

19 March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

The rapid evolution of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak continues to be a challenge for everyone in education.

I am aware that it has caused concerns for parents, staff and students, and fully understand the decision some families have made to keep their son/daughter at home.

Because the health and safety of school communities is our highest priority, the school's decision to stay open is based on advice from the Australian and Victorian Chief Medical Officers.

Currently, the advice of Dr Brett Sutton, Victorian Chief Health Officer, is that 'pre-emptive school closures are not likely to be proportionate or effective as a public health intervention to prevent community transmission of COVID-19 at this time'.

When advice from the Chief Medical Officers changes, we will communicate those changes to our school community.

We continue to actively monitor developments and are working closely with the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV).

The CECV is partnering with the Victorian Department of Education and Training and Victorian Department of Health and Human Services to ensure our practices reflect current advice and support the needs of our school community.

I am receiving regular updates from the CECV, and ensuring staff are aware of coronavirus reporting and management practices, and are well-placed to respond as circumstances change.

The staff are committed to ensuring that learning remains available to students should schools close. We are developing plans to support students to learn from home but, while we remain open, the emphasis will be on the learning and teaching currently in place in the classroom.

Early next week we will provide families with further information about what learning at home might entail. Essentially, learning will take place through the SIMON Learning Management System and Google Classroom.

Learning from home requires careful management and may not be available immediately.

End of Term 1

We have decided that Term 1 will finish on **Thursday 26 March**, not Friday as previously planned. This will give staff time to plan for the transition to learning online, should we need to move into this space.

Communication

Due to the cultural and linguistic diversity of our community, communicating with families can be complex.

To assist in communicating information more immediately, from next week, we will do the following:

1. Post all updates on the College website in English, Arabic and Vietnamese.
2. Notify families that there is an update with an SMS message that has a link to the website.
3. Post the same documents on the Learning Management Parent Access Module (PAM). Please contact the office if you need your password.

It is important that families check the update, each time a notification is sent. Should the school need to close, it will be our main form communication with families.

As the situation is evolving quickly, there could be a number of updates in a week.

Parent / Teacher / Student interviews

Due to possible school closures and restrictions around gatherings of 100 people we will cancel the Parent / Teacher / Student interviews scheduled for 16 April 2020. We encourage parents / carers to contact teachers in Term 2 if they have concerns about their child's progress.

At this very difficult time, I hold you all in my thoughts and prayers. We pray that we all stay strong in body and spirit, and have the prudence to do what is called for, to have empathy for all who are suffering, and to live with your love, presence and strength.

Kindest regards



Christina Utri
Principal

Advice for Families: Conversations with children and young people

(Provided by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria)

Families and caregivers of children and young people should discuss news of the virus with those in their care in an open and honest way.

Try to relate the facts without causing alarm, and in a way that is appropriate for their age and temperament.

It is important to listen to any questions they may have, and to let them know that they are safe and that it's normal to feel concerned.

If the media or the news is getting to be too much for them, encourage them to limit their exposure.

Resources

A range of key resources, including videos and tips for young people, have been collated to assist you in ensuring the ongoing wellbeing and good health of your family.

- [SPECIAL REPORT: Coronavirus](#) – Dr Michael Carr-Gregg developed this video for parents and school staff. Catholic Education Melbourne acknowledges the generosity of **SchoolTV** in making the report accessible to parents and staff in Catholic school communities
- [How to talk to your children about coronavirus](#) – ABC News article
- [Worried about your child getting coronavirus? Here's what you need to know](#) – *The Conversation* article
- [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
- [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.