



2 February 2022

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Welcome back after what we hope has been a wonderful summer for you and your family. On behalf of our board and staff, I warmly welcome all new students and their families to our school community. For those of you already a part of our school, we trust your children will continue to enjoy their time at Howick College. Our aim is to ensure that our students enjoy a smooth transition back into school life and that they settle as quickly as possible.

I would like to provide you with some further information in preparation for the start of the new school year at Howick College.

Regarding COVID-19, we have moved fully into the new traffic light framework for all school activities and events this year. You will be familiar with the health measures we have in place but for new families I provide further information about our plan.

### **First Day of School**

The first day of school for all new students is **Tuesday 8 February at 8.40am.**

**Y9 and new Y10** students will finish at **3.20pm.** **New Y11 - 13** students will finish at **12.00pm.**

For all returning students, the first day of school is **Wednesday 9 February, 8.50am - 3.20pm.** Students should go straight to tutor class.

### **Preparing for Omicron**

All staff are now fully vaccinated and I continue to encourage our students to also take the opportunity to get vaccinated. Staff and students must wear masks at all times, in and outside of the classroom, including on buses to and from school. We recommend that our students wear medical grade masks (the blue ones or N95s). In class, students will be physically distanced from each other as much as possible and rooms will be ventilated with doors and windows kept open. Classroom hand sanitiser and cleaning sprays will also be available.

If your child or a family member is unwell and has any covid symptoms and/or awaiting test results they must remain at home until they have medical clearance to return to school. Please contact the school via email to advise us at [note@howick.school.nz](mailto:note@howick.school.nz).

Large gatherings of students and staff, especially when indoors, continue to be a high risk. Therefore, we have reviewed all our events and activities for the upcoming term to ensure we meet the school guidelines at the red setting. We will keep our parent community updated

regarding future events and will endeavour to proceed with as many of these as possible within the COVID-19 restrictions in effect at the time.

If large numbers of staff and students are compromised by the virus and need to isolate at home, we have plans to ensure the school remains open and there is continuity of teaching and learning. We are well prepared and confident that we can provide our distance learning programmes when required and we continue to refine our processes in readiness. One of the strategies we have considered to cover large staff absences is to ask for a specific year level to learn from home on one particular day of the week. This will free up staff to supervise any remaining classes on site. More information about this and other strategies will be communicated when required.

### **Visitors To School**

Only essential visitors are permitted to enter the school site. If parents need to contact the school, we ask that you phone in or email the staff member in the first instance and where required, make an appointment. You will be guided through the entry requirements once you have made an appointment. Parents and caregivers can access any payment options through our on-line website portal.

### **Managing Cases in Our School**

We have an effective contact tracing system in place so if a confirmed case has been at school while infectious, we can quickly identify all close contacts. We will then advise those contacts and support them through the steps they need to follow. Please make sure we have your updated contact details on file so we can get in touch with you if necessary. Current parents can check their contact details via our portal. New parents will have portal access information provided to them next week.

It would also be helpful to have an updated register of student vaccination records. As mentioned by health officials, vaccinations including the booster shot remain an important tool in helping to prevent the most serious harm from COVID-19. We have previously collected some data from parents relating to the vaccination status of their children but the response rate was relatively low. We strongly encourage parents to advise us of their child's current vaccination status. This information will help us support our third-party providers, such as College Sport, who require all student participants to be fully vaccinated. A further opportunity for parents to update their child's status will be provided by the school in due course.

### **New Students Powhiri**

The official welcome for all new students will occur on **Tuesday 8 February at 8.40am**. All new students should be in their full school uniform and assembled at the front of the school where they will be organised in their House groups. Staff will direct them towards the gym for the official outdoor powhiri. Students will then be split into two groups to manage the number of students attending. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 protocols, parents are **not permitted to attend** this year's event and we ask that you do not accompany your child on to the school grounds.

The new Year 9 and 10 students' first day will include fun sporting activities run by a certified outside provider called *Top Town* who will meet all COVID-19 protocols. They will also be supported by staff and student leaders. Students should remember to bring their **Howick College sports gear, a towel, sun hat, sunscreen, lunch, drink bottle and mask.**

### **Bus Bay**

The school has invested in a re-designed bus bay that will significantly improve the health and safety of students using the school bus service. These changes now prohibit parents and caregivers from using the bus bay for parking, dropping off or picking up their child during the school day.

All information regarding buses to and from Howick College can be found on the school website, <https://www.howickcollege.school.nz/getting-to-school>

### **Dropping Off and Picking Up Students**

Parents must plan to collect their child from surrounding streets away from the main entrances. Students who are collected regularly by car at the end of the school day can be collected from entrances located either at Bledisloe or Rochester Streets which are less congested.

We look forward to meeting all our new students and their families as well as our returning community. I encourage all parents to contact the school at any time if you have queries about your child's welfare, progress, and achievement. We are here to support you and your child.

Please see below for COVID-19 information that may be helpful to you and your family.

Regards,



Mr I L Ropati  
**Principal**

- [Be prepared for COVID-19](#)
- [Download the COVID-19 Readiness Checklist \[PDF, 121 KB\]](#)
- [What to expect when self-isolating at home](#)
- [What to expect when self-isolating at home | Unite against COVID-19 \(covid19.govt.nz\)](#)
- [Getting extra support if you have COVID-19 or are self-isolating | Unite against COVID-19 \(covid19.govt.nz\)](#)
- [COVID-19 positive – managing your symptoms | Health Navigator NZ](#)