

### **Brief Overview**

From Monday 5th of March to Friday the 9th of March, 120 Brooklyn School year 7 and 8 students and 14 adults (including 4 teachers) went on their biannual camp to Teapot Valley in Brightwater, Nelson.

On Tuesday a number of children (4 children) started to feel sick resulting in vomiting and diarrhoea. Overnight on Thursday it became evident that a more serious (yet to be officially identified ) virus was spreading through the camp resulting in a large number of children (approx 40) and 2 adults being affected.

After consultation with available health services, relevant people at Brooklyn School and most importantly discussions involving the staff and parents on the ground, it was decided that the group would need to be split up with 75 healthy students leaving on a later ferry on Friday night and the children displaying symptoms of the virus staying behind for what ended up being only one more night.

This involved on the spot, decisive decisions that impacted on a range of people obviously including students and parents. Efforts were made to communicate with families and the right information being put out to the relevant people.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this review is to get feedback from the staff, parents and children involved with the intention of coming up with recommendations that will be used and considered when organising future camps in case this or a similar, unforeseen situations arise.

### **Methodology**

All camp parents and teachers were asked to answer questions relating to camp either by filling in a google doc or talking to me personally either face to face or by phone. Of the 10 parents who went on camp, 7 chose to fill out the google doc, 1 responded over the phone and 2 others did not respond. All teachers filled out the google form but we also had numerous face to face discussions.

I put the same questions to 6 students and noted down their responses which was very valuable. Parents were also invited to offer feedback by the BOT through the Board update and also at the 'Thank You Evening'. As of writing I did not receive any formal feedback due to these requests but I did have a few informal discussions with various parents whose responses were taken into consideration when forming the recommendations.

Also after a discussion with representatives of both the Wellington and Nelson Health Board I obtained information that helped form some of the recommendations outlined in the summary.

### **Executive Summary**

Before confirming any future camps at Teapot Valley or in any other locations that could make it difficult to evacuate children if a similar situation arises, it is recommended that the Board Of Trustees are consulted and are given the relevant assurances that all health and safety measures have been put in place and formalised. This will bring clarification to what processes will be carried out during an emergency in order to reassure the parent community that their children will be safe and looked after to the best of our ability, taking into consideration that some parents may be concerned about their children being in the South Island. This should include the relevant health and safety policies, RAM"S etc from the camp, bus company and ferry service.

Also the BOT should be confident that a plan has been put in place regarding how best to communicate with parents, health authorities and the school if an emergency does arise.

It is recommended that we also create a policy that any children that have displayed symptoms of a contagious illness should not be able to attend camp unless checked by their GP.

Then if the BOT are confident that all recommended provisions are put in place then they should be in the position to fully support the decision to continue to have our Year 7 and 8 camp in the South Island and communicate this to concerned parents.

## **Findings**

Positive points in regards to the handling of the situation.

Without exception all respondents commented positively on the role of the adults on camp in regards to the handling of the viral outbreak. The school community should be proud of the competence and capabilities of the Moa teachers and camp parents in regards to the way they conducted themselves while making difficult decisions in an unusually stressful situation. Considering some of them were suffering the effects of the virus and having to make decisions on the fly that affected a large group of people without any real practical assistance from health professionals who they sought for advice. Special mention has to be given to Jo Wheeler whose leadership was commended by multiple respondents to the review.

*The teachers were amazing, particularly Jo and Kathryn H. They were endlessly positive, and remained focussed in extremely challenging circumstances on the welfare of the children, communicating with parents and getting the kids home.*

*I felt there was really strong leadership from the teachers who kept up spirits very well and let the kids know what was happening. I also felt they were dealing well operationally with things like the Public Health, ferries and keeping parents at home informed, while still keeping the camp running. I was genuinely impressed. At the risk of naming names, Jo was just a tower of strength and Kathryn Harris and Tom coped amazingly well despite being sick.*

*Your Moa teaching team are awesome, a truly wonderful team that have fun, support each other and just really know when to tag in/out to be at their best for the kids 100%+ of the time.*

*All hands on board, all parents and teachers got involved and went well beyond being told what to do and worked as a team to get kids feeling safe, happy and well, and entertaining others to stop them worrying and missing friends/family/home.*

*Non-sick kids were entertained and distracted in a good way even though activities etc changed or were cancelled, the teachers and parents were awesome at just getting on with it.*

*As parents, I felt we did our best and also tried to make sure the well kids still had a good time and the sick ones were cared for. It seemed like the school had picked a group of parents pretty well-equipped to help out.*

*The fact that the parents took the initiative to make a roster through the night to share the load of looking after the sick kids and give the teachers a bit of a rest was great. Everyone was very supportive of all of the decisions that were made regarding how we separate the kids from the healthy children and how we went about getting them home.*

*The parents were great as well, giving tirelessly of their time. For example, Nikki Lichtner and Dan Ormond were wonderful; they were in the area at the time and pitched in as well. Mark Vivian was so generous and tireless in driving to Nelson and back multiple times to buy supplies, Colin helpfully put together a night roster, everyone just pulled together and were just so giving.*

Praise was also given to the role the camp played in dealing with the outbreak even though it did impact on them as they had to cancel a large group scheduled for the weekend.

*Camp and Camp team were awesome and went above and beyond.... Just such loving gorgeous people who helped the parents, teachers and children cope and enjoy the times they could*

*The camp staff were also fantastic, giving us everything we needed, letting us stay on for longer than anticipated, preparing extra food for us etc.*

The school community also should be pleased with the way the students conducted themselves on camp in general but especially in regards to how they dealt with the the effects of the gastro bug and cared for each other.

*The biggest positive by far was the kids stuck together and supported each other through an incredibly tough time. Kids who aren't usually 'best friends' helped each other out and looked after each other.*

*I was impressed with the way the children handled the situation as they showed resilience and bravery considering the situation. They showed patience but were able to express themselves and on the whole remain calm.*

*The kids that stayed behind at camp were amazing. They were really upset at the beginning and then they really rallied around each other to look after each other.*

*The parents and teachers did a really good job by giving up their time to deal with us sick kids as it was 'not the most entertaining thing for them'. While sick it was good to talk to other sick kids and we got ice blocks and lemonade!*

*I was cared for really well, especially by those kids who were sick before me, they would clean up after me and ask me if I was ok. We were also put in an area away from the healthy kids. The parents and teachers looked after the sick kids and isolated them in the hall. Also when some kids in my cabin got sick then we looked after them.*

As the extent of the seriousness of the viral outbreak started to unfold the teachers and parents did their utmost to try and contain the virus to the best of their ability considering the limited resources and space they had available.

*Every decision made leading up to the outbreak was the right one, looking back at what happened. When kids were first feeling unwell they were isolated in their own cabin. Hand sanitizer and hygiene was a focus.*

*Toilets etc were scrubbed, sanitizer put in place promptly, sick kids seperated in a safe and comfortable way.*

*Children were immediately quarantined. Hygiene was great. I think the sick kids were able to be outside while in a potentially isolating situation.*

*As soon as kids felt unwell, they were isolated into their own cabins and away from the main group to minimize risk of spread. Immediate steps were taken for widespread use of hand sanitizers*

*Hand sanitizers, gloves and other supplies (red buckets!) were purchased as soon as it became apparent that they would be needed. The healthy kids were kept as safe as possible and practicable, and activities continued as normal as possible for them  
Steps taken to ensure that kids requiring medication were tended to, despite the demands of other kids*

**The final question asked was how they would feel about future school camps being in the South Island in the future.**

A majority of the respondents acknowledged that the logistics of distance did make things more complicated but most agreed that the positives of the camp outweighed the potential negatives. Obviously certain safeguards should be put in place prior to future camps, to reassure parents who are concerned about their children participating (hence the reason for this review).

*On balance, I would keep it in the South Island but with clear instructions as to how to handle such a situation again. Teachers can't be expected to be health professionals, and to know what they need to do. Public Health have to do this.*

*Reluctant to say as I was really impressed by the camp and the facilities but if we were closer to home that would have solved a lot of problems. All in all it shouldn't be a reason to change but just a factor to consider.*

*It was an awesome camp and location aside from the sickness and as you say - abnormal and unexpected as not occurred in past 20 years...*

*I loved Teapot Valley. I think it does present an extra layer of challenges in the face of an incident like this but I believe the benefits of the experience outweigh the potential downfall.*

*Despite how it panned out this time, I think it is still an excellent thing to do. My kids haven't been on the ferry before and I imagine lots of others hadn't either. There's something about giving them a little bit of independence by taking them somewhere a bit further away from home. They are growing up and I felt it was good to give them something acknowledging that.*

*I may be a bit "rose-tinted glasses" though as I was there and looking after my own kid, when other parents couldn't be.*

*It was definitely worth going even though I got sick. Being in the isolation room meant I was with cool people instead of being stuck at home sick by myself.*

*It was amazing to be on a different island as I have never been there. But we couldn't just go home when we were sick so it was hard. Next time I would be nervous about being on camp.*

*Camp can build up resilience as you just can't go home so we just had to deal with it. It was fun being such a long way from home and the ferry was cool.*

*I love the camp in the South Island. I think for a lot of kids, it gives them experiences that they wouldn't normally have and the pricing for groups travelling is incredibly reasonable. Teapot valley is so well set up and they are so accommodating of the different things we can do in the camp and the surrounding area and they make it so easy. Am very keen to continue going there in the future.*