

Our schools continue to follow and promote all the public health measures in place. The wearing of face masks, regular hand washing, sanitizing, distancing, and learning that takes place outside of the classroom are fast becoming our new learning norms. Our schools, students and teachers are advocates of our response to COVID-19 and making sure everyone in our schools is safe and happy.

Despite the good work of our schools and their communities we know some of our students, their families and our teachers are being impacted by COVID-19. In light of recent cases, the information below will help to support any COVID-19 queries you may have, and what you need to know should your child return a positive result for COVID-19 or be a household contact. Please note that this information is subject to change. We will be following the advice and requirements set out by Te Marae Ora at all times and will keep our families updated if there are any changes. We thank you for your understanding and ongoing support.

Why are schools still safe places for students and staff to be?

The public health measures that are keeping us safe in the community are also keeping us safe at school – including mask wearing, distancing and increased hygiene measures such as regular handwashing and surface cleaning.

Continuity of learning reduces stress on family, students can engage with friends, peers, and their teachers. Schools also provide another network of support for students and staff.

What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?

- Quarantine if you are a household contact of a positive COVID-19 case
- Isolation keeps someone with confirmed COVID-19 away from the general public

Who do we advise if my child tests positive for COVID-19?

Please contact the principal of your child's school as soon as possible after you have been notified of a positive test result.

My child has tested positive for COVID-19. What does this mean?

This will mean that your child will need to isolate for 7 days. All members of the household will be considered household contacts and will need to quarantine during this time. During this time school will provide home-based learning for during your child's isolation period.

My child is a household contact. What does this mean?

This means your child has had contact with a positive case and requires an initial rapid antigen test. Your child will be formally quarantined as a household contact of a positive case. They will be required to remain at home for 7 days and undergo scheduled testing. If all negative and your child is asymptomatic, they along with the remainder of the household will be released from quarantine. During this time, your child will not attend school, but it is important that you remain in close contact with your child's school so absences can be accounted for, and this data accurately reported back to the Ministry of Education and Te Marae Ora. During this time school will also provide home-based learning packs for during the quarantine period.

What will happen if my child is required to undergo a rapid antigen test at school?

All schools have registered COVID-19 Health & Safety Officers on staff, who have been trained to conduct rapid antigen testing. In school tests will only be conducted if your child is showing symptoms of COVID-19. If the school needs to test your child, then they will contact you immediately seeking your support and consent and will notify you of the result immediately after, and any further action required. If the result returns positive, then the school will require your child to return home immediately to isolate. The school will then notify Te Marae Ora and the Ministry of Education of the result.

Should you not want your child to be tested at school, alternatively you can take them to the nearest health clinic or testing station for a rapid antigen test.

What actions does the school take when there is a positive case associated with the school?

Our priority is ensuring our schools are open and open safely. If there is a positive case associated with a school then the school will continue to follow the advice and guidance of Te Marae Ora, which includes:

- Continuing to monitor for symptoms of COVID-19
- Unwell students and staff to always remain home
- Increased focus and attention on all public health measures – Mask wearing, distancing, well ventilated classrooms and learning spaces, thorough cleaning of classrooms, shared spaces, and equipment.

During this time, schools will need to inform their school communities if classes are impacted. These classes do not need to be tested unless students or teachers and staff are showing flu like symptoms. Parents and families who wish to have their children tested during this time, especially if they are associated with positive case, may do so with support from the school.

1. When is it safe for my child to return to school?

Your child may return safely back to school once formally released from either quarantine or isolation by Te Marae Ora. When returning back to school please ensure a copy of the quarantine or isolation order has been shared with the school to account for your child's absence.

What additional things can families do to prepare for Omicron and to keep themselves safe?

- If feeling unwell always stay home.
- Utilize the 24/7 COVID-19 Health Line (0800 1 888), or call 20065/66 for any health questions and phone consultations. If an emergency, always call 999.
- Get to know your nearest health clinic (Nikao, Tupapa, Matavera, Titikaveka, Black rock, Pa Enuva hospitals). Make sure you know their location and contact numbers.
- Optimize your personal health - Regular fitness and activity, ensuring sufficient supply of home medication (paracetamol, liquid options for children, inhalers etc.).
- Preparing for Omicron is also like preparing for natural disasters. Keep a good stock of supplies at home (food, water, medication, first aid). Everyone at home be given a role during an emergency/ isolation, even our children. Have a Plan B – when your Puna is unable to assist, who will be your close contact when needing help?