

Kia ora Parents and Caregiver,

I hope all is well, with your bubble adjusting to the new routine of lockdown. I know it can be extremely stressful and challenging for some families, and as a school we want to ensure our students and their whānau are able to thrive as best as possible.

We understand that for some families, this means computer time has to be shared and spaces aren't always ideal for learning. With parents often also needing to work, it's easy for the stress levels to rise.

With the Delta variant causing considerable concern at present, we are anticipating an extension of lockdown from next Tuesday, 24 August. While we hope this won't be the case, it's important to be prepared.

I want to outline our approach to online learning - predominantly for the parents of our Year 9 students - as we know this varies from school to school.

We have opted to use Google Classroom as our primary learning platform. As a school, we have been using it for many years, so it is a comfortable and familiar tool for our students and teaching staff. Students are also able to access it offline, reducing pressure in families with limited access to the internet.

Following the various lockdowns in 2020 we surveyed our parents, students and staff. Our students have told us they prefer the flexibility to be able to spend more time on subjects they find most difficult, or to continue to complete a task. As a result, adhering to a fixed timetable is not a requirement. Instead, the school is providing resources and advice to help students plan their time and prioritise their learning.

We also have a strong focus on mental and physical wellbeing. Allowing flexibility in when students do their work, means they can go for walks with their family, or spend time connecting with friends over Zoom or social media. Many of our staff are also parents responsible for their own children during the day and are grateful for this flexibility.

Teachers are expected to post work, regularly provide feedback, and respond to questions in a timely manner. Their focus will be to provide excellent opportunities and activities for students to remain connected and engaged in their learning. The key is to focus on essential learning, without over-complicating things. However, they will schedule at least one Google Meet per week per class so students can connect face-to-face. We strongly encourage you to make sure your daughter has her video camera on for these sessions.

Please encourage your daughter to contact her teacher if she needs help, feels overwhelmed with the workload, needs clarification or has questions she would normally ask in class. Some students are reluctant to ask questions, but it is especially important for us to know if a student isn't understanding the work being given.

If a teacher has concerns that a student is not engaging online, you may receive an email, both to inform you of the concern and ask if there are any barriers to online learning we can assist with. Your support is appreciated. If you have concerns about your daughter's online learning, motivation or access to resources including a computer or the internet, please contact your daughter's House Deans in the first instance. You can find their emails here:

<https://www.westlakegirls.school.nz/houses/>

We've had students ask if they are able to come into school to collect items from their lockers. Unfortunately at Level 4 we are unable to accommodate this.

I have sent a letter to all of our students today with some information about planning and making the most of the time they have available.

Take care and have a restful at-home weekend. Our school newsletter will be sent tomorrow with any additional information that comes to light.

Kindest regards

Jane Stanley
Principal