



Friday 13 March 2020

Dear Parents/Caregivers,

The issue of coronavirus (COVID-19) is being reported on daily by the media and you are no doubt aware of the information that is available concerning this virus.

I do not intend to replicate advice that is provided by official channels, so links to official websites are included which carry the latest information: www.health.gov.au or www.health.gov.au/covid19-travellers or SA Health. The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are provided with information that may assist you and your families at this time. Please note that our school will continue to monitor advice from government or health authorities, and you will be updated.

Here are some typical questions being asked by parents/caregivers:

1. What should I do if my child is unwell?

If your child is ill or displays flu like symptoms, seek medical advice and do not send your child to school. If you receive confirmation that your child or a member of your family has coronavirus (COVID 19) please notify the school as soon as this is known. The child will need to be picked up immediately if he/she is at school.

2. Are students from families who have recently travelled overseas allowed to be at school?

There are only certain countries where returning travellers need to self-isolate. This is based on Federal government advice that Diocesan schools are following. Please note that this continues to change, and we rely on the most up to date information as our guide.

In-line with Commonwealth advice, the current advice is:

- *Any student or staff member who has travelled in or transited through mainland China, Iran, South Korea or Italy must self-isolate for 14 days after leaving the high risk country.*
- *Close contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19 must self-isolate for 14 days since last contact with the confirmed case.*
- *All returned travellers who develop symptoms (especially fever and cough) within 14 days of returning from anywhere overseas should seek testing for COVID-19, and self-isolate while awaiting test results.*
- *Any confirmed case of COVID-19 will be excluded from school/childcare/the workplace until they are medically cleared to return. Students and staff who have returned to Australia from anywhere else overseas and have no symptoms are able to return to school or work.*

Consistent with current guidelines, all children, students and staff who are unwell with respiratory illness should remain at home until symptoms resolve.

If children are unwell after travelling regardless of destination, they should be kept at home and medical advice should be sought.

3. What happens if my child or another child seems to display coronavirus like symptoms while at school?

While coronavirus is of concern, it is important to remember that most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat or tiredness are likely suffering with a cold or other illness – not coronavirus. Nevertheless, if a child becomes unwell at school, the usual school routine of care, separating that child from their classmates and calling a parent/caregiver to collect them would be followed. It is a requirement during this time that the child be collected from the College at the earliest opportunity.

4. What will happen to my child's education if he/she is to be isolated for 14 days?

If a child is unable to attend school, we will work with you to ensure that we minimise the impact on their learning. Teachers will provide work for students through SEQTA and email.

5. What happens if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus in the school?

The school will communicate with families and follow the advice from relevant authorities, such as SA Health. It is likely the school would close for at least 24 hours while it is cleaned, and health authorities trace virus contact between individuals. Health authorities will declare that the school has followed all expected protocols and allow the school to reopen.

The school will keep you informed during any closure period via SMS, SEQTA and email. Parents would be advised when students are able to return.

6. What education is happening about coronavirus at school and what can I do to help relieve any anxiety for my children?

Ongoing communication has occurred from the Gleeson College Principal to the College community. Students were emailed further information on Tuesday this week. Staff are regularly updated and informed and supporting students where appropriate. Our counsellors are available to students who may be anxious about this situation. Staff and students are reminded about general health and the importance of handwashing and refraining from touching their face.

A recent online article provides some useful tips for talking to your child, depending on their age and level of understanding about coronavirus:

- *Assess what they know already. Find out what they understand so you know where to start*
- *Don't dismiss or minimise your child's fear — validate their concerns. It is reasonable to be concerned because most have probably never experienced anything like this before*
- *Make your explanation age appropriate, provide facts, and keep it positive and calm. Tell them scientists and doctors are working on treatments. Reassure them that right now the risk of getting the coronavirus is low and if contracted most people only get cold-like symptoms and then they are immune*
- *Give them some control over what is happening. Teach the importance of handwashing and how to do it properly, remind them of their responsibility to protect others from coughs and sneezing.*
- *Make it an opportunity to learn. Talk about how our bodies fight viruses. Understanding the science can alleviate fears. Get them to do their own fact-checking on what they have heard at school.*
- *Remind children that no-one should be ostracised or bullied because they have been associated with the virus*
- *Do not make it a one-time conversation. Keep checking in to see if they need reassurance or if they have any new questions.*

If you have particular concerns about how your child is responding to information about coronavirus, please speak to your child's Care Group Teacher or our College Counsellors.

Yours sincerely

Joe Corbo,
Principal 2020