



Tuesday 24 March

COVID-19 Update:

Kia Ora Koutou

With yesterday's announcement by Government, we are implementing with urgency our plan to support your child's learning from home. We appreciate this is a sudden and significant change, and will be heavily disruptive to many people in our community.

School holidays brought forward

School holidays are being brought forward so that they are completed within the 4 week period. Holidays will now begin from next **Monday 30 March to Tuesday 14 April** inclusive (a reminder that the Tuesday after Easter Monday is always a closed day for schools).

At the end of the school holidays, schools will be open for distance learning but not physically open for staff or students to attend school. Please note the instruction to stay home (Alert Level 4) will continue beyond the new school holiday period but schools will be technically open for distance instruction.

We will be supporting children's learning from your home as shared with you all in the information sent home yesterday in home learning books. For those not at school yesterday, staff will be emailing these details to you. You will also hear from teachers about how they will be engaging with you during this time apart.

For students in Year 1-4, See Saw will be the main portal for your child's learning and for students in Year 5-6, their class websites. You can expect to hear from your child's teacher at the beginning of each week to learn more about new activities that have been added to these portals. Our staff will be busy putting together activities to support ongoing learning in this uncertain time. Please be aware that they will also be managing their own families, children and households too. Take time over the coming two weeks of 'school holidays'. Distance learning does not need to start until after the school holidays.

Words taken from a really pertinent post on I saw this morning that I agree so much with right now:

'What our children need right now is to feel comforted and loved. It is so important that they feel like it is all going to be okay. That might mean that you need to tear up the perfect timetable and simply focus on giving them lots of love and attention. I understand this may be hard if you have the added pressure of trying to work at home with the children there.

Please try to prioritise time for play outside and going on walks together. Use this time which has been gifted to us to bake biscuits and paint pictures. Play board games and watch movies. Do a science experiment together or find virtual field trips of the zoo. Create a fitness circuit in your garden. Start a book and read together as a family. Snuggle under warm blankets and do nothing

Please pause, breathe and smile and try hard to limit worry about your children regressing in school. Every single child, the world over, is in this position and they all will be okay. When we are back in the formal classroom, we will focus on their learning and meet their educational needs. Our Merrilands School teachers are real experts at this! Avoid picking fights with or putting pressure on your precious children because they don't want to do any activities. Don't shout or become tense at your children for not following the timetable. Don't insist on 2 hours of learning time if they are resisting it. See if you can make learning fun through their play.

If I can leave you with one thing, it is this: at the end of all of this uncertainty and testing situation, it is the mental health of your precious children which will be far more important than their academic skills. How they felt during this time will stay with them long after the memory of what they did during these weeks is gone. I urge you to keep this at the forefront of your mind every single day. When the children in the class of 2070 are learning about these times in their history class, how is it that we want to be remembered?’

We all have an important part to play in reassuring children at this time. If you haven't already done so, you may wish to read the information put together by the Ministry of Education to support your conversations with your children – [Talking to children about COVID-19](#)

As noted by the Prime Minister these restrictions are our best chance to slow the virus in New Zealand and to save lives. We all have a clear role here to slow the spread of COVID-19.

We will continue to communicate with you over the coming weeks. Thank you for your ongoing support of our school staff and school community.

Remember, ‘Be kind, keep safe, and look after each other’

Ngā mihi
Michelle Cronin
Principal

