



# Shakopee Area Catholic School

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August 18, 2021

Hello SACS Families,

As Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis prepare for the 2021-2022 academic year, we are eager for the opportunity to partner with parents in the education of their children.

Beginning in March 2020, and continuing through the 2020-21 school year, our deep concern about the risks of COVID-19 and love of neighbor, along with our responsibility to adhere to the regulations issued through the legitimate authority of the State, prompted Catholic schools to impose unprecedented restrictions and requirements on teachers, students, and families. We did this in solidarity with the broader community to give the healthcare system an opportunity to prepare and to give the scientific community an opportunity to gain knowledge.

While some circumstances remain the same, others are quite different from last year. We are prudentially evaluating all public health recommendations and implementing those that will best serve our students, staff, and entire community. We want to let families know our plan will be fluid and as circumstances change, we will adjust to best serve our students and staff. When the updated Decision Tree is published by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), we will send that out to our families.

We pray for all our families and ask for the prayers of the entire school community as we all seek the wisdom and courage to continue the essential work for the sake of one of our noblest endeavors—the education of our children.

## **Overview of SACS Mitigation Strategies:**

While some of the pieces of our plan from last year are no longer applicable, we remain committed to maintaining the health and safety of our school community. We are taking the approach of a broad number of steps in our mitigation strategies for the start of this year.

## **Learning Model**

All students are expected to learn in-person, on-campus, each day. SACS will not offer a distance learning option for students, including for those in quarantine or home due to

2700 17th Avenue East Shakopee, MN 55379 Phone: (952) 445-3387 Fax: (952) 445-7256 [www.sacsschools.org](http://www.sacsschools.org)

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a lab-confirmed case of Covid. Students that are absent for any reason will follow the normal procedures for making up work while absent.

## **Staying Home When Sick:**

We continue to require all individuals to stay home when they are sick. We are asking all parents to do a health check before sending your child to school each day. Students can return to school once they are feeling better and their symptoms have substantially improved (including being fever free for 24 hours with no fever-reducing medication). If your child is presenting Covid-19 symptoms it is recommended they get a negative Covid test result prior to returning to school. This has always been our policy for students and staff.

## **Sanitation, Hygiene, and Respiratory Etiquette**

Hand sanitation dispensers are installed at the entrances to the school building and available in classrooms. Students will be instructed on the importance of good hygiene and will be expected to follow routines established for this purpose.

In addition, we will encourage regular hand washing routines to help prevent the spread of viruses.

We will continue cleaning and sanitizing spaces each day. All classroom high-touch areas will continue to be cleaned and disinfected each day.

We will continue to have the water bottle filling stations available, drinking fountains are disabled.

## **Physical Distancing**

We will encourage physical distancing during the school day when it does not disrupt the development and learning of our students.

## **Visitors and Events**

We will begin the school year limiting visitors in the building to essential volunteers.

School Mass will be held on Wednesday mornings with one half of the students attending live and one half viewing online from their classroom.



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As we start the year, we will not have visitors to school Masses.

## **Ventilation**

Director of Maintenance, Dan Casey, will monitor the ventilation system of the building ensuring it is operating properly.

The ventilation system is set to maximize air flow throughout the building.

## **Lab-Confirmed Cases of COVID-19**

State law requires us to report to the Minnesota Department of Health any cases of COVID-19 that occur among students or staff in our building. If your child has COVID-19, we will require that they not return to school or school-sponsored activities until they are no longer contagious.

This means:

They feel better. Their cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms are substantially improved.

It has been at least 10 days since they first felt sick or tested positive for COVID-19.

They have had no fever for at least 24 hours, without using medicine that lowers fevers.

Like other infectious diseases, we will notify impacted families of a lab-confirmed case of COVID-19 in the classroom

As a school, we will no longer send school-wide emails about lab-confirmed cases. However, families will be notified if they have a student in their child's classroom with a lab-confirmed case.

The MDH has trained staff to conduct contact tracing, we will be ready to assist whenever they request our assistance in this area.

## **Quarantine:**

The Minnesota Department of Health no longer requires individuals who have been potentially exposed to COVID-19 to quarantine. In general, our school will not exclude any healthy individual from the learning environment, unless we are specifically counseled to do so in the particular circumstances by public health officials.

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Here is the MDH Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf>

## **Face Coverings in the School Building:**

Last year, the Governor through an Executive Order required all individuals in public and nonpublic school buildings to wear face coverings. In our commitment to obey rightful legal authority, last year we implemented the face covering mandate at our school. This legal mandate ended over the summer. Districts and schools across Minnesota are making decisions based upon the actual COVID-19 circumstances that are present in their respective communities. **The start of the school year remains several weeks away and the situation with COVID-19 continually changes. The Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis does not have a policy requiring face coverings in Catholic schools. For the start of the 2021-22 school year, we are putting the decision for a child to wear a face covering in the hands of each parent. Students and staff are strongly encouraged to consider wearing a mask, but it is not mandated.** Parents and guardians are well positioned to determine if their child should wear a face covering while outside of the home. We ask all parents and guardians to consider what is best for their child and family in making this decision while also being vigilant in the monitoring of symptoms and the health of their child.

We know that there are a variety of positions and opinions on the use of masks for children. Our school faculty and staff will be working diligently to eliminate any bullying or stigmatization for wearing or not wearing a face covering. We really need the help of all our families to reinforce our efforts at school and help the children understand that the decision to mask or not mask is an individual decision. We as Catholic Christians know each person is a child of God with different gifts and talents. We also do not know the whole story behind the family situation for each child in our school or community. We ask that you help us in this goal. We expect that a considerable number of students and families will decide to wear masks this autumn.

## **Face Coverings on the Bus**

All people are required by an Order from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to wear face coverings while in public transportation hubs and on all public transportation conveyances (airplanes, public buses, etc.), including school buses (both public and private). Therefore, all students riding a school bus will be

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required to wear a face covering. This is something SACS does not have any control over.

We are excited to welcome our children back to the classroom and grateful for your trust to educate with excellence and help slow the spread of disease. In conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Health and the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, we will be monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic closely and will be promptly communicating any updates to this plan.

Sincerely,

Bruce Doyle

Interim Principal

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