Grace Episcopal



 School

Guide for Managing COVID-19

 2021-2022

 Revised August 18, 2021

The policies in this guide are intended to aid our work at Grace Episcopal School in an environment that is ever-evolving and ever-changing. Grace Episcopal School may change, delete, or suspend any part or parts of the policies in this guide at any time without prior notice. Any such action will be communicated to all employees, parents, and affected parties.

As Grace Episcopal School opens for the 2021-2022 school year, we offer the following protocols and considerations to help protect students, teachers, staff, and administrators and to help slow the spread of COVID-19. This guide is created in alignment with suggested best practices by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Texas Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), state and federal health and government officials, and the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. These protocols and considerations are meant to supplement, not replace, any state or local safety laws, rules, and regulations with which the school must comply.

This guidance has been updated given new evidence on the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant. Since the population we serve at Grace is unable to be vaccinated at this time, the CDC recommends layering prevention strategies.

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 **Symptoms of COVID-19**

People with COVID-19 may have a wide range of symptoms. These symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Anyone can have mild to severe symptoms. Older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness.

* Fever or chills
* Cough
* Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
* Fatigue
* Muscle or body aches
* Headache
* New loss of taste or smell
* Sore throat
* Congestion or runny nose
* Nausea or vomiting
* Diarrhea

 This list does not include all possible symptoms. The CDC will continue to update this list as more is learned about COVID-19.

 **Guiding Principles**

We are committed to delivering the Grace Episcopal School mission through on-campus learning. In order to safely reopen school, we are assessing information, acting decisively, and developing guidelines and procedures in service of our community.

 The following ideas have guided Grace Episcopal School’s decisions regarding school attendance during the current pandemic.

* Protect the health and safety of GES students and staff.
* Be compliant with guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC); the Texas Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); local, state and federal health and government officials; and the Episcopal Diocese of Texas.
* Establish effective use of spaces to support physical distancing while at school as much as possible.
* Provide a school day experience with as many familiar routines as possible.
* Use prevention strategies as recommended by the CDC. Best practices involve layering the following strategies so that if one is not present, the other layers together will help prevent the spread of COVID-19.
* Promoting vaccination
* Consistent and correct mask usage
* Staying home when sick and getting tested
* Contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantining
* Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
* Physical distancing and cohorting
* Ventilation
* Cleaning and disinfecting

 **Student and Staff Safety Protocols**

 **Training/Vaccination**

To help mitigate risk as much as possible, our staff has completed health and safety training related to COVID-19 through the Texas A&M AgriLife extension. All staff members will also receive additional instruction on COVID-19 related issues such as handwashing, use and storage of cleaning products including UV-C light towers, and classroom set-up and routines during our in-service training prior to the start of school.

 At Grace Episcopal School we understand that vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic.

 What we know about the COVID-19 vaccines:

 • COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective at preventing COVID-19, including severe illness and death.

 • COVID-19 vaccines are effective against severe disease and death from variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 currently circulating in the United States, including the Delta variant.

 • Infections happen in only a small proportion of people who are fully vaccinated, even with the Delta variant. When these infections occur among vaccinated people, they tend to be mild.

 • If you are fully vaccinated and become infected with the Delta variant, you can spread the virus to others.

 • People with weakened immune systems, including people who take immunosuppressive medications, may not be protected even if fully vaccinated.

**Cloth Face Coverings/Masks**

At Grace Episcopal School, masks are optional for students. If a parent requests that his/her child(ren) wear masks, the masks must be provided by the family, and the GES staff will do our best to ensure proper usage by the child. We support all of our Grace families’ decisions regarding their children’s health and will do our best to scaffold the learning that is also taking place at home. The cloth face cover should have the name of the child clearly marked. An extra mask should be sent to the school in a closed and labeled zipper bag in the event an extra is needed. A clean mask should be worn each school day. Sharing masks is prohibited.

While in the orange or red phase of spread, face coverings will be worn by all adults in common areas of the school, and will be worn by staff members when physical distancing is difficult or not possible. Due to cohorting, requirements for classroom teachers to wear masks while in the classroom will be contingent on vaccination status (unvaccinated staff will wear masks in the classroom). [Please note: some staff members may choose to wear a mask even after vaccination.] In addition, any other staff member (music teacher, teachers’ assistants, Head of School) interacting with a child, will be expected to wear a face covering in common areas and when the 6-foot distance cannot be maintained.

Any unidentified face coverings found at school will be thrown away. Students and staff are to avoid touching another person’s face covering unless an emergency prompts such action. If someone comes into contact with another person’s face covering, hands will be washed immediately.

Cloth face coverings are meant to protect other people in the event the wearer is an asymptomatic carrier of COVID-19. Cloth face coverings are not surgical masks, respirators, or other medical-grade personal protective equipment.

 **Suspected or Lab-Confirmed COVID-19 Protocols/Contact Tracing**

 **Staying Home from School**

Employees and students who have symptoms of infectious illness, such as influenza or COVID-19 should stay home and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care. Showing symptoms of or having been tested positive for COVID-19 *requires* the student or staff member to stay home.

 Staff members required to stay home due to a positive COVID-19 test will not lose sick days.

 If a positive case is confirmed, GES will contact the Williamson County and Cities Health Department for guidance on school closure, quarantining, and additional cleaning procedures. In addition, GES will notify all teachers, staff, and families of students consistent with legal confidentiality requirements.

* Fully vaccinated close contacts should be referred for COVID-19 testing. If asymptomatic, fully vaccinated close contacts do not need to quarantine at home following an exposure (they can continue to attend school in-person and participate in other activities). In addition to correctly wearing masks at school, they should wear a mask in other indoor public settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result.
* Close contacts who are not fully vaccinated should be referred for COVID-19 testing. Regardless of test result, they should quarantine at home for 14 days after exposure. Options to shorten the quarantine provide acceptable alternatives of a 10-day quarantine or a 7-day quarantine combined with testing and a negative test result.
* Quarantine can end after Day 10 without testing and if no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring.
* Quarantine can end after Day 7 if a diagnostic specimen tests negative, and if no symptoms were reported during daily monitoring. The specimen may be collected and tested within 48 hours before the time of planned quarantine discontinuation (e.g., in anticipation of waiting for results), but quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than after Day 7.

***In both cases, additional criteria (e.g., continued symptom monitoring and masking through Day 14) must be met.***

 GES will not recognize any attendance goals (perfect attendance, etc.) for students or staff members. Students who are absent will be allowed time to catch up in class and/or missed work may be sent home (in kindergarten).

 **Returning to School**

Individuals who had a positive COVID-19 test **and** had symptoms can return to GES after:

* Three (3) days with no fever **and**
* Symptoms improved without medication **and**
* Ten (10) days since symptoms first appeared.

Individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 **but had no symptoms** can return to GES after ten (10) days have passed since their positive test as long as no symptoms appear during this time.

If an individual has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to school before completing the three bulleted items, the individual must either (a) obtain a medical professional’s note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis or (b) receive two separate confirmations at least 24 hours apart that he/she is free of COVID-19 via acute infection tests at an approved COVID-19 testing location which can be found at https://tdem.texas.gov/covid-19/.

 Individuals who have not been vaccinated who come into close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual will be asked to self- quarantine for 14 days and may not return to school during that time. The CDC defines close contact to include anyone who came within 6 feet of an infected individual for at least 15 minutes or more over a cumulative 24-hour period starting from 48 hours before illness onset until the time the patient is isolated (6-15-24-48 Rule). Close contact occurs in this situation regardless of whether the individuals wear face coverings.

 **If Someone Gets Sick on Campus**

GES is implementing several strategies to prepare for when someone gets sick during the school day. Guidelines for our procedures for when a sick person can return to campus are included in the *Student and Staff Safety Protocols* section of this guide.

 If someone at school shows COVID-19 symptoms, that person will be immediately separated from the group at school and asked to wait in our Isolation/Sick Room with staff supervision. In the event a student becomes sick, a parent or legal guardian will be contacted and asked to pick up the child within 30 minutes. Please call the school at 512.863.6214 upon your arrival.

 Any areas used by the sick person will not be used until the areas have been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

 GES must notify local health officials, staff, and other GES families of any positive case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality.

 **Proper Hand Washing and Respiratory Etiquette**

GES will teach proper hand washing techniques to all students at the start of the school year. Staff members will monitor hand washing during the day to ensure the proper technique is being used. In addition, there are several hand sanitizer stations in the halls of Grace, and each classroom will have sanitizer available to use as needed. Sanitizer will be kept out of the students’ reach, and the use of sanitizer once applied to the child’s hands will be monitored.

\*\*\*We ask our families to please partner with us to teach and reinforce proper hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds at home as well.\*\*\*

Tissues are available in every classroom and in the hallways. Grace staff members will also teach proper etiquette for covering sneezes and coughs. If a tissue cannot be reached in time, coughing and sneezing into the elbow bend will be taught.

Hand washing will be scheduled and will occur at each of the following times:

* Upon entering the school at the start of each day
* Before and after lunch
* Before and after recess
* Before and after treating a cut or wound
* After using the toilet
* After blowing nose, coughing, or sneezing
* After touching garbage

 **Daily Health Screenings**

Each school day we will ask parents to complete an online daily health screening regarding their child(ren) attending Grace Episcopal School. This simple checklist can be completed quickly on a computer or smart phone through your email and Google Docs. We ask parents to **complete** the checklist **each school day by 8:20 a.m.** to help facilitate our drop-off procedures. Staff will also complete daily health checks.

 In addition, when feasible, and at any time, GES may conduct health checks of staff and students.

 Health checks will be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations. GES will be guided in this practice by the screening methods in CDC’s supplemental *Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open*.

 **Physical Distancing & Cleaning/ Disinfecting Protocols**

 **Staggered Drop-Off and Pick-Up**

Individuals who are dropping off or picking up students should stay in their vehicles and not enter the building. At Drop-Off, Grace Episcopal Staff will approach your vehicle to complete a temperature check of your child before he/she is unbuckled from the vehicle. After a temperature reading of 100°F or lower, GES staff will remove the child from the vehicle, help sanitize hands, and then safely escort the child to his/her classroom. Also during this time, another GES staff member will be checking-in your child on our software’s Attendance Tracker. We recommend that backpacks and lunchboxes routinely get cleaned at home, or at the very least sprayed with a disinfectant/sanitizer (i.e. Clorox 4-in-1 Orange Spray, Lysol, etc.) each night. If unable to clean properly, the school recommends using a disposable lunch sack labeled with the child’s name.

 At Pick-Up, GES staff will bring your child to you to buckle into his/her car seat. **GES staff members are not allowed to buckle children into car seats.**  If you have more than one child at GES, we recommend pulling into a parking spot on the west side of the church to buckle your children into seats instead of using the drop- off/pick-up lane.

 GES will provide each family with a car hangtag labeled with the children’s names. These will be distributed during Meet-the-Teacher. Please keep your hangtag in a safe spot, and display the tag at both drop-off and pick-up each day. This will help facilitate our car line procedures.

 Drop-off/Pick-up Times

 8:30 a.m. – 2:00 Kindergarten

 8:40 a.m. – 1:40 p.m. Pre-K 4’s

 8:50 a.m. – 1:50 p.m. Pre-K 3’s

 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Primary (2’s)

 If you have more than one child to drop-off and pick-up, we recommend you use the later timeframe to drop-off and pick-up all children. Teachers will be very understanding of late arrivals during this time. Certain families will be contacted by the Head of School regarding a different, more suitable drop-off/pick- up time.

 If you will be late for drop-off or early for pick-up, please call the school to notify us of this change. We will do our best to have a check-in staff member available to meet you outside, or in the event of picking up early, we will do our best to have your child ready and waiting for your arrival. [512.863.6214]

 At the discretion of the school, procedures for dropping off and picking up may change based on providing as safe a process as possible.

 **Late pick-up fees**

$10.00 – 15 minutes late, then an additional $1 per minute when more than 15 minutes late

 **Class Size and Groups (Cohorts)**

GES will maintain its low student to teacher ratios while maintaining the Texas HHS Departments revised guidelines. These intentionally small, in-person classes will help reduce exposure to others. The more people a student or staff member interacts with, and the longer the interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread.

 In addition, as we did for the 2020-2021 school year, we have reduced our total school enrollment by 25%. This reduction will help us with the staggered schedules and the use of common spaces. We hope to be able to reinstate classes next school year up to our licensed capacity of 74 students.

 Groups of students will stay together with the same teacher (cohorts) throughout the school day and across school days with the exception of recess and music (and P.E. and Art for kinder only). These specials teachers will be masked. This will allow the classroom teacher a mandatory break. The music classroom will be treated with our UV-C tower and the instruments will be disinfected between different cohorts’ music classes. Cohorts will not mix. While classroom groups of students will not remain 6 feet apart, different cohorts will maintain the 6 foot distance between members of the different cohorts when transitioning or when attending Chapel.

 Chapel services will be held outside and cohorts will be distanced. In the event of inclement weather, Chapel may be cancelled.

 **Ventilation**

GES will ensure that the ventilation systems continue to operate properly. Grace Episcopal Church has upgraded its HVAC systems to promote healthier air ventilation and circulation. We will also work to increase circulation of fresh, outdoor air as much as possible. Classroom windows and doors will be open as much as possible to allow for increased circulation of fresh air.

 **Water Fountains**

Water fountains in the school hallways will be unlocked, but we will discourage their use by students. Students and staff are expected to bring personal, refillable water bottles to use throughout the day. Staff will refill as needed. Water bottles are not to be shared. Please label water bottles with the child’s name clearly identifiable. Bottles found that are not identifiable will be disposed of at the end of the day.

 **Supplies for Hygiene, Cleaning, and Disinfecting**

The school will provide adequate supplies including soap, hallway hand sanitizer and stations, paper towels, and cleaning products. Parents are asked to only provide the supplies listed on the School Supply List. Occasionally the school will have to request additional supplies for the last half of the school year if supplies are consumed on an above-average basis.

 **Cleaning and Disinfecting**

We will clean and disinfect all surfaces daily and as needed throughout the day including Top of the Hour (ToH) disinfecting of high-touch areas such as door handles, light switches, sink handles, etc. In addition, all classrooms and restrooms will be treated daily with UV-C light sterilization towers. This will be done daily when spaces are not being used to ensure safety.

 All cleaning supplies will be stored in locations unavailable to students.

 **Shared Objects**

Shared objects (art supplies, musical instruments, P.E. equipment, toys, games, etc.) will be limited when possible, used on a rotational basis, and/or cleaned between uses.

 Each student’s school supplies (pencils, markers, crayons, scissors, glue, etc.) will be kept in individually labeled cubbies/containers and will not be shared among students.

 We will minimize sharing of high-touch materials to the extent possible. We will also limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of children at a time and clean, disinfect, and store between uses. Students will have individual sensory bins and water tables when these are utilized in the classroom.

 **Playground**

Use of the playground will be limited to no more than one class at any one time. Hand washing and/or hand sanitizing is required both before and after use of the playground. Playground time has been expanded this year to 40 minutes per class, and brain breaks have been eliminated. This will reduce the number of transitions within the building.

 **Lunch and Snacks**

Lunch will continue in individual classrooms. Families are encouraged to use disposable items. Sharing of food, drink, or utensils is strictly prohibited. Please do not send items requiring refrigeration or heating. We ask that parents wipe-down or spray lunchboxes and icepacks every afternoon/evening. If it is not possible to keep lunchboxes cleaned and disinfected, GES recommends the use of disposable, labeled lunch sacks. We understand that occasionally systems fail, and a child might show up to school without his/her lunch. GES will have a limited number of pre-packaged Lunchables to give a child without a lunch. We ask that this Lunchable be replaced the following school day.

 Snacks should be packaged and clearly labeled with the child’s name.

 For at least the first semester, we must limit the sharing of birthday snacks/treats to pre-packaged items only. Please contact your child’s teacher if you would like suggestions on how we can safely celebrate your child’s birthday at school.

 Cooking has always been an important part of the curriculum at GES. Teachers will still be incorporating cooking with extra safeguards in place to ensure cleanliness and sanitation. Parents will be notified of cooking projects.

 **Operational Protocols**

 **Regulatory Awareness**

GES will maintain active awareness of local or state regulatory agency policies related to group gatherings to determine if events can be held.

 **Assemblies, Visitors, and Field Trips**

All school or large group assemblies/gatherings will be temporarily suspended. This includes the entire school Meet the Teacher Night, Parent Orientation, Thanksgiving Feast honoring Grandparents, and visits from the Mad Hatters, community helpers, etc. at least for the fall semester. You will be contacted about Meet the Teacher sessions.

 Field trips that are not practical, in terms of limiting the spread or exposure to COVID-19, will not be scheduled.

 Nonessential visitors will not be allowed on campus. Every visitor must check in at the main school entrance and will complete a health screening, temperature check, and must wear a face covering. Parents/family members are discouraged from coming into the school building unless it is for a scheduled meeting or in case of an emergency. This includes drop-off and pick-up times.

 **Communication**

Consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, staff and families should self-report to the Head of School if there has been a positive test for COVID-19, someone in the family has symptoms of COVID-19, or someone in the family was exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days in accordance with health information sharing regulations for COVID-19.

 In accordance with state and local laws and regulations, GES will notify local health officials, staff, and families of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). People who have had close contact with the person diagnosed with COVID-19 will be asked to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms and follow CDC guidelines if symptoms emerge.

 In addition, to help our families stay aware of what is happening in the life of the school, the Head of School plans to send a weekly email home on Mondays to highlight certain events, classes, or news. This will be in addition to the monthly newsletter that will go home at the beginning of each month.

 **Continued Instruction during Possible School Closure**

 There may be times during the school year due to acute or widespread COVID-19 outbreaks when school may be mandated by local or state officials or the Episcopal Diocese of Texas to close physically. In the event of a school closure, and depending on the projected length of the closure, the school will continue to provide online/virtual learning opportunities for our students. We all realize that screen time for our youngest learners should be limited, so we will provide optional online learning opportunities for all students. Kindergarten students will have a weekly instructional packet exchange. Unfortunately, this is an area that we cannot address more definitively in advance.

 **Steps to Prepare Your Child**

 The most important thing we can stress is to remember you help determine your child’s attitude. Be angry or sad in private. Discuss your frustrations away from your young children. Set them up for success by teaching them to make the best of the situation. Be a sounding board for their worries and disappointments. Stay positive and model perseverance.

 You can help support the successful launch of the school year by reinforcing some basic measures at home that will be in place at school.

 **Maintain preventative health measures for your child(ren)**

* Continue regular doctor visits and well-child appointments.
* Keep immunizations and physicals current.
* Add daily temperature checks to your routine.
* Encourage lots of physical activity and time outside.

 **Keep your child(ren) emotionally safe**

* Ask your child how he/she is feeling and give him/her space to share and to ask questions.
* Maintain at-home routines to provide stability.
* Continue reassuring them that the adults in their lives are there to support their well-being, both physical and emotional.

 **Teach and encourage health and hygiene protocols**

* Practice now wearing a protective cloth face covering if your child will be wearing one at school.
* Practice sneezing and coughing into elbow.
* Encourage frequent hand washing and use of sanitizer.
* Encourage and talk to your children about the importance of physical distancing. Show and practice the 6 foot rule when out around others.

 **What can you do to help?**

We are blessed to have so many people sharing in our values and our commitment in keeping the school community safe. If you are interested in how you can further our school's mission and support our efforts in safety and health, we ask you to prayerfully consider these options:

 **Financial Support**

With decreased enrollments, lack of major fundraisers (Golf tournament and Grandparents’ Basket Auction) and increased expectations of GES staff, financial support is crucial to our mission. Financial support will help with a) scholarships and tuition assistance for families in need, b) program support, c) faculty and staff support, and d) facilities management, cleaning.

 **Stock and Supplies**

GES will gladly accept donations including, but not limited to, Lysol or Clorox disinfecting wipes, hand sanitizer (Germ-X, Purell, or at least 60% alcohol, but NOT containing methanol), face coverings, tissues, air purifiers, and gloves.

 If you are interested in helping with stock and supplies, please contact our Administrative Assistant, Evelyn Vance at admin@graceschool1992.org.

 Please direct questions regarding financial support to Ginny Herbert, Head of School at headofschool@graceschool1992.org.

 You can also contact the school by calling (512) 863-6214.