

17 March 2019

Dear Parent and Caregivers of Children at MPS

As you will all well know, there was an unprecedented event in Christchurch on Friday afternoon. The terrorist attack at the Masjid Al Noor Mosque and the Linwood Masjid Mosque is an appalling tragedy for the families and friends of the 50 children, men and women killed on Friday. Our thoughts are with the people of Christchurch during this tragic time, and in particular with the children and families of the Muslim community.

The flag at school has been flying at half-mast since Saturday morning and will continue to do so during the coming week. I will meet with the teaching staff before school tomorrow morning and we will begin a discussion about how we will respond as a community. We have received the advice below from the Ministry of Education; as a staff we will be following these guidelines and they may prove helpful for use at home as well with your children.

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 (e.g. 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 and 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.

As Salaam Alaikum (Peace be with You)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Chris".

Chris