



South Otago High School

Newsletter 17th April 2020

Nga mihi mahana ki a koutou katoa
Warm greetings to you all

Dear Parents/Caregivers

Kia Ora Tatou

Welcome to the first newsletter of the new look term 2. This week has seen the return of students to on line and distance learning. During what was called the school holidays I was able to send messages to parents to determine which students needed devices and I am happy to say that myself and Mr Scarth were allowed to access the school site and that devices were sent on the courier earlier this week.

I know that many parents will be wanting to know what is happening with a move to Level 3 alert for Covid-19 and this will be left until later in this newsletter.

With the start of the new term I have communicated with teachers and asked them to be aware that the first lessons of this week will probably be the first time that students have seen a familiar face from outside of their own bubble.

As teachers we are aware that some students and parents may be feeling anxious about the new term. As I have said in the past, we do expect teething problems and we just ask that we all work together to overcome any issues that we may encounter. I know that teachers are adapting their delivery and that this is nothing like as easy to manage as face to face meetings in a classroom. We also acknowledge that students are adapting to a new learning style and this is also challenging.

Please do remember that for both parents and students the school is willing and able to support learners. As I have said in the past the first point of call should be the teacher or mentor and if you need further help then you should contact the year level dean.

During the 'holidays' there have been lots of offers of support for families and the following may be of assistance:

Parenting Helpline

For support and advice on any parenting issue; if you need someone to talk to about what is happening in your family, or need some advice on how best to support your family, call our free parenting Helpline on 0800 568 856. Available from 9 am – 9 pm 7 days a week.

Online coaching

Online coaching to develop parenting strategies or coping skills you can implement straight away.

Our parenting coach can support you with strategies to help in chaotic situations, create structured routines that best support your family, suggest strategies to stop unwanted behaviour, create plans to achieve a calmer household and learn how to work together as a team, etc.

30 mins or 60 mins sessions available via Zoom. Call 0800 568 856 to book an appointment or read more here: www.parenthelp.org.nz/coaching

Affordable counselling

We understand that in this strange new environment we are in that all relationships can be tested and we urge you to reach out for support. Our counsellors offer therapy online via Zoom or via telephone. We offer a 30-mins free initial appointment.

Call 0800 568 856 to book an appointment or read more here: www.parenthelp.org.nz/counsellingg

Online safety

While students are learning from home, they are away from the online safety and security services provided by Network for Learning (N4L) at school. So together with N4L and Netsafe, we have launched www.switchonsafety.co.nz - a free way to block the worst of the web for students and teachers.

Remember, no technical solution is a silver bullet. Please remember to complement this with digital citizenship toolkits provided by Netsafe.

Netsafe

Netsafe provides comprehensive support and information to support everyone to stay safe as they work, learn and play online. Netsafe has new and updated resources for parents, whānau and students at <https://www.netsafe.org.nz/advice/staying-safe/>

Students in paid employment

With the start of the new term as gazetted by the Ministry of Education students should now be available to study and follow their timetable to meet with teachers from 08:40 until 3:10pm. The Ministry of Education have advised that employers would be acting illegally if they employ students during school time. I have been contacted by some employers for clarification and explained what our expectations are for our students to be available for learning during what would be the normal school day.

Move to Level 3 of the Covid-19 Alert

First and foremost, at the present time it is important to remember that the country currently remains at Level 4. This means that the school site remains closed and access to go onto the site for anything is only granted upon application to the Secretary of Education and for specific purposes such as emergency repair work eg a burst water pipe.

On Thursday it was announced that schools would re-open for students up to and including Year 10. This was to enable supervision for parents who were able to return to work.

We are expecting a further announcement on 20 April and then detailed information for schools to be presented shortly afterwards. I am anticipating that we will be communicating with parents of our Year 9 and 10 students in the near future to determine how many students we can expect to be attending school.

It is unlikely that we will have a full complement of teachers on site as some may need to continue to work from home. The advice so far has been that students will be in their own 'bubbles' within school. This does mean that it is likely that students will be supervised in a class with some of their peers. There they will be able to continue to do their on-line study. There may be the opportunity for some specialist teacher tutorials.

Lunch time and interval will require that students are supervised in their bubble and at this stage we cannot guarantee that we will have an operational canteen.

As yet we have had no information on the availability of school transport or how social distancing will be managed on travel to and from school.

For students who walk to and from school, they will need to be responsible for their social distancing.

As we understand it presently, attendance at school will be voluntary and we will continue to offer online learning for students.

Sending students to school should be restricted to those families where there is no other supervision available. It will not be possible to return to a 'normal' school setting as we will have to have good processes to ensure contact tracing and so restrictions will be placed upon students' movements within school.

As before the lockdown, we will not be able to have students who appear unwell at school. We will need to be vigilant and continue to protect the health and well being of all of our students, staff and in so doing our wider community.

Finally

We do appreciate that these are very uncertain times and there is a strong desire to return to a normal work environment. It is unlikely, from what we currently know and are seeing around the world, that this is going to be a fast return to normality. However, I do believe that if we all work together and follow the expectations we can emerge from this pandemic ahead of many other countries. This will be good for our society and community and I believe that we will be stronger as a country and as a community.

As parents, please support us and make sure that your children are following the guidelines.

Ka kite ano
Mike Wright
Principal

Support for your wellbeing during COVID-19

COVID-19 is having a huge impact on the day-to-day lives of all of us. A number of useful contacts have been shared to support our students and parents/caregivers. We know many people are feeling a range of emotions. This is an unusual situation that we find ourselves in and it's normal to be feeling frustrated and possibly anxious. If anyone is feeling overwhelmed there is plenty of support available. Please do not hesitate to contact me by email.

A new Staying on Track course, along with resources on the Just a Thought and Wellbeing web pages, have also been created to support New Zealanders with their mental and emotional wellbeing through this time of uncertainty. see the links below:

<https://www.justathought.co.nz/covid19>

<https://wellbeinginfo.org/self-help/wellbeing/5-ways-to-wellbeing/>

Where students may like to access support for their mental health from professionals outside of our school resources there are also a number of free options.

- *The Lowdown: Free text 5626 www.facebook.com/TheLowdownNZ and www.thelowdown.co.nz*
- *Youthline: Free Phone: 0800 376 633 and Free text 234; Email: talk@youthline.co.nz and www.youthline.co.nz*
- *Common Ground: www.commonground.org.nz*
- *Tautoko Suicide Crisis Helpline: Free Phone: 0508 828 865*
- *SPARX: Free Phone: 0508 4 SPARX and www.sparx.org.nz*
- *Need to Talk? Free text: 1737*

The most important thing we can do as parents at the moment is spend time with our children, checking in and answering any questions that they may have. We will get through this together. At South Otago High School we have a strong sense of community where we support one another, and care about each other. For many families, staff and students there have been a range of positives to come out of this time; time to exercise, time to work on special projects, time to connect in different ways with others. If there is anything that you need please reach out for some support.

Kia kaha

Nga mihi nui

Cath Bloxham

Guidance Counsellor