

Questions and Answers about COVID-19

Many of you have asked questions about the protocols for this year. In order to provide answers, please see below a number of questions and answers (Q&A) for you. Please note that these items will be posted on our website and will be updated throughout the year.

Is my child allowed to wear a mask to school?

Yes. If you would like your child to wear a mask to school, that is permitted. However, as directed by the Provincial Health Office, students are not required to wear masks. Adults in the school must wear masks in the common areas, such as the hallways and staff areas, but they are not required to wear them in their learning groups. Specialist teachers are required to maintain a two metre distance from the students, or to wear a mask in situations in which this is not possible.

If your child wears a mask to school, can you please ensure that it is washed every day.

What are learning groups?

In accordance with the Operational Guidelines from the Ministry of Education, the school is divided into learning groups. At St. Joseph's, these groups are:

Learning Group A: Kindergarten and Grade 1

Learning Group B: Grades 2 and 3

Learning Group C: Grades 4 and 5

Learning Group D: Grades 6 and 7

These learning groups generally interact only on the playground at recess and lunch breaks. Throughout the remainder of the school day, they function as individual classes.

What are the directives regarding physical distancing in a school?

According to the latest information from the BCCDC regarding schools, physical distancing is as follows:

Physical distancing refers to a range of measures aimed at reducing close contact with others. Physical distancing is used as a prevention measure because COVID-19 tends to spread through prolonged, close (face-to-face) contact.

- Within cohorts, physical distancing should include avoiding physical contact, minimizing close, prolonged, face-to-face interactions, and spreading out as much as possible within the space available.
- Outside of cohorts, practicing physical distancing should include avoiding physical contact and close, prolonged face-to-face interactions, spreading out as much as possible within the space available, and ensuring there is 1-2 meters of space available between people.
- Spaces where members of different cohorts interact should be sufficiently large, and/or should have limits on the number of people so that 1-2 meters of space is available between people.
- Within and outside of cohorts, there should be no crowding. Due to physical space limitations it may be necessary to reduce the number of individuals within secondary schools at any given time to prevent crowding.

What do I do if my child has symptoms of illness?

Parents must use the checklist provided by the BCCDC to check their children for symptoms every morning.

If you find that your child has symptoms of illness, you must keep them at home; they may not attend school. You need to seek the help of a medical professional (your family doctor, clinic or call 8-1-1 for advice). You must pick up your child immediately if we call you that your child is sick.

Anyone experiencing symptoms of illness should not return to school until they have been assessed by a health-care provider to exclude COVID-19 or other infectious diseases AND their symptoms have improved (i.e. only mild symptoms remain like a sustained cough or an occasionally runny nose). A doctor's note is not required for students or staff to return to school.

If a health assessment recommends testing to exclude COVID-19, students and staff who have been tested must stay home while awaiting their test results.

Students and staff with symptoms who have had COVID-19 excluded should not return to school until their symptoms have improved and they feel well enough

Why do I have to drop off and pick up my child within a certain period of time?

In order to facilitate physical distancing, we have staggered the drop-off and pick-up times. (Students with the last names A-M are dropped off between 8:30 and 8:45am and picked up between 2:30 and 2:45pm; students with last names N-Z are dropped off between 8:45 and 9:00am and picked up between 2:45 and 3:00pm). Having the students arrive in two stages allows the first half to come in the front door and get settled in their desks before the second group of students comes. Even though the parking lot may look empty at times in the morning, half of the students are unpacking their bags and getting organized to allow physical space for the second half of the students to arrive in the classroom. Please note that there is no supervision before 8:30am or after 3:00pm (except for those attending Afterschool Club).

Why can't I go into the classrooms and hallways?

We have been told through the safety guidelines by WorkSafe BC that we are expected to limit access to the school. Anyone who is not directly involved in the education of the students will not be permitted in the classroom and hallway areas. If you have something to drop off for your child, please put it on the table in the front hall; you are not permitted to go to the classrooms to meet the children. This rule is for the safety of everyone in our community.

If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, the health authority will provide further instructions to the student or staff member on when they can return to school.

(Taken from COVID-19 Protocols for School and District Administrators: Management of Illness and Confirmed Cases - BC Ministry of Education, Updated September 11, 2020)

How often is the school cleaned?

The school is given a thorough cleaning by our custodian every evening. He has many years of experience, working in a variety of areas throughout the city, and we have every confidence in his ability to disinfect and clean the school properly. The high-touch areas in the school are

disinfected twice each day (after the recess breaks and after the lunch breaks). These areas include, but are not limited to: handrails, doorknobs, toilet flushers, soap dispensers, etc.

Will we have First Friday Mass?

We will still have our First Friday Masses as a faith community. The classes will be taking turns in attending those Masses, and the classes that are not able to take part in the church will take part in the livestream while in their classrooms. Thank you so much to Father Martin for livestreaming the Masses so that we are all able to take part.

How will Music class happen?

We are so pleased to welcome back Ms. Rumpel to our St. Joseph's community. Ms. Rumpel has been working all summer on ways to teach Music to the children while adhering to the recommendations to minimize singing. She recognizes that it is safer to have the students sing on a limited basis; the students will be encouraged to wear masks during singing and they will sing as often as possible outdoors. Ms. Rumpel will be using a variety of instruments in her teaching this year, and the instruments will not be shared between students before being sanitized.

Will there be a sports program this year?

Yes, Mr. Evans and the teachers are going to ensure that the students will have the opportunity to play sports this year. We are not permitted to have tournaments or games with other schools, but we will still have an extra-curricular sports program so that the students can develop their skills, have some fun and get some exercise. The students will be playing and practicing within their learning groups.