



St. Mary's School Blenheim

Te Kura O Hato Mere

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Kia ora whanau - Wednesday's update

March 25, 2020

Kia ora Hato Mere whanau,

Today is the last day of school for Term 1. Thank you for a great first term and a positive start to 2020. Although our lives have been interrupted momentarily we as one are still a strong faith based community and will again be one in the physical sense sooner than you think.

With our official school holidays beginning on Monday, it is a great time to spend quality time with your children having fun making lifelong memories. This is what they will remember from this time with you and your whanau.

Get out in the fresh air, build huts, create games and be adventurous, enjoy the quiet times together as well. Remember your children will be tired, as are you. They will be weary of the world around them in it's ever changing state as are you, your children will be nervous and anxious as are you, your children are very aware of the mental and emotional state you are in, sometimes more than you are.

Please, everyone, take a breath, relax and refocus. This is something we cannot change, it has been forced upon us by something that is unseen until it's effects are truly realised. We all need to accept this and refocus on what is truly at the core of our lives...our children and our families.

With regards to school work and continued learning,

You might be inclined to create a minute by minute schedule for your children. You have high hopes of hours of learning, including online activities, science experiments, and book reports. You'll limit technology until everything is done! But here's the thing...

Our children are just as scared as we are right now. Our children not only can hear everything that is going on around them, but they feel our constant tension and anxiety. They have never experienced anything like this before. Although the idea of being off of school for weeks sounds awesome, they

In Christ's Light

are probably picturing a fun time, not the reality of being trapped at home and not seeing their friends.

Over the coming weeks, you will see an increase in behaviour issues with your children. Whether it's anxiety, or anger, or protest that they can't do things normally - it will happen. You'll see more meltdowns, tantrums, and oppositional behavior in the coming weeks. This is normal and expected under these circumstances.

What your children need right now is to feel comforted and loved. To feel like it's all going to be ok. And that might mean that you tear up your perfect schedule and love on your children a bit more. Play outside and go on walks. Bake cookies and paint pictures. Play board games and watch movies. Do a science experiment together or find virtual field trips of the zoo. Start a book and read together as a family. Snuggle under warm blankets and do nothing.

The focus for us all is the health and well being of our children and our family units.

If I can leave you with one thing, it's this: at the end of all of this, your children's mental health will be more important than their academic skills. And how they felt during this time will stay with them long after the memory of what they did during those weeks is long gone.

Device use and Digital Responsibility

During this time your children may spend more time than usual on devices. This is understandable but also needs to be closely monitored. What are your children actually watching or interacting with while they are on these devices. Please check this at regular intervals and make sure your children are using them for the intended purpose and also that they have large time breaks between usage of the devices.

Through technology our children can stay connected with their friends, classmates and whanau from all round the world. This is important as it allows us to communicate and see beyond the boundary of our own property.

Please also be very mindful that children's emotional and social intelligence is growing but has not fully formed. It is our job as parents to monitor and share these experiences with our children.

What is written in an email or shared with a group during a group chat can be misread and taken a different way than from what it was intended. Children can also become very brave online and use words that when face to face with the intended recipient they would never use.

Please reinforce appropriate digital behaviour with your children during this time especially as our children could have plenty of time to use their devices.

As parents/caregivers we need to be aware and fully connected with our children's digital journey at all times. This is for their safety and others around them.

Please be proactive!

Thank you again to all of the teachers for the learning resources they have provided to their classes. I will send an email out to the whole school community once again during Easter in regards to the start of Term 2 and the work that will be provided by the teachers. There will also be guidelines around communication with your child's teacher and the availability each day to further strengthen your child's learning.

Thank you all as parents for your positive responses during this week and the great open lines of communication we have had and will continue to have over the next couple of weeks. It is great to see that Room 5 is nearly empty and nearly all of the learning resources have been collected. As of 3pm today school is officially closed as a physical space for learning until further notice.

Mrs Rosie Lamain has shared this beautiful prayer with us:

Our 'Weird Times' prayer

Jesus, these are weird times, but I know you are with me and my friends,

You care about my school and all the people in Aotearoa and this world.

Thank you for being with me, especially if I'm scared.

Thank you for listening to me when I pray.

Please, help all people who are sick, or scared about getting sick,

Help me to remember to wash my hands,

Help me to not get too grumpy when I can't do the things I want, or go where I want,

Thank you for the people who love me and care for me.

I know that with them, and you, I am never alone.

Amen.

Remember that simple little routines throughout the day are great to have. Prayer time is something your children are used to. Usually 3 to 4 times a day your children will say a prayer at school. The

beginning of the day (morning prayer), before lunch and before the end of the day (prayer of thanks). Sometimes the classes say a prayer before morning tea as well.

Prayer is a great time for peace and togetherness, reflection and thanksgiving. Your children are amazing at prayer so is a good chance to let them lead and you be an active participant. Enjoy!

Resources will continue to be shared with you. The prayer resource will be in your hands later today.

Please keep in contact with your teachers and share the cool different areas of learning and fun you are having at home with your children. Remember, all teachers are also in 'Isolation' and love to see how your children, their students are getting on.

Keep strengthening your relationships across all areas of life during this time and enjoy the special time this is for you and your whanau.

Kia kaha - be strong, be understanding, be patient, be yourselves, have fun, be creative, be all of this 'In Christ's Light'

God bless you all.

Paddy Dowling

Make sure you are still all taking care of yourselves and you whanau. I look forward to seeing you all back here when school begins healthy and raring to go.

My thoughts and prayers continue to be with you all.

Yours 'In Christ's Light'

Paddy Dowling

Principal

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