

December 1, 2020

Our Lady of Mercy's Safety Plan

Introduction

This document outlines the policies, guidelines and procedures the school has put in place to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

“School supports students in developing their potential and acquiring the knowledge, skills and abilities they need for lifelong success. In-person learning, as a part of a student’s education, provides the opportunities for peer-engagement, which supports social and emotional as well as overall wellness.” (Ministry of Education - Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings, updated August 17, 2020.)

School also provides access to programs and services that many students can’t get at home and is integral to their overall health.

“Based on the current epidemiology of COVID-19 in B.C., the latest research, guidance from the Provincial Health Office, and evidence that children are at a lower risk of developing and transmitting COVID-19, K-12 students can return to full-time, in-class instruction in accordance with current public health guidelines for schools.” (Ministry of Education - Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings, updated August 17, 2020.)

This plan has been submitted to the Ministry of Education for approval. It adheres to the standards, guidelines and protocols from the BC Centre for Disease Control, WorkSafeBC and the COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 school Settings.

The OLM Safety Plan is designed to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff, and at the same time create environments where joyful and fruitful learning can occur. Furthermore, this plan is posted at the school and also on the OLM’s school website, and it has been communicated to parents. It will be updated as new information becomes available.

“As directed by the Ministry of Education, CISVA schools will open in Stage 2 of the Ministry of Education’s K-12 Five-Stage Education Restart Plan this September. All students will return to school on Thursday, September 10, 2020, for full-time instruction.” (CISVA, Deacon Luyten, Superintendent)

“There will be no remote learning in Stage 2. Schools will organize students in cohorts (learning groups) to limit contact and possible exposure, and implement newly revised provincial health guidelines to maintain a healthy and safe environment.” (CISVA, Deacon Luyten, Superintendent)

What we know about COVID-19

The BCCDC states:

“Based on the current epidemiology of COVID-19 in B.C., and the fact that children are at a much lower risk of developing and transmitting COVID-19, K-12 schools in B.C. can have all elementary and middle school students, and most secondary students receive in-class instruction within the school environment, while supporting the health and safety of children and staff. Schools should implement as many public health and infection prevention and exposure control measures as possible as described in this document.

Lowering the number of in-person, close interactions continues to be a key component of B.C.’s strategy to prevent the spread of COVID-19. A cohort is a group of students and staff who remain together throughout a school term. The use of cohorts in schools allows for a significant reduction in the number of individual interactions, while allowing most students to receive in-person learning in a close-to-normal school environment.”

The BCCDC also states the following with respect to COVID-19 and Children:

- COVID-19 virus has a very low infection rate in children (ages 0 to 19).
- In B.C., less than 1% of children tested have been COVID-19 positive, and even fewer are suspected to have been infected based on serological testing. Most children are not at high risk for COVID-19 infection. Children under 10 comprise a smaller proportion of the total confirmed child cases compared to children between the ages of 10 and 19.
- Based on published literature to date, the majority of cases in children are the result of household transmission by droplet spread from a symptomatic adult family member with COVID-19. Even in family clusters, adults appear to be the primary drivers of transmission.
- Children who are immunocompromised or have pre-existing pulmonary conditions are at a higher risk of more severe illness from COVID-19 (visit the BCCDC Children with Immune Suppression page for further details). Children who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 can still receive in-person instruction. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to consult with their health-care provider to determine their child’s level of risk.
- Children typically have much milder symptoms of COVID-19, if any. They often present with low-grade fever and a dry cough. Gastrointestinal symptoms are more common than in adults over the course of disease, while skin changes and lesions are less common.

The BCCDC further states the following with respect to COVID-19 and Schools:

- Children do not appear to be the primary drivers of COVID-19 spread in schools or in community settings.
- Schools and childcare facility closures have significant negative mental health and socioeconomic impacts on vulnerable children.

Schools are a Controlled Environment

The Provincial Health Officer and BCCDC see schools as a controlled environment which is why schools remain open. The BCCDC explains, “Schools include a consistent grouping of people, there are robust illness policies for students and staff and there is an ability to implement effective personal practices that are followed by most people in the setting.”

This document serves to outline how we make our school environment more controlled.

Step 1: Assess the Risks at School

Higher Risk Areas have been identified, either through close physical proximity or through contaminated surfaces.

- We have involved staff members, Janitorial staff, administration and the EC Maintenance member
- We have identified areas where people gather, such as staff room, student and staff washrooms, gym tables and chairs
- We have identified high traffic surfaces such as door knobs, door handles and light switches
- All students and staff personal devices and school materials are brought to and from home
- All food and beverage is brought to and from home

Signage

- Signage to reinforce self-screening, hand hygiene and traffic flow, adjustments to entrance and exit practices, adjustments to the use of the bathrooms are clearly posted.
- At this time, there is no evidence that a building’s ventilation system would contribute to the spread of COVID-19. (WorkSafe BC, Dec. 2020)
- Increase of air flow and ventilation using open windows and outside doors.
- Classrooms have been outfitted with “surgically clean air purifiers – Merv 19”

Step 2: Implement Protocols to Reduce the Risks

Record Keeping

- The administration will prepare and submit to the teachers a list of students in each Learning Group (cohort).
- The teachers will prepare a seating chart and submit the plan to the office.
- This will be shared with public health should contact tracing need to occur.
- Office staff will keep a list of the date, names and contact information for all visitor who enter the school, a list of students who travel outside Canada during the 2020-2021 school year.
- The office staff will monitor school attendance to track student and or staff absence and compare against usual absenteeism patterns of the school.
- There is no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted on textbooks, paper or other paper-based products.
- Schools can share books or paper-based resources with students.

Access to School Site

- Visitors, including parents will be limited or even prohibited to enter the school. Parents are not permitted to come to the school day to drop off lunches, supplies etc.
- If parents need to contact the school principal or a staff member, they will be directed to do so by phone or email.
- In-person visits are for essential purposes and are arranged in advance by appointment.
- Visitors will be made aware of safety protocols.
- Parent participation will be re-visited.

As per WorkSafe BC the following Section describes the 4 levels of protection.

First Level Protection (Elimination)

- We have established and posted an occupancy limit for our premises.
- We have established and posted occupancy limits for common areas such as staff rooms, hallways and washrooms.
- We have implemented measures to keep staff members and students at least 2 metres apart, when necessary as indicated in Stage 2.

Parents understand that if a student develops symptoms while at school:

- Immediately separate the symptomatic student from others in a supervised area.
- Contact the student's parent or caregiver to pick them up as soon as possible.
- Contact 811 or the local public health unit to notify them of a potential case and seek further input.
- Where possible, maintain a distance of 2 metres from the ill student. If not possible, staff may wear a mask if available and tolerated, or use a tissue to cover their nose and mouth.
- Provide the student with tissues to cover their coughs or sneezes. Throw away used tissues as soon as possible and perform hand hygiene.
- Avoid touching the student's body fluids (e.g., mucous, saliva). If you do, practice diligent hand hygiene.
- Once the student is picked up, practice diligent hand hygiene.
- Workers responsible for facility cleaning must clean and disinfect the space where the student was separated and any areas used by them (e.g., classroom, bathroom, common areas).

Measures in Place

- Changes of work schedules
- Re-defining of roles, responsibilities and teaching tasks
- Occupancy limits for the gym, the washrooms, the staffroom, the hallway
- Parents have limited access to the school. They are expected to stay inside the car when dropping their child(ren) off
- Screening Forms for people entering the school premise

Second Level Protection (Engineering): Barriers and Partitions

- We have barriers where staff or students can't keep physically distant
- We have included barrier cleaning in our cleaning protocols

Measures in Place

- A barrier has currently in place in the Administration Area
- Barriers in the Music and French Room
- Use of Barriers will be used when itinerant staff is working 1:1 with students or in small groups

Third Level Protection (Administrative): Rules and Guidelines

- We have identified rules and guidelines for how staff and students should conduct themselves
- We have clearly communicated these rules and guidelines to staff, students and parents

Measures in Place

- Parents, students and staff have a list of rules and guidelines for social distancing, hygiene, washroom needs, physical breaks, hallways
- Cleaning products comply with the BCCDC

Fourth Level Protection (Administrative): Rules and Guidelines

- We have reviewed the information on selecting and using masks and instructions on how to use a mask.
- We understand the limitations of masks to protect the wearer from respiratory droplets. We understand that masks should only be considered when other control measures cannot be implemented.
- We have reviewed the information on cleaning and disinfecting surfaces.
- Our school has enough hand washing facilities on site for all our staff and students.
- We have policies that specify when staff and students must wash their hands and we have communicated good hygiene practices to parents, students and staff.
- We have implemented cleaning protocols for all common areas and surfaces.
- Workers who are cleaning have adequate training and materials.

Measures in Place

- As per the BCCDC guidance for K-12 school settings is that PPE such as masks and gloves are not needed within the class Bubble, unless physical proximity is not possible or symptoms have arisen
- Staff and students will be trained to properly use masks
- Posters indicated proper usage of masks will be posted
- Our cleaning supplies comply with WSB specifications
- Hygiene Posters are posted
- The Janitor (Mr. Acosta) is responsible for cleaning and has been given the cleaning protocols as outlined by WSB and the BCCDC.

- Staff are required to wear a PPE once they leave their learning zone

STEP 3: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. Health and Sickness

No one who is sick or showing symptoms is to come to school.

- The BCCDC guidelines for schools are firm. Students and staff must stay home until they have been assessed by a health care provider to exclude COVID-19 or other infectious diseases AND their symptoms have resolved. They must not enter the school.
- Staff or students who are unsure of if they should self-isolate should be directed to use the *BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool*.
- Students, staff members and any other adult must stay home and self-quarantine if they have: symptoms of COVID-19, travelled outside Canada in the last 14 days, or been identified as a close contact of a confirmed case or outbreak
- 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.

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.
- Parents have been given a Daily Health Self-Assessment and it is posted on the OLM School's Website (www.ourladyofmercy.com)
- Before or on Monday, September 14, 2020 parents must complete the Daily Health Self-Assessment, sign it and return it to school. This is only done once to indicate that parents have understood it is their responsibility to check their child for Covid-19 related symptoms and to keep them home if they are symptomatic.
- ***In the event that a child has stayed home because they are sick. Another signed Daily Health Self-Assessment must accompany the child to school.***

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.
- The office will call the parent to arrive as soon as possible when notified their child is ill. Parents will need to have a plan in place.

- 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 the illness.

Staff Illness: Staff members who start feeling ill while at work are to return home and monitor their symptoms.

Illness:

PROTOCOL IF A STUDENT/STAFF DEVELOPS SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS AT SCHOOL as per the Provincial COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings.

If a student or staff member develops symptoms at school, schools should:

- Provide the student/staff with a non-medical mask if they don't have one (exceptions should be made for students and staff who cannot wear masks for medical and/or disability-related reasons).
- Provide the student/staff with a space where they can wait comfortably that is separated from others. The student is to be supervised and cared for, when separated.
- Make arrangements for the student/staff to go home as soon as possible.
- Contact the student's parent/caregiver with a request to have their child picked up as soon as possible.
- Clean and disinfect the areas the student/staff used.
- Encourage the student/staff to seek assessment by a health-care provider.
- Request that the student/staff stay home until COVID-19 has been excluded and symptoms have resolved.
- In the event that a student has stayed home because they are sick. Another signed Daily Health Self-Assessment must accompany the student to school.
- Schools and school districts should notify their local medical health officer if staff and/or student absenteeism exceeds 10 percent of regular attendance, to help with the early identification of clusters or outbreaks.

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

- If a staff or student in a school is confirmed by public health as positive for COVID19, public health will work with school administration to determine what actions should be taken. Public Health has the authority and will perform an investigation the Contact Tracing
- Schools will not provide notification to staff or students' families if a staff member or student becomes ill until directed by the public health authority.
- Public Health has provided school with the appropriate letters when the school community must be informed. The school authority MUST wait until Public Health has given them direction.

- Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 in the last 10 days must self-isolate at home; symptoms include fever, new or worsening cough, shortness of breath (difficulty breathing), sore throat (trouble swallowing), runny nose, loss of taste or smell, not feeling well, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. (Health Self-Assessment Checklist is posted on the OLM School's Website www.ourladyofmercy.com).
- 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.

iv.) Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 in a Learning Group at school.

If a student or staff member is confirmed to have COVID-19 and were potentially infectious while they were at school:

- Public health will perform an investigation to determine if there were potential close contacts within the school
- Learning groups and staff who have interacted with the learning group may be asked to stay home while public health completes their investigation

If it is determined that there are close contacts within the school, public health will:

- Notify the school administrator and request class list to assist with contact tracing
- Provide guidance on what steps should be taken

Public Health *may* then:

- Recommend 14-day quarantine if necessary
- Recommend monitoring for symptoms if necessary
- Provide follow-up recommendations if necessary
- Schools will provide learning support to students required to self-quarantine
- Together, schools and public health officials will determine if any other actions are necessary.

You will be notified by public health if your child has been in contact with a COVID-positive person. If that happens, your child is required to self-quarantine.

v.) What if my child has asthma or is immune compromised?

As per the Provincial COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings, most children and to the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control, most children who are immunocompromised can return to in-class instruction when safety measures are in place. Protective self-isolation is only recommended for children who are severely immunocompromised.

Children with immune suppression are usually followed by a specialist. There are different types of situations where your child is considered to have immune suppression:

1. They have a medical condition that affects their immune system
2. They have side effects from medications that cause a very low white blood cell count
3. They are taking medication that suppresses their immune system. Children may be taking these medicines as treatment for:
 - o autoimmune or rheumatologic disease
 - o inflammatory bowel disease
 - o immune-mediated kidney or liver disease
 - o organ transplant
 - o bone marrow or stem cell transplant
4. They are having chemotherapy, or they had chemotherapy recently.

As per the CISVA, parents requesting schooling accommodations due to an immunocompromised diagnosis are asked to review the information given to them by their principal and to submit appropriate documentation from your child's specialist team.

v.) Working from Home

- Work from home policies have been communicated to staff members. When working from home, staff members are to follow the protocol of completing the check-in form before 9:00 a.m.

B. Respiratory Etiquette

Students and staff should:

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

C. Handwashing and Hygiene

- Students will be asked to wash their hands frequently, including before coming to school. They will have access to hand sanitizer when hand washing is not available.
- Teachers will be scheduling breaks to allow students to wash their hands.
 - o When they arrive at school and before they go home
 - o Before eating and drinking
 - o After using the toilet
 - o After sneezing or coughing
 - o Whenever hands are visibly dirty
 - o When moving between different learning environments, (e.g., outdoor-indoor transitions, from the gym or music room to the classroom)
- Washroom areas will be monitored and supervised. Maximum capacity in the washroom is 2. Traffic flow to and from the washroom will be controlled. Educational assistants will assist with movement.
- Hand sanitizers will be available in each classroom and other areas including the front entry to the school, office, staff room, gym, library, etc.

D. Food and Personal Items

- Parents will be asked to label ALL personal items, including water bottles and masks. Cloth and disposable masks are to be labeled with the students' initials and Grade and kept in a paper envelope or cloth bag. (It has been recommended drinking fountains not be used at this time).
- Each student is to bring a backpack with what they need for the day. Everything must fit into the student's backpack (no extra bags). Students are to take their backpack home each day.
- The classroom teacher will give more specifics but, in general, students are to bring:
 - Filled water bottle (water fountains are disabled)
 - Snack/lunch in a container.
 - School supplies and personal device (laptop or iPad) as specified by the teacher.
 - Personal size hand sanitizer-labeled with child's name (optional).
 - Personal Mask (school will provide one when necessary)
- The sharing of staff coffee urns/stations will be discontinued. Other staff room amenities (fridge, microwave, etc.) may be continued to be used, however, staff are encouraged to use these items as infrequently as possible and only with a routine cleaning. Hands must be washed before and after using shared staff room items.
- The Public Health Guidance says that "there is no need to limit the distribution or sharing of books or paper based educational resources." However, laminated paper based products should be cleaned and disinfected daily if touched multiple people.
- Avoid sharing communal equipment/supplies as much as possible.

E. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Staff will have access to personal protection equipment and cleaning supplies. These items must remain in the classroom and not travel between classrooms.
- Students will be trained on appropriate hand hygiene.
- Scheduled breaks will allow students to wash their hands frequently.
- Encouraged masking for Grades 4 to 7, where students have an awareness of the proper techniques and efficacy of using masks. Masks should be worn when in the hallways. Cloth and disposable masks can be labeled with the students initials and are to be kept in a labeled plastic or cloth bag.
- Encouraged masking for teachers and staff with reasonable exceptions for medical conditions.
- Itinerant teachers (French, Music and PE and Resource Department) to wear a PPE such as a protective visor during instruction to facilitate reduced congregate exposure. A mask must also be worn if social distancing cannot take place. Anytime a staff member works with a student not in his or her Learning Group a visor must be worn.
- Staff on duty must wear mask or a protective visor.

- Anytime a staff member works with a student not in his or her Learning Group a visor and or mask must be worn.

D. Entering the Building

- All staff will enter the building through the main front doors of the school. Do not use the side doors.
- A Thermal Scanner has been installed at the Front and Side Entrance. Every person entering the building thru these doors must be scanned.
- Staff are to report to the office and sign in.
- Students are to arrive beginning at 8:30 and go immediately to line up outside their classroom door. The playground and all areas are closed before and after school.
- Students in Kindergarten and Grades 1 thru Grade 6 will line up and enter through the outside classroom doors.
- Grade 7 will line up outside the gym door and wash their hands in the main washrooms, then go directly to their classroom (a new sink will be installed by the Gr. 7 classroom during the Christmas Break)
- Upon entering students will wash their hands before class begins.

E. Exiting the Building

- Students in Kindergarten and Grades 1 thru Grade 7 will exit via the outside classroom door.

G. After School Pick Up

- Parents are to arrive punctually to pick up their children after school.
- Children are not to play after school but are to go straight home.

H. Recess & Lunch

- Each Bubble (Learning Group/Cohort) Kindergarten and Grade 1, Grade 2 and 3, Grade 4 and 5 and Grade 6 and 7 will have designated play areas and must remain in their learning cohorts.

I. Student Bubbles and Supplies

Public Health guidelines for K-12 school setting recognize that physical distancing is challenging. Learning groups were recommended by the PHO to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

Students will be placed in Learning Groups or cohorts (this is the student's bubble while they are at school). A Bubble (or Learning Group) is a group of students and staff who remain together throughout a school term or year, and who primarily interact with each other. The principle of this BUBBLE is used to limit the number of interactions among students and staff, as well as facilitate an effective and efficient rapid-response contact tracing protocol.

Students will remain in an established BUBBLE (learning group, cohort) during the school day. The composition of the Bubble will remain consistent for all activities that occur in the school day including but not limited to learning and breaks (lunch, recess, classroom changes, etc.)

K & 1, 2 & 3, 4 & 5, 6 & 7 (NOTE: Learning groups or Bubble are ONLY for outside play and not for classroom instruction)

- Occupancy limits will be posted in certain areas (e.g. staffroom, LRC, Teacher Resource Room, Sensory Room, etc.)
- The number of adults (teachers/EAs) interacting with groups of students throughout the day will be minimized. Students will stay in assigned cohorts to receive beneficial supports or services (e.g. resource). Within these supports or services, it is expected that cohorts and physical distance are maintained as much as is practical to do so while still ensuring the support, program or service continues.
- A 5-7 minute transition time between itinerant classes will allow for the teacher to clean all surfaces/equipment.

J. Why Use Learning Groups?

Compared to other public settings, schools have a relatively consistent set of people accessing the building. Learning groups further reduce the number of interactions between students and staff.

- Learning groups allow for more students to have more in-class learning time in a closer to normal learning environment. This leads to significant academic, social and emotional benefits and minimizes learning gaps, increase peer interaction and support and decrease feelings of isolation
- Learning groups also help with contact tracing and limiting interruptions to learning is a case of COVID-19 is confirmed in a learning group

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 posted on the school's website.

- All staff will be trained and informed as to how to keep them safe while at school.
- Formal staff training and information sessions include:
 - 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. During the daily check-in, updates will be provided when available.
- The health and safety measures in place prior to the pandemic are still in place.
- The administration will keep records of training meetings. Covid-19 related meetings are documented and minutes available in the staff room and the Principal's office.
- A bulletin board in the staffroom will be dedicated to sharing information with staff about policies and practices for COVID-19
- Signage will be posted around the school including occupancy limits and effective hand washing practices. Signage will also be posted at the main entrance indicating who is restricted from entering the school including anyone with symptoms.

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.

STEP 6: ASSESS AND ADDRESS RISKS FROM RESUMING OPERATIONS

- New employees will be trained.