



27th July 2020

Dear Damascus Students and Families,

We are incredibly proud of the way our students and families responded to the request for face masks and face coverings today. They provide an important protection for our community in this time of uncertainty, and I ask can you please ensure your young people continue to attend school with a facemask/covering over the next fortnight.

Today, I have received communication of a Damascus student who is a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19. This student is currently in isolation has been tested and is now awaiting results, and has no symptoms; however, I am keen for Damascus families to be aware of the current status of possible cases within our community.

The best protection for this community continues to be the 5 S's of health and safety:



Students should not attend school if they or anyone in their household are symptomatic (ill). This may include a cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath, fever, or loss of sense of taste or smell. Those students should immediately get tested for COVID-19 and not return to school until a negative result is known. Family members are also advised to stay at home until the results are known. Follow the links below for information from the DHHS website regarding testing and testing locations.

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/getting-tested-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/where-get-tested-covid-19>

On a daily basis, the College will continue to send students who appear unwell at school, to Student Administration, and parents will be contacted and asked to collect their student promptly.

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It is reasonable to assume that families may seek advice on whether their young person should be tested, based on varying degrees of contact with another person who has been/is being tested. **The current DHHS recommendation for Ballarat is that only people with symptoms, or people who have had direct/close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 should be tested.** While a test result is pending, students should remain at home in isolation until they are confirmed negative.

'Direct/close contact' means having face-to-face contact for more than 15 minutes with someone who has a confirmed case of Coronavirus (COVID-19) – or alternatively sharing a closed space with them for more than two hours. The following link to the DHHS website contains more information regarding contacts:

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19#how-do-you-define-closecontact>

In the case of a Damascus College student or staff member testing positive after having attended school, closure of the College will be enacted. A clear process will be communicated to parents and carers in this event. The College will take advice from the DHHS and the Catholic Education Office Ballarat.

As well, the College will undergo a deep decontamination clean. Classes will be taught remotely following a short period of preparation, similar to how the first period of remote learning was delivered.

Families are actively encouraged to seek information from the DHHS (1800 675 398) for advice concerning their own specific concerns regarding COVID-19 matters.

I will continue to communicate with families as I become aware of any further developments.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact principal@damascus.vic.edu.au or the College office on 5337 2222.

Kind regards

Matthew Byrne
Principal

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