost importance. However, so too are those around us! These times remind us of the interconnectedness of our global world, our vulnerability and of our responsibility to one another. We ask you to also hold the most vulnerable in our community in your thoughts and ensure that in our actions, we consider the needs of others as well as our own.

The media and public commentary about the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak continues to create concern. We are being provided the latest advice from the Department of Human Services, Australian and Victorian Chief Medical Officers by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd to ensure that our school practices are helping to keep our school community safe from the outbreak.

At the time of writing this letter, anyone returning to Australia from overseas is now required to isolate for 14 days. This will impact all staff and families who are still intending to travel overseas during the term break, regardless of the overseas location.

Travel advice is constantly changing, please keep up to date by reviewing the advice given by Smartraveller <http://smartraveller.gov.au>

College Preventative Measures

The College has put in place many preventative measures to ensure we are best placed to protect all children, staff and community members from possible contamination from COVID-19.

Additional preventative measures include:

- Daily sanitising of all door handles and additional hand sanitising stations around the site
- Provision of extra hand sanitiser and antibacterial soap in all dispensers throughout the College
- Non-contact greeting for staff and students
- Social distancing measures in action - school assemblies, year level assemblies and large group meetings have been cancelled
- This will be complemented by the reinforcement of the identified personal hygiene steps to all students and staff.

College Events:

The College is following advice from all relevant authorities. In line with this advice the following decisions have been made:

- All **BAS After-school sport** has been cancelled for the remainder of Term 1.
- All **Year 10 -12 offsite Retreats** from 25 – 27 March have been cancelled
- The **Year 9 Retreat** has been cancelled
- All **Parent/Student/Teacher Interviews** have been cancelled (*see below for revised format*)
- All **external excursions** for the remainder of Term 1 have been cancelled
- All Year Level assemblies and JPIC Meetings have been cancelled
- The **National Rowing Championships** have been cancelled
- The **Rowing Dinner** on Thursday 19 March has been postponed
- The **Athletics Carnival** on Friday 20 March has been cancelled
- The JPIC Walkathon scheduled for Friday 24 April could be cancelled and an alternative activity arranged.
- All College Reunions scheduled for the start of Term 2 have been postponed

Parent / Student / Teacher Interviews:

All pre-booked Parent / Student / Teacher interviews will take place in the following online format:

- There will be no face to face interviews at the College
- A personal report will be emailed to parents/carers from the staff member for all pre-booked interview sessions
- In cases where required, a personal phone call will be made
- If parents /carers have not pre-booked an interview, you will not receive any emails from staff
- If you have booked an interview, and you do not receive an email from the designated staff member on Wednesday 18 March after 8pm, please contact the College.

What will we do if your child/daughter is unwell?

In the first instance we ask that sick children and students do not attend the College. If your daughter/child presents unwell with cold or flu like symptoms, you will be contacted and asked to collect them immediately.

What if we have a confirmed case of COVID-19?

In the event that there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 amongst students, staff or parents/carers, the College will put in place the following steps:

- We will seek immediate advice and direction from Department of Health and Human Services and other relevant authorities.
- We will inform the College community, advising of the confirmed COVID-19 case(s) and the steps being taken.

The provision of online teaching and learning in the event of a school closure

Loreto College has a number of on-line platforms that we use to communicate with parents and students.

- SIMON is our school learning management system that all students and teachers use for emailing and recording academic results. (Parents can see this information via PAM).
- Classwork and relevant resources can be uploaded to on-line platforms like SIMON or Google classroom. Students are able to submit work and communicate with their teachers via these platforms.
- VCE students also have access to a product called Edrolo, it is a VCE online subscription resource designed to provide students with engaging, informative and comprehensive presentations to help them understand and learn and prepare for their exams.

Our staff and students have been using these on-line platforms as part of their regular classroom practice for some time now, so if we are directed to close the school we would be able to work from home provided the student has access to the internet.

If any student has an issue with their computer or accessing these platforms, they can contact the IT help desk at helpdesk@loreto.vic.edu.au

What will parents need to do to facilitate online learning?

In preparation for a possible school closure, we ask families to prepare for online learning, to be facilitated in your home. Your daughter(s) will require:

1. Access to laptop or computer – all students should have their school computer
2. Internet access or capacity to access the internet temporarily
3. Quiet area for your daughter(s) to access their online learning

NOTE: If your daughter(s) does not have access to the internet, please contact the school immediately.

In terms of maintaining protective practices between staff and students, should the online learning involve video conferencing or discussions, we ask that this does NOT occur in bedrooms and that your daughter is appropriately dressed for learning. Inappropriate dress, including pyjamas, will not be acceptable.

What will you need to do if Victorian Health advise that you must isolate at home?

According to the Australian Government Department of Health, people who need to isolate must stay at home and not attend public places, in particular work, school, childcare or university. Only people that usually live in the household should be in the home.

Do not see visitors. Where possible, ask others such as friends or family, who are not required to be isolated, to get food or other necessities. If the person in isolation must leave the home or residence, such as to seek medical care, they are instructed to wear a surgical mask if they have one.

What if you or your child becomes sick whilst in isolation?

According to the Australian Government Department of Health, symptoms include (but are not limited to) fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath. If you or your child/daughter develops mild symptoms, you must:

- Isolate them or yourself from others at home and use a separate bathroom if available.
- Put on a surgical mask and if you don't have one, practise good sneeze/cough hygiene.
- Practise good hand hygiene; and
- Call a doctor or hospital and tell them the recent travel or close contact history.

If your child /daughter has serious symptoms such as difficulty in breathing:

- Call 000, ask for an ambulance and notify the officers of the recent travel or close contact history.

As parents, you have a critical role in helping the school manage this situation:

- Exercise good judgment by keeping children home if they are feeling unwell for any reason
- Talk to children about the situation, as they may be feeling anxious or stressed. You have a key role in helping students feel prepared and safe
- Encourage children to be proactive and committed to their schoolwork, and to stay connected with the school and their teachers.

We also refer families to the Department of Health and Human services guide on:

Ten ways to reduce your risk of coronavirus:

1. Wash hands often with soap and running water, for at least 20 seconds. Dry with paper towel or hand dryer.
2. Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
3. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow.
4. Isolate yourself at home if you feel sick. If you take medication ensure you have adequate supplies.
5. Phone your GP first if you need medical attention. They will tell you what to do.
6. Continue healthy habits: exercise, drink water, get plenty of sleep, and now is the time to quit smoking. Call the Quitline 137 848.
7. Don't wear a face mask if you are well.
8. Buy an alcohol-based hand sanitiser with over 60 percent alcohol.
9. Get the flu shot (available April).
10. Shaking hands is optional!

The Department of Health and Human Services has a number of resources on its website, which explain the virus, detail risk-reduction practices and behaviours, and answer frequently asked questions. These are available at www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus.

You can also find information about Catholic education's response at <http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Coronavirus-information-for-parents>.

This is an evolving situation, but we will keep you updated as things change.

I ask that you continue to work closely with the school and to contact my office should you have any new concerns.

Thank you for your support as we work to keep our students safe.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SD' or 'S. Diafas', written in a cursive style.

(Ms) Sandra Diafas
Interim Principal