



Special Newsletter

18 March 2019

Tū mai Te Ahūmairangi, tū mai hoki tātou
As Te Ahūmairangi stands, we also reach for great heights

T: 475 7596

M: 027 526 0155

F: 475 7566

E: office@northland.school.nz

W: www.northland.school.nz

Today at Northland School we have been responding to Friday's tragedy in Christchurch. We are aware that this has directly impacted a number of families (both students and staff) and our thoughts are with them at this time as they come to terms with the enormity of the situation.

Our teaching staff met at 8.00am today and we had a follow up meeting with our support staff after 9.00. We shared our support for one another and discussed how we would support our young people.

The school will be flying the New Zealand flag at half mast. We will explain to our students why.

In Christchurch the schools in the city centre were in lockdown for four hours and this was not uplifted until 6.00pm. The school does have lockdown procedures and has had to use these twice in the last 10 years in response to incidents in the local area. These were all precautionary in nature and lasted about an hour. As always we would follow police advice in such situations. We will use our emergency text messaging system with follow up information on our school website if this situation arises.

We have been following guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education over the weekend. These include:

- providing reassurance and keeping to routines
- staying calm and promoting a calm environment
- doing enjoyable things together
- taking time to listen and talk.

The Ministry advises that parents and school staff should be guided by the children's questions - be factual and age appropriate with your response. Children and young people do not always talk about their feelings readily – ask them if they are feeling worried.

Keep your explanations developmentally appropriate:

- Very young children need brief, simple information that should be balanced with reassurances that their early learning centre, school and homes are safe and that adults are there to protect them.
- Older primary school aged children will be more vocal in asking questions about whether they truly are safe and what is being done at their school. They may need assistance separating reality from fantasy. Discuss efforts of school, emergency services and community leaders to provide safe schools.
- Secondary school students will have strong and varying opinions about the causes of violence in schools and society. They will share concrete suggestions about how to make school and communities safer and how to prevent violence and tragedies in society.

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Emphasise the role that students have in maintaining safe schools by following school safety guidelines, for example:

- signing out when they leave school, not providing building access to strangers, reporting strangers on campus, reporting threats to the school safety made by students or community members, etc
- communicating any personal safety concerns to teachers
- accessing support for emotional needs through teachers and the pastoral care system.
- Observe children's emotional state
- Changes in behaviour, appetite, and sleep patterns can also indicate a child's level of anxiety or discomfort.

In most children, these symptoms will ease with reassurance and time. However, some children may be at risk for more intense reactions, particularly those who have experienced difficulties and change. Parents and teachers, seek support through your school pastoral care system or your GP.

Further information

[Resources to help with mental distress after Christchurch incident — Ministry of Health website](#)

[How to talk to your kids about: Trauma - The Parenting Place website](#)

[Helping children deal with trauma – Ministry of Health website](#)

[Talking to children about terrorism and trauma — Children's Commissioner NZ Facebook page](#)

[Phone Counselling Service for those affected by Christchurch Incident — Ministry of Health website](#)

Links to these resources are on the home page of our school website www.northland.school.nz

Jeremy Edwards – Principal

Internet Issues – Information from Netsafe

Netsafe is New Zealand's independent, non-profit online safety organisation and has issued the following information.

Netsafe has received a number of reports of online content relating to the attacks in Christchurch. Footage of the attacks has been deemed objectionable under New Zealand law which means that possession or distribution of the content is an offence.

While the content is online there is some risk that children or young people may come across it. We encourage all parents to proactively discuss with their children what they should do if they come across distressing content online. Further information is available at netsafe.org.nz/upsetting-content/

The footage of the Christchurch attacks is disturbing and will be harmful for people to see. If you or someone you know has viewed the video and are struggling with what you have seen please contact 'Need to talk' – free call or text 1737.

If you find other offensive content relating to the attacks which you believe may breach New Zealand law you can also report this to Netsafe.