



COVID-19 Level 4 down to Level 3 Alert UPDATE

Monday 20th September 2021

Supervision at school will be available for children from Wednesday 22nd September as a last resort ONLY! That is, *if parents have to go to work and there is no other adult supervision available*. Therefore, things remain as they are now for nearly all of you – the continuation of distance learning with the daily form teacher contact etc.

As the PM specifically said, 'schools are broadly speaking closed', except for the above reason!

Kia ora Parents and Whanau

Once again, like me, I am sure you have followed with interest the announcement made this afternoon by the Prime Minister. If so, you will already be aware we are moving down to Alert Level 3 at 11.59pm on Tuesday 21st September for a period, at this stage, of two weeks, with a review of this on Monday 4th October (which is the start of the term 3 school holidays).

Before I speak more specifically about the changed alert level, I wanted to acknowledge the major challenges facing many families in our community. We are aware of many job losses and financial strain, which is resulting in some heightened stress in households. Level 3 means nearly ALL of you still remain at home, learning from a distance, so can I reiterate what I said to you all in my communication with you after the last lock down extension two weeks ago. That is if the distance-learning programme is adding to stress in your household and things are at a tipping point, then 'flag it'. There will be no judgement from us. We will pick things up when life returns to 'normal' and all will be well. In support of this, you may have seen a posting on social media recently by a Bosnian refugee, who now lives in New Zealand, where he said:

"I missed four years of school in Bosnia during the war. Four whole years with a war happening. I came here at age 13 with no English and no schooling since I was eight. I am now 33 and I have a university degree and a very good career. The kids will be fine."

His post is such a relevant and pertinent comment for our situation now, so do not sweat it. Every kid in the world is in the same boat! Our kids are not missing out, they are learning other, new things, and thankfully, we are not in a war zone. We are all doing the best we can, and you as a whaanau are doing the best you can. Look after your kids and spend time doing something with them - what they want and indeed need is to feel safe and loved... so in one word "chill!".

I would also like to take a moment to thank and praise the essential workers who rose to support our nation in this dire time. Doing the mahi, so that we could shelter at home with food, with electricity and with peace of mind - we are so appreciative. Thank you.

SO, what does it mean being at Alert Level 3?

When we move to alert Level 3 tomorrow at midnight, Tuesday 21st September it will be the turn of the teaching profession, amongst others, to heed the call to support Aotearoa. We need to get the economy moving. Our Manurewa Intermediate School staff (Teachers and Support

Staff) will rise to this challenge! Nurses did it when they were called upon. Supermarket workers when they were asked. Many workers did it when the nation needed them. Educators will do the same. Level 3 gives the teaching profession the chance to support the other essential workers and reinforce the country's collective effort to get through this pandemic. But we are also understandably very nervous about opening school up, merging bubbles and in so doing, opening both your families and our own up to risk, so sending your child(ren) to school really must be a last resort. We will love them and care for them while you help to get our economy working again. I would like to echo the call of the medical profession - keep us safe, so that we can help you. **Only send your child to school if you really have no other choice.**

Once a child starts on Wednesday 22nd September, they must come to school every day unless they are sick – there is no come one day, then miss a day and then back again etc. Likewise, the hours are set: 9am – 3pm. If you wish to do differently then you keep your child at home full time. All students must wear full school uniform every day, and we suggest they wear a mask.

All of us will use our energy to ensure the school environment is well managed and safe for those who work there and for the children who need to attend. Level 3 is not a return to “normal”, therefore there cannot be an expectation that schools will return to their “normal” function or operation. We will use our collective professional wisdom, so workloads are distributed, and staff are not having to both teach online and face-to-face. We will use our knowledge and skills to provide teaching and learning opportunities that are appropriate to the situation we are in. Teachers will continue to teach online whether the child is doing so from home or in person at school.

It was always going to be the case that alert Level 3 would be much less clear than alert Level 4 – it is by its nature a partial lifting of limitations and as such creates more grey and more ambiguity. However, my reading of the information is that it is pretty much the same as Level 4 around bubbles and keeping to our homes etc. The reason for the approach, as outlined by the Prime Minister, is to find a balance between **having schools available for those who need it while minimising the numbers of students attending for public health reasons.** We are still in a state of emergency as the Government takes decisions in the national interest.

Please read all the information following, and preferably, as soon as possible, so you know all these details before your child's form teacher makes contact with you on Tuesday morning.

We are ever mindful that each family faces a unique set of circumstances, so please do take care and let us know if there is anything you need, and that we can help you with, to support you and your tamariki during this time.

A massive thank you in advance for all your support and goodwill.

Kia kaha and faamalosi whānau!

Ngā mihi

Iain Taylor
Principal

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION!

Who can come to school when we reach level 3?

The PM has said schools are basically *still* closed. The overriding principle for [Alert Level 3](#) is to **stay at home**, other than for essential personal movement and going to work. **The children of parents who are returning to work and have no other adult in their bubble to care for their children, can send their children to school.** We will care for them. If it is possible to widen your bubble with another family in order to share child care, you should do that rather than send your child to school where their bubble will mix with many other bubbles.

Parents and caregivers keep their children at home and maintain distance learning where that is possible.

Schools will be open for both onsite and distance learning for years 1 – 10. **Onsite learning will be the same as Distance Learning.**

People at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g. those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled, and the elderly) are encouraged to take additional precautions when leaving home.

What mitigation protocols will Manurewa Intermediate School have at alert level 3?

As of 22nd September, we are planning for the following:

1. Staff with compromised immunity or comorbidities (refers to one or more diseases or conditions that occur along with another condition in the same person at the same time) or such people in their personal bubbles, will stay at home. They will support the school by doing work from the safety of their bubbles.
2. We will be continuing with the current format of work - distance learning at school and distance learning at home. The same learning. This will ensure fairness. It will also make the workload more manageable for staff. So teachers will supervise those on-site - not teach. They will give feedback to work being submitted by students at school and at home.
3. We are planning to keep bubbles very small and where possible keep family groups together in the same group for the duration of level 3. To keep the bubbles as small as possible, students will be spread across the room, hall or gymnasium (as much as is practical) - doing the same distance learning activities.
4. Cross grouping will not necessarily occur. Students will stay with their bubble for the duration of level 3. This will help to make contact tracing easier if we do get a case of COVID-19 at Manurewa Intermediate School.

5. The cleaning regime will be stepped up significantly. Learning Assistants and Leadership staff will be deployed to help with classroom cleaning and playground supervision. Rooms will be cleaned throughout the day on a rotation.
6. Each bubble will have individual break times. Breaks supervised by Learning Assistants and Teaching Staff.
7. The reception counter will not be open for face to face transactions of any nature. All office staff will be on site in reception and will only interact via phone or from a distance, with the main foyer door locked. This will help to reduce their bubbles and to support us with the contact tracing of our office staff.
8. When students arrive at school, they are to move directly to the classroom bubble spaces for hand sanitisation (stations will be set up at the door). **Do not congregate with other children and parents who are not in your bubble.** Contact teachers via phone or email. Please do not arrive at school before 9am.
9. All Health and Safety measures we are following at school need to be followed by all students and their whanau on their way to and from school as well ie. 2 m apart etc.
10. There will be no before OR after school sports or cultural practices, or any other after school activities or supervision.
11. Hand sanitiser will be available in each classroom space.
12. Playground equipment will be off limits to all. No personal sports equipment to be brought to school either.
13. Breaks will occur in designated areas e.g. courts/fields. Break times will be staggered - to maintain their individual bubbles.
14. Devices will be sanitised between any changes of user (although we will be trying to ensure the same device is used by the same child each time) and at the end of each day.
15. All large gatherings are cancelled. This refers to our weekly assembly and whanau singing, as well as our daily Fitness.
16. There will be lunch provided as normal. But, there is NO Breakfast Club or Tuck Shop so please ensure your child comes to school with their morning tea. NO food to be dropped off at reception at all. Do not be angry if you try this and we say no! You have been advised!
17. Playground water fountains turned off. All students to have their own drink bottles.
18. PE shed will not open. No shared equipment.
19. Depending on the numbers of children who physically attend school, staff may be rostered to be at school. Thus, the full staffing compliment may not be at school on any given day.

20. Staff who have to remain at home for health reasons will be completing distance learning programmes.
21. Any child that appears sick at school will be sent home immediately. Parents/Caregivers will be rung, and you will collect immediately, with your child being isolated until you arrive. The definition for 'appearing sick' includes: coughing, runny nose, chesty coughs, exposed skin lesions, headaches. If your child displays these before coming to school please don't send them! This will create more issues for you as we will call you to collect immediately.
22. Physical distancing - 2 metres outside and 1 metre inside.
23. The Director-General of Health has recommended that our bubbles are no more than 10. We are still working through this, but are hopeful that we can have smaller bubbles.
24. We also have to determine what the level of attendance will be at level three. We will not know this until form teachers have called you by the end of Tuesday 21st September.
25. The school Library will remain closed until further notice.
26. Personal electronic devices are not to be brought to school. This includes cell phones. NO cell phones at school.
27. When students arrive on the first day, at 9am, on Wednesday 22nd September, they are to come directly to the school hall where they will be advised where to sit.

What will be the difference between learning at home vs learning at school during level 3?

There will be no difference because these students can work through the online material at home and at school with very little adult support.

Will all teachers be back at school?

No. Mostly it will be the leadership team with a few other non-form class teachers on a roster system. All others remain at home with the distance learning. This will allow us to reduce the amount of people on site.

Will all Learning Assistants be working?

Yes. They will be assisting the teachers, supervising breaks and helping to support the cleaning roster as needed.

Will break times remain the same?

No. We will stagger the breaks. Each 'bubble class' will have different break times. Lunch times will be reduced in length.

Will children be allowed to use the playgrounds?

No. We know that the virus can live on surfaces for a few hours. The length of time that it can survive depends on the surface.

Will the school office be open?

The office staff will only be available via email or phone; or when vital at the sliding reception door which will be closed, and therefore speaking through it. We want to protect our office team by also keeping their bubble small and the office is the area that could have the most traffic through it. Please help us to do this by either phone calling or using email.

Will Before and After school programmes/clubs etc operate?

No. They will not operate during alert level 3.

What Health and Safety evidence underpins the partial opening of schools at level 3?

Health and safety is at the forefront of our planning and the health of all in New Zealand is at the forefront of decisions that are being taken to respond to COVID-19.

Health authorities have carefully looked at the evidence around COVID-19 and educational settings, and at the experience of other countries in responding to COVID-19 to inform the public health advice to the education sector in planning for a move to Alert Level 3. Experience in New Zealand and overseas with COVID-19 over the last year shows that it does not infect or affect children and teens in the same way it does adults.

Whilst more children and teens are getting Delta than the previous incarnation, they don't seem to become that unwell if they do get infected. The two key public health principles that support Alert Level 3 are first to minimise the risk that someone gets infected in the first place, and second to limit the number of possible contacts people have if they do get infected to make it easier to rapidly stop further spread.

The Alert level 3 approach in a school environment is designed to limit the number of people that children have contact with based on these principles. And because all the evidence points to children having a lower risk of being affected by COVID-19, and it is possible to ensure that children are within the same group each day with no mixing between rooms, it is safe from a public health perspective to have a group of children learning together in a room or physical space (but to keep that group small).

Parents can have confidence that the proposed approach is designed to keep children and their families safe, to keep staff safe and to support the country's overall response to COVID-19 to 'keep it out and stamp it out'.

Parents also have a role here, to fully support this approach by doing their bit – making sure that they inform the school as to whether they need to have their children at school, keeping children home if they are unwell and seeking medical advice about whether a child may need to be tested; strictly maintaining their family 'bubble' outside the school environment; and ensuring great hygiene practices at all times.