



## ***Saint Rita School COVID Plan***

***Updated January 2022***

Given the fluidity of the COVID situation, in terms of the ever-changing legal landscape as well as the strains of the virus itself, Saint Rita School is providing this updated COVID Plan to our families and staff in January 2022. It will be updated as needed with changing conditions.

### **1. What is the school's sick policy?**

- Students and staff may not come to school if they have had a fever, nausea / vomiting, or diarrhea within the last 24 hours. Anyone experiencing respiratory symptoms severe enough to interfere with learning (or working) also needs to stay home until they improve.
- Families will be asked to pick up any children manifesting a fever, nausea / vomiting, diarrhea, or severe respiratory symptoms within 30 minutes of being called.
- Families will not be asked by the school to test their children for COVID unless we are required to obtain a negative test for students returning from quarantine.

### **2. What is the school's mask policy?**

- Per [Executive Order #2](#) effective in Virginia on January 24, 2022, parents can decide whether or not to comply with a school mask policy. The school will assume, unless informed otherwise, that those parents who submitted medical or religious mask exemptions last fall will want their students to remain unmasked. As of January 24, any additional students may unmask if their parents so choose by requesting and submitting a form indicating that preference or simply calling or emailing the principal to let us know. No reason needs to be provided - we just need to hear directly from you so we know it is your decision (not your child's) that they will not be wearing a mask at school. Based on that information, we will update our seating charts to seat any additional unmasked students near those currently with exemptions. This ensures accurate information for contact-tracing purposes. *Please see #7 for information about masking upon return to school or preschool following quarantine or isolation.*
- **In the K-8 building: Masks will still be requested for students for the next few weeks given the extremely high number of cases in our school community.** Aside from the debate over how well cloth masks preclude viral transmission, they do cut down on the need to quarantine. As between masked students at least 3 feet apart, which is

the current spacing in most classrooms, quarantine is not required in the case of an exposure (see #6 & #7 for more information). Learning together, in person, remains our top priority, so we request that masks continue to be worn for one more month, until February 18, 2022. Possibly by then, either (1) this recent surge of cases will have diminished, or (2) the legal requirements to contact-trace and quarantine will be abandoned and this virus will be treated like any other. Parents will be consulted again on or before February 18, 2022 to see if anyone else would like to exercise their option to send their students to school without masks.

- **In the preschool:** Our policy of optional masks for students remains unchanged unless disruptive quarantines prompt us to request more widespread masking (subject to the provisions of Executive Order #2).
- **For staff:** Staff mask policies are outlined in the Employee COVID Handbook of the Diocese of Arlington, which contains regulations based on the Virginia Permanent Standard for employees. This Standard currently requires masks for unvaccinated employees, though vaccinated employees remain free to wear masks if they so choose.

### **3. What should families do when getting tested for COVID?**

- If any member of a household is getting tested for COVID or awaiting results, ***no members of that household may come to school*** until a negative result is obtained.
- If a child, parent, or other household member test positive or are presumed positive for COVID, please inform the school immediately by emailing the school nurse. She will begin contact-tracing, if necessary, and provide information about next steps and a potential return date.

### **4. How will the school community be notified of COVID cases?**

- The school nurse will continue to send a notification of each positive or presumed positive COVID case in our school community, noting the grade, date last in school, and any action needed or taken.
- When possible, notifications will be consolidated to cut down on the volume of emails, which may cause a slight delay. Should high numbers of cases continue, the notification system may be streamlined further.

### **5. What does “presumed positive” for COVID mean?**

- Typically this is used in COVID notifications when at least one member of the household has a confirmed positive case and then other family members manifest the same symptoms (even if they do not end up getting tested).

### **6. How is contact-tracing done for positive or presumed positive cases?**

- The principal and school nurse are the contact tracers for Saint Rita.
- The relevant time window for contact tracing is 2 days before symptoms emerge or - if asymptomatic - 2 days before testing.
- **In the preschool:** contact tracing is not practicable because the children are not stationary and distanced. This means that an exposure in the relevant time window would prompt a closure of that class.

- **In the K8 building:** contact tracing is conducted by reviewing seating charts and attendance records, as well as consulting the teachers, to identify close contacts.
  - Close contacts are those who are:
    - Closer than 3 feet to a positive case for at least 15 cumulative minutes (whether the children are masked or not)
    - Closer than 6 feet to a positive case who is not wearing a mask
  - Typically, close contacts include the other students at their lunch table but possibly also on an adjacent computer in the computer lab or at the same art/music/kindergarten table, etc
  - Note that masked students need to be just 3 feet apart to avoid being considered close contacts while the requisite distance is 6 feet for unmasked students.
- Close contacts will be notified by the school nurse, by email or phone call, as soon as they are identified.
- Please bear in mind that we only perform contact-tracing for the school; the families with the positive case bear the responsibility of notifying other potential close contacts outside of our school day.

## **7. Who DOES and DOES NOT have to quarantine?**

- In the preschool, as discussed above, the whole class will quarantine if there is an exposure in the relevant time frame (2 days before symptoms or - if asymptomatic - testing). This is because our preschoolers are not stationary and distanced so the threshold of a cumulative 15 minutes near each other would be met in the course of their morning together.
- In the K-8 building, quarantine is required for **close contacts** who are not fully vaccinated or have recently had COVID.
- Again, close contacts are those who are:
  - Within 3 feet of a positive case for at least 15 cumulative minutes (whether the children are masked or not)
  - Within 6 feet of a positive case if either child is not wearing a mask
- ***Masked students at least 3 feet apart from each other are not considered close contacts who would have to quarantine.***
- ***As we have done throughout the pandemic, 6 feet of space will continue to be provided between masked and unmasked students in the classrooms when feasible.***
- If an individual has been fully vaccinated (2 shots), they do not have to quarantine as a close contact. A third (booster) shot is not currently required.
- If an individual has had COVID within the last 90 days, they do not have to quarantine as a close contact. Please make sure to report positive tests to the school so we have a record of this.
- “Contacts of contacts” do not have to quarantine - meaning if Jenny in 4th grade has to quarantine as a close contact of another 4th grader, Jenny’s little sister Stacy in 1st grade DOES NOT have to quarantine.
- ***These quarantine rules are the directives of the Alexandria Health Department. There is presently no provision for an antibody test to prevent someone from having to quarantine but if that changes, we will update our protocols accordingly.***

### **8. What are the current quarantine and isolation timelines and protocols?**

- The standard duration of isolation or quarantine following a COVID case or exposure is 10 days, but there is now an option for a 5-day return provided certain criteria are met and a close-fitting mask is subsequently worn. This 5-day option requires that:
  - ***symptoms are resolving***
  - ***the individual has been fever-free for 24 hours without medication, and***
  - ***the individual will wear a close-fitting mask for 5 additional days (days 6-10 following the exposure, onset of illness, or positive test).***
- The Alexandria Department of Health has applied this new exception to schools, and the Diocese of Arlington requires its schools to follow this directive. Therefore:
  - **If a student or staff member meets the criteria to return to school early, after the 5 days, a face mask is required at school on days 6-10, regardless of mask exemption or parental election that child not normally be masked.**
  - If parents prefer to keep the student home for the full 10 days, students can return (provided improving symptoms and fever-free) without a face covering.
- Students returning from quarantine or isolation after 5 days will also be spaced by 6 feet at lunch or snack time on days 6-10.
- When counting the days for quarantine or isolation, Day Zero is the day of the exposure, the day symptoms began, or the day of the COVID test.
- *Please be aware that these quarantine and isolation protocols and timelines, along with the masking requirement for an early return, are not school-generated policies but rather the directives of the Alexandria Department of Health that the Diocese of Arlington requires its schools to uphold.*
- *Please also be aware that the Alexandria Department of Health falls within the Virginia Department of Health, and some of its rules and practices may change as a result of Governor Youngkin's election and the appointment of a new State Health Commissioner. We will update any changing policies as needed.*

### **9. What is the process to return to school from quarantine or isolation?**

- When the school nurse receives word about a positive case requiring isolation or quarantine, she will provide that family with a "next steps" flyer that lists the criteria described above as the conditions for return and explains the mask requirement if an early (5-day) return is desired.
- Each family (or staff member) must be explicitly cleared by the nurse before their return.
- If we are required to also obtain a negative COVID test to return from quarantine we will update these protocols accordingly.

### **10. What about quarantines for siblings or other family members of a positive case?**

- Family members who separate when there is a positive case can begin their quarantine clock after they separate (day zero), **potentially** emerging from quarantine 5 days later (if criteria are met and mask is subsequently worn).
- If family members DO NOT separate when they have a positive case, the first five days (counting from day zero) elapse as the illness of the positive family member runs its

course and THEN the quarantine clock (minimum of 5 days) starts for family members who did not have COVID but are quarantining as close contacts. So if MOM gets COVID, children stay home for at least 5 days whilst Mom is still considered to have COVID and THEN children quarantine at least 5 additional days as close contacts (to afford time for their symptoms to develop if the children have contracted the virus). If during Mom's illness, children start showing symptoms or test positive, please update the school nurse as that would affect the children's return date.

- *These are the current directives from the Alexandria Department of Health, which the Diocese of Arlington requires its schools to follow, and they will be updated with any changes as needed.*

#### **11. What if a whole class is quarantined?**

- If an entire K-8 class is quarantined, that class will transition to eLearning according to a schedule that will be circulated. Chromebooks will be available to check out for families who need them.
- If an entire preschool class is quarantined, packets will be assembled for home learning and live or recorded instruction will be provided virtually as appropriate for early childhood learners.

#### **12. What about make-up work?**

- For students absent just one or two days, students will make up the work upon their return in the ordinary fashion (an additional day is allocated to make up work for each day missed).
- For students who will be absent three or more days due to a COVID case or exposure, the teachers will try to provide and send home as much work as is practicable for the student to be working on at home during the absence. Please bear in mind that all of our teachers are currently dealing with many absent students, so you may need to be proactive in requesting make-up work and patient in receiving it. Some of our teachers have just 40 minutes a day of planning time (i.e. when their class is in PE) so they have quite a lot to do in a very short time.

***Thank you for your understanding and support as we navigate this challenging environment together. We will continue to educate these children to the best of our ability and keep our community healthy and united. Thank you for all you are doing to make that possible.***