

Saint Rita School COVID Plan: 2021-2022



INTRODUCTION

Our goal for this school year is to return to as normal of school operations as possible, while still maintaining the health and well-being of our school community. All school policies, practices, and routines are subject to change based on:

- Changes in applicable law to preschool, K-8 school, or both
- Evidence of possible COVID transmission in preschool, K-8, or both
- Disruptions created by frequent need to quarantine groups or grades inside preschool, K-8, or both

Note: If there is a legal change specific to preschool or to K-8, or a problem with a particular preschool- or K-8 specific situation, the protocols for just that building will be modified. If a problem arises (or seems likely to) in both programs, the protocols for both buildings will be adjusted in tandem. If a COVID problem specific to just a particular grade emerges, it will be initially addressed just within that grade - with wider changes made as needed.

Every two weeks, we will be monitoring COVID data available for Alexandria City, particularly any evidence of increasing impact (sickness, hospitalization, or death) on children in our surrounding area, but the primary drivers of any changes to our protocols will be adverse COVID impacts in our school community, as shown on the Covid Impact Spectrum (page 4).

ADJUSTING PROTOCOLS & PROVIDING NOTIFICATION

- Any changes to the policies listed here will be communicated via school-wide email.
- Any need to quarantine a small group of students will be communicated to those families via email or phone call from school administrators.

- Any need to quarantine one or more grades and temporarily shift to remote learning will be communicated via email and SchoolMessenger.
- Any tightening of our COVID mitigation measures will last a minimum of two weeks and be re-evaluated by Pastor, Principal, School Nurse, and Preschool Director (when involving preschool) every two weeks after that. The decision to return to baseline protocols will be made based on an assessment of the current level of COVID impact experienced in our school and in the wider Alexandria community.

QUARANTINES

Saint Rita's quarantine policies reflect CDC guidance and may be updated as those recommendations change. Individuals with COVID must isolate at home for 10 days. Quarantines based on close contact with a positive COVID case are a little more complicated. As a threshold matter, "close contacts" as defined by the CDC include those individuals within 6 feet of a positive case for more than 15 minutes during their contagious period, which is 2 days before their symptoms began or - if asymptomatic - before they took a test that would ultimately come back positive. Unvaccinated students and staff deemed to be close contacts of positive cases must quarantine for 10 days. But per CDC updates in July 2021, fully vaccinated people not experiencing any symptoms - as well as those who have had COVID within the past 3 months - do not need to quarantine; they should mask until they get a negative test result from a test taken 3-5 days following exposure. If positive, they would isolate for 10 days.

Quarantining a K-8 individual student/family

If a K-8 individual or family needs to quarantine based on COVID exposure or illness from outside the school community, the individual or family will be provided with as much take-home work as possible to complete during the 10-day quarantine or isolation period, but live instruction will not necessarily be provided. Parents are free to contact teachers for any needed help, and teachers will reach out to those families at least once during the quarantine/isolation period to check on the student. The student will be marked absent for this time and will need to complete all make-up work in a timely manner (see Handbook).

Quarantining a pod or small group of K-8 students

If a small group of K-8 students deemed to be close contacts of a positive case at school need to quarantine, they would be marked absent for the first day while the teachers pulled together their books, materials, and a chromebook if necessary. Pickup will be from 3:30-6 pm the following school day. For the remainder of the group's 10 day quarantine, students will be permitted to eLearn according to a schedule and directions circulated by the teacher. Students must fully participate in this remote learning to be marked present for those school days and must bring all completed work back to school upon their return.

Quarantining an entire K-8 class or grade

If one or more K-8 grades need to quarantine for 10 days based on exposure to a positive case at school, the full class will transition to distance learning (even if vaccinated). The first day, students will be marked absent and the teachers will get materials together. Books, materials, and a chromebook if needed can be picked up that afternoon from 3:30-6 pm. Thereafter, a

schedule of synchronous (live) and asynchronous (posted) instruction will be circulated. Students must fully participate in this remote learning to be marked present and must bring all completed work back to school upon their return.

Quarantines in the Preschool

Any individual preschoolers or a full class who need to isolate or quarantine will be provided with take-home packets of optional work the children can complete, with parent help, during their 10 days at home. The Preschool Director will notify families of packet pickup timing and procedures. If the full class needs to quarantine, preschool staff will provide any additional practicable and age-appropriate resources, such as a short (optional) zoom class or videos of staff reading favorite children's books.

Quarantines of Staff

Any staff members who contract COVID will isolate at home for 10 days. If there was no exposure at school, the students will carry on at school with a substitute teacher. If there was exposure at school, any (unvaccinated) close contacts would need to quarantine, which could result in shifting a whole class to distance learning for 10 days. If unvaccinated staff have to quarantine based on exposure to a positive case *outside of school*, their students would still come into school in person to be taught by a regular substitute, their own teacher (virtually, from home) with a proctor, or some combination - according to what would be most practicable.

TRAVEL QUARANTINES

Saint Rita School will enforce any travel-related quarantine measures adopted by the Commonwealth of Virginia - please check in with the office before planning a trip and keep in mind that Virginia could adopt new quarantine restrictions at any time. Staff planning to travel should consult the Diocesan regulations for travel-related quarantines applicable to employees.

COVID TESTING

The school will not provide COVID testing, but may require students or staff displaying symptoms or reporting contact with a positive case to be tested before returning to school - while awaiting results, all members of that individual's family/household would need to remain home from school. If another family/household member (i.e. a parent) is getting tested for COVID, the family must report that to the school nurse.

- If the testing is due to symptoms of illness, all students in that household must remain home until a negative result is received.
- If the testing relates to possible exposure to a positive case by (only) the family member seeking testing, the Preschool Director or Principal will decide if children not subject to that exposure need to remain home to await their family member's negative result.

Any type of professionally-administered COVID test results (rapid or PCR), *not a self-administered home kit*, will be accepted by school.

ANALYSIS OF CASES AT SCHOOL

If we have two positive cases of individuals in the same grade or indoor classroom environment, within the relevant time window for exposure, and without evidence of significant contact outside of school, we will treat those cases as potentially related and adjust school protocols accordingly. If the individuals did not have close contact in school, or became positive outside the relevant time window for exposure, or seemingly contracted the virus from another source (family, sports team, etc), those will be treated as isolated cases, and we will continue normal school operations.

NOTIFICATION OF CASES

All positive cases among students and staff will be anonymously mentioned in a full-school email notification listing the grade of the child (or that it was an adult), the date the individual was last in school, and whether based on timing there was any exposure to the school community requiring additional action.

VACCINATION STATUS

No staff or students are required to receive the COVID vaccine. Neither the Diocese nor Saint Rita School will request documentation of anyone in our school community’s vaccination status, but staff or parents are welcome to submit such documentation to the school nurse. Parents are encouraged to inform the school nurse if their child will be receiving a vaccine so we can watch for any side effects when they return to school. If we are aware that a staff member or student has been fully vaccinated, such individuals would not have to quarantine based on exposure to a COVID-positive case. If we have no such awareness, a 10-day quarantine would be required. If a full grade has to temporarily shift to eLearning, all students in that grade would eLearn at home (even if vaccinated).

COVID Impact Spectrum: Assessing Adverse Impacts in School

If we see...

<i>Low Adverse Impact</i>	<i>Moderate Adverse Impact</i>	<i>High Adverse Impact*</i>
Isolated positive cases only; no evidence of transmission	Evidence of related positive cases possibly transmitted at school	Possible outbreak at school
Quarantining only of individuals / families	Frequent & disruptive quarantining of multiple groups / grades	Quarantining of multiple grades required simultaneously
<i>What would we do?</i>		
Keep school operations normal, as described in each topic area below	Adjust our protocols accordingly - see individual topics (below) for layers of potential changes	Temporarily transition to distance learning for some or all of the school, for some or all of the day, for 10 days

**The possibility of experiencing HIGH levels of adverse COVID impacts in our school seems unlikely, but if it occurred we would temporarily transition instruction (fully or partially) to an eLearning platform. That announcement would be disseminated by school-wide email and the School Messenger system, and a K-8 textbook/packet pickup would be held the next school day from 3:30-6 pm with chromebooks available for those in need of them. A K-8 eLearning schedule combining synchronous and asynchronous learning would be circulated, and full participation would be required for students to be counted present. If our preschool program experienced a high level of adverse impact and had to transition to distance learning, the Preschool Director would circulate information and directions to the preschool community.*

*We hope and pray that we will experience only **low** levels of adverse impact from COVID in our school community, but we are preparing to adjust our protocols if that level rises to **moderate**, as described below. Progressive layers of adjustments will be made as needed.*

Planned Routines & Protocols - with possible adjustments, as needed

MASKING FOR STUDENTS

Masks are optional for everyone outside. So long as we experience “low” adverse impacts of COVID within our school, indoor masking will be optional for all students.

If we start seeing “moderate” adverse impacts of COVID within our school, we will consider requiring masks for all students when seated within 3 feet of others or when within a mixed-cohort environment. If adverse impacts continue, we will consider requiring masks for all students when seated within 6 feet of others and/or when within a mixed cohort environment. If adverse impacts persist, we will consider mandating constant masking indoors. Students unable to constantly mask due to a health condition would need to social distance from others by 6 feet and slip on a mask or alternative face covering whenever unable to maintain that distancing.

DISTANCING OF STUDENTS

So long as we experience only “low” adverse impacts of COVID in our school community, no rigid minimum spacing will be required. But in most big school classrooms, students will be approximately 3 feet apart when seated at their desks. Students may be seated closer together in rooms utilizing a table-based furniture arrangement, such as in Preschool, Kindergarten, the computer lab, science lab, art/music room, or lunch room.

If we start seeing “moderate” adverse impacts of COVID within our school possibly related to distancing, we will utilize alternative seating arrangements to maintain a minimum of 3 ft spacing in indoor instructional settings. If such distancing is not possible in a given Specials room, for example, the Specials teacher will teach the students in an alternative space such as the school hall, in the students’ regular classroom, or outside. If COVID problems persist despite the increased spacing, we will have to consider requiring masking as well.

STAFF REGULATIONS ON MASKING, DISTANCING, ETC.

Indoor masking is optional for fully vaccinated staff so long as our school plan and protocols permit. Unvaccinated staff are required by Diocesan regulation (based on Virginia law) to mask and social distance by 6 feet. The VA law and Diocesan regulations provide for a face shield + social distancing as an available alternative for unvaccinated staff with health problems caused by continuous masking.

VISITORS

So long as we experience “low” adverse impacts of COVID in our school, visitors are welcome in our buildings as guest readers, parent helpers and volunteers, etc. If here in a capacity to interact with students (i.e. not just momentarily dropping off or picking up their child, a lunch, a form, etc), unvaccinated visitors will be asked to mask or socially distance by 6 feet (and masks will be provided).

If we start seeing “moderate” adverse impacts of COVID within our school that have any connection to visitors, we will consider requiring all visitors to mask indoors, hold any classes or events with visitors outside, or no longer permitting visitors or volunteers to participate in activities on campus.

WELLNESS POLICIES

It is imperative that students and staff remain home when sick. All students and staff must be fever-free, without the use of fever-reducing medications, for 24 hours before returning to school. All students and staff must also be free from vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours before returning to school. Any students or staff with new respiratory symptoms may be required to produce a negative COVID test result from a medical provider (not a home kit) before returning to school. If a child at school has a fever or a persistent cough, the school nurse will escort the child to an isolated location and may have him or her mask while the parents are called to discuss. The child may need to be tested for COVID and produce a negative result in order to return to school. Even if it is not COVID, children with severe enough symptoms to impact learning need to recover at home.

So long as we experience “low” adverse impacts of COVID within our school community, we will not require daily health screening forms or temperature checks, as generally these did not alert us to any problems last year that the parents in our communities did not directly bring to our attention. Thank you for your continued efforts to protect our community by alerting us to any health issues your children are experiencing.

If we do start seeing children brought to school sick or any “moderate” adverse impacts of COVID in our school community, we will consider reinstating daily health screening forms for all students and staff and/or instituting nurse rounds to all classrooms each morning to observe for any signs of illness. If the health screening or nurse rounds alone fail to remedy the problem, both measures will be employed.

CLEANING/SANITATION/VENTILATION

All of our classrooms have air purifiers that will be fitted with new filters for this school year, and the MERV filters remain in our school-wide HVAC system. We will keep windows open whenever practicable and enjoy outdoor classes or snack/lunch as much as possible. Hand sanitizing stations are placed around the school and filled. Students will wash their hands with soap and water multiple times per day. Our cleaning crew will maintain last year's deep cleaning protocols nightly.

If we start seeing "moderate" adverse impacts of COVID in our school community, we will use our backpack fogger to sanitize indoor spaces (such as the cafeteria, Atrium, or Specials rooms) between groups.

DROP-OFF/PICK-UP PROCEDURES

So long as we experience only "low" adverse impacts of COVID in our school community, we will use our usual drop-off and pick-up routines.

Drop off & pick up in K-8 School

All K-8 students will be dropped off from carline or walked up to the staff members meeting the carline between 7:50 and 8:05 a.m. No children can be dropped off prior to 7:50 am. Parents will not enter the building with their children. The school day begins promptly at 8:10 am and runs until 3:10 pm, when students will come out to the parking lot to meet their parents or proceed to Extended Day. Refer to the parent handbook for other pickup procedures, and be sure to notify the main office by email to let us know if someone else will be picking up your child on a given day.

Drop off & pick up in Preschool

Preschool drop off will begin at 8 am for their 8:15 am start time. To cut down on the risks of exposure posed by families congregating in the small lobby of the parish center for a prolonged period, families are encouraged to say goodbye to their preschooler at the outer glass doors anytime between 8 and 8:15 am. The children will be welcomed by the Preschool Director and guided to the Instructional Aide in their classroom. Any parent who would like to bring their child all the way to the classroom door on a particular day is welcome to do so if desired, so long as we see only "low" adverse impacts of COVID in our school community. Should we start to see "moderate" adverse impacts of COVID potentially related to adults in the building, we will consider asking all visitors who come in (even briefly) to mask or requiring (rather than encouraging) drop off at the outer doors.

You are welcome to pick up your child anytime between 11:30 am and 11:45 am (unless they are remaining for Lunch Bunch). When you arrive at the glass doors of the parish center, your child's lead teacher and Preschool Director will escort him or her to you.

MASS & ADORATION

So long as we experience “low” adverse impact of COVID in our school community, we will attend weekly Mass all together on Wednesday mornings at 8:20 am, and families are invited to attend as space permits. Three grades at a time will attend weekly Wednesday afternoon Holy Hour for Adoration and Confession. All Diocesan directives on proper COVID protocols at Mass will be followed.

If we start seeing “moderate” adverse impacts of COVID within our school community possibly related to closer spacing at school Mass, we will limit Mass attendance to grades 1-8 and close the Mass to families - or consider splitting our community into two school Masses so we can spread out.

RECESS

In K-8, three classes at a time will be outside for morning or afternoon recess, but they will stick to designated areas by cohort just as they did last year (so if 1st grade is on the playground, 3rd grade may be on the interior blacktop, and 5th grade may be on the far blacktop). In preschool, one class at a time uses the playground. Masks will not be required outside, but recess monitors will halt any tackling, wrestling, or prolonged close huddles of kids.

COHORTING

The students will be spending most of their instructional day, as well as snack, lunch, and recess, with their grade-level peers, with the following exceptions:

Middle School House System: Middle school students will begin and end their day in 10 minute homerooms in their mixed-age Archangel classrooms. *Though it is not ideal, for now they will be seated in their Archangel House among their grade-level peers (with the sections separated from each other separated from each other 6 feet) to preclude any close contacts that would trigger quarantines beyond the grade of the positive case.*

If we start seeing “moderate” adverse impacts of COVID affecting the mixed-age Houses despite how we are seating them, we will consider masking in Houses or returning to single-grade daily homerooms.

Level I Atrium: Our Lambs, Shepherds, and Kindergarteners attend their weekly Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program as a mixed-age cohort according to the Montessori model.

If we start seeing “moderate” adverse impacts of COVID affecting the Atrium, such as an exposure scenario resulting in the quarantine of groups of Lambs, Shepherds, and Kindergarteners, we will cohort the students according to grade level or consider having them wear masks during that time.

Strings/Band: Weekly lessons may involve mixed-age students.

If we start seeing “moderate” adverse impacts of COVID related to these music lessons, we will re-design the schedule so children attend lessons only with grade-level peers or have them mask for their lessons.

Extended Day/Lunch Bunch: K-8 afternoon Extended Day and Preschool Lunch Bunch happens in a mixed-age setting. When inside, students will be distanced as much as practicable and outdoor time will be maximized.

If we start seeing “moderate” adverse impacts of COVID affecting Extended Day or Lunch Bunch, we will consider cohorting these groups into grade levels or family groups. If impracticable to cohort, we may need to have children wear masks during these programs when indoors.

SEATING CHARTS

K-8 students will have written seating arrangements for each room they are in during the day to assist in any necessary contact tracing. If (and only if) we begin to experience “moderate” adverse impacts of COVID such as repeated and disruptive full-grade quarantines due to exposure at school, we will consider forming small groups of peers (“pods”) who will be seated near each other in all classrooms and at lunch to limit the number of “close contacts” who would have to quarantine based on exposure. Such pods are not likely to work as well in the preschool given how that program is structured.

USE OF & MOVEMENT WITHIN BUILDING

So far as we experience only “low” adverse impacts of COVID in our school community, we will use and travel throughout our building as normally as possible, including rotating to Specials classrooms, eating in the school hall, using middle school lockers, etc. We will continue the practice of having staff members call for the nurse, when needed, on their walkie talkie - rather than permit ill or injured students to visit the nurse on their own.

If we start seeing “moderate” adverse impacts of COVID potentially related to any of these practices, we will consider:

- Spreading students out or masking in Specials rooms (if proximity is the problem) - or having Specials teachers rotate into the regular classroom or use an alternate (or outdoor) space
- Discontinuing use of middle school lockers, if there is some indication that has created a COVID problem
- Limiting numbers of students using the bathroom at the same time
- Rotating student groups through the cafeteria to create more room to spread out, with other groups eating outside or in their classrooms
- Turning off drinking fountains, if we have some indication that has created a COVID problem

CO / EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

So long as adverse impacts of COVID in our school community remain low, we plan to offer our normal fun extra-curricular activities such as Battle of the Books, the School Play, CYO Sports, Chess, Boxing, a new Spanish Club, etc. We will first focus on launching school itself before layering in these additional activities.

If we start seeing “moderate” adverse impacts of COVID in our school community related to any of these activities, we will consider holding them outside, requiring the use of masks, cohorting them into grade-level groups, or suspending them altogether, as needed.

Strings lessons will proceed normally in mixed-age cohorts, spaced by 6 feet, but will be cohorted by grade or masked if we start seeing “moderate” adverse impacts of COVID related to these classes.

Band will proceed normally with in-person lessons but will be cohorted by grade, held outside, or conducted virtually in response to “moderate” adverse impacts of COVID potentially related to participation in Band.

FIELD TRIPS

We hope to take advantage of the many opportunities in our area to get our K-8 students off campus for fun and educational field trips, but we will monitor the COVID situation in the community to make sure such planned trips are prudent. Field trips to outdoor locations or places adhering to capacity limits & undertaking COVID mitigation measures will be preferred, and masks may be required for any crowded indoor locations open to the public.

SCHOOL EVENTS

So long as we experience only “low” adverse COVID impacts in our school community, we will hold in-person events like Back to School Night, PTO meetings, Parent Coffees & Conversations, Parent-Teacher Conferences, Concerts, etc.

If we start seeing “moderate” adverse impacts of COVID in our school community that raise a concern about any of these events, we will consider requiring masks, locating the events outside, or holding them virtually as needed.