



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT  
Catholic Independent Schools of the Nelson Diocese  
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September 22, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians;

The first few weeks of school can be a bit chaotic under normal circumstances, and with the current health crisis, parents, students, and staff are faced with new health and safety protocols and new procedures for drop off and pickup. Thank you for your patience as the schools adjust their procedures to ensure a smooth return to school.

Over the last few weeks you have received a lot of information and updates from your school. It is very important that parents read this information in order to help keep our students and staff safe and healthy.

I am sure that you have also read about recent cases of COVID -19 being identified in schools in the lower mainland of BC. It is our hope that this is an isolated case and that by all of us continuing to follow the safety protocols in place our schools can remain COVID-free. However it is prudent that we also be prepared for every eventuality and wanted to take this opportunity to let our school community know the steps that will be taken if there was a confirmed case.

### **PROTOCOL IN THE EVENT OF A CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASE IN A SCHOOL**

In the event that a student, staff, or other individual who has been in a school is identified as a confirmed case of COVID-19 through testing or investigation, the local health authority will initiate contact tracing to determine how they were infected and who else may have been at risk of infection.

If there was a potential exposure at a school (i.e. the confirmed case attended school when they may have been potentially infectious), the health authority will work with the school administrator to identify who may have been exposed, and to determine what actions should be taken, including identifying if other students or staff are sick or have been exposed and should monitor for symptoms or self-isolate.

Please note that self-monitoring and self-isolating have different meanings.

**Self-monitoring** - means one should be monitoring their health for symptoms

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such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing. Individuals who are self-monitoring are allowed to attend work and school and take part in regular activities.<sup>1</sup>

**Self-Isolation** - means staying home and avoiding situations where one could come in contact with others. Self-isolation is required for those confirmed as a case of COVID-19, those who are identified as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19, and those who have travelled outside Canada in the last 14 days.<sup>2</sup>

Students and staff are **only required to self-isolate if directed to do so by health authority staff** – this includes members of the learning group of the confirmed case.

Other people who are not identified as close contacts of a confirmed case, but who may have interacted with the confirmed case while they were infectious, may be advised by health authority staff to self-monitor for symptoms **but can still attend school.**

Public Health staff may require additional measures to be taken which may include:

- Requesting students and staff to stay home until contact tracing has been completed
- Self-isolation of a learning group (cohort)
- Additional cleaning/disinfectant requirements
- Temporary restrictions or modification of certain school activities<sup>3</sup>

## **COMMUNICATIONS AND PROTECTING PERSONAL PRIVACY**

**It is important to note that it is the Public Health staff - not the school- that will play the lead role in determining if, when, and how to communicate out information regarding a confirmed case to the school community.**<sup>4</sup>

To protect personal privacy rights, health authorities will not disclose that a student or staff member is a confirmed case of COVID-19 unless there is reason to believe they may have been infectious when they attended school. In this case, the health authority will provide only the information required to support effective contact tracing and only to the school administrator.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/common-questions>

<sup>2</sup> COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings – September 11, 2020 p.7

<sup>3</sup> COVID-19 PROTOCOLS FOR SCHOOLS AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS – Management of Illness and Confirmed Cases – September 11, 2020 p.7

<sup>4</sup> COVID-19 PROTOCOLS FOR SCHOOLS AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS – Management of Illness and Confirmed Cases – September 11, 2020 p.7

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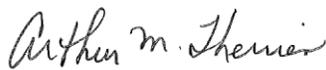
To ensure that personal privacy rights are maintained and that information provided is complete and correct, schools are unable to provide any public statements to staff or students' families about potential or confirmed COVID-19 cases unless they are directed to do so by the public health authority. Any communication from the school to parents **must** be reviewed by the public health authority prior to release.

We understand that much information is spread through the use of social media. At times incorrect or misinformation may be inadvertently passed along that may violate a person's right to privacy. We also recognize that it is important that our parent community receive timely, appropriate, and factual information if a situation should occur. The only correct avenue for this information to come to you is through a letter from the Superintendent's Office or the school administration, in consultation with the Public Health Authority.

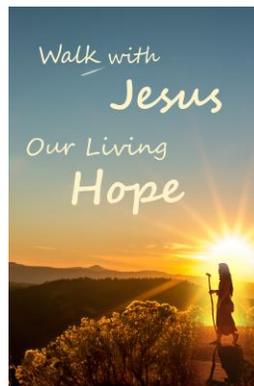
The information the schools receive from the Ministry of Education is updated weekly and is subject to change with very little notice. Any changes in these procedures will be communicated to our school communities as soon as possible.

Thank you for your continued support of our Catholic schools and keep safe. I am looking forward with hope to a great year for all the members of our school communities, and particularly our students. May God continue to bless you as we prepare to welcome our students back to "Walk with Jesus, Our Living Hope"!

Yours in Christ,



Arthur M. Therrien  
Superintendent of Schools



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