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# **Guidelines for Maintaining Safe & Healthy Schools in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Holy Spirit Catholic School Division  
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# **Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Separate School Division**

## **Guidelines for Maintaining Safe and Healthy Schools in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

This document has been created by the Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Separate School Division to serve as a guide to keep Holy Spirit employees, students, parents, and community partners safe in this time of COVID-19.

This document outlines safety information and protocols that need to be considered. This plan will be updated, as necessary, to continue following guidelines outlined by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Alberta and the Minister of Education. Key documents from these sources includes:

- [2021-2022 School Year Plan](#) (August 2021)
- [COVID-19 information: guidance for schools \(K-12\) and school buses - scenario 1](#) (July 2021)
- [Guidance for respiratory illness prevention and management in schools](#) (August 2021)
- [Public health management of respiratory illness in schools: questions and answers for school administrators](#) (August 2021)

**Please ensure you have the most recent version and this plan is posted at the worksite.**

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# Mission Statement

*We are a Catholic Faith Community, dedicated to providing each student entrusted to our care with an education rooted in the Good News of Jesus Christ.*

*Guided by the Holy Spirit, in partnership with home, parish and society, our schools foster the growth of responsible citizens who will live, celebrate and proclaim their faith.*

*Our Catholic Faith is the foundation of all that we do.*

## Introduction

The Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Separate School Division (Holy Spirit) is receiving guidance and direction from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, local Medical Officer of Health and Alberta Education. We continue to be committed to keeping parents, students, staff, and the community informed about health and safety issues in relation to COVID-19.

## Guiding Principles

1. The safety of students and staff comes first.
2. Student learning will continue.
3. Resources continue to flow to schools.
4. School authorities have flexibility to do what is best for their community

On August 13, 2021 the Government of Alberta announced that schools would be focusing on a normal return, with in-class learning for the majority of students this Fall 2021. They further provided a [2021-2022 School Year Plan](#) outlining key elements for the resumption of learning. Recognizing the dynamic nature of COVID-19, the Appendix found within that documentation also contains two contingency plans in the event that they may be needed. Currently, the Government of Alberta plans to review this plan by September 27, 2021, at which time changes may be required.

## Division Practices for the 2021/2022 School Year

Routine best practices to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses will continue to include:

- promoting and facilitating hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- staying home when sick
- maintaining ventilation
- ensuring regular cleaning and disinfection of high traffic/touch areas
- ensuring that masks are mandatory on buses

**In the absence of legislation and associated health orders, we are unable to mandate the use of masks in our division. However, we highly recommend that masks be used as a means of reducing the transmission of respiratory viruses. As a result, all those who choose to wear a mask in our schools will be unequivocally supported.**

Additional measures may be considered or recommended if a school experiences a COVID-19 outbreak. Should this occur, Holy Spirit Catholic School Division will work closely with Alberta Health Services to mitigate risk. Some of the measures that may be taken include:

- requiring the use of masks
- implementing classroom cohorts
- limiting extra-curricular activities
- making localized rapid testing available
- any other measures, as determined by Alberta Health Services and Alberta Education

## Vaccinations in Schools

As part of the Re-entry Plan for 2021/2022, the Government of Alberta announced that COVID-19 immunization clinics are being planned for grades 7 through 12 schools across the province. Alberta Health Services (AHS) has indicated that students under 18 of age will not be vaccinated without parent or guardian consent. When available, consent forms will be available through the school.

It should also be noted that these vaccination clinics will be open to interested staff. Provisions may also be made for parents, provided there are sufficient resources.

## Out-of-School Learning: Division E-Learning

In the spring of 2021, the school division promoted an “E-learning” program as a program of choice for students from grades 4 to 12. Any student from within or external to the division had the opportunity to register for this program. Although we closed registrations and staffed accordingly, we have opened the option of E-learning for those parents who desire to have this method of delivery for 2021/2022. Further details and regarding the E-learning program and request for registration can be found under “Educational Services” on the Holy Spirit Catholic School Division website:

[https://www.holyspirit.ab.ca/educational\\_services/elearning\\_program-trinity\\_learning\\_centre](https://www.holyspirit.ab.ca/educational_services/elearning_program-trinity_learning_centre)

## COVID-19

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found mostly in animals. In humans, they can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The disease caused by the new coronavirus has been named COVID-19. While many of the characteristics of COVID-19 are still unknown, mild to severe illness has been reported for confirmed cases. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic in March 2020.

The [Alberta Health COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) is available for anyone that develops [symptoms](#) and can be used to help determine if you need further assessment or testing for COVID-19.

In October 2020, the [Alberta Health COVID-19 Self-Assessment for Healthcare Workers and School Teacher and/or School Staff](#) was updated and released.

## Symptoms

Symptoms for COVID-19 are similar to those for influenza or other respiratory illnesses.

Anyone who has the following symptoms is legally required to [isolate/quarantine](#) and should test for COVID-19:

- fever<sup>1</sup>
- new onset of cough or worsening chronic cough
- new or worsening shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- sore throat
- runny nose
- loss of taste or smell

If you have any of the following symptoms, stay home, monitor symptoms, and minimize contact with others until you are feeling better.

- chills
- painful swallowing
- stuffy nose
- headache
- muscle or joint ache
- feeling unwell, fatigue or severe exhaustion
- nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or unexplained loss of appetite
- loss of sense of smell or taste
- conjunctivitis (pink eye)

For guidance about testing and additional information, parents/students should complete the [Alberta Health COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#). Division staff are directed to complete the [Alberta Health COVID-19 Self-Assessment for Healthcare Workers and School Teacher and/or School Staff](#).

## Responding to Illness

- Staff members, parents, and children/students must not enter the school if they have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Schools must develop procedures to address staff that become symptomatic during the school day to allow that staff member to isolate/leave the school for the time recommended by the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Alberta Health Services.
- If a child/student develops symptoms while at the school, the child/student should be asked to wear a non-medical mask if they are able to, and be isolated in a separate room. Schools will have a designated sick room. The parent/guardian will be notified to come and pick up the child/student immediately. The child/student should be distanced from other children/students. The parent/guardian of the student should access COVID-19 testing by accessing the [Alberta Health COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Average normal body temperature taken orally is about 37°C. For more on normal body temperature and fevers, see MyHealth.Alberta.ca's information for [children age 11 and younger](#) and for [people age 12 and older](#).

- If the child/student requires close contact and care, staff can continue to care for the child/student until the parent is able to pick up the child/student. The student and staff should wear a mask and close interactions with the student that may result in contact with the student's respiratory secretions should be avoided.
- Staff/students must wash their hands before donning a mask and before and after removing the mask (as per [Alberta Health's guidance regarding the use of masks](#)), and before and after touching any items used by the child/student.
- All items the student touched/used while isolated must be cleaned and disinfected as soon as the child/student has been picked up.
- Should a case of COVID-19 be identified at a school, in keeping with the *Public Health Act*, neither the school nor the school division will be privy to any confidential information.

## Daily Screening

- Before leaving home, staff, children/students, visitors, and volunteers who will access the school for work or education, **must** self-screen for symptoms each day that they enter the school using the [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#).
- Parents and children/students must be provided a copy of the screening tool upon school registration with the expectation that it needs to be completed on a daily basis.
- Schools must keep records of children's/student known pre-existing conditions. If a child/student develops symptoms that could be caused by either COVID-19 or by a known pre-existing condition (e.g., allergies), the child/student should be tested for COVID-19 to confirm that it is not the source of their symptoms before entering or returning to school.
- Anyone that reports symptoms should be directed to stay home, seek health care advice as appropriate (e.g. call Health Link 811, or their primary health care practitioner, or 911 for emergency response).
  - Parents/guardians and students are directed to fill out the [Alberta Health COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) for further direction and to determine if they should be tested.
  - Division staff will complete the [Alberta Health COVID-19 Self-Assessment for Healthcare Workers and School Teacher and/or School Staff](#) for further direction and to determine if they should be tested.
- [Signs](#) must be posted at all entrances reminding persons not to enter if they have COVID-19 symptoms, even if symptoms resemble a mild cold.

## Absenteeism Reporting Process

Staff will continue to follow the current school division procedure regarding absenteeism reporting.

### Reporting to Public Health

- School leaders must report unusual absenteeism patterns or symptoms in staff or students who recently attended the school.
- If there is a school-wide absence rate of 10% or greater due to illness OR there is an unusual amount of individuals with similar symptoms, this will be reported to AHS Coordinated Early Identification Response (CEIR) team at 1-844-343-0971.

## Training and Education

All school division personnel are required to:

1. Review this document;
2. Report concerns to your supervisor immediately;
3. Support the site safety liaison; and
4. Follow the guidelines outlined in this plan.

## Additional Resources

### From the Government of Alberta:

- [COVID-19 Information for Albertans](#)
- [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#)
- [Alberta Health COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) (For Parents and Students)
- [Alberta Health COVID-19 Self-Assessment for Healthcare Workers and School Teacher and/or School Staff](#) (For Staff)
- [COVID-19: Education and child care](#)
- [2021-2022 School Year Plan](#) (August 2021)
- [COVID-19 information: guidance for schools \(K-12\) and school buses - scenario 1](#) (July 2021)
- [Guidance for respiratory illness prevention and management in schools](#) (August 2021)
- [Public health management of respiratory illness in schools: questions and answers for school administrators](#) (August 2021)

### Mental Health Resources

- [Alberta Health Services - Help in Tough Times](#)
- [jack.org - The Alberta COVID-19 Youth Mental Health Resources Hub](#)
- [Government of Canada – Hope for Wellness Help Line](#)
- [Holy Spirit Catholic School Division - Mental Health Resources](#)

### Health Resources

- [Holy Spirit Catholic School Division - OHS Portal](#)
- [St. John Ambulance Poster “How to Remove Gloves”](#)
- [Hand-washing Steps Using the World Health Organization's Technique](#)

# APPENDIX A

## Building Safety and Cleaning Protocols

- Area rugs and furnishings with porous fabric must be removed.
- All classrooms, other teaching spaces, and offices must be de-cluttered.
- Hand hygiene and cleaning requirements for schools will address:
  - The placement of hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol content (or a non-alcohol-based hand sanitizer approved by Health Canada) in entrances, exits, classroom entrances, near high-touch equipment and other high traffic areas.
    - Consider the age and ability of students when determining whether hand sanitizers are appropriate. Hand sanitizer can cause serious harm if ingested. The risk of ingestion is greater for those who may not understand the warning labels and negative effects of ingestion.
  - High contact surfaces;
  - Washrooms;
  - Shared equipment;
  - Auxiliary spaces and common rooms; and
  - Other areas that may apply.
- Increased frequency of cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas and equipment, inside and outside classrooms.
- Students and staff are required to perform hand hygiene when entering and exiting the school as well as before entering the classroom.
- Proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette will be promoted.
- Students and staff should bring their own water bottles for refilling. Water fountains will be closed, with the exception of water bottle refill stations. Knobs and push buttons are considered high touch surfaces and must be regularly cleaned and disinfected.

## Cleaning Responsibilities

- Regular, enhanced, and as needed cleaning will be performed by caretaking staff:
  - Daytime caretakers will disinfect contact surfaces and high contact areas.
  - Caretakers will ensure ongoing inspection and filling of hand washing supplies, including alcohol-based sanitizer dispensers.
  - Caretakers will monitor supplies to ensure all necessary supplies are available.
  - Evening caretaking staff will thoroughly clean all areas.
  - The Plant Operations Coordinator will provide cleaning kits with approved disinfectants, PPE and materials.
  - Caretakers will check the sign-in/out sheet at the main entry at every shift to monitor people who have been in the building. All areas in the school that have been accessed must be cleaned.

- Other staff may also be required to clean/disinfect areas as needed in order to maintain a safe environment:
  - Division approved cleaning/disinfecting supplies are provided;
  - Do not bring cleaners from home;
  - Do not take school materials home to clean.
- If cleaning is required, staff should notify the principal or school office.
- The principal or school office will request cleaning, per their protocol with caretaking staff.

## Cleaning<sup>2</sup> and Disinfecting<sup>3</sup>

Regular cleaning and disinfection is essential to preventing the transmission of COVID-19 from contaminated objects and surfaces.

Schools will be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with [Alberta Health Services' COVID Public Health Recommendations for Environmental Cleaning of Public Facilities](#).

This includes:

- General cleaning and disinfecting of the premises at least once a day.
- Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day.
  - These include doorknobs, light switches, bathroom faucets, front desk counter, toilet handles, as well as shared tables, desks, chairs, keyboards, toys, etc. Clean and disinfect any surface that is visibly dirty.
- All sites will use common, division-provided detergents and disinfectant products and closely follow the instructions on the label.
- Eliminate items from classrooms and other areas that are not easily cleaned (e.g., area rugs, fabric or soft items).
- De-clutter teaching spaces and school office.
- Empty garbage containers daily.
- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning blood or body fluids (e.g., runny nose, vomit, stool, urine). Wash hands before wearing and after removing gloves.

### General Cleaning Guidelines

- Clean and disinfect shared high-touch surfaces regularly:
  - Door handles and door edges;
  - Bathroom faucets;
  - Front desk counter;
  - Shared tables.

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<sup>2</sup> **Cleaning** is the physical removal of visible soiling (e.g. dust, soil, blood, mucus). Cleaning removes, rather than kills, viruses and bacteria. It is done with water, detergents and steady friction from a cleaning cloth. Cleaning for COVID-19 virus is the same as for other common viruses. All visibly soiled surfaces should be cleaned before disinfected.

<sup>3</sup> **Disinfection** is the killing of viruses and bacteria. A disinfectant is only applied to objects, never on the human body. It is recommended that high-touch surfaces be disinfected at least twice each day.

- Shared spaces such as kitchens and bathrooms should also be cleaned more often.
- Clean areas where students and staff are/were present.
- Clean high-touch electronic devices (e.g. keyboards, tablets, smartboards) by spraying microfiber cloth with appropriate disinfectant and wiping device.
- Use damp cleaning methods such as damp clean cloths and/or a wet mop for dusting and sweeping. Do not dry dust or sweep, as this can distribute virus droplets into the air.
- Cleaning to remove debris/soil (e.g. floor care and dusting will be done as time permits).

### **Cleaning Supplies/Equipment**

- Ensure adequate hand washing supplies at all times (e.g. soap, paper towels and alcohol-based hand sanitizer (minimum 60%) where hand washing is not readily available).
- Disinfectants used must have a Drug Information Number (DIN) with a virucidal claim. Solutions containing the following types of disinfectants are currently approved for use in Holy Spirit Catholic School Division.
  - Accelerated hydrogen peroxide (0.5%). These are the preferred type of cleaner disinfectants by the division due to the broad kill spectrum and they are tolerated by most persons.
  - As a last resort, diluted household bleach may be used. Add 9 ml of bleach to 1L of water. Please note that bleach is not generally recommended in school environments due to its instability and corrosive nature.
- Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for safe use of cleaning and disinfecting products (e.g. wear gloves, use in well ventilated areas, allow enough contact time for disinfectant to kill germs based on the product being used).
- Reusable cleaning items can be washed using regular laundry soap and hot water (60-90 degrees Celsius).

### **Cleaning of Tools/Equipment and Desks/Workstations**

- Staff who clean equipment will use gloves, a spray bottle, and a division approved disinfectant solution.
- Staff will follow the directions provided by the manufacturer to clean.
- When cleaning a vehicle, make sure to clean outside in a well-ventilated area with the vehicle windows down.

Staff are responsible for cleaning their tools/equipment and desk/workstation throughout the workday. This will ensure limiting the risk of infection from staff to staff:

- Cleaning shall be conducted in the morning (prior to commencement of work) and at the end of the day. Additional cleaning throughout the day shall be repeated whenever possible.
- Allocate enough time to do a thorough cleaning of surfaces of tools/equipment touched during the workday.
- All sets of keys that are used by maintenance staff and keys loaned out to other staff must also be cleaned prior to shift/lending out and upon end of shift/return of keys.
- If any tools/equipment cannot be cleaned, please contact your supervisor for further direction.
- Limit sharing of any tools/equipment with other staff while on shift.

It is recommended that students use the same desk or table throughout the day. However, in the case where a desk or table may be shared by different students, the desk or table should be sanitized before and after use.

### **Cleaning of High Touch Surfaces**

- School division caretaking staff continue to clean and disinfect all high touch surfaces throughout the workday.
- If school-based staff or other school division site staff require cleaning for their personal desk/workstation/areas, they may request a spray bottle of the disinfectant solution and paper towel from their head caretaker.

### **WHMIS**

- Employees working with or using disinfectants, detergents or hand sanitizers must review safety data sheets and ensure products are stored out of the reach of children.
- All chemicals must be properly labelled, in accordance with WHMIS requirements. If the product is not labelled, request assistance from the Head Caretaker.
- Safety Data Sheets for all cleaning products are available through Head Caretaker. These sheets and instructions can also be accessed through Public School Works.

# APPENDIX B

## School Based Protocols/Requirements

The following protocols will ensure controlled access and movement for currently active school sites.

### Arrival and Movement Procedures

#### Entering and Exiting

- There should be no non-essential persons allowed into the school.
- Access to the school by non-school division individuals, including parents, is by appointment only. Principals must approve all visits.
- Division support staff, including maintenance and Board Office Staff, are required to sign in.
- Sign in/out for all visitors – name, phone number, date, time in, time out, areas visiting.
- Hand washing/sanitizer at point of entry for use on arrival.

#### Visitors and Access to Schools

- Limit school visits. Visitors must phone the office to make an appointment (e.g. pick up student information, materials, etc.).
- All visitors to the school are required to wear a mask to reduce the transmission of respiratory viruses.
- Continue to follow school division visitor procedures (e.g. sign in at the main office).
- A record of all visitors must be kept, including contact information
- Drop off and pick up of children will be outside only and if available, located at the exterior classroom door. If this is not available, a school plan will be developed to ensure a limited number of students are in one area.
- Parents/caregivers are not permitted to attend classrooms, or walk throughout the school.
- All visitors must complete the [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#).

### Use of Water Dispensers and Water Fountains

- Students and staff should bring their own water bottles.
- Fill stations (water dispensers) can be used to fill individual water bottles.
- Do NOT use fountain or mouthpiece features of the water dispensers.

### Designated Sick Room

- Principals will select a room with a door that can be used for isolating a sick student and/or staff member while waiting for a parent/caregiver or transportation to arrive.
- Designate a sufficiently large room, preferably close to the pick-up doorway entrance. Put signage up on the doorway (e.g. sick room).
- Designate a washroom nearby for use by symptomatic students only. Put signage up on the washroom door.

- Students that present symptoms of illness must use the sick room until they can be picked up by a parent/guardian.
- The selected area will ideally have a sink with running water and hand washing supplies. Hand sanitizer should be available if no running water is available.
- The room must have a sign posted that this room is in use.
- The selected sick room must not impede the timely provision of school first aid services.
- A Pandemic First Aid Kit will be available with appropriate PPE such as face masks, face shields, and gloves.

## De-Cluttering of Classrooms

- Classrooms must be decluttered to minimize the number of surface contacts and items that will need to be cleaned and disinfected.
- Attempts should be made to minimize the number of learning resources made available to students. This includes toys and manipulatives.
- Unnecessary or unused items should be removed from the classroom.
- Desktops and counter surfaces must be kept clear to facilitate ongoing cleaning and disinfection.
- Teaching staff will direct students to take home any unnecessary personal items
- Staff will clearly label toys, manipulative and resources that were used and need to be disinfected. These items will be placed in plastic bins or agreed upon containers to clearly identify the need for cleaning.
- No soft toys, furniture or items not easily cleaned should remain in the classroom (e.g. teddy bears, bean bag chairs).

## Hand Washing and Sanitizers

- When available, students and staff members should use classroom sinks to wash hands regularly with soap.
- Classrooms without sinks must have hand sanitizers available for staff and student use.

## Keyboards and Electronic Devices

- Mobile and other frequently touched electronics like tablets, remotes, keyboards, mice, Chromebooks and gaming consoles can carry germs. These electronics should be cleaned and disinfected after use.
- Personal electronic devices that are not used for learning should be left at home.
- Many school division devices have been borrowed by students and staff to accommodate school work at home. When they are handed in, the school will ensure that each machine is disinfected and cleaned, inspected for defects, and checked in.

To disinfect electronic devices:

- The school will be given computer cleaning supplies; a mixture of 70% isopropyl alcohol / 30% water, a microfiber cloth, and disposable gloves made of latex (or nitrile gloves if you are latex-sensitive) to clean and disinfect surfaces.

- Turn off the device and disconnect AC power. Remove batteries from items like wireless keyboards. Never clean a product while it is powered on or plugged in.
- Disconnect any external devices.
- Moisten the microfiber cloth with a mixture of 70% isopropyl alcohol / 30% water. Do not use fibrous materials such as paper towels or toilet paper. The cloth should be moist, but not dripping wet. NOTE: Do not immerse or spray any liquids directly onto the product.
- Starting with the display and ending with any flexible cables (like power, keyboard and USB cables), gently wipe the device with the moistened microfiber cloth.  
NOTE: Do not allow any moisture to drip into areas like keyboards, display panels, or USB ports located on the printer control panels. Moisture entering the inside of an electronic product can cause extensive damage to the product.
- Inspect the device for defects (e.g. screen, trackpad, keyboard) to ensure it's in good physical working order. Make sure the charger is returned with the machine and note any defects for follow up service.

## Shared Equipment

- Personal school supplies should not be pooled and/or shared.
- Use of shared items or equipment is to be avoided where possible.
- Equipment that must be shared should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- Arrangements for storage of personal items should be made.
- Children/students should be provided with an area for storing personal items.