

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.

-James 5:7

Dear Highland Catholic Parents and Guardians,

We have been patient, we continue to be patient, as we both wait for spring and a return to normalcy after two years of a pandemic that has challenged us all in different ways. And, as Saint James continues to remind us in his letter, we know that “the Lord is full of compassion and mercy” and will get us there together as a community.

As our Pandemic Planning Team looks at the current Covid 19 data and information, we see much to be hopeful about. We have high vaccination rates among eligible students at Highland Catholic School, we see positive Covid cases taking a steep downturn at school and in the community, and our families continue to be incredibly responsible about keeping sick children home and getting tested. We are so grateful for all of your efforts to protect the common good!

This pandemic has thrown us plenty of curveballs, so we will remain vigilant about monitoring the situation, but based on the most current information and research, we feel very hopeful that we will be able to make mask-wearing optional for all preschool through 8th grade students in the near future.

Barring any new variants or changes in information, our current plan is to require masking through Wednesday, March 3rd.

This change will bring great relief to some, great anxiety to others, and a little bit of both to many. We will spend time in school talking about the importance of respecting everyone's decisions around masking once it becomes optional. Please feel free to reiterate this important message at home. Saint James supplies us with yet another apt verse in his letter when he says, “Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged.” May we all show the compassion and mercy of God to one another as we transition through yet another phase of this long pandemic.

Spring rains can't come soon enough!

Phase 4: Safety Protocol for Preschool through 8th Grade

At School:

1. Extra masks are available in the school office and classrooms for those who choose to mask.
2. Handwashing stations are positioned around the school to allow for frequent and consistent handwashing. Preschool students wash hands upon entering the building and on a regular basis throughout the day.
3. 2 windows remain open in each school classroom on the first and second floors to enhance air circulation in classrooms. An air handler circulates air for the garden level classrooms and the Preschool classrooms in the Church building.

At Home:

1. Families are asked to keep students home with any symptoms of Covid. These symptoms include: fever, runny nose, headache, cough, upset stomach, lethargy.
2. Families are asked to have students who display any Covid symptoms remain quarantined from school until a negative Covid test has been secured or if their quarantine period is over.
3. Families are encouraged to test for Covid regularly.
4. K-8 students should have a filled water bottle at school each day. Preschool students have access to water from their teacher.

Procedures:

If a student tests positive for Covid:

***Families should contact the school with this information immediately.**

1. Parents/guardians should be prepared to share the following information with the school:
 - Student name and DOB
 - Date of first symptoms
 - Date the Covid test was conducted and date that positive test results were received
 - Last date the student attended school
 - Vaccination status of the student
2. The student should isolate at home for five days AFTER their last symptom of Covid 19 or ten days from their positive test date. Students who are asymptomatic should remain home five days AFTER their positive test result date.

If a student has been exposed to a positive Covid case in school:

Parents/guardians of the grade level will be notified of a positive Covid case and the date of exposure.

Unvaccinated Students (and Staff):

1. Parents/guardians of students who are unvaccinated and deemed a “close contact” by the school will be notified and asked to quarantine their child until a negative Covid test has been conducted 3-5 days after the exposure.
2. Negative Covid test results should be provided to the school before a student’s return.

Fully Vaccinated Students (and Staff):

Parents/guardians of students who are vaccinated and deemed a “close contact” by the school will be notified and asked to monitor their child closely for symptoms. Testing 5-7 days from the date of exposure is encouraged.

How school determines a “close contact”:

1. Students who sit immediately in the area of a Covid-positive student at lunch are considered close contacts.
2. Teachers may identify students who need frequent mask and/or distancing reminders as close contacts.

If a family member that lives in the home has tested positive for Covid:

***Families should contact the school with this information.**

Unvaccinated Students (and Staff):

1. Students should quarantine at home for a minimum of 10 days after the infected person’s positive test date and should stay away from the Covid patient as much as possible.
2. Students should test regularly and monitor closely for symptoms.

Fully Vaccinated Students (and Staff):

1. Students may return to school but are asked to wear a mask for 10 days.
2. Students should stay away from the positive family member and mask at home as much as possible. *With the highly contagious Omicron variant, families who are able to consider isolating at home are encouraged to do so.
3. Students should test regularly and monitor closely for symptoms.

If a student has had close contact with a positive Covid case who does not live in their home:

Unvaccinated Students (and Staff):

1. The student should quarantine at home and should have a Covid test done 3-5 days after the last exposure date.
2. A student may return after receiving a negative test result.

Fully Vaccinated Students (and Staff):

1. Students may attend school but should monitor for symptoms. *With the highly contagious Omicron variant, families who are able to consider isolating a student at home for 3-5 days are encouraged to do so.
2. Students are encouraged to test for Covid 3-5 days after the last exposure date.

How school defines "Quarantine": a period of time after a known exposure when a person stays home, monitors closely for Covid symptoms, and avoids contact with people in the household who may be especially vulnerable to Covid 19.

How school defines "Isolation": a period of time when a Covid patient stays home and separates from any household members who do not have Covid.

The Highland Catholic Pandemic Planning Team updated and approved these policies at a meeting on Tuesday, February 8, 2022.