Critical Incident Planning

Version 1.5 (09:00am 08/04/2020)

Coronavirus Pandemic Response Plan

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Introduction

"The great advantage we have is that the decisions we all make – as governments, businesses, communities, families and individuals – can influence the trajectory of this epidemic" – Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General (9 March)

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation declared the coronavirus outbreak a Global Pandemic and a Public Health Emergency. With 249 confirmed cases across the country (12 March) and counting, Prime Minister Scott Morrison has stated clearly that it is not a question of if, but when, we will start observing widespread community transmission in this country. This planning document is intended to be a flexible and adaptable work in progress that can be adjusted and revised as need dictates and/or the College is directed by outside authorities. Fundamentally, this plan is focused towards the safety, well-being and resilience of the College community. However, it also seeks to maintain continuity in teaching and learning. Simply put, this plan is about being as well prepared as possible, for the difficult days that lay ahead of us.

Guiding Principles

It is easy to get caught up in the hype and bogged down in detail, so this plan identifies five key principles that will keep it focused and will guide our thinking, planning and decision making:

1. Maintain the trust and confidence of the College community
2. Ensure compassionate, respectful and generous treatment of all affected
3. Minimise the potential negative health, well-being, livelihood and operational impact on students, staff and the wider College community
4. Keep up-to-date with developments and be guided by the evidence
5. Develop responses that are timely, flexible and proportional and that seek to reduce the impact on teaching and learning

Key Characteristics of the COVID-19 Virus

"Half of all coronavirus cases … are most likely to occur in just a three week period, with 95% of them over a nine week period … with a peak three month period of disruption" – Professor Chris Whitty (UK Chief Medical Officer)

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can make humans and animals sick. They cause illnesses that can range from the common cold to more severe diseases. Other coronaviruses include Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Coronavirus (COVID-19) was first reported in December 2019 in Wuhan City in China. Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by a new virus. Symptoms range from a mild cough to pneumonia. Some people recover easily, others may get very sick very quickly.

Infection with COVID-19 is now a notifiable condition under the *NSW Public Health Act*, so all cases and suspected cases must be reported by doctors to NSW Health, public health authorities who will work to prevent spread of the infection to others.

COVID-19 is primarily spread through respiratory droplets, such as through:

- close contact with an infectious person
- contact with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze
- touching objects or surfaces (eg, doorknobs, benches, handrails) that have cough or sneeze droplets from an infected person, and then touching your mouth or face

People with coronavirus may experience:

- fever
- flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat, runny nose and fatigue
- shortness of breath

It is important to understand the main characteristics of the virus and the level of risk it presents to particular age groups and individuals.

Based on the statistics coming from China, 81% of people who contract the coronavirus will present with mild to moderate symptoms (fever, coughing, fatigue, shortness of breath) 14% will present with severe symptoms (pneumonia and other lung problems) needing hospitalisation for 3 – six weeks and 5% will be critical (respiratory failure, septic shock or multiple organ failure) requiring intensive care (Guardian 13 March).

The current death rate is between 1.4% and 2.3% of those infected. The seasonal flu rate by comparison, has a mortality rate of 0.1%. People most at risk of death are over 80 years (14.8%) and those already suffering from a chronic condition – for example heart disease, diabetes, respiratory disease and cancer (between 6% to 10%) (CDC). The mortality rate in people under 40 years is currently just 0.2%.

Children and young people under 19 years are just as likely to be infected with coronavirus as adults, but so far they are not getting as sick. Preliminary data from China is also suggesting children are being infected by adults, rather than vice versa as is typical during a flu season (27 March data shows of those infected, 2.5% are 0 – 19 years).

A key characteristic of COVID-19 is that it is being spread below the radar by people who are infected but not really showing symptoms. It is suggested that up to two thirds of cases exported from China via global travel have gone undetected and that their impact on a community is only being detected after several hundred cases have accumulated (Dalton, Corbett and Katalaris, Mar 15). This means that many more people could be infected than official numbers are suggesting.
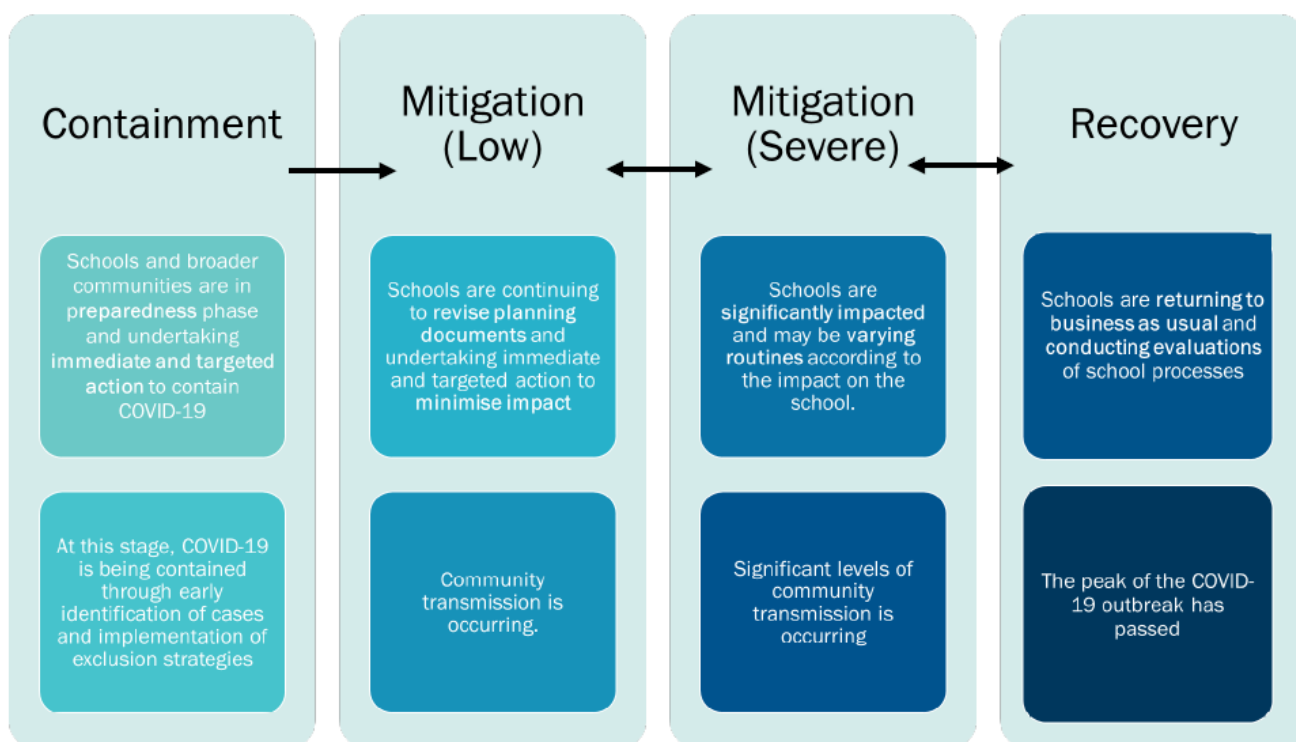
While the incidence of infection from the COVID-19 virus is higher than seasonal flu, generally, only 7% to 8% of contacts of known cases are later testing positive for the virus. However, people who live in the same household as someone who is infected are about six times more likely get infected, compared with people who made contact with an infected person in other settings. Currently, NSW Health is quarantining people as a close contact when *"a person has spent significant time either face-to-face (15 minutes) or in an enclosed space (two hours or more)".*

Structure of the Plan

The structure of this response plan aligns with the Federal Government's approach to responding to Coronavirus, along with the World Health Organisation and the Association of Independent Schools NSW . It involves four phases:

- **Level 1: Containment** – Sporadic cases imported from overseas and locally detected. This phase is about detecting early cases, following up close contacts, and preventing the disease taking hold in the community for as long as is reasonably possible. As at 27 March 2020, two thirds of Australian coronavirus cases have been from Australians returning from overseas (Aus Govt)
- **Level 2: Mitigation (Low**) – Low level community transmission is occurring in localised clusters of cases. Government ordered community containment measures are beginning to be implemented including limiting the size of social gatherings and social distancing measures. Sporting and entertainment events and businesses are either voluntarily cancelled or closed or being ordered to shut down by the government. Large scale events and businesses are being voluntarily cancelled or closed. This phase is about slowing the spread of the disease.
- **Level 3: Mitigation (Severe)** – There is an exponential surge of cases with numbers doubling every 3 to 4 days and larger outbreaks of community transmission occurring. Widespread regional and/or national community containment and social distancing measures are being implemented. Again, the focus of this phase is about slowing spread and also flattening the curve on peak impact.
- **Level 4: Recovery** – The peak of the Coronavirus outbreak has passed. There are still instances of re-occurring sporadic cases and localised clusters, but little by little, life is returning to more recognisable routines.

Note: Various actions and responses described at each level will overlap and will continue to be utilised until they are no longer needed or superseded by a better practice. Even during the recovery phase, containment strategies may still need to be implemented. As the WHO Director General commented on 9 March, *"It's not about containment or mitigation ... it's about both"*.

Containment	Mitigation (Low)	Mitigation (Severe)	Recovery
Schools and broader communities are in preparedness phase and undertaking immediate and targeted action to contain COVID-19	Schools are continuing to revise planning documents and undertaking immediate and targeted action to minimise impact	Schools are significantly impacted and may be varying routines according to the impact on the school.	Schools are returning to business as usual and conducting evaluations of school processes
At this stage, COVID-19 is being contained through early identification of cases and implementation of exclusion strategies	Community transmission is occurring.	Significant levels of community transmission is occurring	The peak of the COVID-19 outbreak has passed

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Phases of the Response Plan

"The fundamental objectives are to deploy phased actions to Contain, Delay, and Mitigate any outbreak, using Research to inform policy development …" – UK Government

LEVEL 1: CONTAINMENT

In this phase, staff and students at the College will be engaged with teaching and learning as normal unless they are returning from an affected area overseas.

Activities:

- Minimise transmission
- Manage potential cases and/or possible close contacts
- Become informed, identify risk factors and prepare for further response

Possible Actions:

- Isolation, monitoring and testing of students and staff who are returning from travel to affected coronavirus areas
- Social isolation strategies considered and adopted as appropriate
- Isolated students provided with learning resources with regular contact with their teacher/s, so they can continue working at home

Planning Responses:

Teaching and Learning

- Investigate the potential for scaling up course content delivery on the College's LMS with IT, identify priorities and prepare responses for both short term and extended College closure
- Consider Distance Education alternatives
- Run information and training sessions for staff in preparation for Level 2
- Review pastoral care strategies to ensure well-being of students and staff in preparation for Level 3

Communication

- Build trust and confidence through regular, honest and frank communication
- Acknowledge the Coronavirus outbreak and communicate that the College is working on a response plan
- Create opportunities and mechanisms for staff, students and parent/carers to ask questions and their raise concerns and ensure appropriate follow up
- Develop a Communication Plan that utilises the College Portal, LMS, email and Social Media with helpful information, regular updates and links to resources, including a copy of the GPCC Coronavirus Response Plan
- Update the essential contacts list, particularly key Federal and State government agencies as well as CSA and AIS ,and reliable news sources. Identify what websites need to be checked and with what level of frequency
- Alert staff and the wider College community of the College's policy regarding interacting with the media in the event of an identified Coronavirus infection on campus and/or a temporary College shutdown

Health and Hygiene

- Determine what healthy hygiene practices are effective and practical for Primary and Secondary students and develop a plan for actively promoting these

- Audit the current cleaning regimes around the College and develop strategies for minimising virus transmission, particularly in high traffic areas
- Identify at risk students and staff with chronic health conditions and other well-being related issues and develop strategies to minimise the risk to these individuals
- Identify a suitable space and develop a protocol for dealing with staff and/or students who need to be isolated on the College campus
- Consider what "deep cleaning" of the College would look like, who could carry it out and how would they need to be protected in the event of a temporary College closure

Operations

- Review procedures for the use of College facilities by the wider school community and other outside organisations if a localised case cluster is identified (Level 2)
- Identify essential operational functions during an extended College closure and develop a social distancing protocol for staff who will be required to work during this period within the office environment
- Identify school excursions and activities involving large groups that may need to be suspended
- Maintain proactive contact with support organisations (CSA, AIS, NSW Health, NESA, fellow CSA members etc) for information and ideas

LEVEL 2: MITIGATION (LOW)

In this phase most staff and students at the College are engaged in teaching and learning for as long as possible. Scaling back of both on and off campus activities occurs as the government implements phased and proportional containment measures.

Activities:

- Ensure proportionate responses based on risk
- Support and maintain Government mitigation strategies
- Monitor for an escalation in localised clusters and community transmission and seek advice

Possible Actions:

- Cancelling camps and overnight excursions
- Restricting student and staff participation in regional and state sporting carnivals, after school team competitions and other College related gatherings off and on campus as necessary
- Consider school operational changes including placing a hold on school assemblies or other large gatherings
- Limiting participation in conferences and other professional development gatherings in affected areas or with participants from affected areas locally and overseas as necessary
- Instructing at risk staff and students to self-isolate and work from home as soon as government containment measures are announced.
- Temporary College closure (1 to 3 days) if a student or staff member is diagnosed with the virus after taking instruction from NSW Health and other relevant authorities
- NSW Health working with the College to initiate rapid tracing, monitoring and isolation of close contacts, with the aim of preventing further spread

Planning Responses:

Teaching and Learning

- Plan to provide course content delivery and resources for an extended period in anticipation of higher level staff and student absenteeism or extended school closure

- Identify key functions and tasks for teaching staff on and off campus during an extended closure and social distancing protocols
- Provide information and training sessions for teaching staff in preparation for Level 3 Mitigation
- Organise a scaled-up trial of remote teaching and learning technology using staff and students and implement key learnings
- Review all excursions, participation in sporting competitions and carnivals and off-site co-curricula activities and cancel as necessary or when advised by the Department of Education or NSW Health
- Review all assemblies, Chapels and other school gatherings and reconfigure as necessary or when advised by the Department of Education or NSW Health
- Monitor students and staff and implement pastoral care strategy as required

Communication

- Maintain trust and confidence through regular, honest and frank communication and storytelling
- Provide regular updates for staff and parents outlining preparations for future contingencies
- Encourage staff, students and parent/carers to continue asking questions and raise their concerns and ensure appropriate follow up
- In the event of a short-term College closure inform all stakeholders, including staff, parents/carers, Extend OOSHC, Little Coasties and Green Point Baptist Church
- Encourage parents/carers to talk about the situation with their children as it develops and suggests strategies for doing this that are age appropriate
- Consider what signage will need to be displayed around the College campus in preparation for Level 3 Mitigation
- Acknowledge the anxiety, distress and grief responses of students and staff as familiar College routines are significantly impacted and adjusted

Health and Hygiene

- Determine what social distancing practices are effective and practical for Primary and Secondary students and develop a plan for actively promoting them
- Continue promoting healthy hygiene practices and reinforce messaging with clear signage around the campus
- Communicate with staff and College families about the importance of being vaccinated in preparation for the influenza season
- Strongly encourage all staff to participate in the College's vaccination program
- Strictly observe the two-week self-isolation protocol if staff and students present with cold and/or flu like symptoms
- Ensure additional cleaning procedures for high risk areas such as door handles, railings etc is maintained
- Implement a screening protocol and signage for visitors coming on site as needed

Operations

- Seek advice and consider restricting the use of College facilities by the wider school community and other outside organisations if a localised case cluster is identified or as government containment strategies are escalated
- Review all gatherings involving parents and the community on campus and cancel as necessary
- Finalise planning measures to ensure maintenance of essential business operations in the event of an extended closure, including communications, cleaning, finance (payroll), IT services and remote support
- Ensure all staff understand their roles and responsibilities in the event of an extended school closure
- Identify staffing issues related to changing family circumstances and implement appropriate support measures as needed

In this phase teaching and learning moves online as staff and students are restricted by an enforced College closure, disrupted travel and other containment measures

Activities:

- Cease activities that are no longer needed
- Ensure proportionate responses based on risk
- Support and maintain Government mitigation strategies
- Monitor the situation and seek advice

Possible Actions

- Large scale regional and national containment measures
- Limiting of unnecessary travel
- Limiting gatherings and implementing other social distancing measures
- Extended College closure ordered by the Federal Government and NSW Health

Planning Responses

Teaching and Learning

- Seek advice from NESA, monitor and implement strategies to address impact on HSC assessments exam preparations and other external requirements from NESA.
- Implement on-line home learning for all appropriate years. Provide advice and support materials for younger students unsuited to online learning
- Implement pastoral care strategy to ensure well-being of students and staff
- Continue to acknowledge, monitor and address the anxiety, distress and grief responses of students and staff as they continue to adjust to new practices in teaching and learning

Communication

- Maintain trust and inspire hope through regular, honest and frank communication
- Ensure important messages and updates are communicated via multiple platforms
- When an extended College closure occurs, inform all stakeholders, including staff, parents/carers, Extend OOSHC, Little Coasties and Green Point Baptist Church
- Set up prominent signage at all entry points to the College campus for staff and visitors coming on site
- All communication relating to COVID-19 needs approval from the College Principal before being sent out to the wider College community.

Health and Hygiene

- Full scale deep cleaning of the College campus
- Strictly observe the two-week self-isolation protocol if staff present with cold and/or flu like symptoms
- Strictly enforce social distancing protocols while visiting or working on the College campus
- Strictly observe screening protocol for all visitors coming on site

Operations

- Majority of Business Services staff and Academic staff work from home
- Administration functions such as payroll maintained – relevant staff may come on site, but practice social distancing strategies with no interpersonal contact

LEVEL 4: RECOVERY

In this phase, teaching and learning and other activities recommence as the College returns to normal operational status.

Activities:

- Support the return from mitigation and response to normal operations
- Provide support and resources to assist staff and students in their personal and social recovery
- Evaluate systems and revise school processes and procedures

Possible Actions

- Large scale regional and national containment measures are being scaled back
- Federal Government and NSW Health gives the all clear for schools to re-open
- Continued Isolation, monitoring and testing of students and staff who are locally infected or returning from travel to coronavirus affected areas

Planning Responses

Teaching and Learning

- Classes resume with teachers working on catch up of missed work
- Continue online or home delivery of lessons for students still affected or in isolation
- Seek advice from NESA regarding assessments and hours potentially lost for course delivery
- Assess impact of an extended College closure on student well-being, seek advice and implement appropriate pastoral care strategies

Communication

- Maintain trust and inspire hope through regular, honest and frank communication
- Ensure important messages and information are communicated via multiple platforms

Health and Hygiene

- Maintain healthy practices with staff and students
- Continue extra cleaning of high traffic and high risk areas
- Continue requiring isolation and medical clearance for those returning from overseas countries listed as affected

Operations

- Resume normal operations, assessing impact and adopting a flexible approach to bring the College back to usual operating standard

Links:

- www.health.gov.au
- www.nesa.nsw.edu.au
- www.who.int