

**Dear Families,**

## **Health Notice:**

Welcome back to you all to the Autumn term. I hope that you and your families were able to enjoy your time together over the last couple of weeks.

Winter is on its way and with it will come the rain, wind and cold!

You will see that I have included a notice from the Auckland Regional Public Health Service with this Newsletter.

It is about investigations into an influenza-like illness amongst a group of 25 people from Rangitoto College, on Auckland's North Shore, following the group's return on Saturday from a school trip to Mexico. Concerns are heightened because of the outbreak of swine influenza in Mexico and some areas in the United States.

You will be aware from news reports that US and international health authorities are still investigating the nature of the virus. In the meantime both the Auckland Regional Public Health Service and the Ministry of Education are strongly recommending families follow the precautions outlined in the attached document.

Please take care of your health through these coming winter months and please also remember that if your child is not well that it is very important to keep them at home until they are better so that any flu viruses do not spread to others.

If you do have to keep your child at home could you please phone the school your child goes to each day? It is important to let the taxi driver know this as well.

Often, if we have no notice of absence, our Attendance Officer will phone home to make sure that all is well and that your child is accounted for. Please treat these calls as being made with the best of intentions: that is, the health, safety and well being of your child is our first priority.

Thank you all for your assistance in this.

## Sports Day 2009:

This year's Annual KDEC Sports Day was another great success!

It was a perfect day, not too hot and not too cold, a little bit of sun and no wind! All the students were fully involved in all the activities and that was the point of the day.

The energy and enthusiasm of everyone involved in the planning and organisation hugely contributed to making this day such a success.

Bringing students to this day from as far away as Taupo and Kaitaia, is essential in making this day special for those young people.

Many of the RTD staff and students from KDEC's more distant regions came up the day before, and took the opportunity to give their students an "Auckland" experience. The Residential staff and Marae staff provided a safe, warm and hugely welcoming experience (and lunch the next day!) for over 40 RTD staff and students! What a fantastic effort.

If you made it to the day, you will know what I am talking about, if you couldn't be there, that's OK: there is always next year!

### Board of Trustees Notice:

The next Board of Trustees meeting is on Wednesday May 13. The main items of discussion will be the first 2009 Quarterly Report and the 2008 Curriculum Report.

The meeting begins at 6:00 pm in Conference Room One at Archibald Road, Kelston.

All the best to you all this term!

Warm regards,

Tom Purvis

**Head of School**

## **Mexican Swine Influenza - Health Alert from the Auckland Regional Public Health Service**

### **INFLUENZA-LIKE ILLNESS IN RETURNING TRAVELLERS**

Auckland Regional Public Health Service (ARPHS) is investigating an influenza-like illness amongst a group of 25 people from Rangitoto College, on Auckland's North Shore, following the group's return yesterday from a school trip to Mexico.

There are currently concerns regarding outbreaks of swine influenza affecting humans in Mexico and in the United States of America (in the states of California, Texas and Kansas at this time).

The group of 22 senior students and 3 teachers arrived into New Zealand from Mexico via Los Angeles on Flight NZ1 on 25 April 2009, having spent three weeks in Mexico. Some of the group have symptoms of influenza-like illness.

Therefore, as a precaution in view of the international situation, preliminary tests are under way to determine the cause of the illness and to exclude or confirm swine influenza (a type of influenza A, H1N1) or another type of virus. The group of students and teachers are remaining in home isolation until preliminary test results are known. Advice has been given to the families regarding infection control precautions. ARPHS is supporting the families, and is providing advice to the Principal of Rangitoto College and keeping the Ministry of Education informed.

Clinical Director of ARPHS Dr Julia Peters says "We are taking this very seriously and doing everything necessary to manage this situation in Auckland. The Ministry of Health is managing the response to this issue at a national level."

"The best things you can do to stop the spread of any type of influenza virus is to:

- stay at home and away from others if you are sick
- cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue
- put used tissues into a rubbish bin
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth – germs spread that way
- be careful to wash hands often with soap and dry them thoroughly – hand hygiene is critical: even when you start to feel better there is still a risk of infecting others, so keep to the 20/20 rule – 20 seconds washing and 20 seconds drying
- keep surfaces clean at home, school and work.

### **Travellers returning from Mexico or the affected parts of the United States who have symptoms of influenza are advised, before returning to work or school:**

to contact their GP or an after hours medical centre by phone, for advice about what to do and how to get checked out.

Anybody experiencing warning signs of severe influenza illness such as rapid breathing, difficulty breathing, chest pain, severe vomiting or if a child is not responding or is difficult to wake up, should get urgent medical attention.

## **Questions and Answers**

### **How was ARPHS notified about the group of returning travellers from Rangitoto College?**

ARPHS was notified at approximately midday on Saturday 25 April by calls from a general practitioner from the North Shore and an infectious diseases physician at North Shore Hospital who the GP had called for advice.

## **What did ARPHS do?**

ARPHS took immediate action to investigate the situation and to follow-up on the group of travellers. ARPHS communicated immediately with the Ministry of Health in Wellington and has continued to work closely with the Ministry of Health.

## **What has ARPHS done to prevent the influenza-like illness from spreading to others?**

Tests are under way to determine the cause of the illness in the group from Rangitoto College and to exclude or confirm swine influenza (a type of influenza A, H1N1) or another type of virus. The group of students and teachers are remaining in home isolation until preliminary test results are known. Advice has been given to their families regarding infection control precautions. ARPHS is supporting the families and checking in with them regularly by phone.

## **How serious is this and what are the chances of swine influenza reaching New Zealand?**

The World Health Organization (WHO) has determined that the current situation constitutes a health emergency of international concern under the International Health Regulations (2005). Therefore New Zealand has to take this situation extremely seriously. See following links for further information and Q & A:

[http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2009/h1n1\\_20090425/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2009/h1n1_20090425/en/index.html)

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>

See also the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website for further information and Q & A:

[http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/?s\\_cid=swineFlu\\_outbreak\\_001](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/?s_cid=swineFlu_outbreak_001)

For hand hygiene facts and more facts about influenza people can go to ARPHS' website:

<http://www.arphs.govt.nz/notifiable/downloads/HandHygiene.pdf>

<http://www.arphs.govt.nz/notifiable/downloads/Influenza.pdf>