



MINARET COLLEGE

Islamic College of Melbourne South and East

16 March 2020

Dear Minaret Family

Assalam Alaykum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu,

InshaAllah this letter finds you in the best state of health and iman.

News regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to evolve quickly and so the following letter serves as an update to the community regarding decisions we have made today about the ongoing operation of the College.

Firstly, to confirm, **Alhamdulillah the College has not had a student or staff member test positive to COVID-19, and therefore, consistent with government advice, we remain open.** Included in this letter is today's statement from the Victorian Chief Health Officer, which outlines the rationale for schools to remain open. That said, reflective of the escalating measures to protect the broader community, we recognise the need to take further action and minimise risk of exposure to the virus. In addition to these measures, we have also made decisions which will allow staff to adequately support students during this period of uncertainty and prepare for a period of closure in the future. Effective immediately, the following will occur:

- All excursions, incursions, ceremonies and assemblies where students gather in significant number are cancelled. Where an excursion fee has already been paid, this will be held to offset the fee for the same student for an excursion in the future
- Photo Days are postponed until future notice
- Parent Teacher interviews scheduled in the coming weeks are cancelled
- Dhuhr prayer will be conducted by creating greater separation between each row to minimise student contact
- Jummah will no longer be open for members of the public to attend (including parents of students)
- Morning prayers will now be conducted within classrooms
- Where possible, teachers will organise classrooms in a way which creates the most distance between students. Primary student learning will be conducted at desks – sitting in close proximity on the carpet will no longer occur
- Increased presence of staff supervision during recess and lunch time – with the purpose of ensuring students are following social distancing guidelines, including 'no contact'
- Visual reminders to be displayed and teachers continue to remind students to adopt good hygiene measures, including regular thorough washing of hands. For primary students this will include scheduled times to wash hands

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Given the critical nature of this period, ongoing learning support for VCE students is our priority. We have also committed that in the event of closure, even with continued online learning support, SACs will be postponed. In the event of closure of schools across the state, we expect the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) will make decisions which will be applied to all students.

To allow our teachers additional time to prepare for elearning in a very short period of time, the College leadership is exploring the option of ending school for students at 2.30pm (Ramadan timetable). We will notify families by tomorrow if this is our confirmed course of action.

The protection of our students will only be effective with co-operation from our families. We request your ongoing support through the following actions:

- We expect that all families will follow government advice, including self-isolating for 2 weeks after any overseas travel
- Only students will be permitted to enter school buildings. We request that when dropping or picking up students, parents remain outdoors to minimise exposure
- If a student, family member or close contact is being tested or has been diagnosed with COVID-19, the student should NOT attend school and the College should be advised via the Admin team
- Students showing flu-like symptoms should not be sent to school. If a student displays flu-like symptoms while at school, parents will be contacted for the student to be picked up. A medical certificate will be required as clearance for a student to return to school
- To minimise students queuing at the café for recess and lunch, we encourage families to either order lunches online via the flexi-school app or bring lunch from home
- For students who have a greater level of risk due to a current medical conditions, we encourage families to consult with doctors and medical specialists regarding the best course of action for those students. When this advice is received, we ask families to inform the College so we can work in partnership to manage risk to more vulnerable students

We thank families for the continued trust you place in us to make decisions which are in the best interest for students and the community – we take this amanah very seriously. We also caution families that during this time, emotions can run high and ‘news’ can travel fast. We ask all families to raise any concerns or questions to us for investigation or clarification. As per my previous letter, communication is a critical component of managing through this period and we ask for your ongoing support.

May Allah (SWT) continue to protect our families and keep us all strong both in health and iman. Ameen.

Kind regards,



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Executive Principal



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STATEMENT ON SCHOOL CLOSURES IN VICTORIA

Dr Brett Sutton MBBS MPHTM FAFPHM FRSPH FACTM MFTM

Victorian Chief Health Officer

Victorian Chief Human Biosecurity Officer

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) met recently to consider the issue of school closures in relation to the community transmission of COVID-19.

The Committee's advice is that pre-emptive school closures are not likely to be proportionate or effective as a public health intervention to prevent community transmission of COVID-19 at this time.

As Victoria's Chief Health Officer and as a member of the AHPPC, I fully endorse this advice in relation to schools in Victoria.

There is currently limited information on the contribution of children to transmission of COVID-19. The WHO-China Joint Mission noted the primary role of household transmission and observed that children tended to be infected from adults.

Previous work suggests that the potential reduction in community transmission from pre-emptive school closures may be offset by the care arrangements that are in place for children who are not at school.

There is a particular risk associated with the fact that children may require care from vulnerable grandparents or may continue to associate (and transmit infection) outside of school settings.

Broadly, the health advice on school closures from previous respiratory epidemics shows the health costs are often underestimated and the benefits are overestimated.

This may be even more so in relation to COVID-19 as unlike influenza, the impact on otherwise healthy children has been minimal to date.

For pre-emptive school closures to be effective, prolonged closure is required and it would be unclear when they could be re-opened. If there were still a large pool of susceptible students when schools are re-opened, there would be likely to be re-emergence of transmission in the community.

School closures may still be considered late in the outbreak in anticipation of a peak in infection rates, for a shorter period of time. Short term reactive school closures may also be warranted to allow cleaning and contact tracing to occur.

Should evidence change in relation to school closures then my advice to the sector, in collaboration with AHPPC, would of course change also.