



Friday 28 January 2022

Dear Parents / Caregivers,

Start of Year Newsletter to Whānau

Ka nui te mihi kia koutou - He hari tau hau kia koutou -
Greetings and Happy New Year to you all.

Welcome to the start of a new school year, especially to those students and whānau who are joining Ruawai College for the first time.

It is a very exciting time for Ruawai College as we look to implement our new look curriculum; home based format for the Year 7 & 8, modules at Year 9 & 10 and learning packages for the Senior school.

I would like to wish our students and their families all the very best as we look forward to a successful 2022.

This is the first newsletter of the year and will be unusually long due to a fair amount of COVID-19 information.

In regard to COVID-19 we have moved to the COVID Protection (traffic light) Framework (CPF), not only as a nation but for all our school activities and events. It is good to know that at the Red setting school is open, and we are able to support all students learning onsite.

Events and activities

Large hui and gatherings, especially when indoors, continue to be one of the riskier activities we can undertake. Therefore, we have reviewed all our events and activities for the upcoming term to ensure we meet the health guidance for Red.

Unfortunately for us, this means a big change to our annual new students powhiri / welcome ceremony. This will now be held outside, and due to the Red setting, sadly, **we will be unable to have parents / whānau onsite for this welcome.**

Year 7 students only, please congregate at the front entrance of the school on Friday 4 February 2022 by 8:45am. From here, you will be welcomed by our Deans, Prefects and Senior Leadership Team.

For an overview of Week 1 and 2 events, please see the table below:

OVERVIEW OF WEEK 1: Monday 31st January 2022 - Friday 4th February 2022 School office open (except Monday 31 January 2022), 8:30am - 3:00pm e.g. enrolments, purchasing uniform. Contact the school office to bring in devices for connection to school's Wi-Fi	
Monday 31 January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northland Anniversary Day - Observed public holiday, school office closed
Tuesday 1 February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School starts for specified students only - please read the remaining dates carefully! • All school buses running from this date onwards • Year 13 & Prefects Peer Support Training (9:00am - 3:00pm): All Year 13 students and Prefects are to meet with Deans / AP / Guidance Counsellor in Room 14 at 9:00am. • Lunch will be provided; students are to wear mufti
Wednesday 2 February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gateway First Aid Course (8:45am - 4:30pm): All Year 11 students and selected Year 12 and Year 13 students. Students will need to organise their own transportation home as school buses will have departed. • Students are to provide their own lunch; students are to wear mufti • Course Confirmation (10:00am - 11:00am): Year 9 - 13 course confirmation for those who are yet to have finalised
Thursday 3 February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Student Leadership Programme (8:45am - 3:00pm): All Prefects and House Leaders • Lunch will be provided; students are to wear mufti
Friday 4 February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First day of school for all Year 7 students • All Year 7 students please assemble at the front entrance of the school by 8:45am. • Peer Support Day: All Prefects, House Leaders and Year 7 students. Please bring PE gear, swimming togs and towel • Lunch will be provided; students are to wear school uniform

OVERVIEW OF WEEK 2: Monday 7th February 2022 - Friday 11th February 2022	
Monday 7 February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waitangi Day - Observed public holiday, school office closed
Tuesday 8 February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Year Levels return to school!
Wednesday 9 February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal timetabled school day for all Year levels

Ventilation

Providing good, old fashioned, fresh air remains the most important thing we can do in our learning spaces to minimise risk for ākonga and kaiako (and the same goes for you at home).

The Ministry of Education has indicated that we will also be receiving a CO₂ monitor in the coming weeks to further support our ventilation plan.

Omicron and testing

We have seen very large numbers of cases overseas and will likely see much larger numbers of cases in Aotearoa than we have previously experienced. While Omicron is more transmissible than previous strains, most people who get COVID-19 will have a mild to moderate illness and will fully recover in their own home.

However, some of our community who are immune compromised, are ill, or have other vulnerabilities, even when they are fully vaccinated, could be more affected by Omicron. Therefore, we all need to continue to play our part to minimise the spread of the virus.

In regard to testing, the health system currently has capacity to process 40,000 PCR tests a day. PCR testing is the most accurate test for COVID-19 and will continue to be used while New Zealand is in the stamp-it-out phase.

Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) will begin to be used more widely over time. They are not as accurate as PCR tests and this means that some people who do have COVID-19 will get a negative test result back. There are currently 4.6 million RATs in the country and 10s of millions ordered.

If you are symptomatic or need to be tested to access a workplace or service, you will be guided at the time on which test is best for you.

Face coverings

Staff and children in Years 4 – 13 must wear face coverings when **inside** at school while in the Red setting.

Public health advice is that an appropriate face covering will fit snugly and seal well around facial contours. This can include single use, disposable masks (medical masks) and reusable fabric masks with three layers.

Don't worry if you don't have these specific types of face coverings, as public health experts also say that any face covering is better than no face covering. The Unite Against COVID-19 website has information on how to make a face covering [here](#).

For those of you with children who might be reluctant to wear a face covering, [here](#) is some helpful advice from Michigan Health. Advice includes using simple, specific explanations about why they need to wear a face covering, adults being the role models, providing small rewards for wearing them, bringing face coverings into play such as drawing face coverings on characters in colouring books, or letting them choose / make the mask.

Managing cases in our school

We have a good contact tracing system in place that if there is a confirmed case who has been at school while infectious, we can quickly identify who was a close contact of that person. Ruawai College will then quickly advise those contacts of what they need to do.

Only if the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Education advises to do so, would we consider closing a physical onsite school and moving to distance learning for everyone. At Red, we will keep everyone learning onsite for as long as we can but we will always put student and staff safety first.

Please make sure your contact details we have on file are up to date, so we can get in touch with you if needed.

Preparing for COVID-19

You can also prepare for COVID-19, making sure you and your household have a plan and know what to do. This will mean your whānau and community can help each other if needed.

Find out more below:

- [Be prepared for COVID-19](#)
- [Download the COVID-19 Readiness Checklist \[PDF, 121 KB\]](#)
- [What to expect when self-isolating at home](#)

Self-isolating at home because of COVID-19

Many people will be able to manage self-isolation with help from friends and whānau, but there is help available if you need it, both with health support and access to food and other essentials.

- [What to expect when self-isolating at home](#)
- [Getting extra support if you have COVID-19 or are self-isolating](#)
- [COVID-19 position - managing your symptoms](#)

If you know anyone in your community affected by COVID-19 and who may need help, such as food and other financial assistance, Work and Income has a range of [support available for individuals, families, employers and self-employed people affected by COVID-19](#).

Work and Income support

The beginning of the year can be a tough time for parents who are faced with many costs and it is important you are aware of what assistance you may be able to get from Work and Income.

These are available to people on a low income as well as those on a benefit.

Use the links below or call 0800 559 009 to find out more, or to apply.

- [Check what you might get here](#)
- [School costs](#)
- [Out of School Care and Recreation \(OSCAR\) Subsidy](#)
- [Other Childcare Assistance](#)
- [School and Year Start-up Payment](#) (for people getting Orphan's Benefit or Unsupported Child's Benefit)
- [Help with living costs \(including food and rent/mortgage\)](#)

MoneyTalks can assist with [free budgeting and debt help](#). You can also contact your local community provider. [Please find more information here](#).

Getting ready to return to school

The Ministry of Education has some helpful information on their [Parents and Whānau website](#) to support your tamariki to get back to school. There is also a very important reminder about how you can [take care of yourself](#).

While this might all feel a little overwhelming at times, we know that all these measures will help our children return to school, reconnect with whānau and friends and do what they enjoy.

We are also here to help. Please get in touch if you have any concerns or need help in any way. You can contact the school office on 09 439 2216 or email admin@ruawaicollege.school.nz.

Until then, stay safe and enjoy the long weekend.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Raeleen Harré', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Raeleen Harré
Principal