

The following is a letter from MoE sent to each school. The information and links are from MoE sources.

Kia ora koutou,

New Zealand's COVID-19 response continues amid much larger numbers of daily cases.

You may well have seen the headlines in the media about the numbers of cases being seen in schools. Please don't be alarmed by this. It is only natural as cases in our community increase, they will appear in our school. We have really good systems in place to respond to this and to keep any spread of the virus – should it appear – to a minimum.

You may have seen Dr Jin Russell in the media noting [research from New South Wales about their recent Omicron outbreak](#) showing that onward transmission within the school setting is very low. For every child who is infected and attends school only 3.7% of their close contacts at school subsequently tested positive. We have seen that in New Zealand too – public health teams on the ground have seen that even though cases pop up in schools, there has been very little onward spread through the school because of the protective measures we have in place.

This is why we remain open at Red. It's great for a child's wellbeing and learning to be at school with their friends and school staff, and we have very good systems in place to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Your job remains the same, too: please continue to keep a really close watch of your whānau for anyone with symptoms. If unwell, please stay at home and get advice about getting a COVID-19 test.

With Phase 3 of the Omicron response, the key change is that it is only confirmed cases and their household contacts who need to self-isolate. Everyone else, including those who may have had close contact with the case but aren't in the household, must continue to monitor really closely for any symptoms of COVID-19.

Rapid antigen tests (RATs) are now being used to diagnose COVID-19 as well as PCR tests. This means that you will get an almost immediate test result back if a RAT is used.

If anyone in your family is confirmed as having COVID-19, you will be asked to notify your close contacts yourself. Please get in touch with us as soon as you can if your child has tested positive for COVID-19.

Transmission of COVID-19 is still most likely to happen in your home – so please keep doing all those good things to keep your whānau safe. Wash your hands, get lots of fresh air, cover any coughs and sneezes, clean surfaces regularly, and seek advice if anyone is not feeling well. And please wear a mask when you are out and about. There is information online to help your family [prepare to isolate](#) if you need to.

The most important advice we can give to keep your whānau safe is to act as if you have COVID-19. More than a third of people who have COVID-19 will not have any symptoms if they have had three doses of the vaccine. Please think about who you visit and what health measures you can put in place to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Getting three doses of the vaccine will really help you to do that. Research has shown that compared with being unvaccinated, three doses of the vaccine will mean you are 67% less likely to be infected with Omicron and 97% less likely to get Delta. If you can't get COVID you can't pass it on.

Finally, we know how hard the impacts on COVID-19 have been for many families in New Zealand. If you know of a family in your community who is struggling, please encourage them to reach out for support for example to access food, medicine, or access financial support: [Help is available – COVID-19 Health Hub](#).