

## Special Newsletter to Parents

18 March 2019

Kia ora koutou

I am writing to you to offer support after the horrific events in Christchurch on Friday afternoon.

I know that some of our students will have family members and friends in Christchurch; I also know that many of our ex-students are currently studying at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch College of Education, or working in Christchurch.

At the bottom of my newsletter, I have listed links to two key sites that you and your family may find helpful. I have also added a very useful one-page document from the Ministry of Education – “Tips for parents and educators: Supporting children and young people” – this one-page document was sent to Christchurch schools on Sunday.

At 11.00 am this morning I spoke to our whole school through our intercom system requesting a school-wide minute of silence as a mark of respect for those killed, injured or affected in any way by the events in Christchurch. The entire school was silent.

Please note that we have two full-time counsellors at Whanganui High School – Jacqui McKenzie and Terry Tubman. They will be available for any additional support required.

Nga manaakitanga

***Martin McAllen***  
**PRINCIPAL**

**Helping children deal with trauma – Ministry of Health website:** <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/emergency-management/managing-stress-emergency/helping-children>

**Oranga Tamariki’s website:** <https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/caring-for-someone/support-and-training/talking-about-traumatic-events/>

# Ministry of Education

## Tips for parents and educators: Supporting children and young people

16 March 2019

Lockdowns are an important part of school safety and crisis preparedness. We want to thank schools and early learning services for keeping all children and young people safe on Friday.

Now we need to help them recover well. An incident like this can confuse and frighten anyone who may feel unsafe or worried that their friends or loved-ones are at risk. They will look to others for information, guidance and support.

Parents and teachers can help children and young people feel safe by:

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

Be guided by their 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 ELS, 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. Have a way of recording the ideas and how you might build on the ideas expressed.

Emphasize 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.