



UPPER HUTT SCHOOL

Kia tupu ai ēnei kākano hei rakau nui
May these tender seedlings grow into mighty trees

**Martin Street
Upper Hutt**

Phone (04) 939 6634
admin@upperhuttsschool.nz
www.upperhuttsschool.nz
facebook.com/upperhuttsschool

Monday 27th June, 2022

Kia ora Upper Hutt whānau/ families of children in Year 4 and above,

This term has seen a steady increase in 'winter bugs and viruses'. For the first three weeks of this term, our school was required to report the number of children away to the MoE because we had more than 15% of our total school roll away with sickness. We are getting close to this % again.

The 'bugs' this winter are making children/ staff very unwell and they are away for many days. As expected, we are also starting to see an increase in the number of children away due to Covid. Today we have seen another spike in covid cases, isolation and other viruses.

I know long periods of sickness (often one child after the next) is very hard for families to manage at the moment.

Under our current 'Orange' guidelines we 'strongly encourage' all children in year 4 and above to wear masks. Since the mandate around masks finished, we have seen a decline in the number of children wearing masks. Almost no children wear masks now.

The staff continue to wear masks - this is a requirement for all staff at our school under Orange.

After our last Board meeting on Tuesday 21st June, the Board asked that I re-connect with families about wearing masks inside school buildings for children in Year 4 and above. The thinking around mask wearing is that it can help to slow the spread and transmission of viruses (not just covid, but all viruses). Anything that helps keep children and staff healthier: I want to promote.

I know the children don't find the masks easy to wear, but again we will continue to ensure there are multiple times throughout the day when children are getting breaks outside from mask wearing. Teachers will support messages around the normalisation of mask wearing.

I also know there is a lot of emotion/ feeling about mask wearing in our community which I respect.

The school has purchased disposable masks for children so that cost isn't a barrier for any families.

Again we cannot mandate mask wearing at this stage, however as a school we '**strongly encourage**' it in the hope and belief that it may help prevent weeks and weeks of your child being away from school with illness. I am also concerned for staff wellness and the impact of having staff away sick with very few (if any) available relievers. It is becoming more and more difficult to fully staff every classroom. We have schools in our region that are closing for periods as they are unable to get enough 'well' teachers due to the level of illness in their school community. We hope mask wearing will help reduce the risk of this happening at our school.

I would like to ask that the children start wearing masks inside the school buildings from tomorrow please. If you DO NOT want your child to wear a mask at school could you please email your class teacher directly (links below). We will of course respect your choice and decision.

Adam Williamson - adam@upperhuttsschool.nz, Shanice Tredrea - shanice@upperhuttsschool.nz, Brigit Kerr - brigit@upperhuttsschool.nz, Jo Newman - jon@upperhuttsschool.nz, Vanessa Packer - vanessa@upperhuttsschool.nz, Kirsten Foley - kirsten@upperhuttsschool.nz

If you would like to discuss this further with me please contact me by phone, email or appointment. This surge of winter bugs wont last forever...lets get through this winter as best as we can together. Thank you for continuing to engage in a conversation with me about ways we can help keep children and adults healthy and at school.

Ngā mihi nui, **Jo Grant**

