



A guide to learning in a Covid-19 world:

# Supporting primary-aged students into 2021

We know that Covid-19 has had a huge impact on you, your school and other schools across NZ. In 2020, you had to deal with new challenges and develop innovative ways to support your students.

Last year was tough and you had to go above and beyond to meet the needs of your students and whānau. With this being said, the impacts of Covid-19 are likely to still be felt this year – and ERO would like to help you to support your students during this difficult time.

To do this, we talked to a wide range of schools in 2020 to find out about the challenges they had to overcome in responding to Covid-19 and the lessons learnt in supporting school staff, students and whānau. From talking to everyone, we have produced an in-depth report on the impact of Covid-19 on schools. This short guide for school leaders and teachers in schools with primary-aged students draws from the full report to help you:

- understand the impact of Covid-19 on students and teachers in schools with primary-aged students
- share strategies adopted by schools to respond to Covid-19
- identify practical actions for you and your schools to consider for continuing to support students, parents, whānau, and staff in a Covid-19 world.

We hope you find this short guide useful to reflect how far you have come in responding to Covid-19 and to provide you with some ideas about what you could do next to support your school in 2021.

## What we found from talking to schools in 2020 about the impact of Covid-19

This section of this guide covers some of the key findings from our *Learning in a Covid-19 World: The Impact of Covid-19 on Schools* report which you may find interesting.

Despite schools being busy last year responding to Covid-19, we are grateful for the time given to us by students, whānau, teachers, principals and school boards. Their experiences and insights are at the heart of what we have learnt. You can find the full report on the impact of Covid-19 on schools, along with a short summary of the findings, on ERO's website.

### What we learnt about primary-aged students

Some of your students may still be feeling anxious about Covid-19, but most will be feeling positive about the year ahead.

- Sixty percent of year 4-8 students were feeling positive leading up to the 2020 summer break, but 10 percent were not.
- Sixty-two percent of primary-aged students said they were feeling safe from Covid-19 following the lockdowns last year.

Covid-19 and the disruption caused by the lockdowns may have had an impact on your students' attendance, even those students who were attending regularly before Covid-19.

- Around half of schools were concerned about student attendance when we spoke to them in 2020, and concerns were highest among the decile one to three schools we talked to.
- Most of the schools we talked to told us that student and whānau anxiety about Covid-19 was the main reason why students were not coming back to school following a lockdown.

There is likely to have been a negative impact on some of your students' progress and most principals were worried about the impact on learning.

- In Term 3, 66 percent of year 4-8 students told us they been able to keep up with their learning post-lockdown, whereas 4 percent told us they were struggling to keep up.
- Fifty-nine percent of schools reported having concerns about student progress and achievement.
- Māori and Pacific students are more likely to be in schools that faced more challenges responding to Covid-19 and many schools have provided tailored support.

### What we learnt about the strategies schools put in place

Schools told us that they used some of the strategies listed below.

- Using digital technology for distance learning – two thirds of schools intend to retain some elements of distance learning and increase the use of digital technology in their curriculum.
- Flexible and personalised teaching and learning post lockdown.
- Connecting learning to students' home context – a quarter of leaders have found greater whānau involvement and integration of home and school learning a key success.
- Recognising learning in lockdown and extending it post lockdown.

See Part 1 and 2 in the *Learning in a Covid-19 World: The Impact of Covid-19 on Schools* report for more information about the impact on student wellbeing, engagement and learning.

### What we learnt about teachers and principals

You and your colleagues have been resilient, but it has been harder for some teachers and principals.

- Over three-quarters of teachers felt supported by their teaching team during and after lockdown.
- We frequently heard that principals took on a lot of responsibility – not only for student learning and wellbeing, but for staff and wider community wellbeing.

See Part 3 in the *Learning in a Covid-19 World: The Impact of Covid-19 on Schools* report for more information about the impact on teacher and principal wellbeing.

### What do we suggest you can do to continue to support your school this year?

As tamariki return to school in 2021, here are some actions you could take to continue to support students, teachers, parents and whānau.

1. *Reflect on 2020* – identifying what worked well for your school, what challenges emerged and how to address these.
2. *Promote student wellbeing* – ensuring your school has an effective pastoral system and supports in place to address student wellbeing needs.
3. *Support student engagement, particularly through relationships with whānau* – actively engaging whānau as partners in their child's learning and developing strategies to engage students with school life.
4. *Use differentiated teaching strategies* – ensuring that learning is scaffolded from where your students are at and that learning remains a collaborative process.
5. *Monitor your own wellbeing as a leader and that of staff* – regularly reviewing how staff wellbeing is supported through your school's systems and drawing on support networks to support your own wellbeing.

See Part 4 in the *Learning in a Covid-19 World: The Impact of Covid-19 on Schools* report for more information about the key lessons for supporting schools going forward.

### Where else can you go for help?

- [Ministry of Education COVID-19 Information and Advice](#)
- [New Zealand Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy](#)
- [Healthy Active Learning](#)
- [Wellbeing@School](#)
- [Wellbeing for Success](#)
- [SPARKLERS resource hub](#)