

The Diocese of Knoxville Catholic Schools

Re-Entry Policies and Procedures



Diocese of Knoxville Catholic Schools: Preparing Scholars, Leaders, and Saints



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Forward

Dear Catholic School communities,

The Diocese of Knoxville has carefully reviewed and prayerfully considered all available science, data, and input from our families to determine the manner for on-site re-opening of our Catholic Schools. Pope Francis reminds us “an education in the fullness of humanity should be the defining feature of Catholic schools”. With that in mind, our school leaders and various task forces have worked diligently to develop operational plans that adhere to the scientific recommendations for the safest possible return of students and faculty to campus while also responding to the needs of each family in order to build the optimum educational experience for the upcoming 2020-2021 school year. Our re-entry plans are a testament to our partnership with our families by providing on-site and remote options for families. These plans reflect the collective work of many and I am extremely grateful for the thoughtful contributions made by administrators, teachers, diocesan staff, parents, medical professionals, and community leaders.

Our schools are about communion and community and are founded on the moral principle that all people are created by God with dignity and purpose. This is why our re-entry plans ask that each of us make small sacrifices, such as socially distancing and wearing protective facial coverings. These sacrifices help ensure a strong community and demonstrate actions that promote care and concern for others. Preparing for pandemic is not optional. In fact, it flows from our duty as Christians to be of service. As Pope Benedict XVI reminded us in his encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*:

Following the example given in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Christian charity is first of all the simple response to immediate needs and specific situations: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for and healing the sick...The church’s charitable organizations ought to do everything in their power to provide the resources and above all the personnel needed for this work. (#31a).

The health and welfare of our students and school communities is always our highest priority. It is critical that all within our school communities are prepared to contribute to the prevention, rapid identification, and mitigation of the spread of COVID-19 in our schools and communities.

The policies and procedures outlined in this document provide the foundational basis for our schools to create environments that mitigate risk. Procedural protocols will be reviewed every two weeks and the community will be informed of any changes. The Diocese of Knoxville Catholic Schools believe that the optimum educational delivery for holistic development of students is on-site and in-school delivery. Therefore, it is our hope that these measures will help keep our communities healthy and students in school.

In Christ,

Dr. Sedonna Prater

Superintendent of Catholic Schools

Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: “Do not be afraid” (Matthew 28:5). And we, together with Peter, “cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us” (1 Peter 5:7).

Pope Francis
Strong in the Face of Tribulation: A Sure Support in Time of Trial

Introduction

As Catholic schools, we have been invited by Pope Francis to embrace creativity and inventiveness so that we can implement new methods of engagement and ministry. Our planning for safe re-entry into the Catholic school adheres to the procedural recommendations by medical and civil agencies while also ensuring systems of welcoming and belonging for families and students are maintained. The policies and procedural protocols below provide the foundation for our schools to build on to have Christ-centered, faith-filled, safe, nurturing academic school environments.

General Health & Well-Being Policies

Health Examination & Vaccinations

- To ensure that all students have up-to-date health exams and vaccinations, schools shall require health examinations and proof of immunization of each student in accordance with the regulations of the Tennessee Department of Education and the Tennessee Department of Health. (*Diocesan policy 1320*).
- Parents of medically vulnerable students are encouraged to consult with their child’s health care provider concerning physical attendance at school. Our schools are committed to providing a remote learning educational plan for students with compromised immune systems, students in required quarantine of any kind, and for those families seeking this option for any reason.

Health Requirements: Employees & Students

- To ensure that all students and employees in the Diocese of Knoxville conform to local county health department regulations, principals/presidents shall keep on file a copy of

the local county health department regulations concerning students and employees. Student health information should be verified at least annually to ensure that the information is current. (*Diocesan policies 1330 & 3120*).

Notification of Communicable Diseases

- Parents must notify the school if his/her child has a communicable disease at which time the school will notify the parents of children who may have been exposed to disease. The student's anonymity will be maintained. Guidelines from the Tennessee Department of health will be used in conjunction with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Health Insurance Portability, and Accountability Act (HIPAA). (*Diocesan policy 3040*).
- Parents must notify the school if his/her child has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or has been exposed to COVID-19 and is in quarantine (*Diocesan policy 3040*).

Screening

- **Students and employees must remain at home if they are ill.**
- **All employees, students, and visitors will be screened prior to entering the building** with the following questions:
 1. Have you been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
 2. Are you experiencing a cough, shortness of breath or a sore throat?
 3. Have you had a fever (100.4 or higher) in the last 48 hours?
 4. Have you had new loss of taste or smell?
 5. Have you had vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours?
- **Temperature screening of employees, students, and visitors will be conducted daily.**

Each school will establish a designated protocol for daily temperature screening of employees, students, and visitors within the building. When feasible, the screening point for students will be directly in the drop-off line for school.
- **Anyone who answers *yes* to the screening questions or is suffering from multiple COVID-19* symptoms (different from normal allergies) must not enter the premises for the safety of all.**

*COVID-19 symptoms are:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore Throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea
- Abdominal pain (especially in children)
- Malaise
- Fatigue
- Rash

Attendance

- School attendance is required by state law; therefore, schools must keep accurate and complete attendance records (*Diocesan policy 1030*).
- Traditional school attendance policies for non-COVID illnesses continue to be in effect.
- Faculty and students will be excused from physical attendance at school for any of the following COVID-19 related reasons:
 - A positive test for COVID-19
 - Presenting a fever of 100.4 or higher
 - Exhibiting two or more of the symptoms of COVID-19 based on CDC guidance
 - An employee or student has been asked to quarantine because of exposure
 - Parental request for at-home learning (The at-home remote learning educational plan will be provided by the student's Catholic school).
 - State or regional mandates to close school for on-site learning (All Catholic schools will shift to the remote learning plan).

Extended Absence due to Quarantine

- If students are not able to be physically at school for one of the above factors, the school will work with families to create an education plan to ensure the students are progressing in their education. Asynchronous (teacher-directed and technology-based) remote learning with regular modifications will be implemented to ensure every student is receiving a well-balanced and academically fulfilling experience.
- If a student is not able to be physically present at school due to COVID-19 symptoms or has had a positive COVID-19 test, his or her siblings (or other students living in the same household) will be transitioned to a remote learning plan and asked to self-quarantine until the family member meets the requirements for returning to school. The school will work with each family privately to create an educational plan for the duration of the self-quarantine.

Procedures for Isolation during the School Day

- Any student or staff who exhibits symptoms consistent with COVID-19 during the day at school will be moved into a safe, private, isolation space for evaluation and pick-up. Those suspected of illness will be provided a facial shield in addition to their facial mask when interacting with others and sent home as quickly as possible. Anyone assisting the individual will also wear additional personal protective equipment (PPE). The school will maintain accurate records of all in contact with the individual that is ill. The room will be disinfected frequently throughout the day.
- The school will ensure the individual is safe and does not need emergent medical attention. If the individual appears seriously ill, the school will call 911 before calling the parent, guardian, or emergency contact.

Returning to School after Physical Absence from the Campus due to COVID-19 or a COVID-19 related health concerns

Students and faculty members may return to school if they satisfy any of the following guidelines:

- A health care provider confirms that the individual's illness is not due to COVID-19 because another explanation was identified (For example, strep throat confirmed by a positive strep test or a rash from poison ivy). (Note: Diagnoses of upper respiratory tract

infection, pneumonia, and viral illness do not exclude the diagnosis of COVID-19 and should not be considered as adequate to return to school).

- Testing for COVID-19 is not a mandatory requirement to return to school. However, persons are required to remain out of school until the following conditions are met:
 - He/she has not had a fever for at least 72 hours (three full days) without fever reducing medications
 - Respiratory and other symptoms have improved for at least 72 hours
- If a person has tested positive for COVID-19, but are asymptomatic, he/she may return to school after fourteen (14) calendar days or when he/she has been released from a healthcare provider.
- If a person has been exposed to COVID-19, he/she must adhere to complete isolation for a minimum of fourteen (14) calendar days or he/she has been released from a healthcare provider to return to school.

Confirmed Case of COVID-19 in the School

The school will notify parents of students who may have been exposed. Confidentiality of the individual will be maintained and will not be identified in communications to the school community at large, but may need to be selectively identified for contact tracing by the health department. The school will also have to assist the local health department in identifying contacts of the infected individual. Contacts will have to self-quarantine for fourteen (14) days from their last contact with the infected individual.

- While confidentiality of the individual will be maintained, the school will communicate to the school community at large that there has been a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the school. This communication will be completed to maintain trust within our school communities, as well as, to better protect our communities and their extended families.

Procedures & Protocols

The following are the highest priority procedural protocols to mitigate risk and optimize the return of students to schools in the context of physical distancing guidelines and the appropriate developmental level of students. Protocols will be explicit and directly taught to students.

Infection Prevention Education

- Faculty and staff will implement infection prevention education including hand hygiene, physical distancing, facial coverings, and spending time outdoors for students and families in a developmentally appropriate manner.

Hygiene and Sanitation

- The school will adhere to safe cleaning and disinfecting protocols with EPA-approved products for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 throughout the school according to the CDC recommendations.
- Hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol will be readily available for use by students and staff.
- Students and faculty will be reminded to frequently wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Young children will be appropriately supervised when using hand sanitizers and other cleaning products.

Physical/Social Distancing

- The school will make every effort to ensure appropriate physical distancing according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the CDC recommendations. This is defined as three (3) to six (6) feet.
- Spectators for athletic events will abide by local regulations and the standard protocols in place during the school day.
- Efforts will be made to maintain as normal social interaction as possible.

Facial Coverings/Masks

- Following guidance from the AAP and the CDC, faculty, students (Pre-Kindergarten and older), and visitors will wear protective facial equipment (masks or shields) in the school.

- All should wear facial masks when entering the building and in all common areas (i.e. hallways, restrooms, etc.). Facial shields, rather than cloth masks, may be worn in the classroom.
- When exercising or during outdoor recess activity, protective facial coverings may be removed if physical distancing is maintained.

Outdoor/Ventilation: Schools are encouraged to provide outdoor classrooms if possible and to utilize large outdoor spaces for instruction, physical activity, and eating when possible.

Experiential Learning/Field Trips: Experiential learning off-campus field trips will be suspended during the fall semester. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate experiential learning on campus through engaging activities and virtual experiences.

Extra-curricular Activities/Events: Standard protocols in place for the school day will also be in place for gatherings, extracurricular activities including athletic events, plays, concerts, and other type activities.

- Families who choose at-home learning for their students in lieu of the traditional classroom setting will not be allowed to participate in extra-curricular activities (i.e. athletics, academic clubs, performing arts, band, etc.). This does not apply to students in quarantine.
- Spectators for athletic events will abide by local regulations and the standard protocols in place during the school day.

Conclusion

This document provides the framework to plan and implement a safe, efficient re-entry in our Catholic Schools. It is important to realize that it is informed by evidence and global best practices, but it is limited by the boundaries of scientific knowledge about COVID-19 and its impact on our communities. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize that there is insufficient data to make recommendations that entirely remove risk from returning to school. It is also likely that as more information is acquired that plans will evolve. Our schools are committed to using all available information to make the best-informed decisions for our students and families regarding safety procedures. Please know that we are committed to monitoring and adjusting these plans accordingly. It is our intent to review protocols every two weeks and will inform our communities when any adjustments are made.

Each school will provide a more detailed description of its procedures and protocols for the daily school routine. A list of helpful resources are provided below. If you have questions, you may contact the Catholic Schools' Office at 865-584-3307, sprater@dioknox.org, or your Catholic school principal or president. While there may still be levels of uneasiness or uncertainty, we can say with great confidence that we will face these challenges as a community of faith. "The Holy Spirit upsets us because it move us, makes us walk, pushes the Church forward" (Pope Francis). Let us all look for moments of grace as we enter this school year. May our Lady shower her blessings on our school communities.

TIPS FOR HELPING STUDENTS GET USED TO MASKS OR SHIELDS



- 1 **MODEL WEARING MASKS. MOST CHILDREN WILL FOLLOW THE ADULT'S EXAMPLE WITHOUT FEAR.**
- 2 **USE SIMPLE WORDS TO EXPLAIN WHY PEOPLE ARE WEARING MASKS.**



- 3 **GIVE CHILDREN TIME TO LOOK, WATCH, AND PRACTICE WEARING A MASK.**



- 4 **ATTACH FACIAL SHIELDS TO A FAVORITE CAP OR HAT.**



- 5 **ANSWER KIDS' QUESTIONS & GIVE SUPPORT.**



- 6 **MAKE IT FUN! ALLOW KIDS TO PICK OUT & DECORATE THEIR OWN FACE MASKS.**



- 7 **HAVE A FEW MASKS HANDY WHILE CHILDREN PLAY. YOUNGER CHILDREN MAY ENJOY BEING A MASKED SUPER HERO OR DOCTOR.**

- 8 **DESCRIBE THE MASK OR SHIELD AS ANOTHER PART OF THE SCHOOL UNIFORM.**



Family Resources

American Academy of Pediatrics aap.healthychildren.org

Return to School During COVID-19

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Return-to-School-During-COVID-19.aspx>

Regreso a la escuela durante el COVID-19

<https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/health-issues/conditions/covid-19/paginas/return-to-school-during-covid-19.aspx>

Wearing Face Masks and How to Explain it to Kids

<https://www.lifespan.org/lifespan-living/wearing-face-masks-and-how-explain-it-kids>

Kids health: Helping Kids Get Used to Masks

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/coronavirus-masks.html>

How to Make Face masks more Comfortable for Kids

<https://www.childrensmn.org/2020/06/05/make-face-masks-comfortable-kids/>