

# Communicable Disease Prevention Plan

St. Ann's Academy

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## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Key Principles.....	4
Regional Differences.....	4
Infection Prevention & Exposure Control Measures.....	5
Supportive School Environments .....	5
Vaccines.....	6
<b>Physical Distancing and Space Arrangement</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Staff Only Spaces .....	8
<b>School Gatherings and Events (including Extracurricular)</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Personal Items .....	8
Supporting Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities.....	9
Guidelines for Staff Working with Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities Where Physical Contact may be required .....	9
Student Transportation .....	10
<b>Buses</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Carpooling.....	10
Other Methods of Transportation .....	11
<b>Cleaning and Disinfecting</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Frequency of Cleaning and Disinfecting.....	11
Cleaning of Teaching Materials, Fabrics and Other Materials .....	11
<b>Visitor Access</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Community Use</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Illness & Self-Assessment Policies and Protocols.....	13
Daily Health Checks .....	13
School Staff Responsibilities.....	13
Symptoms of Illness and Return to School.....	14
Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette.....	14
When to Perform Hand Hygiene .....	15

Respiratory Etiquette .....	15
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) .....	15
Exemptions for Staff, Students and Visitors.....	16
General Ventilation and Air Circulation .....	16
Emergency and Evacuation Drills .....	17
Communication and Training/Orientation.....	17
Curriculum, Programs and Activities .....	17
Contractor Safety.....	18

## Introduction

On **August 24th 2021**, the Ministry of Education introduced the [Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for the K-12 Settings](#). Based on guidance from the BC Centre for Disease Control, K-12 students can participate in full-time, in-class instruction in accordance with current public health guidelines for schools. **On February 18th, 2022, the Ministry lifted additional addendums issued in December due to the rise in Omicron variants.**

### **Key Principles**

- All schools within the Catholic Independent Schools of the Kamloops Diocese (CISKD) are required to have Communicable Disease Prevention plans in place, which focus on reducing the risk of workplace transmission of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases.
- **Controls for Communicable Disease Prevention continue to be:**
  - Hand Hygiene
  - Ventilation
  - Health Checks
  - Increased Cleaning and Disinfection
  - Use of Non-Medical Masks
  - Vaccines
- Schools continue to be low-risk sites for COVID-19 transmission even with increased risk of COVID-19 in some communities.

### **Regional Differences**

St. Ann's Academy will comply with all orders (provincial, regional, and local) issued by a Medical Health Officer. These orders or guidelines may augment the Provincial COVID-19 Safety Guidelines for K-12 settings based on epidemiological data. Regional or local orders would consider:

- Increased community transmissions
- Communities with low vaccination uptake
- Local epidemiology

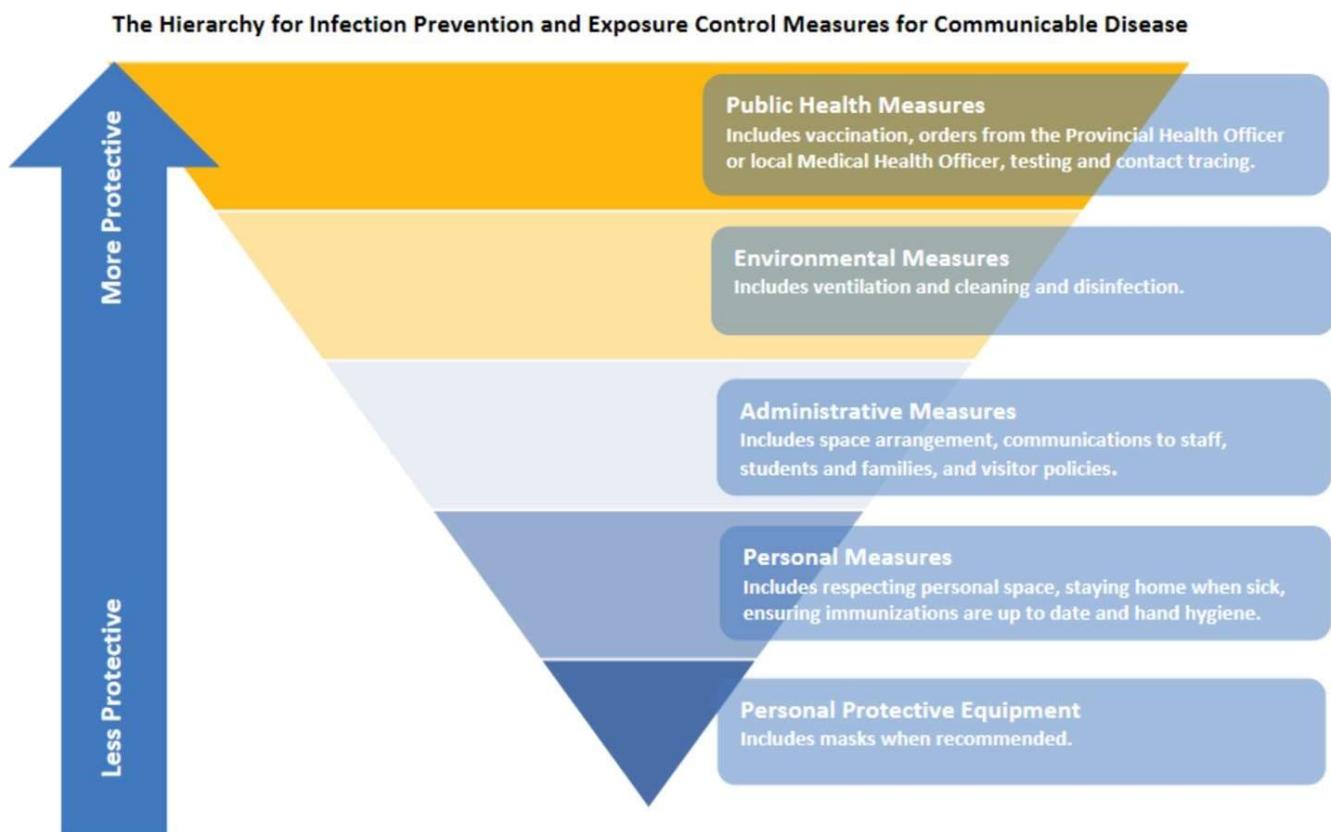
These orders may be issued as part of a local or regional strategy, but may also be issued to an individual school, a grouping of schools, all schools within the health authority region, or some combination thereof, during times of elevated risk. These measures may include:

- limits on gatherings and events
- reconfiguring room arrangements or incorporating more activities that maximize space between people and reduce face-to-face contact
- limiting visitors
- recommending increased mask use

## Infection Prevention & Exposure Control Measures

Infection prevention and exposure control measures (also called communicable disease measures or health and safety measures) help create safe environments by reducing the spread of communicable diseases like COVID-19. Schools provide a controlled environment in which access to the public is restricted. As such, these environments allow for greater use of administrative measures as all individuals present, are part of the school environment.

The Hierarchy for Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures for Communicable Disease describes measures that should be taken to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in schools. Control measures at the top are more effective and protective than those at the bottom. By implementing a combination of measures at each level, the risk of COVID-19 is substantially reduced.



## Supportive School Environments

Schools can support students to practice personal preventive measures by:

- Having staff model these behaviours.
- Promoting safety measures in the school using visual aids like signage and posters

St. Ann's Academy will share all links to reliable COVID-19 Information on our website to provide information to parents, families and caregivers. Additional information that St. Ann's Academy receives from our Regional Medical Health Officers or Interior Health may be distributed to parents, families and caregivers by St. Ann's Academy or local school administrators.

School staff will utilize positive and inclusive approaches to engage students in preventive practices and will not employ measures that are punitive or stigmatizing in nature.

Staff should also utilize a trauma-informed lens when planning school activities (e.g. gatherings and events) and interacting with other staff and students, including considerations around respecting others' personal space.

Students and staff may choose to wear additional personal protective equipment in schools beyond the required circumstances outlined in this document, and those choices must be respected. School administrators are encouraged to review the information in this section with their school community, to increase awareness and support from staff, students and families.

### **Vaccines**

Vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in schools and communities. The vaccines used in B.C. remain highly effective against COVID-19, including among variants of concern (such as the Delta Variant). Vaccinated people aged 12 and older tend to have milder illness if they get infected and are also less likely to spread COVID-19 than unvaccinated people 12 and older.

Public health strongly encourages all eligible students and staff to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to protect themselves and those around them including those who are not eligible to be vaccinated. People over 12 who are not vaccinated are at higher risk of getting and spreading COVID-19, with age the greatest factor of individual risk of severe illness. Most COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are now among unvaccinated adults.

According to the BC Centre for Disease Control, children under 12 who are not currently eligible to be vaccinated continue to be less likely to get and spread COVID-19 and have a low risk of serious outcomes if they do get COVID-19.

St. Ann's Academy will work with Public Health to:

- Share evidence-based information (e.g. from BCCDC and ImmunizeBC), and details on how and where people can get vaccinated, with staff, students and families prior to the start of the school year; and

- Explore opportunities to establish school-based COVID-19 vaccination clinics to help increase community uptake. This includes provision of space within schools for public health nurses or other qualified health personnel to carry out their duties (including immunization).

While COVID-19 is present in our communities, there will continue to be COVID-19 exposures in schools involving students and staff. However, the BC Centre Disease Control reports that, with the increasing proportion of people 12 and over being fully vaccinated and effective communicable disease measures continuing to be in place, exposures are unlikely to lead to further transmission. At this time vaccination is not required for K-12 staff or students.

### **Physical Distancing and Space Arrangement**

Public health no longer recommends learning groups or physical distancing of 2 metres as communicable disease measures for the K-12 setting. There are a number of strategies that schools can consider to help create space between people and to support students and staff in returning to school using a trauma-informed approach:

- Remind students and staff about respecting others' personal space. Use visual supports, signage, prompts, video, modelling, etc. as necessary.
- Use all available space to spread people out, both for learning environments and for gatherings and events wherever possible to reduce involuntary physical contact between participants.
- School extracurricular events and social gatherings should occur in line with those permitted by local, regional, provincial, and federal public health orders and recommendations.
- Implement strategies that prevent crowding at pick-up and drop-off times (focus on entry and exit areas, and other places where people may gather or crowd).
- Stagger recess/snack, lunch, and class transition times to provide a greater amount of space for everyone.
- Taking students outside is still encouraged for overall health benefits, but no longer recommended for Covid-19 prevention.
- Manage flow of people in common areas, including hallways and around lockers, to minimize crowding and allow for ease of people passing through.
- Schools may continue to use floor markings and posters to address traffic flow throughout the school. This may include one-way hallways and designated entrance and exit doors. It is important not to reduce the number of exits and ensure we adhere to fire code.

- Spaces used for breaks and unstructured time should have enough space available to prevent involuntary physical contact.

### **Staff Only Spaces**

Transmission between adults within the school environment is also an important transmission route to control in the school environment.

Within these spaces, WorkSafeBC Guidelines should be used to determine what measures should be in place.

Within non-student areas within schools, additional precautions should be put in place including:

- Rules and procedures to prevent crowding at gathering areas (such as the break room or photocopier)
- Occupancy limits
- Virtual options for meetings where reasonable.

### **School Gatherings and Events (including Extracurricular)**

School gatherings and events will occur in line with those permitted by all applicable public and local / regional health orders and recommendations. School organizers will apply a trauma informed lens to their planning, including consideration of:

- respecting student and staff comfort levels regarding personal space;
- using space available to spread people out as much as possible, respecting room occupancy limits, and ensuring enough space is available to prevent involuntarily physical contact between attendees (e.g., overcrowding); and
- gradual transitions to larger gatherings (e.g. school-wide assemblies), including starting with virtual or smaller in-person options, shorter in-person sessions, etc..

Examinations or assessments are not considered school gatherings; however, they must still follow all current COVID-19 requirements.

### **Personal Items**

Staff and students may continue to bring personal items to school, but they are encouraged to not share items that come in contact with the mouth (e.g. food, drinks, unwashed utensils, wind instruments, etc.).

St. Ann's Academy will implement strategies to manage the flow of students around lockers to minimize crowding and allow for ease of people passing through. These may include:

- Uni-directional hallways.
- Staggered release times where feasible
- Staggered recess and lunch times
- Encouraging students to not loiter at lockers

### **Supporting Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities**

Most students with disabilities/diverse abilities or medical complexity are not considered at greater risk of experiencing severe illness from COVID-19. Refer to the [K-12 Recovery Plan](#) for students who have immune suppression.

St. Ann's Academy is committed to accommodating our students with disabilities or diverse abilities and will work with families to ensure that students have access to learning supports. Parents/ Caregivers of students with disabilities/diverse abilities are encouraged to contact their school administrator to discuss available options for their child (including ensuring appropriate preventative measures are in place).

### **Guidelines for Staff Working with Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities Where Physical Contact may be required**

Supporting students with disabilities/diverse abilities may require staff providing support services to be in close physical proximity or in physical contact with a student. When staff are working with a student indoors, and the service cannot be provided from behind a barrier, staff are required to wear a non-medical mask, a face covering or a face shield (in which case a non-medical mask should be worn in addition to the face shield) Additional personal protective equipment is not required beyond that used as part of the personal care routine normally encountered in their regular course of work (e.g., gloves for toileting).

When working with students where seeing facial expressions and/or lip movement is important, and the service cannot be provided from behind a barrier, options include having the staff member wear a mask with a transparent section to enable visualization of the mouth.

## Student Transportation

### Buses

All bus drivers will be provided non-medical masks which they are required to wear while inside the bus. Bus drivers have received instruction on local schools' cleaning and disinfecting procedures. All frequent touch-points will be disinfected once per day or when visibly dirty, and low frequency touch points will be cleaned once per day.

Transportation assistance for students requiring accommodations are in place. Students will spread out within the bus when empty spaces are available. Whenever weather permits, windows will be open to allow for increased ventilation of the bus. All students and adults will continue to wear a non-medical mask while on the bus, unless they qualify for a mask exemption.

Parents and caregivers must assess their child daily for symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other infectious respiratory disease before sending them to school. If a child has any symptoms, they must not take the bus or go to school.

Students in Kindergarten to grade 12 are required to wear non-medical masks or face coverings when indoors or on the bus. Students should clean their hands before they leave home to take the bus, when they leave school prior to taking the bus, and when they get home. Where possible, bus line up areas should be set up to prevent crowding and students should put on their masks prior to boarding the bus. Students are spread out if empty seats are available. Windows are opened when the weather allows.

### Carpooling

When staff, students or others carpool as part of St. Ann's Academy school-based activities, the following protocols should be followed:

- Weather permitting, all windows should be opened.
- If the weather is poor, the vehicle's ventilation should be turned on and set to bring in fresh outside air. Do not use air recirculation.
- Travel with the same people whenever possible.
- Spread out within the vehicle as much as possible.
- All staff and students in grades 4 to 12 are required to wear non-medical masks or face coverings in the vehicle.
- All vehicle occupants should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after trips
- Clean frequently touched surfaces within the vehicle regularly.

St. Ann's Academy encourages families and staff who carpool outside of school hours to follow the same protocols where possible.

#### Other Methods of Transportation

Staff, students or visitors who take mass transit (such as BC Transit buses) should wash their hands following trips and ensure they are following any other safety guidance issued by the transit operator.

### **Cleaning and Disinfecting**

Regular cleaning and disinfection are essential to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and other diseases from contaminated objects and surfaces.

#### **Frequency of Cleaning and Disinfecting**

St. Ann's Academy will continue to perform daily general cleaning of all sites. Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected at least once in a 24-hour period. These frequently touched surfaces include:

- Items used by larger numbers of students and staff, including doorknobs, light switches, hand railings, water fountains, faucet handles, toilet handles.
- Shared equipment (e.g. computer keyboards and tablets, glassware and testing equipment for science labs, kitchen equipment for culinary programs, sewing machines and sewing equipment for home economic programs, PE/sports equipment, music equipment, etc.)
- Appliances (staff and students can share the use of appliances and other objects, but treat items like microwaves, refrigerators, coffee pots, photocopiers or laminators as frequently touched surfaces)
- Service counters (e.g., office service window, library circulation desk)

Areas that are not used in a day will not require cleaning.

### **Cleaning of Teaching Materials, Fabrics and Other Materials**

When using teaching materials, toys or manipulatives that may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g. fabrics) or at all (e.g. sand, foam, playdough, etc.), may be used if hand hygiene is practiced before and after use. Carpets and rugs (e.g. in Kindergarten or preschool classes) can also be used.

No cleaning or additional hand washing is required when handling:

- Textbooks, papers or other paper-based products;
- Laminated or Glossy Paper-based products (e.g. Children’s books or magazines) and;
- Items with plastic covers (DVDs)

Cleaning and disinfecting bodily fluids will be conducted in accordance with St. Ann’s Academy procedures for universal precautions and bodily fluid cleanup.

Staff or students doing laundry will ensure hand washing is practiced after loading a laundry machine. Dirty items will not be shaken, and plastic liners should be used in the laundry basket when collecting items to be washed.

### **Visitor Access**

Schools may leave front doors unlocked for visitor access. All visitors to St. Ann’s Academy are encouraged to make an appointment if they wish to meet with any local school staff. If a visitor is unable to wear a mask due to a medical concern, preference will be given for virtual meetings wherever feasible.

When entering St. Ann’s Academy, visitors must complete a sign in form (digital or sign in sheet) that indicates requirements for communicable disease protocol and completion of a daily health check prior to continuing into the school. Schools must keep these records for 45 days. Visitors to St. Ann’s Academy will be required to wear a mask.

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to drop and pick up students outside of the building and should avoid crowding in outside areas such as the playground during pickup times.

### **Community Use**

After hours community use of facilities is permitted in alignment with other health and safety measures. The school administrator will ensure that community groups have a communicable disease plan in place that ensures:

- Diligent hand hygiene
- Respiratory etiquette (coughing/sneeze into elbow or tissue, hand hygiene after touching face.)
- Ensuring participants stay home if they are feeling ill
- Where possible, limiting building access to only those areas required for the purpose of the activity.

Community users are responsible for collecting names and contact information of participants to support contact tracing activities by the local health authority.

## **Illness & Self-Assessment Policies and Protocols**

### **Daily Health Checks**

Parents and caregivers are reminded to assess their children daily for illness before sending them to school. Parents, caregivers and students can utilize the provincial K-12 [Health Check app](#) for daily assessment of symptoms. If you feel unwell, stay at home.

Staff and other adults are to review the posted list of symptoms and perform an active daily health check prior to entering the school. If there are any doubts, please use the [COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#).

If a student, staff or other adult is required to self-isolate they must stay home and should not enter St. Ann's Academy. If as a St. Ann's Academy staff member you are required by Interior Health to self-isolate, please contact Mr. Niwa by phone immediately.

### **School Staff Responsibilities**

- Ensure staff and other adults (e.g. parents, caregivers, visitors) entering the school/ worksite are aware of their responsibility to complete a daily health check prior to entering the school/worksite (e.g. emails/letters to parents and staff, orientation video, signage on doors) and to stay home if they are sick.
- Clearly communicate with parents/caregivers their responsibility to complete a daily health check with their child, and keep them home from school if they are sick.
- Establish procedures for students and staff who become sick while at school/work to be sent home as soon as possible.
  - Some students or staff may not be able to be picked up immediately. As such, schools will have a space available where the student or staff can wait comfortably and is separated from others (at least 2 metres), and provide the student or staff with a non-medical mask if (unless they are experiencing gastrointestinal symptoms and are at risk of vomiting).
  - Schools must provide supervision for younger children. Supervising staff will wear a non-medical mask and face shield if they are unable to maintain physical distance, avoid touching bodily fluids (use gloves when cleaning up bodily fluids), and practice diligent hand hygiene.
  - Staff responsible for facility cleaning should clean and disinfect the surfaces/equipment which the bodily fluids may have been in contact with while they were ill (e.g., their desk in a classroom, the bathroom stall they used, etc.) prior to the surfaces/equipment being used by others. Clean/disinfect in these circumstances.

St. Ann's Academy will not require a health-care provider note (e.g. a status of any individual, beyond those required to support medical accommodation as per usual practices).

## **Symptoms of Illness and Return to School**

Students, staff or other adults should stay at home when sick, as this is one of the most important ways to reduce the introduction to and the spread of COVID-19 in schools.

Students and staff who experience symptoms consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition (e.g. seasonal allergies) may continue to attend school when they are experiencing these symptoms as normal. If they experience any new or unexplained symptoms, they should seek assessment by a healthcare provider.

Students or staff may still attend school if a member of their household develops new symptoms of illness, provided the student/staff has no symptoms themselves. If the household member tests positive for COVID-19, public health will advise the asymptomatic student/staff on self-isolation and when they may return to school.

Note: health-care provider notes (i.e. a doctor's note) is not required to confirm the health status of any individual.

## **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**

Rigorous hand washing with plain soap and water is the most effective way to reduce the spread of illness (antibacterial soap is not needed for COVID-19). St. Ann's Academy will encourage students to make use of hand washing facilities and will promote the importance of this activity with signage and posters.

To be effective, hands should be washed for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. Staff and students will make frequent use of hand washing facilities where available. Hand sanitizer should only be used in areas where hand washing is not readily available.

## When to Perform Hand Hygiene

When Students Should Perform Hand Hygiene:	When Staff Should Perform Hand Hygiene:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When they arrive at school and before they go home.</li> <li>• Before and after any breaks (e.g. recess, lunch).</li> <li>• Between different learning environments (e.g. outdoor-indoor transitions, from the gym to the classroom).</li> <li>• Before and after eating and drinking.</li> <li>• After using the bathroom.</li> <li>• After handling common resources/equipment/supplies or pets.</li> <li>• After sneezing or coughing into hands.</li> <li>• Whenever hands are visibly dirty.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When they arrive at school and before they go home.</li> <li>• Before and after any breaks (e.g. recess, lunch).</li> <li>• Between different learning environments (e.g. outdoor-indoor transitions, from the gym to the classroom).</li> <li>• Before and after eating and drinking.</li> <li>• Before and after handling food or assisting students with eating.</li> <li>• Before and after giving medication to a student or self.</li> <li>• After using the bathroom.</li> <li>• After contact with body fluids (i.e. runny noses, spit, vomit, blood).</li> <li>• After cleaning tasks.</li> <li>• After removing gloves.</li> <li>• After handling garbage.</li> <li>• Whenever hands are visibly dirty.</li> </ul>

## Respiratory Etiquette

Control of coughs and sneezes is also an important tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Staff and students should cough or sneeze into their elbow, sleeve or tissue and direct coughs and sneezes away from individuals wherever possible. Following a sneeze or cough, any tissue should be thrown away and hands should be washed.

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal protective equipment (PPE), including masks, can provide an additional layer of protection. Non-medical masks and face coverings have a role to play in preventing the spread of COVID-19. They provide some protection to the wearer and to those around them. Medical grade masks are not required within school settings for general use. Face shields should not be worn in place of non-medical masks.

In the event of a Public Health Order that requires stricter non-medical mask use than is indicated in the Ministry of Education guidelines, St. Ann's Academy will follow the public health order. Masks should not be used in the place of other safety protocols and individuals should still respect others' personal space. Masks do not replace the need to conduct personal health checks, perform cleaning/disinfection activities or for individuals to wash their hands.

Staff will utilize positive and inclusive approaches to engage students in the use of masks and should not employ measures that are punitive or stigmatizing in nature.

**K-12 Staff:** All K-12 Staff are required to wear a mask indoors and on school buses.

**K-12 Students:** All Students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 are required to wear a mask indoors and on school buses.

**Visitors:** All visitors are required to wear a mask indoors.

### **Exemptions for Staff, Students and Visitors**

Mask requirements do not apply in the following circumstances

- to a person who cannot tolerate wearing a mask for health or behavioural reasons; • to a person who is unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person;
- if the mask is removed temporarily for the purposes of identifying the person wearing it;
  - if the mask is removed temporarily to engage in an educational activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask (e.g. playing a wind instrument, engaging in high intensity physical activity, etc.);
- if a person is eating or drinking;
- if a person is behind a barrier; or
- while providing a service to a person with a disability or diverse ability (including but not limited to a hearing impairment) where visual cues, facial expressions and/or lip reading/ movements is important.

If a staff, student or visitor is unable to wear a mask, other controls will remain in place.

### **General Ventilation and Air Circulation**

At this time, there is no evidence that a building's ventilation system, in good operating condition, would contribute to the spread of the virus. Good indoor air ventilation alone cannot protect people from exposure to COVID-19; however, it may reduce risk when used in addition to other preventive measures.

St. Ann's Academy has verified that Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems are operating within normal parameters. These HVAC systems are maintained in accordance with best industry practice. St. Ann's Academy is working to identify areas where systems can be upgraded or run at increased capacity to increase the number of air exchanges. Staff and students should not use portable air conditioners or fans in unventilated spaces.

## **Emergency and Evacuation Drills**

It is critical that emergency and evacuation drills continue even during the COVID-19 pandemic. School administrators will continue to conduct fire drills and other emergency drills. School administrators will ensure that muster points for emergency drills are also spaced to ensure that classes make use of the space available to them to muster.

## **Communication and Training/Orientation**

St. Ann's Academy is committed to assisting Interior Health Regional Medical Health Officers and the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) in communicating out guidance, recommendations and orders. St. Ann's Academy will also continue to communicate to staff and parents about changes to COVID-19 protocols using various means including:

- Emails,
- Letters,
- CISKD and St. Ann's Academy website (<https://st-anns.ca>)
- Social media outlets
- Staff meetings,
- Memos

All St. Ann's Academy staff will review the updated Communicable Disease Prevention Plan, in addition to their local updated COVID-19 plans prior to the return of students in January 2022. School administrators will ensure all staff know how to report health and safety concerns and understand the protocols in place to keep them safe.

## **Curriculum, Programs and Activities**

All curriculum, programs and activities operate in alignment with Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings, including school-led activities held off campus (e.g. sporting events, community-based programs/courses).

**Extracurricular sports tournaments may be conducted in accordance with PHO Guidance and recommendations from the BC COVID safe schools link under in and out of the classroom.**

Schools continue to implement ongoing communicable disease prevention practices (e.g. cleaning and disinfecting, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette) specific to the activity.

In general, these practices should include:

- cleaning/disinfecting equipment,
- hand hygiene practices specific to the activity,
- reducing the number of close face-to-face interactions

For more information on course specific guidelines please see the [Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#).

## **Contractor Safety**

All contractors hired by St. Ann's Academy will be required to complete a self assessment health check prior to entry into the school. Please refer to the school's health check protocols. This form will outline the controls in place to keep students safe and will outline the expectations for contractors within schools during the school year.