

Infectious Diseases, Epidemics, Pandemics

The school community is susceptible to a wide range of bacterial and viral infections throughout the year. To minimise the spread of infections, our school encourages basic hygiene practices amongst students and staff at all times. We use heightened hygiene practices as appropriate when there is a known presence of, or risk of, a highly contagious and debilitating infection (e.g. influenza virus or norovirus).

Basic hygiene measures

Blockhouse Bay Primary School promotes basic hygiene measures to help stop the spread of infectious diseases. This includes key messages such as:

- wash your hands regularly
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- cover your coughs and sneezes.

Hand hygiene

Hand hygiene is the best way to prevent the spread of infections – this means washing and drying your hands really well. Reminding students and staff how to wash and dry their hands effectively will help to keep everyone well.

It is important to wash and dry your hands after you have been to the toilet, whenever your hands feel dirty, and before eating or preparing food.

Follow these steps:

1. Wash your hands under clean running water – warm water is best if you have it.
 2. Put soap on your hands and wash for at least 20 seconds.
TIP: Singing happy birthday to yourself twice takes about 20 seconds.
 3. Rub hands together until the soap makes bubbles, rub on both sides of both hands, and in between fingers and thumbs, and round and round both hands.
 4. Rinse all the soap off under clean running water.
 5. Dry your hands all over for 20 seconds. Drying your hands is as important as washing them.
TIP: Using paper towels is best (or, if at home, a clean, dry towel).
- Ministry of Health: **Hand washing** (see High Five for Clean Hands poster)

Coughs and sneezes

We remind students and staff to cover their coughs and sneezes. This means using a tissue (and disposing of it immediately), using the inside of your elbow ("the Dracula"), or cupping your hands over your mouth/nose and then washing your hands straight away.

Staying away from school

- To stop sickness from spreading, students should be kept at home when they are ill. How long they should be at home depends on their illness.
- In the case of some illnesses, the decision about whether to **exclude** students or staff will be made by the Medical Officer of Health.
- The Ministry of Health gives advice on when students and staff should stay away from school when they are unwell with a more serious infection/illness.
- More serious illnesses/infections include campylobacter, chickenpox, conjunctivitis, cryptosporidium, gastroenteritis, giardia, glandular fever, hand, foot, and mouth, hepatitis

A & B, influenza, measles, meningococcal disease, mumps, norovirus, pertussis (whooping cough), skin infections (e.g., school sores, ringworm, scabies), and typhoid.

- Ministry of Health: **School exclusion** (includes link to a helpful Infectious Diseases poster)

Outbreak or risk of outbreak

Heightened hygiene practices

We use heightened hygiene practices when there is a known presence of, or risk of, a serious infection/illness (e.g. influenza virus or measles). This will be signalled by Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health advisories. Heightened hygiene practices include:

- informing parents about the situation and what they can do, and what action the school is taking
- reiterating basic hygiene measures
- watching out for symptoms
- limiting times when large groups of people are together (e.g. no school assemblies), and encouraging social distancing where possible
- stepping up school cleaning practices – this applies particularly to hard surfaces, e.g. sinks, handles and door, railings, table tops:
 - clean surfaces with a neutral detergent, followed by a disinfectant
 - clean surfaces that are touched frequently every day.

If someone at school shows symptoms of a serious infection/illness, they are separated from others while waiting to be taken home. Call Healthline on 0800 611 116 for advice.

Anyone with a serious infection/illness should not attend school while they are infectious. Anyone who is not immunised against the relevant infection/illness and has potentially been exposed to it should also stay away from school.

Immunisations

In the case of an outbreak of a serious infection/illness, it is useful to know who has been vaccinated against the infection/illness. Our school keeps a record of immunisation information to help identify students at risk. We encourage parents to keep their child's immunisations up to date.

In an outbreak, those who haven't been immunised may need to be excluded or quarantined.

- Ministry of Health: **Immunisation**
- **Immunisation Advisory Centre** (0800 IMMUNE)

Information for parents

If parents are unsure about their child's immunity (or anyone in their family) to a particular infection/illness, they should check with their family doctor. They can also ring 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863) or Healthline on 0800 611 116 for advice.

Epidemics/Pandemics

Pre preparation

- Recommend annual vaccinations for staff
- Consider having a supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) gloves, face masks, antiseptic hand wash,
- Follow the communication plan for staff, students, families and other interested members of the community.

- The Sick Bay (or if needed the Hub) will be used as an isolation area
- Know who your local Medical Officer of Health (MOoH) is and maintain regular contact.

Response: When a pandemic has been advised or declared

- Regularly check for updates on the Ministry of Health website (Ministry of Health NZ)
- Use posters available from Ministry of Health re cough / sneeze etiquette, handwashing
- Consider social distancing strategies. Information on this is available from the Ministry of Health.
- Consider implementing an enhanced cleaning routine of touch points and common spaces as a precaution.
- Establish the isolation area (as required)
- Liaise with your local Medical Officer of Health (MOoH)
- Maintain good communication with parents and caregivers to keep them informed of the situation, see **Communicating with Parents** or **Contact in an Emergency**
- Consider closing the school, see **School Closure**.