



Our Lady of Mercy School's

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES HEALTH AND SAFETY PLANS

UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2024

All information in this document is subject to change. Please refer to the BCCDC, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education for the most up-to-date information.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caringorderly/k-12-communicable-disease-guidelines.pdf>

Communicable Disease Health and Safety Plans

Our Lady of Mercy School will support students to practice personal preventative measures by having staff model healthy behaviours, having reliable communication with parents and the school community, and promoting preventative measures using dialog and visual aids.

Our Lady of Mercy School will use positive and inclusive approaches to promote preventive measures, and the school will foster a culture of practice and awareness of preventative measures to help reduce the spread of communicable diseases. The school will avoid punitive measures or enforcement activities that exclude students from fully participating in school or that could result in stigma.

Health and Safety Plan Checklist

DEFINE the guidelines and procedures for a particular audience

- Staff and student procedures and guidelines are determined by the BCCDC, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education & Child Care and CISVA
- Parents and the wider community who are directly involved with the staff and students at the school will have their procedures and guidelines determined by the BCCDC, Ministry of Health, the PEC and the Principal.

CREATE an outline

- Safety plans must address and align with:
 - BCCDC
 - Fraser Health Authority
 - Ministry of Education and Child Care

IMPLEMENT flexible policies

- Adjust local procedures and guidelines to fit the needs of the school that are within the PHO Orders, CISVA Policy, and labour laws
- Update policies when necessary. Stay current.

PREPARE contingency plans

- Be prepared to work through communicable disease outbreaks using a combination of remote and in-class learning.
- Be prepared to be at work during communicable disease outbreaks.
- Anticipate changing regulations, unexpected challenges, and new requirements.

Prevention Management

The following principles are applied by the school to communicable disease prevention and management in schools:

- Aligning communicable disease prevention measures with public health guidance to support student and staff wellness.
- Using an inclusive and trauma-informed lens, with a focus on mental health and wellness.
- Focusing supports to address unique student and staff needs, recognizing the different impacts that communicable diseases may have on individuals and communities.
- Consulting and working with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples to address the unique educational and learning needs of their communities when we have First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit students attending our school.
- Engaging and collaborating with parents/caregivers, staff, and community partners to develop local solutions when needed.
- As required by WorkSafeBC, the PEC, CISVA and Our Lady of Mercy School will ensure the health of their workers by ensuring steps are taken to reduce the risk to workers from communicable diseases.
- The Provincial Health Officer or local Medical Health Officers may issue temporary provincial, regional or local recommendations or orders of additional prevention measures during times of increased communicable disease risk.

Communicable Diseases Prevention Guidance

As part of the infection prevention and exposure control measures to create a safe environment for staff and students, the following measures are in place to reduce the transmission of communicable diseases.

“School administrators should ensure that staff, other adults entering the school, parents, caregivers, and students are aware that **they should not come to school if they are sick and unable to participate fully in routine activities**. School administrators can support this practice by communicating the importance of everyone doing a health check.

A health check means a person regularly checking to ensure they (or their child) are not experiencing symptoms of illness that would limit their ability to participate fully in regular activities before coming to school to prevent spread of communicable diseases within school settings. Schools do not need to monitor students or staff for symptoms of illness” -BCCDC

WHAT TO DO WHEN SICK

- For the safety of all, when a person is symptomatic of a communicable disease, such as, the flu virus, the individual must not enter the school. They must stay home and follow the directions of the BCCDC and the Ministry of Health.
- Parents and caregivers must assess their child daily for symptoms of common cold (with fever and green mucus), influenza, or other communicable diseases before sending them to school.
- Parents and caregivers must pick up their child as soon as possible if they are notified their child is not feeling well and/or symptomatic.
- Staff must leave the school as soon as possible if they are not feeling well and/or symptomatic.
 - Some students/staff may not be able to be picked up immediately. Students or staff can wait by the office until they can be picked up.
 - The supervising staff will avoid touching bodily fluids as much as possible, practice diligent hand hygiene and socially distance themselves when possible.
 - Students must be fever free or not vomited for a full 24 hours before coming back to school
- Staff, children, or other persons can attend school if their symptoms are consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition (e.g., seasonal allergies) or symptoms have improved enough to where they feel well enough to return to regular activities and their fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medication (e.g., ibuprofen, acetaminophen).

The Principal must:

- Clearly communicate the responsibility of the staff, parents and caregivers to assess themselves and/or their children daily before entering the school.
- Established procedures for students and staff who become sick while at school. This entails staff and students being sent home as soon as possible.
- Ensure staff/students or other adults who are sick/unwell will not be permitted to enter the school.

Space Arrangements and Visitors

Our Lady of Mercy School will use classroom and learning environment configurations and activities that best meet learner needs and preferred educational approaches. We will follow normal practices for welcoming visitors and the community use of schools.

- Visitors, including community groups using the school, should follow applicable communicable disease prevention measures outlined in this document.

Curriculum, Programs and Activities

- Teachers and staff should implement communicable disease prevention practices (e.g., cleaning and disinfecting, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette) specific to the activity.
- When planning field trips, staff should follow existing policies and procedures as well as the guidance in this document. Our Lady of Mercy School will consider guidance provided for overnight camps from the BCCDC and the BC Camps Association when planning overnight trips that include group accommodation.
- Frequently touched items like toys or manipulatives that may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g., fabrics) or not cleaned at all (e.g., sand, foam, playdough, etc.) and carpets and rugs (e.g., for circle time activities) can be used and cleaned when necessary.
- Students should be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after shared equipment use. Equipment that touches the mouth (e.g., instrument mouth pieces, water bottles, utensils) or has been in contact with bodily fluids should not be shared unless cleaned and disinfected in between uses.
- All Gatherings and events will follow BCCDC Guidance and be in line with the prevention measures as described in this document.

Health & Functional Closures

- Medical Health Officers play the lead role in determining if, when and how to communicate information regarding increased communicable disease activity within a school.
- Our Lady of Mercy School will routinely communicate to our community the need to practice health awareness and to stay home when sick. We will only communicate communicable disease notifications as directed by public health and/or the CISVA superintendent's office.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

There are two types of school closures that apply: A public health closure and functional closure.

- A public health closure of a school is ordered by a Medical Health Officer when they determine it is necessary to prevent the excessive transmission of a communicable disease. •
- A Functional Closure of a school is determined by the CISVA Superintendent's office. A functional closure is due to a lack of staff to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, support, and/or custodial to ensure the health and safety of students. This would likely be due to a high absenteeism of all staff or certain employees required for a school to function and the inability to replace those absences.
- **OTHER CLOSURES** Closures due to snow, extreme heat, power outages, extreme weather or other events are outside of these types of closures and are separate from these health and safety plans. For more information on these types of closures, please refer to the parent handbook.

Personal Practices

RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

Parents and staff can teach and reinforce good respiratory etiquette practices among students, including:

- Cough or sneeze into their elbow or a tissue. Throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.
- Refrain from touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Refrain from sharing any food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, or vaping devices.

MASKS AND FACE COVERINGS

“The decision to wear a mask is a personal one, based on individual preference. Some students and staff may choose to continue to wear a non-medical mask or face covering throughout the day or for certain activities. The choice of staff and students to choose whether they practice additional personal prevention measures should be respected. Information on non-medical masks is available from BCCDC.” – BCCDC Guidelines

Masks are one layer of protection used to prevent the spread of communicable disease. To be most effective, wearing a mask should be combined with other important protective measures such as getting vaccinated, staying home when sick, and regularly practicing hand hygiene. Masks are most effective when fitted, worn and handled correctly.

Our Lady of Mercy School will:

- Continuing school-wide efforts to create safe and inclusive learning environments free from discrimination, bullying and harassment.
- Setting, communicating and consistently reinforcing clear expectations that bullying and disrespectful behaviour and conduct related to personal mask use is unacceptable.

PERSONAL SPACE

- Staff and students should be encouraged to respect others personal space (the distance from which a person feels comfortable being next to another person).

SHARING FOOD, BEVERAGES & OTHER ITEMS THAT TOUCH THE MOUTH

- Staff and students should be encouraged to not share items that come in contact with the mouth (e.g., food, drinks, unwashed utensils, etc).
- Shared-use items that touch the mouth should be cleaned and disinfected between use by different individuals (e.g., water bottles, cutlery, etc).

Disinfection & Sanitation Guidelines and Protocols

The goal is to establish a sanitary baseline. Disinfection should occur once in a 24hr period. Regular cleaning and disinfection are essential to prevent the transmission of communicable diseases from contaminated objects and surfaces.

Our Lady of Mercy School will use commercial disinfectant products listed on Canada's hard surface disinfectants for use against communicable diseases. We will follow the procedures outlined in the BCCDC Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings Document when cleaning and disinfecting. The cleaning steps outlined below should be done routinely to disinfect surfaces, chairs, tables, etc. as aid in the preventative measures to prevent the transmission of communicable diseases.

Disinfection and Sanitization Daily Guidelines and Routines:

- Disinfecting spray and disposable cloths are in every classroom. Extras can be found in the janitorial room.
- Classrooms and common areas are to be disinfected at least once per day.
- Hand sanitizer, soap and water, or effective disinfectant is available throughout the school.

Frequently Touched Surfaces:

Frequently touched surfaces are items used by multiple students and staff, including doorknobs, light switches, hand railings, water fountains, faucet handles, toilet handles, tables, desks, chairs, manipulatives, toys, shared equipment, appliances, and counter areas.

- Access to water and washrooms will not be restricted.
- Some frequently touched items like toys or manipulatives may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g. fabrics) or at all (e.g. sand, playdough, etc.). These items can continue to be used if hand hygiene is practiced before and after use.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING BODILY FLUIDS

The school will follow these procedures, in conjunction with school policies, when cleaning and disinfecting bodily fluids (e.g. runny nose, vomit, blood, stool, urine)

- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning blood or body fluids.
- Wash hands before wearing and after removing gloves.
- Follow regular health and safety procedures and regularly use PPE for blood and bodily fluids.

General Ventilation and Air Circulation Guidelines and Protocols

The school continues to undergo yearly assessment, preventative maintenance and general overview of operations of the school's ventilation system. This assessment is conducted by a professional HVAC company. The school will support air circulation through opening windows, using fans, and opening doors when appropriate.

At this time there is no evidence that a building's ventilation system, in good operating condition, would contribute to the spread of the virus. Good indoor air ventilation alone cannot protect people from exposure to communicable diseases; however, it may reduce risk when used in addition to other preventive measures.

Ventilation Safety Plan:

If the school's ventilation system is temporarily compromised due to a power outage, or a ventilation break down, the following will occur:

- The principal or designate will assess the situation and make note of all safety concerns.
- The principal or designate, in the event of a power outage, will contact BC Hydro to obtain an estimated return to power.
 - If the power outage will continue for longer than one hour or until the end of the school day (whichever comes first), the principal or designate may initiate calls to families to retrieve their child(ren) from school.

Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) and Socio-Emotional Learning

Trauma-informed practice is an informed way of approaching working with children through a compassionate lens of understanding that is helpful to all children, youth and adults, especially those who have experienced traumatic events.

- Our Lady of Mercy School will use regular needs-based 'check-in' to assist in gathering important information to inform the level of trauma response and recovery necessary to support the school community. The school will provide inclusive and compassionate learning environment and help minimize additional stress or trauma by addressing individual student needs.
- Staff members receive on-going in TIP and socio-emotional learning opportunities. Training is done through on-site, small group, professional lead, workshops and/or through virtual meetings.

TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE (TIP)

The goal of TIP is to recognize the cues of trauma and move them from survival instincts to a capacity to learn. TIP recognizes that students cannot learn when they are stressed and that a trauma informed brain needs to learn through repetition and focusing on the environment where students can learn.

Key components of TIP are:

- Staff are to provide inclusive and compassionate learning environments
- Staff are to provide modelling and lead students in practicing coping strategies
- The school will use non-adversarial discipline (avoiding punitive and stigmatizing measures)
- Staff will help to minimize additional stress or trauma by addressing individual student needs
- Staff will engage in self-awareness practices to understand their own levels of trauma and that trauma is everywhere in our community

The school will build an understanding that executive functioning skills are compromised; work within the framework that these skills will not be performing at peak levels and these behaviours are a deficit of the following skills:

- Inhibitions
- Verbal working memory
- Forethought Socio-Emotional Learning:
- Organizing, planning, and prioritizing
- Understanding different points of view
- Working memory
- Emotional self-regulation
- Paying attention
- Starting tasks and staying focused
- Self-monitoring

Socio-emotional learning is an integral part of education and human development. It is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships and make responsible and caring decisions.

Key benefits of socio-emotional learning:

- Improvement in students' social and emotional skills, attitudes, relationships, academic performance, and perceptions of classroom and school climate
- Long-term improvements in students' skills, attitudes, prosocial behaviour and academic performance
- Decline in students' anxiety, behaviour problems, and substance use (From: <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>)

Our Lady of Mercy School uses the knowledge and understanding of TIP with the knowledge and understanding of socio-emotional learning. This is done through grade level curriculum, online educational programs, forging healthy relationships, on-going TIP workshops, community building, and providing a safe and caring environment for learning.

Supportive School Environments

Our Lady of Mercy School provides supportive environments for communicable disease prevention by:

- Having staff model personal practices (e.g., hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette), and assist younger students as needed.
- Sharing reliable information, including from the BC Centre for Disease Control, Office of the Provincial Health Officer, and local health authorities to parents, families and caregivers.
- Promoting personal practices in the school (e.g., posters).
- Ensuring individual choices for personal practices (e.g., choosing to wear a mask or face covering) are supported and treated with respect, recognizing varying personal comfort levels.

Vaccines

Vaccines are important tools to protect against serious outcomes of many communicable diseases. Students and staff are encouraged to ensure they are up to date on all recommended vaccines for communicable diseases.

<https://immunizebc.ca/children/vaccines/vaccines-by-age>

Our Lady of Mercy School will share evidence-based information and promote opportunities to be vaccinated in partnership with public health and the local medical health officer.

The Support Services for Schools Order and the Inter-Ministerial Protocols for the Provision of Support Services to Schools require boards of education and participating independent school authorities to provide a designated space in each school for public health nurses or other qualified health personnel to carry out their duties (including immunizations). Our Lady of Mercy School complies with this order and ensures that health personnel feel welcomed and supported when they are in our school.

Supporting Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities and/or Receiving Health Services

“Staff and those providing services to students with medical complexity, immune suppression, receiving direct or delegated care, or with disabilities and diverse abilities who are in close proximity to a student should follow routine infection control practices and care plans for the child, if applicable. “ - BCCDC

Our Lady of Mercy School has a communicable disease prevention measure that promote inclusion of students with disabilities/diverse abilities.

In-class instruction may not be suitable for some children (or families) with a severe immune compromise or medical complexity, which should be determined on a case-by-case basis with a medical care provider. The school follows regular practices for those needing alternative learning arrangements due to immune compromise or medical complexity to ensure access to learning and supports.

Those providing health services that require being near to a student should follow the student’s individual care plan (if one is in place) and their standard risk assessment methods to determine what PPE is needed for communicable disease prevention (e.g., gloves for toileting).

Our Lady of Mercy School will continue to have non-medical masks on hand for those who have forgotten theirs but would like to wear one.

Indigenous Students

First Nations Living on Reserve

First Nations may take increased safety measures during the pandemic recovery phase. This may mean that some First Nations learners will not be able to attend in-person classes. First Nations have the authority to declare states of emergency and have responsibility for the education of their citizens. In the spirit of Reconciliation and consistent with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, the school is expected to engage with First Nations communities who have First Nation students living in community (on- reserve) enrolled in the school as soon as possible to discuss school plans for the 2024/25 school year. This will help to identify potential accommodations needed to support students who may not be able to attend in person classes.

Indigenous Student Success and Achievement

The CISVA, in collaboration with Our Lady of Mercy School, is expected to continue to support equitable outcomes and opportunities for all Indigenous learners by maintaining Indigenous student supports and collaboration with Indigenous communities and education partners. Our Lady of Mercy School is expected to collaborate with local First Nations, Métis Chartered communities and Indigenous communities on any changes/updates to the delivery of any programs including Indigenous language and culture services.

Communicable disease outbreaks and pandemics have a disproportionate impact on Indigenous communities. Our Lady of Mercy School will identify Indigenous students whose educational outcomes may have been negatively impacted during the pandemic and make accommodations to ensure these students are supported. The needs of Indigenous students who require additional supports should be planned for and prioritized in partnership with parents/caregivers and communities.

Our Lady of Mercy School is also expected to engage with First Nations to identify the transportation needs of First Nation students living on reserve. Collaboration between the school and First Nations is necessary to ensure there are equitable and safe transportation opportunities for students.

Additional considerations include:

- Collaboration between teachers and Indigenous support staff on the development of Indigenous students' learning plans, including ensuring the integration of language and culture into these plans.
- Awareness and sensitivity regarding the complex and devastating history that pandemics have had on many Indigenous communities.
- Understanding that some Indigenous families and communities may continue to take increased safety measures, which may mean that some students will not attend in-person instruction in September.

Communication

The CISVA, in collaboration with Our Lady of Mercy School, has an obligation to inform and communicate with the First Nations they serve regarding learning plans for Nominal Roll students, Enhancement Agreement goals and Equity Action Plans, Local Education Agreements and Joint Transportation Plans.

Our Lady of Mercy School is expected to inform and communicate with the local Métis Chartered communities regarding the learning plans, Enhancement Agreement goals and Equity Action Plans for Métis students.