



St. Mary's School Communicable Disease Prevention Plan

Updated September 2024

Dear Parents and Staff,

The updated guidelines in this document are aligned with and build on the BCCDC (BC Centre for Disease Control) and Ministry of Health Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools.

The school staff practise a compassionate lens of understanding (trauma-informed practice) of what is helpful to all children and youth especially those who have experienced traumatic events. Trauma-informed practice includes:

- Providing inclusive and compassionate learning environments.
- Understanding coping strategies.
- Supporting independence.
- Helping to minimize additional stress or trauma by addressing individual needs of students and staff.

VACCINES

BCCDC Guidance

Vaccines are important tools to protect against serious outcomes of many communicable diseases, such as COVID-19 and influenza. Students and staff are encouraged to ensure they are up to date on all recommended vaccines for communicable diseases.

ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES

Cleaning and Disinfection

BCCDC Guidance

Regular cleaning and disinfection can help prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Cleaning of frequently touched surfaces should occur in line with regular practices and when visibly dirty.

- Frequently touched items like toys or manipulatives that may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g., fabrics) or at all (e.g., sand, foam, playdough, etc.) can be used. Carpets and rugs (e.g., in Kindergarten and StrongStart classes) can also be used.
- Proper hand hygiene should be practiced before and after shared equipment use. Equipment that touches the mouth (e.g., instrument mouth pieces, water bottles, utensils) or has been in contact with bodily fluids should not be shared unless cleaned and disinfected in between uses.

Ventilation and Air Exchange

BCCDC Guidance

Continue to ensure all mechanical heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are designed, operated, and maintained and that they are working properly. Windows may be opened when the weather permits if it does not impact the functioning of the ventilation systems.

When using air conditioners and fans in ventilated spaces, air should be moved from high places to lower places instead of blowing air directly from one person's breathing zone to another's. Avoid horizontal cross breezes.

Natural ventilation (operable windows, etc.) and portable HEPA filter units can be considered in regularly occupied classrooms that do not have mechanical ventilation systems.

Hand Hygiene

BCCDC Guidance

Rigorous hand washing with plain soap and water or using an effective hand sanitizer reduces the spread of illness. Everyone should practice diligent hand hygiene and schools should facilitate regular opportunities for students and staff to wash their hands.

Please refer to the BCCDC's [hand hygiene poster](#).

Respiratory Etiquette

BCCDC Guidance

Parents and staff can teach and reinforce good respiratory etiquette practices among students, including:

- Cough or sneeze into their elbow or a tissue. Throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.
- Refrain from touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

Refrain from sharing any food, drinks, unwashed utensils.

ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTISES

Health Awareness and What to do When Sick

BCCDC Guidance

School administrators should ensure that staff, other adults entering the school, parents, caregivers, and students are aware that they should not come to school if they are sick and unable to participate fully in routine activities. School administrators can support this practice by communicating the importance of not attending school if sick and unable to participate fully in routine activities.

A health check means a person regularly checking to ensure they (or their child) are not experiencing symptoms of illness that would limit their ability to participate fully in regular activities before coming to school to prevent spread of communicable diseases within the school settings. Schools do not need to monitor students or staff for symptoms of illness.

Staff, students, or other persons in the school setting who are exhibiting symptoms of illness, such as respiratory illness, should stay home until they are well enough to participate in regular activities or otherwise advised by a healthcare provider. Those experiencing certain illnesses, such as gastrointestinal illness caused by norovirus, may be advised to stay home for longer. Staff, children, or other persons can attend school if their symptoms are consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition (e.g., seasonal allergies) or symptoms have improved, and they feel well enough to return to regular activities. If you are unsure or concerned about your symptoms, connect with your healthcare provider or call 8-1-1.

School administrators should ensure that everyone entering a school is aware and routinely reminded of their responsibility to practice health awareness, including that they should not come to school if they are sick.

What to do when sick at school/work

BCCDC Guidance

If a staff member, student, or other person develops symptoms of illness at school and is unable to participate in regular activities, they should be supported to go home until their symptoms have improved or otherwise advised by a healthcare provider. **If your child is sick, they must not go to school until fever and symptoms have subsided and your child is feeling much better** (A runny nose, excessive coughing, headaches, diarrhea, etc. requires some healing time at home).

Appropriate infection control precautions should be taken while the person is preparing to leave the school premises, including use of appropriate hand hygiene and cleaning/disinfection of surfaces soiled with bodily fluids. They may use a mask if they are experiencing respiratory symptoms.

Diligent hand hygiene practices will continue throughout the day at school for all staff and students (hand washing with soap and water or using effective hand sanitizer) as well as regularly employed cleaning protocols.

Supporting Students With Disabilities/Diverse Abilities and/or Receiving Health Services

BCCDC Guidance

Staff and those providing services to students with medical complexity, immune suppression, receiving direct or delegated care, or with disabilities and diverse abilities who are in close proximity to a child should follow routine infection control practices and care plans for the child, if applicable.

Schools should communicate disease prevention measures that promote inclusion of students with disabilities/diverse abilities. implement health and safety measures that promote inclusion of students with disabilities/diverse abilities.

Parents and caregivers of children with severe immune compromise or medical complexity are encouraged to consult with a medical care provider to determine their child's level of risk. Schools should continue to have non-medical masks on hand for those who have forgotten theirs but would like to wear one.

Space Arrangement

BCCDC Guidance

In learning environments, schools can use classroom and learning environment configurations and activities that best meet learner needs and preferred educational approaches.

Visitors and Community Use of Schools

BCCDC Guidance

Schools can follow normal practices for welcoming visitors and the community use of schools. Visitors, including community groups using the school, should follow applicable communicable disease prevention measures outlined in this document.

Gatherings and Events

BCCDC Guidance

School extracurricular and social gatherings and events (including those occurring within and between schools), regardless of location, can occur in line with the [BCCDC Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools](#).

School gatherings and events should have communicable disease prevention measures in place in line with those in place in the school.

- We will continue with routine sign in/sign out practices (visitors and volunteers, etc.).
- Information on communicable disease protocols and requirements for visitors is posted on the school's website and included in communications to students and families.
- There is regular Parish use of the school building.
- Pick up/drop off practises will continue as has been done since September 2023 (Pickup and drop off at school gates in the back playground with Kindergarten at the front of the school by the gym doors)

PERSONAL PRACTISES

Health Awareness, Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Everyone at school should practice [health awareness](#) (including staying home when sick), [hand hygiene](#) and [respiratory etiquette](#).

Masks and Face Coverings

BCCDC Guidance

The decision to wear a mask is a personal one, based on individual preference. Some students and staff may choose to continue to wear a non-medical mask or face covering throughout the day or for certain activities. The choice of staff and students to choose whether they practice additional personal prevention measures should be respected. Information on non-medical masks is available from [BCCDC](#).

Masks are one layer of protection used to prevent the spread of communicable disease. To be most effective, wearing a mask should be combined with other important protective measures such as getting vaccinated, staying home when sick, and regularly practicing hand hygiene. Masks are most effective when fitted, worn and handled correctly.

PERSONAL SPACE

Staff and students should be encouraged to respect others' personal space (the distance from which a person feels comfortable being next to another person).