

COVID-19 Public Health Plan for SFDS Preschool Setting

Return to School Safety Plan re: COVID-19

In accordance with the Ministry of Education's K-12 Restart Plan, beginning on September 10, St. Francis de Sales School will be resuming K-7 in-class instruction, as well as preschool instruction. The 2020/21 school year will begin in *Stage 2* of the K-12 Restart Plan with the goal of maximizing in-class instruction for all students within the revised public health guidelines.

Whenever possible, feasible and practical control measures in accordance with the order of the Provincial Health Officer, have been selected to provide the best/widest protection to all staff and students within the school community. This plan is posted at the preschool and also on the St. Francis de Sales School website, and it has been communicated to parents. This information is based on the best evidence currently available and will be updated as new information becomes available.

COVID-19 and Children

COVID-19 virus has a very low infection rate in children. In B.C., less than 1% of children and youth tested have been COVID-19 positive. Most children are not at high risk for COVID-19 infection.

Even children who are considered more vulnerable can attend preschool. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to consult with their health care provider to determine if their child should attend if they are uncertain.

Children and youth typically have much milder symptoms of COVID-19 most often presenting with low-grade fever and a dry cough. GI symptoms are more common over the course of disease, while skin changes and lesions are less common.

Many children have asymptomatic disease. However, there is no conclusive evidence that children who are asymptomatic pose a risk to other children or to adults.

Evidence indicates transmission involving children is primarily limited to household settings, and from COVID-19 positive adults to children. Most cases in children have been linked to a symptomatic household member.

Clusters and outbreaks involving children and youth are unusual and tend only to occur in areas where there are high levels of community spread.

Children are not the primary drivers of COVID-19 spread in child care facilities, schools or in community settings.

STEP 1: RISK ASSESSMENT AT ST. FRANCIS DE SALES SCHOOL

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads in several ways, including through droplets when a person coughs or sneezes, or from touching a contaminated surface before touching the face.

Things to Consider

During normal operation *prior* to COVID-19:

- St. Francis de Sales Preschool had classes of 13 students plus 2 staff and support workers. We did not use parent volunteers to assist with various activities.
- Students and staff congregate in classrooms, in other learning areas (gym, learning commons/library, activity room), in hallways, in the staffroom and other smaller areas such as the office and the medical room.
- Surfaces that are touched often include door knobs/handles, desks, washroom doors, toilets, taps, light switches, stair railings, office equipment (photocopier, phones), teacher laptops, iPads, classroom materials including books and supplies, library books, gym equipment, etc.
- Staff, students and other adults sometimes attend school when they are sick or have symptoms of colds, influenza, hay fever, allergies, etc.

STEP 2: MEASURES TO REDUCE THE RISK

A. Restricting Access

- In accordance with the Ministry of Education's K-12 Restart Plan, beginning on Sept. 10th, St. Francis de Sales Preschool will be resuming in-class instruction in a controlled manner while ensuring health and safety measures are in effect. School density targets of no more than 11 students in a learning group ensure the number of students in our preschool environment aligns with public health guidance.
- Access to the preschool building will be restricted. Only staff and students are permitted, unless it is an urgent matter. Parents/guardians will remain outside when they drop off their children. Parents are also not permitted to come in during the school day to drop off lunches/supplies, etc.
- If parents/caregivers need to contact the school principal or their student's teachers, they will be directed to do so by phone or email. In-person visits should be for essential purposes and arranged in advance by appointment.
- Visitors must be aware of, and follow safety protocols, limited in their access to necessary spaces only, and will be asked to confirm they have completed the requirements of a daily health check before entering the school building.

B. Environmental Measures

Outdoor Spaces and Ventilation

- We have children outside often, including for learning activities, snack time and play time.
- Activities are organized in a thoughtful way, taking into consideration personal measures.
- We reassure children and parents that playgrounds/play areas are a safe environment, and encourage appropriate hand hygiene practices before, during, after outdoor play.
- We ensure adequate ventilation and open windows if possible. Our preschool is equipped with a furnace that circulates air well, and a cool atmosphere in hotter months.

Pick-up and Drop-Off

- Pick-up and drop-off of children occurs outside the preschool setting. If a parent must enter the building, they must maintain physical distance from staff and other children present and are reminded to practice diligent hand hygiene and maintain physical distance when they are in the facility.
- Parents and caregivers that are symptomatic must not enter the preschool.
- We stagger the timings of pick-up and drop-off so they do not coincide with the drop off of kindergarten students (who use the other half of the building).
- Daily checks at drop-off are conducted by asking parents and caregivers to confirm that their child does not have symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other respiratory disease.
- We keep attendance to track which children have been present in the building on any given day.

C. Maintaining Physical Distancing

i.) Regulating Physical Distancing During the School Day

For younger children maintaining physical distance is less practical and the focus should be on minimizing physical contact instead.

The physical space requirements for licensed child care settings/preschools set out in the Child Care Licensing Regulation mean that child care centres have sufficient space to support physical distancing (i.e., maintaining a distance of 2 metres between each other) between staff without reducing the number of children in care at any one time.

Staff minimize the frequency of direct physical contact with children and encourage children to minimize direct physical contact with each other.

Staff maintain physical distancing from one another.

We remind children to avoid close greetings (e.g., hugs, handshakes). We regularly remind children to keep “Hands to yourself”.

We strive to minimize the number of different staff that interact with the same children throughout the day: typically, there are only two staff that they interact with.

We organize children into smaller groups and/or spread children out to minimize direct physical contact.

- o Use different room configurations (e.g., separating tables).
- o Set up small group environments to reduce the number of children in a group, for example, set up 2 or 3 areas for colouring or doing crafts.

We incorporate more individual activities or activities that encourage more space between children and staff.

- o We removed toys that encourage group play in close proximity or increase the likelihood of physical contact. We kept toys that encourage individual play.
- o When possible we use books, individual games, video and online programs as a part of learning so children can sit independently and distanced from each other.
- o We have a separate, supervised area available for children who have symptoms of illness rest until they can be picked up and ensure these areas are cleaned and disinfected after the child has left.

Washroom areas are monitored and supervised. Capacity in the washroom is restricted to 2 members of one learning group (either kindergarten or preschool, as they share this washroom space). Traffic flow to and from the washroom is controlled. Staff assist with movement.

Although the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) guidance for K-12 school settings is that personal protective equipment, such as masks and gloves are not needed beyond those used by staff as part of regular precautions, staff use non-medical masks, understanding that these have limitations.

D. Hygiene and School Cleanliness

i.) Personal Hygiene—Hand Washing

- Rigorous hand washing with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds is the most effective way to reduce the spread of illness. The preschool will ensure that adequate hand-washing practices are followed. When returning from outside activities, students will wash with soap and water.
- Hand sanitizer will be available to students/staff when they go outside to play.
- Staff members are to wash or sanitize their hands when they arrive as well as frequently throughout the day. Wearing of gloves does not preclude hand washing. Hands must be washed/sanitized before and after using gloves.
- Teachers provide instruction and assist younger students (as needed) to properly wash their hands. Hand washing signs are posted near all sinks.
- Teachers will incorporate additional hand hygiene opportunities into their daily schedule. Students will wash hands/use hand sanitizer when necessary but at least:
 - ☐ When they arrive at school and before going home
 - ☐ Before eating and drinking
 - ☐ After using the toilet
 - ☐ After sneezing/coughing into hands or tissue
 - ☐ Whenever hands are visibly dirty
 - ☐ When transitioning to different area (e.g. outdoor to indoor; gym to classroom)

- Hand sanitizers are available in each classroom and other areas including the front entry to the school, office, staff room, gym, library, etc.
- Students and parents will be reassured that playgrounds are a safe environment and we will encourage appropriate personal hygiene practices before, during and after outdoor play at Rene Memorial Park. The back field behind the school will also be used. Staff will ensure students are practising physical distancing as much as possible considering the age group.

ii.) Food and Drink

- Food and drinks may not be shared by students.

iii.) Storing Belongings

- Students will be using their sanitized 'cubbies' to store items such as jackets, backpacks, shoes and lunch kits. There are no doors on these so there are reduced points of contact.

iv.) Remain on Site

- Staff are to remain on site and not leave during lunch or other break times.

v.) School Cleaning/Sanitizing Protocols

- The school will be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) *Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings* guidelines. Cleaning practices will be in line with the Provincial Health Officer's COVID-19 *Public Health Guidance for Childcare Settings*.
- Regular cleaning and disinfection are essential to preventing the transmission of COVID-19 from contaminated objects and surfaces. The preschool setting is cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the BCCDC's *Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings* document.
- General cleaning and disinfecting of the centre occurs once a day.
- Frequently-touched surfaces are cleaned and disinfected multiple times a day
 - These include door knobs, light switches, faucet handles, table counters, chairs, electronic devices, and toys.
- We clean and disinfect any surface that is visibly dirty.
- We use common, commercially-available detergents and disinfectant products, following the instructions on the label.
- Toys and other items that cannot be easily cleaned (e.g., avoid plush/stuffed toys) have been removed.
- We empty garbage containers daily, at minimum.
- We wear disposable gloves when cleaning blood or body fluids (e.g., runny nose, vomit, stool, urine). We wash hands before wearing and after removing gloves.
- There is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus is transmitted via textbooks, paper or other paper-based products. As such, we do not limit the distribution of books or paper based educational resources to children because of COVID-19.
- High touch surfaces (door and cabinet handles, stair railings, washroom areas, shared office spaces, desks, communication devices, keyboards, light switches, etc.) are to be frequently cleaned and disinfected, at least **twice (2) a day**. Staff will assist with this.

- Washrooms should be cleaned **twice (2) a day** keeping in line with the high touch surface areas protocols.
- General cleaning and disinfecting of the premises will be completed by the custodians at least **once (1) a day**.
- Drinking fountains will not be accessible. Students are encouraged to bring their own water bottles.
- According to the BC Centre for Disease Control, there is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus is transmitted via textbooks, paper or other paper based products.
- Garbage containers are emptied daily.
- The mattress in the school medical room is encased in plastic and all linens are removed in order to effectively disinfect this room after use.
- The plant manager (Mr. Bencze) will ensure that hand washing supplies are available at all times (i.e. soap, paper towels and 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer.) Also, cleaning products (e.g. Lysol wipes) will be provided for cleaning photocopiers and other common devices.
- The custodians are trained in how to follow cleaning protocols in the school under these new requirements. This includes window cleaning in the office.

STEP 3: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. Health and Sickness

- **No one who is sick or showing symptoms may come to school.**
- Should children and staff have common-cold, influenza, or COVID-19 like symptoms they must stay home, be assessed by their health care provider, and tested for COVID-19. Testing is recommended for anyone with these symptoms, even mild ones.
- When someone is symptomatic, they should self-isolate and follow directions provided by their health care provider.
- Staff or students who are *unsure* of if they should self-isolate should be directed to use the *BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool*.
- If concerned, they can be advised to contact 8-1-1, or the local public health unit to seek further input. They can also be advised to contact a family physician or nurse practitioner to be assessed for COVID-19 and other infectious respiratory diseases.
- If a person is found to be a confirmed case of COVID-19, public health staff will ensure there is robust contact tracing and management of any clusters or outbreaks. They will also ensure that children, staff and parents have access to health care providers and that appropriate supports are in place.

i) Daily Health Assessments

- Staff members must assess themselves daily for symptoms of common cold, influenza, or COVID-19 prior to entering the school.
- Parents have the responsibility to assess their children daily before sending them to school. Parents are to ensure their child is free from symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other infectious respiratory disease before they are to come to school.

- If a student develops symptoms while at home, parents/guardians **MUST** keep their child at home until they have been assessed by a health care provider to exclude COVID-19 or other infectious diseases, and their symptoms have resolved. **Testing is recommended for anyone with these symptoms, even mild ones.**

ii.) If student/staff becomes ill during the day

- Individuals who show **any** signs of illness will go home until they are well and symptom-free.
- Until they can be retrieved by a caregiver, they will be isolated from others.

Staff Illness: Staff members who start feeling ill while at work are to return home and monitor their symptoms. They are to let the school secretary know how they will get home.

Student Illness:

- The office will call the parent to arrive as soon as possible when notified their child is ill.
- The office will contact 811 or the local public health unit to notify them of a potential case and seek further input.
- The office will record illness in First Aid records in the event this information is later needed.
- Staff member is to put on PPE (mask and gloves) and immediately separate the sick child from others and put them into a supervised area until the parent/guardian arrives. Apply physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, and hand hygiene principles while waiting for pick up. Avoid touching a student's body fluids (mucous/saliva). Wash hands thoroughly before donning gloves and after removing them.
- Staff member to clean/disinfect the area where the child was relocated. Remove garbage.
- Children with common cold, influenza or COVID-19 like symptoms must stay home, be assessed by their health care provider and tested for COVID-19.
- Students with known allergies must present a doctor's note stating this is the case.
- Self isolation is also advised for those who are considered a close contact of a confirmed case and are waiting to see if they develop COVID-19 illness.

iii.) Provincial Health Officer (PHO) and the BCCDC Guidelines

- Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 in the last 10 days must self-isolate at home; symptoms include fever, chills, new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, skin rashes or discoloration of fingers or toes, fatigue, diarrhea, loss of sense of smell or taste, and new muscle aches or headache.
- Children or staff may return to the centre once they are assessed by their family physician or nurse practitioner and it is determined that they do NOT have COVID-19, and their symptoms have resolved.
- Anyone under the direction of the PHO to self-isolate must follow those instructions.
- Anyone who has arrived from outside of Canada, or who is a contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case is to self isolate for 14 days and monitor symptoms.

B. Respiratory Etiquette

Students and staff should:

- Refrain from touching their eyes and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Refrain from sharing any food, drinks, unwashed utensils.
- Cough or sneeze into their elbow sleeve or a tissue. Ensure that used tissues are thrown away immediately and hands are thoroughly washed.

C. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Staff should be aware of the limitations in regard to respiratory droplets, and masks should be considered, especially when other control measures cannot be implemented. Wearing one by staff or students is a personal choice and will be respected.
- Gloves are also a personal choice. Their use would not preclude students and staff members from regular hand washing.
- Staff will wear PPE when administering First Aid.
- Staff on supervision duty must have a mask available, and wear one if they are supervising indoors.

STEP 4: COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND TRAINING

- Everyone in the school community (staff, students and parents) will know the policies around staying home when they are sick. This information will be communicated in writing and reviewed regularly.
- All staff will be re-trained and informed as to how to keep themselves safe while at school. Formal staff training and information sessions were held May 25 and May 26, 2020 and included:
 - i. the risks of exposure to COVID-19
 - ii. how to report an exposure to or symptoms of COVID-19
 - iii. safe procedures and instructions regarding proper hand washing, cough/sneezing etiquette, etc.
- Staff will be informed of changes made to work policies, practices, and procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Signage will be posted around the school including occupancy limits and effective hand washing practices. Signage will also be posted at the main and rear entrances indicating who is restricted from entering the school including anyone with symptoms.
- Signage reminding people not to enter the facility if they are sick is posted at facility entrances.

STEP 5: MONITOR THE WORKPLACE AND UPDATE PLANS

- As new information is provided, some of these protocols and guidelines may change.
- Steps will be taken to update policies and procedures and involve the staff in this process.
- All staff are asked to raise any safety concerns with the Principal or Vice Principal.

STEP 6: ASSESS AND ADDRESS RISKS FROM RESUMING OPERATIONS

- New employees will be trained.
- Parent volunteers will be trained.

