



St Francis de Sales Catholic Primary School
626 Pascoe Vale Road Oak Park 3046
Tel: (03) 9306 9444 Email: principal@sfoakpark.catholic.edu.au
ABN: 87 246 330568



School Note

Information for Parents – Update number 8 on COVID-19

20 March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

As we continue to travel together in unknown waters, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our school community for your support and understanding during these uncertain times. I am incredibly proud of the teachers and support staff who have worked really hard to maintain the level of education and student support in challenging circumstances. The school is grateful for the support and positive feedback from our community over this time.

The current advice from Catholic Education Melbourne and the Victorian Chief Health Officer remains unchanged, schools are to remain open and there are no plans for closing schools in the immediate future. School life at SFdS will be operating as normal next week.

This advice is constantly under review and we will update you if it changes. I have included a letter from Victorian Chief Health Officer, Dr Sutton who has outlined the reasons as to why schools are currently remaining open.

Working together - Social Distances

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind our school community of the recommendations around keeping social distances between each other of 1.5metres and how this can be of benefit at school. Social distancing includes ways to stop or slow the spread of infectious diseases. It means less contact between you and other people. With this in mind, for the wellbeing of our students, staff and broader community, I kindly ask and encourage our school community to not congregate in the corridors and in school entrances and/or exits and keep these zones clear and kindly wait for your children in the outdoor open waiting areas.

Learning from home

We are aware that some people in our school communities have heightened levels of concern and anxiety regarding the many impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. These thoughts and feelings are normal and understandable.

The school understands and respects that families may choose to keep children home during these uncertain times. However, it is important to note the school is remaining open as normal and will continue to do so into the future. Teachers are working hard delivering our mandated curriculum to students. As such, we are currently not in a position to offer additional home learning if you choose to keep your children home.

In the event, the Victorian Chief Health Officer enforces the closure of all schools, the school will provide suitable home learning activities to enable children to access the Victorian Curriculum. School staff are currently preparing this home learning which will be shared with families if this circumstance eventuates.





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Liturgy and sacramental guidelines

Yesterday, the Bishops of Victoria issued new guidelines regarding the celebration of liturgies and sacraments.

Public liturgies, celebrations of Mass, and other gatherings such as funerals, weddings and baptisms have been suspended. Clergy have been encouraged to celebrate Mass privately and the Bishops encourage us all to participate spiritually.

All Catholics in Victoria are dispensed from their Sunday obligation until further notice.

I have spoken to Fr Thien this morning who is very concerned about the spiritual needs of the community. Father has asked me to communicate that the Church will be open for private personal prayer at the following times:

- Monday - Friday: 8:30 am - 10:30 am
- Monday - Friday: 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm
- Saturday: 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm
- Sunday: 8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Again, thank you for your continued support as we work together to keep our students safe.

Kind regards

John Rudd | Principal | john.rudd@sfoakpark.catholic.edu.au



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One of the reasons why schools have been kept open by governments across Australia, on the basis of the advice from the health and medical experts, is that people remaining in their routine daily activities, whilst decreasing non-essential social and mass gathering activities, will decrease the opportunities for spread in our community, including those to teachers.

There is evidence that children in households may be infected by adults within the households, which is why all household contacts of confirmed cases are placed into home isolation when a case is confirmed. This will continue throughout the COVID-19 response.

Thus far, approximately 2% of total cases in China have been in children, and there have been no deaths in children under 10 years with very few hospitalisations. There is emerging evidence indicates that the people who are most unwell, and most symptomatic are more infectious than those with very mild or minimal symptoms.

There is not widespread community transmission at this point, and levels of COVID-19 illness are likely to be very low. Children who are at all unwell are advised to be at home, and schools and teachers should exclude any unwell children who present to school. Any children with undetected symptoms are likely to be minimally infectious.

At this point there is no evidence of any school clusters where infections were driven by the student population or student introductions. The evidence is reviewed daily and advice will continue to be tailored to the evidence. Any change in policy advice will consider the risk to teachers as well as the broader community.

Adj Clin Prof Brett Sutton
Victorian Chief Health Officer
Health Protection Branch

19/03/2020



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Please notify the school immediately

Please notify the school immediately:

- if your child has a **CONFIRMED** case of COVID-19; or
- Is a **close contact** of a **CONFIRMED** case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days. "**Close contact**" is defined by DHHS as someone who has had at least 15 minutes of face-to-face contact with a confirmed case, or shared a closed space with someone for more than two hours with a confirmed case.

Critical Role

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.

Good Hygiene Practices

Good hygiene practices are the most effective means of minimising the spread of COVID-19. Please encourage your child to:

- cover mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing with a tissue, or cough into their elbow
- dispose of the tissue into a bin and then wash their hands afterwards
- wash their hands regularly, using soap and water, including after using the toilet and before eating. Hands should be washed for at least 20 seconds

Wellbeing Key Resources

- **Special Report: Coronavirus - Dr Michael Carr-Gregg developed this video for parents and school staff**
https://schooltv.me/wellbeing_news/special-report-coronavirus
- **ABC News article - How to talk to your children about coronavirus**
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-03-04/how-to-talk-to-children-about-coronavirus/12020324>
- **Worried about your child getting coronavirus? Here's what you need to know – *The Conversation* article**
<https://theconversation.com/worried-about-your-child-getting-coronavirus-heres-what-you-need-to-know-131909>
- **Talking to children about natural disasters, traumatic events, or worries about the future** – This **Emerging Minds** video introduces ways for parents and carers to manage media coverage of traumatic events, and talk to their children about their worries and fears.
<https://vimeo.com/394049129>
- **Traumatic events, the media and your child** – This **Emerging Minds** fact sheet provides guidance on how to support and reassure children during ongoing media coverage of COVID-19.
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/traumatic-events-the-media-and-your-child/>



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Keeping well and maintaining social distances

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-public-gatherings-and-visits-to-vulnerable-groups>

Other Resources

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>.

You can also access further information and updates from the following websites:

- For Victorian updates to the current incident, go to: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/novelcoronavirus>
- For national updates: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/latest-information-about-novel-coronavirus>
- For international updates: <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/novel-coronavirus>
- WHO resources: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

Communication

May I take this opportunity to remind our families, the primary means of communication is through our SkoolBag App. The SkoolBag App is used to successfully communicate to parents and families within the school of all important news, events, newsletters, notes, e-forms and other important information about your child's education. It is recommended that all families have access to the SkoolBag App.

Link to SkoolBag <https://moqproducts.com.au/skoolbag/installation-instructions>

Updates on the Coronavirus can also be found on our website, <https://www.sfoakpark.catholic.edu.au/news-events/newsletters/>