



DIOCESE OF CAMDEN
Office of Catholic Schools

August 30, 2022

Dear Catholic School Parents,

I hope that your summer has provided some time for you and your family to relax with a change of pace from the intensity of the past two school years. I am writing to inform you of plans for the 2022-2023 school year with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Much has changed since Catholic schools opened in September 2020 when most other schools did not, and the only protections we had against COVID-19 were the measures that parents, students, and schools took together. Prior exposure to COVID-19 and vaccination have helped to reduce the severity of COVID-19 symptoms for students, vulnerable family members, and school faculty and staff. Parents have taken the precautions and made adjustments in their lifestyles that they feel are necessary for themselves and their children, and many activities have returned to pre-COVID levels.

Catholic schools' approach to managing COVID-19 when the 2022-2023 school year begins recognizes these differences. Expectations for students and families are attached below and include:

- Students will not be required to quarantine if exposed to COVID-19. When exposed to COVID-19 at home, students will be expected to wear a mask to school or to take a home test for COVID-19 on days 5 and 10 after exposure.
- Masks will continue to be optional. However, students will be expected to wear a mask during the short period when returning to school after having COVID-19.
- Remote learning will not be offered for grades K-4. Each school may offer remote learning in a limited capacity in grades 5-8.

As we know all too well by now, circumstances throughout the school year could change dramatically, which could cause any Catholic school to adjust its approach to managing COVID-19. **Any of the measures taken over the last two years could return if the situation warrants their implementation to promote the health and safety of a school community.**

I continue to be grateful for your partnership with your school principal and teachers. As a result of our shared commitment, your children have received the Catholic education they deserve and that you expect in an environment that supports their health and safety. I look forward to supporting your child(ren)'s principal and teachers in serving you in the coming school year.

Sincerely in Christ,

Dr. William A. Watson
Superintendent of Schools



Preparation for the 2022-2023 School Year

Guidance offered by the Office of Catholic Schools to schools considers input from elementary and high school principals and teachers, the diocesan Strategic Action Team, and guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the NJ Departments of Health and Education. Guidance also considers feedback from parents over the last two years regarding their children's health, safety, and consistent access to a rigorous academic program.

Priorities remain the same for this year as they have been before: To maintain the health and safety of students and teachers, sustain the Catholic communities that are so important to the success and development of our students, and continue to provide a rigorous academic program for all students. An important goal is to ensure that all students can participate in school fully in-person safely with as little absence due to COVID-19 as possible. The approaches described below emphasize the commitment of Catholic school students and teachers to one another and our shared understanding that we can take steps individually to help others to stay healthy.

The approaches to managing the scenarios below will be in place for the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year. **Plans may change based on the presence of COVID-19 in the communities served by Catholic schools, new directives that Catholic schools are required to follow, or other factors.** The Office of Catholic Schools will continue to monitor public health information, recommendations, and requirements, including the lived reality of students, teachers, and families in South Jersey Catholic Schools. School-specific questions are best addressed by the school principal.

COVID-19 Scenario-Based Approaches

Scenario	Approach
COVID-19 Symptoms*	<p>Parents are expected to monitor students for symptoms of being sick and to keep students home if they are not feeling well.</p> <p>Parents are expected to test their children for COVID-19 if they exhibit symptoms. A home-based test is acceptable, provided that the instructions for the test are followed exactly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the test is negative: Stay home until symptoms improve • If the test is positive: Stay home for 5 days from symptom onset/positive test. Follow protocol for return-to-school below. <p>Siblings of a student with COVID-19 symptoms may come to school.</p> <p>Any student absent for 3 or more days for any reason will require a doctor's note, including diagnosis, to return to school.</p> <p>Students who are absent from school may not participate in sports or extracurricular activities on the day(s) on which they are absent.</p>
Student tests positive for COVID-19	<p>If a student tests positive for COVID-19, he or she will be required to stay home from school for 5 calendar days from the day symptoms start or the positive COVID-19 test, whichever is earlier.</p> <p>A student may return to school if fever free for 48 hours and symptoms have improved. If the student returns to school during days 6-10 since symptom onset or positive COVID-19 test, he or she is expected to wear a mask while indoors on those days.</p>
At-home close contact with COVID	<p>Quarantine is not required when a member of the household has COVID-19.</p> <p>A student may come to school if he/she does not have COVID-19 symptoms.</p> <p>Students exposed to COVID-19 at home are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear a mask to school for 10 days from the last date of home contact with someone who has COVID-19, OR

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a home COVID-19 test on days 5 and 10 following the initial close contact. If the test is positive, follow the procedures above. <p>A student who participates in sports or high risk extra-curricular activities (e.g., band) and has at-home close contact with COVID-19 is required to take a home COVID-19 test on days 5 and 10. The student may continue to participate in sports and high-risk extra-curricular activities if he/she does not have COVID-19 symptoms and the tests on days 5 and 10 are negative.</p>
In-school close contact with COVID-19	<p>Quarantine is not required for in-school close contact with COVID-19.</p> <p>A student may come to school if he/she does not have COVID-19 symptoms. If COVID-19 symptoms arise, the student must stay home from school and follow the procedures above.</p> <p>Schools will only notify parents of COVID-19 cases in the school community if the cases lead to a change in the school schedule (e.g., temporary remote learning for all students).</p>

*COVID-19 Symptoms that require a student to stay home from school are:

- At least two of the following symptoms: fever (measure or subjective), chills, rigors (shivers), myalgia (muscle aches), headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion or runny nose; OR
- At least one of the following symptoms: new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new olfactory disorder, new taste disorder.

Additional Information

Scenario	Approach
Social Distance, Ventilation, Hand Washing/Sanitizing	<p>Schools may return classrooms to pre-COVID set-up, maintaining distance where possible.</p> <p>Closed air circulation systems will include the maximum amount of fresh air that the system allows.</p> <p>Windows and doors will be kept open as much as possible. Proper use of fans is encouraged to increase air flow.</p> <p>Frequent hand washing and sanitizing should continue as a baseline sanitation measure.</p>

Field Trips	<p>Field trips to educational destinations may be taken. Students are required to follow any COVID-19 safety measures required by the field trip destination.</p> <p>Vaccination will not be required for overnight high school field trips, including Kairos retreats.</p>
Remote Learning	<p>Synchronous, interactive remote learning will be offered if an entire class or school has to stay home due to COVID-19.</p> <p>Synchronous, interactive remote learning due to COVID-19 absence will not be offered for any student in grades PK-4 (unless the whole class is excluded from school, as above).</p> <p>Principals may offer a form of remote learning for students in grades 5-8 to maintain continuity of education when students are absent for COVID-19 reasons, but they are not required to do so. This determination is made at the beginning of the school year by each principal, in consultation with the teachers of grades 5-8. Option need not be synchronous or interactive. Each school will make its own decision based on the resources available to the school.</p>