

19 May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: Information regarding Outside School Hours Care

Given the recent announcement that Hutchins will be re-opening on Monday 25 May, I thought now would be a good time to address some of the questions that you will most likely have regarding how everything will work in a (semi)post-COVID-19 world, what steps we are taking to ensure the health and safety of our community and our children, and what our services will look like on 'the other side'. It has been a rather odd couple of months; we've had on-site 'home learning' happening here at the School since March, and many of the staff from our Kinder, Pre-Kinder and OSHC have been re-tasked with assisting the children with their learning. It's been an interesting time, to say the least – at times stressful, others encouraging, and it's been genuinely amazing to see everybody come together to support one another and work to get through what has been, and continues to be, a unique challenge.

Nonetheless, we are indeed ready and more than willing to reopen on Monday and we ask that you read the information below, set out as frequently asked questions, so you are aware what this means for you.

Are schools safe?

We absolutely must stress that the authoritative advice from the Department of Health is that schools are safe for both employees and students. The information provided below, and any further information received from the School, is in keeping with best practice. Physical distancing is not required in schools, provided that children are well. For extra protection at this time, however, we will be enforcing physical distancing wherever possible and practical. Distancing between employees is still required and will be observed.

Are all the services reopening?

All our Child Care services (Before School Care, After School Care and Vacation Care) are reopening. These services will be running 'as per usual' – at least as much as possible. There will be changes to the way that we manage some elements of our services (e.g. pickup and drop-off will be affected) but our opening and closing times will be returning to normal.

Vacation Care will operate in June. I will have the program for that coming out soon, albeit with some changes due to the restrictions on gatherings, excursions and people in contained spaces that are still in place nation-wide. Opening hours will remain the same.

THE HUTCHINS SCHOOL

71 Nelson Road, Sandy Bay Tasmania 7005 Australia PO Box 254, Sandy Bay Tasmania 7006 Australia
T +61 3 6221 4200 info@hutchins.tas.edu.au www.hutchins.tas.edu.au

The Hutchins School Board as established by The Christ College Act 1926 ABN 91 133 279 291 CRICOS 00478F

Do I need to rebook?

At this point, my intent is to continue all the bookings that were currently in place, and to pick up where we left off. If you would like to cancel, vary or otherwise adjust your booking, please contact me and I will make those adjustments for you. Vacation care will continue to be booked as per usual, with a form.

Is Child Care free at the moment?

The Government's subsidisation of Child Care continues through until 28 June 2020. Until this time, all your fees for Before and After School Care, Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten are entirely covered by the Australian Government. Hutchins will continue to offer free care beyond this date, until the end of Term 2. You will pay no fees whatsoever until 6 July 2020.

Is pick-up and drop-off the same?

The School will be releasing more information on this soon, and particularly in respect to collection of children from their classes at the end of the day. At the moment we anticipate that we will be limiting access to school buildings. This will mean several changes in the way that your children arrive and depart each morning, and we will have staff managing these processes each day. If you have children in Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten, you will receive communication from Ms Naomi Pritchard-Tiller regarding those processes soon.

OSHC and Vacation Care will make use of the new glass doors at the entrance to the building. The main door (with the green button) will be open at all times. A staff member will meet you at this reception point and receive your children (in the mornings) or have other staff bring them to you (in the afternoons). This staff member will also be managing the sign in/sign out process, to eliminate the iPads as a contact point.

How will the School be managing the health of the children in care during this time?

The School is currently working on two documents: an internal document that will inform all staff on the procedures that will be required in this current phase of our national COVID-19 response, and a communication to families. Those of you who have children enrolled at Hutchins will receive information about this via EdSmart – but for the sake of our Vacation Care families (and please note that this is a brief summary, and by no means the sum total of the steps taken):

- We have a significantly increased cleaning regimen being undertaken daily, focusing primarily on contact points and potential risk areas.
- Sanitising stations are being placed at each entrance into the School.
- Games, toys, tables and other heavy to moderate use items are being sanitised (at a minimum) daily.
- Bathrooms throughout the School now have additional cleaning added to their normal schedules.
- All children are now required to wash their hands for 20 seconds upon arrival to school, and both prior to and after recess, lunch and any meaningful transitions.
- Social distancing is being applied wherever possible, with the understanding that this may not always be practical in certain school contexts.
- Certain events in the school day will be staggered to allow for a reduction of children in any one area at any given time.

We are also mindful at this time of the impact that COVID-19 has had on the mental health of our community. If you or your children require additional support, we have School Counsellors who may make themselves available to you.

The School will be making more information available in respect to our commitment to children's health and safety in the coming days.

What does this mean for children with other illness (e.g. colds and flu)?

We understand that this may be difficult and at this point, the School will be contacting parents and carers upon any signs or symptoms that could potentially correlate to COVID-19, and you will be asked to collect your child immediately.

Should you, or any member of your household be required to test for COVID-19, you are asked to inform the School immediately, and members of your household will not be permitted to visit the School site until a negative result has been confirmed. These same requirements apply to staff at the School: no staff will be permitted to work on-site while unwell.

What will happen if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 at school?

We are receiving advice from the Department of Health on a regular basis. They will be our first point of contact in the event of a case at the School. WorkSafe Tasmania will also be informed. Cleaning, closure and isolation measures will be advised by the Department of Health and the recommendations from SafeWork Australia.

As I have mentioned previously, there will be more information made available to you in the coming days regarding the action we are taking to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. We appreciate you working with us on these things – we understand that it is a disruption to the daily life that we had all very much love to get back to, but the health and safety of the children in our care is paramount.

Thank you all, and we look forward to having you all back with us soon.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Benjamin Searle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr Benjamin Searle
Director of Child Care