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| 17 March 2020Kia ora,As you are aware the COVID-19 situation is evolving rapidly. The Government announcement last Saturday requires all arrivals from overseas (including New Zealanders) to self-isolate. This will strongly contribute to “smoothing the curve” with regard to the number of cases we get in New Zealand.It is important to note we continue to have no confirmed cases in schools or early learning services. The policy decisions being made by the Government give us time to plan for future scenarios. At this time the Ministry of Education has advised that the most likely scenario is if a student or staff member is confirmed with COVID-19 in a school, the Ministry of Health may require the school to close for a day or two, to undertake tracking and tracing of close contacts. We are aware that some of our families are experiencing, or will experience, new pressures at this time. Please let the school know of any relevant change in personal or work circumstances, particularly those which may affect your children.It is, therefore, important that school operates normally for our young people. Our focus is on maintaining school routines to provide some normality in these uncertain times. Health and safety is paramount when providing opportunities for positive experiences for your children. We are taking a risk assessment approach for key activities such as school camps and travel for sporting and cultural reasons. We will, therefore, assess each camp and trip on a case-by-case basis until further advice is forthcoming. We have postponed/cancelled some trips, but others where students will not be exposed to members of the public we expect to continue.Yesterday, theGovernment made an announcement restricting mass gatherings of more than 500 people. This announcement covered indoor and outdoor events, but not schools or universities (although some sporting events we are involved with have now been cancelled or postponed). Our Sports Coordinators will let you know as they are notified.We have also decided that Academic Conferencing Day will go ahead on Thursday this week as there is to date no community transfer. We have, however, made the decision to cancel all large-scale assemblies for the immediate future. With large numbers in a large venue like the Hall, it would be impossible to identify close contact if required.At this point in time, COVID-19 is not being transmitted in communities. While we expect that more cases will arise, the Ministry of Health says that with continued vigilance the chance of widespread community outbreak is expected to remain low in New Zealand. We all have a role to play in this. We continue to focus on good hygiene practices. Hand washing and good cough etiquette are very important tools in preventing the spread of illness including colds, flu and COVID-19.One other action we can all take is to be vigilant about our own health and the health of our children. I will be encouraging my staff to stay away from school if they are showing signs of illness such as coughs and colds. I ask that you please do the same with your children. Colds and flu are common in schools and by staying away, seeking medical attention and practising good hygiene, we can all keep any spread of illness to a minimum.Regards,Karen Stewart**Principal / Tumuaki** |