



March 19<sup>th</sup> 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

You will be aware of the latest advice from the Prime Minister and the government on the importance of schools remaining open at the current stage of the COVID-19 crisis. I am writing to you to let you know how Glennaeon stands on this issue, as well as an update from the school on the situation. The summary below gives the main points; please read further for the full picture.

**Executive Summary:**

- At this point Glennaeon will stay open unless there is
  - A) a positive test on a staff member or a student, or
  - B) a directive to close.
- Teachers are preparing for online teaching and learning
- The school is maintaining rigorous health protective measures with extra cleaning
- Only class based activities in place: no inter-class gatherings
- No off-site external activities such as Outdoor Education
- No volunteers or visitors on site
- Attendance reporting requirements continue
- Middle Cove Cafe early closure for term break

**Glennaeon will stay open:**

Over the past few days I have been in contact with a number of other schools, and participated in a teleconference as a member of the AIS NSW Advisory Council which provides advice to the Association of Independent Schools, our peak body. I have researched the material available, and read the different views concerning the matter. I remain strongly of the view that the evidence at the moment supports the containment strategy in Australia of keeping schools open.

The situation is changing daily, and our crisis leadership team makes daily assessments of the school's position. Unless there is some unforeseen circumstance Glennaeon will remain open. We respect the views of parents who are keeping children at home although our view is that being at School is the best place for children now, unless they are ill or have compromised immunity.

There are two possible scenarios for the school to close:

1. If a student or staff member contracts the virus, i.e. tests positive, then we are ordered to close by the Ministry of Health: everyone goes home for one or two days, we do a deep clean, then school reopens and we carry on.

2. If the government, on the advice of the Ministry of Health, decides the time is right to close (i.e. the time in the containment strategy) either for all schools or a large cohort of schools, then we close for the time we are directed.

I can understand that with this advice hanging over our heads, children may think we are about to close, but we are not, unless either of those two scenarios eventuates. We will be making this as clear as we can to the students, and I ask that you also share this message with your child/ren. I believe the best advice at this time is for children to stay at school unless they are ill or have a compromised immunity. Here we have a relatively controlled environment and that is the advice from government and the Ministry of Health professionals.

There will very likely be a time in the future for school closure, but our view is that it is not now. When schools close, it may be for a very long time, and the continuity of education will be severely disrupted, even with online learning. As a result, we need to keep classroom teaching and learning continuing for as long as possible, while preparing for remote learning if/when school closure does take place.

#### **Burden on Teachers:**

Please be aware that the more children at home at this stage, the greater the responsibility on our working teachers to support the online learning, but this comes with a cost. I want to pay tribute to our teachers who are doing a magnificent job of teaching on campus during the day, then after hours preparing and posting online resources. They are working extra hours and putting in extra effort on all levels. Our teachers can only maintain this extra support for a limited time.

#### **Health Protections Measures at School:**

There will be no parent volunteers on any campus for any activity. When picking up younger children, you are requested to stay physically apart, and to leave the campus directly you have met your child/ren.

We are rigorously maintaining a healthy environment through:

- Extra cleaning and disinfecting during the day and after school
- physical and social distancing at all times
- no interschool events such as assemblies or gathering/performances
- no visitors or volunteers on site
- contractors and essential deliveries are conducted within social distancing guidelines
- no external excursions or Outdoor Education.

#### **Attendance Guidelines for Contacts of COVID Cases**

Students and staff with a household member who has had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 should remain away from school until the household member has received a negative test result.

Students and staff with a household member who has had casual contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 may continue to attend school unless they become symptomatic.

## **Absence Notifications**

Notifying the School of your child's absence is important as we need to know exactly who is onsite each day.

1. If your child is not attending school on any one day, please call reception at the relevant campus or email [absence@glenaeon.nsw.edu.au](mailto:absence@glenaeon.nsw.edu.au) to notify us
2. If your child will not be attending school for two or more days, please notify us of the dates of absence by calling reception at the relevant campus or emailing [absence@glenaeon.nsw.edu.au](mailto:absence@glenaeon.nsw.edu.au)
3. If you have advised us of an absence but later decide to send your child to school, please inform us by email or phone

If you had sought and received Leave of Absence for any planned travel which has now been cancelled, please advise the school.

### **Middle Cove: School Cafe**

The cafe will close early for the term break. The last day will be tomorrow Friday March 20<sup>th</sup>. Sharon Dirken is taking advantage of the extended break to undergo an operation, and plans to be back in action in Term 2. There will as a result be no cafe services for the remainder of term.

### **Updates:**

Please consult GLO for updates and information on COVID-19. A page has also been created on the school website for public access. Please see <https://news.glenaeon.nsw.edu.au/news/issue/glenaeon-covid-19-latest-news/>.

Thank you for your support through this difficult and challenging period. Without wanting to repeat all the wise words being shared at the moment, this is obviously a time for shared resolve and action. I heard someone mention that while we need physical distancing, we also need to stay together in whatever ways we can to look after each other, to stay connected with each other in appropriate ways, even in our thoughts. We need to maintain physical distancing, but maintain our human social connections in whatever appropriate form we can, so that together we can overcome this most extraordinary of challenges with some extraordinary human resolve, action, and kindness.

With best wishes,

Andrew Hill  
Head of School