

August 12, 2021  
School Covid Protocols for the Fall

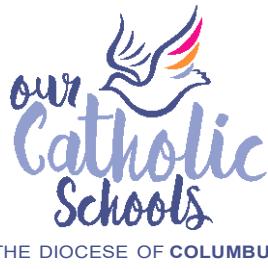
Dear Families of the Diocese of Columbus,

Once again, I'd like to thank you for your cooperation during the extraordinary 2020-21 school year. Because of your support and the tireless work of our administrators, teachers, and staff, all of the schools in the Diocese were able to operate safely. While I wish that Covid were now a distant memory, we are sadly still plagued by the pandemic.

The Covid Task Force advising the Office of Catholic Schools - comprised of principals, teachers, and medical professionals – has been meeting throughout the summer to assess Covid-related guidance given to the schools of the Diocese. This guidance includes:

- Students who are experiencing illness or symptoms **MUST** stay home. A daily home health check is required for all students.
- For any cases of Covid, the policies of the local health department for quarantining and reporting **MUST** be followed.
- Normal classroom instruction will resume without hybrid learning, digital, or all-remote options. Locally-determined support will be provided to students who are required to quarantine.
- Continued enhanced sanitation procedures and procedures allowing for frequent hand washing.
- Social distancing is not required but continues to be recommended by the Ohio Department of Health.
- Masks are strongly recommended indoors for all nonvaccinated individuals, especially children under 12 years of age. The Diocese has not set forth a mask mandate because of varying local conditions, but schools in areas of high Covid rates are encouraged to do so. Local mandates should be temporary and reviewed regularly as conditions change.
- Masks are required on all buses by federal government mandates.
- Vaccinations continue to be encouraged by the Diocese but are not mandatory.

This letter reports the minimal guidance given to schools. With schools serving 15 counties across central and southern Ohio, a single plan for the Fall is not possible. Each school has



developed its own protocols based on local conditions, including health department recommendations. It is possible that individual schools across our Diocese may enact stricter policies. These are local decisions made by each parish and/or school, and the Diocese of Columbus and the Office of Catholic Schools will support the right of every school to do so and the decisions made by our pastors and principals.

The Covid situation will be closely monitored and the above protocols may be amended at any time. Protocols also may be increased at any school at any time depending on the local situation or local directives or in the event of an outbreak.

Last October, Bishop Brennan shared a letter with you, and his comments continue to ring true nearly a year later:

Sadly, our work is not yet done as we labor forward under the continued challenges of this pandemic... I want to encourage you to stay vigilant and strong in the safety protocols in place in our schools. The wearing of masks, the maintenance of appropriate social distancing, the adherence to quarantine directives from the local health departments, keeping children home when they show any symptoms associated with Covid or with any illness, and making careful, responsible decisions about activities outside of school will continue to allow our schools to serve you... For that reason, our perseverance is even more necessary.

Thank you for your continued support. Please keep our schools and our students in your prayers.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Adam J. Dufault  
Superintendent of Catholic Schools  
Diocese of Columbus