

Tuesday 19th March 2019

Dear family and whanau

"Peace be with you" at this sad and difficult time.

The impact of this Terror Attack has been particularly cruel and tough for our school community. Our sympathy, love and condolences continue to be with our two school families who have lost their sons - Sayyad Milne (Year 10) and Hamza Alhaj Mustafa (Year 12). We also acknowledge the tragic loss of our past pupil Tariq Omar (CHS 2008-12), who has a brother and sister currently at our school. We have also lost the father of Hamza and Zaid Mustafa (Year 10), Khaled Alhaj Mustafa. The father of past pupil Imran Safi (CHS 2016-18), Matiullah Safi, was also killed on this dark day. Within our school community we also have student Zaid Alhaj Mustafa (Year 9) in hospital recovering from gunshot wounds; as well as two other fathers (of other students) in hospital, recovering from wounds.

I would like to acknowledge and thank our staff and students for the positive and supportive manner in how they conducted themselves on Friday 15th March during the school lock down.

Our first day back to school on Monday 18th March went very well. It provided opportunities for students to meet their wider network of friends, and start to get back into some regular, safe routines as part of their recovery. Our thanks to our staff for their love and support of our students, and their colleagues, at this time. Our school assemblies held at the start of this Monday were a good way of gathering together to acknowledge what had happened, including the two students we had lost, and understand that we must respond to such events with compassion and love.

This positive response was beautifully illustrated with the across schools student-led vigil held at 4:00pm at Hagley Park near the Deans Avenue mosque. This initiative was entirely led by the students, primarily our Head Boy Oki Tilaia. This was a very powerful time, with inspiring words shared, a mass candle lighting, collective singing of the waiata 'He Honore', and then a spontaneous mass haka. Our thanks and praise to all the students involved in this very moving occasion.

As a school we have received numerous requests from our wider community around how they can help. We already have received enough comfort food for our staff and students in our support rooms, which has been greatly appreciated; more offers of food at this stage are not necessary. People have also asked how they could directly support the families in our school who have suffered loss.

In response to these requests our school is setting up a school account to which people can donate money. Money received will be held by the school until we have been able to speak with the families over the coming weeks to determine how we can best support them in their needs now and for the future. As a state school our financial accounts are publicly audited so all money received will be well documented, and all such donations are GST exempt and tax deductible with the provision of a receipt from the school.

All financial donations can be paid to the following account: 12-3482-0034441-00
Please enter into your online banking payment the following code/reference so our school knows it is a donation to this cause: CHSsupport

Many thanks to everyone in our community for your continued support of us as a school and of our city, as we collectively recover from this traumatic event.

Looking ahead this week: we will be holding a school mufti day this Friday 22nd March with the theme "Colour your Day" with students asked to wear colourful and vibrant colours (avoid red at the request of our Muslim community) and bring at least a gold coin donation for this new school fund for our affected families. We will also observe a minutes silence at 1:40pm this Friday (during our period 4 class).

To conclude, I'd like to share words from our Head Boy, Oki Tilaia who, yesterday afternoon, quoted Martin Luther King when he said: "darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Yours sincerely

Mark Wilson
Principal