

Principal's Update: 18th May 2022

Dear families,

by now many of you would've either read the message on seesaw or seen the news which informed you that we have been selected as a school for a vaccination hub. The concern being expressed at the moment is that we have a relatively low Covid vaccination rate amongst our primary school age children, as well as an Influenza virus that according to health experts, has the potential to be the largest that we have seen for many years.

To give some idea of the impact even at this stage on our school, I have included a graph below of student absences so far this term. Pre-Covid, we had approximately 35 absences a day due to illness. Now we are seeing many times that amount regularly. (see below)

Obviously not all of these absences are due to Covid, but we are getting a large number of positive cases in younger classrooms, and those of you that have received messages about positive cases in your child's classroom would be well aware of this. Hence, it is very appropriate that the school engages in the government strategy of being a Hub for Vaccinations.

Since that newsletter went out, I have had quite a number of very positive comments about the convenience of having a Vaccination Hub at our school. It is a voluntary program, and anybody who doesn't want to be involved, certainly does not have to be.

This year alone, we have seen over 110 students who have tested positive to Covid, which is not all of the Covid cases as we know that we have not been advised of all positive cases in the school. I just want to say, that it is essential that we know if your child has tested positive to Covid, as that allows us to put into place strategies to minimise the spread. Once again, illnesses in children have ranged from mild to severe.

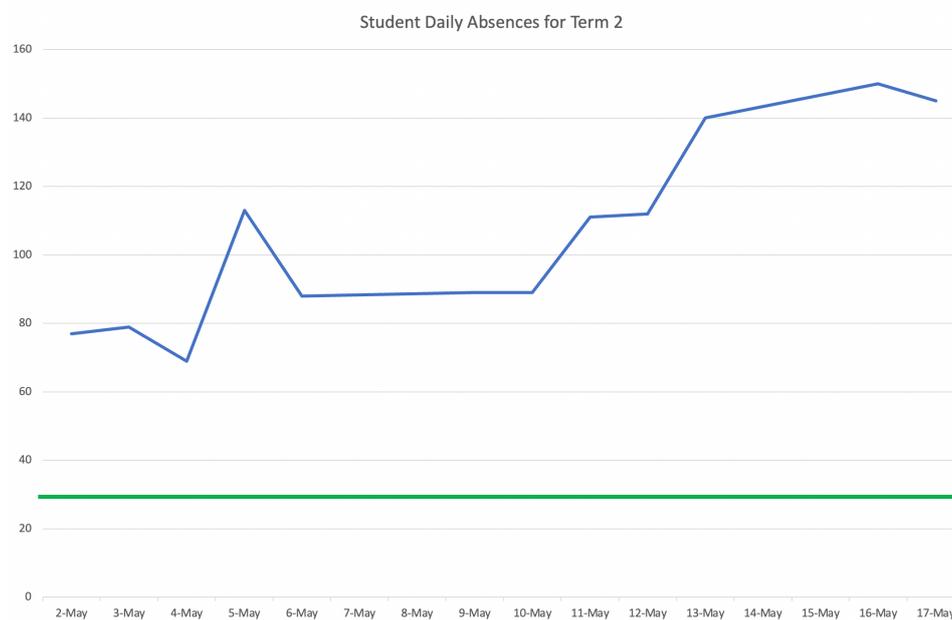
In addition, we have had up to 10 individual classroom teachers absent each day this term, and quite a number of those teacher absences have been directly because of Covid. Having just experienced Covid myself, I certainly understand how it impacts people in different ways. Some people do get relatively mild symptoms, but others find that it is quite severe. I am aware of a person who currently has Covid and Influenza at the same time, which is something best avoided if at all possible. That person has been extremely unwell for an extended period of time and we wish them well during their recovery period.

In my case, as a family, we caught Covid one after another, which put us in isolation for a total of 3 weeks. For children and families, this time at home is certainly a challenge.

It is essential that any child who is even mildly unwell, does not come to school and remains at home until they are completely symptom-free. This is the only way that we will minimise as much as possible the spread of illness between students, teachers and families.

As a school, we will continue to send home any child who shows symptoms of being unwell, no matter how slight. Just like adults, children do not know that they are infectious during the period prior to symptoms being evident.

Below is a graph of student absences for term 2 so far. The green line is our 'normal' daily absence rate prior to covid of just 6%. The difference is abundantly clear.



Face Masks

As I mentioned in my welcome post this term, for the first four weeks of this term, Face masks are required for all adults at school when indoors. They are still being strongly recommended for students in years 3 to 6. Please note that parents are permitted on school grounds, but we do request that you continue to socially distance where possible. We are continuing to minimise general access to school buildings, in an effort to keep the infection rate between staff as low as possible.

Vaccination Hub Update

Please note that we have been able to move the location for the vaccinations to the **gymnasium**.

A reminder that: The vaccination hub at our school will be open:

First dose: Friday 27 May & Saturday 28 May

Second dose: Friday 29 July & Saturday 30 July

The clinic will be open from 12.00pm to 5.00pm on Friday for students and their families and 10.00am to 4.00pm Saturday for the general community.

On the Friday, families can make their way to the Gymnasium via the pathway to the Front Office. Under current Covid directions, Face Masks will need to be worn inside the gymnasium only.

If coming on the Saturday, access will most likely be via the staff car park as it should be empty of cars. We are waiting on further directions from SA Health at this stage. Signage directing people to the gymnasium will be in place.

Governing Council AGM

Next week on Wednesday 25 May at 6:30 pm, we have our rescheduled Annual General Meeting for our Governing Council. This will be held in the school hall, and everyone is welcome. Being indoors, masks will be required and we will set chairs to be 1.5 m apart.

The meeting will go for approximately 30 minutes, during which time the Annual Report is tabled, and there is a short sharing of information by the Principal (Steve Freeman) and the Governing Council Chairperson (Karen Gunton).

There will be an opportunity to ask questions at this time.

OSHC

Recently there have been some changes at Woodend OSHC. We welcome Lauren Edwards and Emilie Rogers who are sharing the role of Director. We also have a number of new staff who have been employed and have already begun their shifts.

I would like to acknowledge the work that Jackie Read (previous Director) has done in a variety of roles in our OSHC over many years. During that time she ensured that it continued to be a viable service to parents, worked with a range of other Directors, and eventually took over the role of Director herself. Jackie has chosen to reduce her time and explore the experience of another service as she heads towards retirement. We wish Jackie well.

Building Program

Due to a number of unexpected delays, the tender process for our building program was extended and now concludes on 24 – 5–22. Once a tender has been accepted by The Department, then we are likely to see some action in our school. While this journey has taken quite some time, it has been important to get the design to a point that will provide the best learning facilities for our students. We are quite excited to be moving closer to seeing builders on site.

Once again, I thank you all for the ongoing support that you give to our teaching staff, school service officers and leadership during this time. Everyone is doing their best, and working together as a collaborative school community, we will continue to provide a safe and engaging school environment.

Kind regards,

Steve Freeman
Principal