



DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH  
THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



August 10, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

Last school year, as a community we experienced and recognized that our COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Fort Worth were successful in mitigating the spread of COVID-19. This was true even before the development and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine. This summer, we experienced that our revised guidelines were successful in mitigating the spread of the virus during summer activities and camps. We anticipate that our guidelines will likewise effectively mitigate the spread of the virus this school year and help protect the vulnerable from illness, especially now that our Catholic school employees and families have a safe, effective vaccine available to them should they choose to receive it. The COVID-19 vaccine is now available to everyone 12 years and older, and we strongly encourage our employees and families to consult with their physician about getting vaccinated.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us, parents are the primary educators of their children. So too are parents the primary caregivers of their children. We are mindful and respectful of the God-given and natural rights and responsibilities of parents to care for their children and to make decisions regarding the health of their children: body and soul. With that in mind, the wearing of masks is optional for all students, faculty, and staff at this time. While we encourage the wearing of masks, especially for those who are unvaccinated or without natural immunity, we leave that decision to the discretion of our employees and Catholic school parents. We ask parents to be mindful and respectful of the potential that the decisions they make regarding their children may impact other children. Concern for the care of their children and those of other parents should inform the option that parents make. Therefore, it is imperative that parents cooperate with our schools in taking actions to mitigate the potential spread of the virus, including keeping home from school any children who have been exposed to COVID-19, or who are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 or any other contagious illness, until the requirements to return to school are met.

In addition to the wearing of masks being optional, our current health and safety guidelines promote frequent handwashing and hand sanitization, social distancing both in and out of the classroom, efforts to improve indoor ventilation, and the frequent cleaning of surfaces, particularly those in high touch areas. We will continue to notify the respective Catholic school communities of all confirmed cases of COVID-19 among students, faculty, and staff.

The current COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Fort Worth are enclosed. As has been our practice throughout the pandemic, we will continue to review our health and safety guidelines throughout the year based on changing circumstances and in consultation with medical professionals and others within the Diocese. If it becomes necessary to revise our guidelines, even temporarily, we will notify the impacted Catholic school communities accordingly. We thank you for your support and cooperation in advance should this become necessary.

Each of our Catholic schools strive to provide our students with an excellent classical Catholic education and formation in a safe environment. We look forward to another fruitful school year, in which we will educate and form children and their families - mind, body, and soul – in accordance with the Gospel of Jesus Christ as presented in authentic Catholic teaching. With prayers for your good health and a fruitful scholastic year, I remain,

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

*+ Michael F. Olson*

+Michael F. Olson, STD, MA  
Bishop of Fort Worth

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# Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Fort Worth

## COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines

The following protocols will be in effect at all schools in the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth for the 2021-2022 academic year. These guidelines will be reviewed and updated as needed throughout the year based on the most up-to-date information available.

### **FACE COVERINGS – Encouraged, but optional**

Masks remain optional for all students, staff, faculty, and visitors regardless of their vaccination status. Campuses will work to ensure all persons are respected whether they choose to wear a mask or not.

### **IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION**

Instruction will be provided in-person at all schools within the Diocese.

### **HAND WASHING & HEALTH PRACTICES**

Schools should have students and employees continue with handwashing and health practices related to the prevention of the virus. Schools should encourage appropriate cough and sneeze etiquette throughout the school day.

### **SOCIAL DISTANCING**

A minimum of three feet of distancing between individuals is recommended whenever feasible. Conducting activities outdoors should be considered when possible. Campuses will do their best to accommodate parent requests to ensure their student remains socially distanced, but social distancing may not be possible or feasible in all situations.

Student desks are to be facing one direction in the classroom when possible.

### **CLEANING SURFACES**

Schools will establish cleaning procedures in high-touch areas to include regular cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing of facilities.

### **VENTILATION**

Schools will make efforts to improve ventilation within indoor spaces where possible.

### **WATER FOUNTAINS**

Water fountains will be turned off; water bottle filling stations may be utilized.

### **MONITOR FOR ANY SYMPTOMS**

Parents should monitor their children daily for any symptoms of COVID-19 or other contagious illnesses prior to coming on-campus. Faculty and staff should likewise monitor themselves daily prior to coming on campus.

- If experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 or another contagious illness, **please stay home** and consult your physician for further guidance.

### **SYMPTOMATIC STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF**

Students that are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 or other contagious illnesses while at school will be isolated from others in the clinic or other designated waiting area until their parent/guardian arrives to pick them up. **Parents must pick up their children within 30 minutes of being contacted by the school.**

Faculty or staff that are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 or other contagious illnesses at work will notify their supervisor promptly, isolate themselves from other individuals, and promptly leave the campus.

### **STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19**

Positive COVID-19 test results for students, faculty, and staff are required to be reported to the school nurse or health representative.

Students and staff who are diagnosed with or test positive for COVID-19 will need to remain home from school until: fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medications, respiratory symptoms have improved, and it has been at least 10 full days since symptom onset (or since positive test result if asymptomatic).

When students are excluded from in-person activities, school administration and faculty will work with families to develop plans to keep the students current in their course work.

### **REQUIREMENTS TO RETURN TO SCHOOL**

Students, faculty, and staff who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 will be excluded from in-person activities.

Criteria for readmission:

- Note from healthcare provider indicating alternate diagnosis and clearing the individual to return; and a negative COVID test result if one was completed\*; or
- 10 full days have passed since onset of symptoms, fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medications, and improved respiratory symptoms.

\* Consult with Nurse Eder to ensure the negative test will be considered valid by the school based on the date of the test.

### **CONTACT TRACING & NOTIFICATION OF POSITIVE CASES**

Parents and staff will be notified of newly reported cases at the campus through email communication. Schools will conduct contact tracing based on positive cases and, with the assistance of local public health departments, will decide who will need to self-isolate or quarantine. Those who will need to self-isolate or quarantine will be notified by school administration.

### **CAMPUS VISITORS**

Volunteers/visitors will be allowed on campus only after being screened in accordance with the school's screening protocols.

### **INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/international-travel-during-covid19.html>

### **NEBULIZED MEDICATIONS**

Since nebulized medications are considered an aerosolizing procedure, they will not be administered at school. Parents should contact their physician to obtain medication in a metered dose inhaler (MDI) with a spacer for administration at school.