

Sacred Heart School Communicable Disease Prevention Plan

Update: January 15, 2025

The purpose of this document is to communicate Sacred Heart School's steps to maintain a safe and healthy school environment by minimizing the risk of communicable diseases, and includes both ongoing measures (e.g., hand hygiene, cleaning) and additional measures to be implemented as advised by public health. Sacred Heart School is committed to providing a positive and inclusive school learning environment for all staff and students. The following plan is based on the Provincial Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings, September 2023.

1) Supportive School Environment

- a) Staff model personal practices (e.g., hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette) and assist younger students as needed.
- b) Sacred Heart School shares reliable information, including from the BC Centre for Disease Control, Officer of the Provincial Health Officer, and local health authorities and First Nations health Authority to parents, families, and caregivers.
- c) Promoting personal practices in the school (e.g., posters).
- d) Ensuring individual choices for personal practices (e.g., choosing to wear a mask or face covering) are supported and treated with respect, recognizing varying personal comfort levels.

2) Cleaning / Disinfecting (On-Site Staff and Custodian)

- a) Sacred Heart School recognizes that regular cleaning and disinfection can help prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Cleaning of frequently touched surfaces occurs in line with regular practices and when visibly dirty.
- b) Regular practices include general cleaning of the premises.
- c) Cleaning: Water and detergent (e.g., liquid dishwashing soap), or common, commercially available products, along with good cleaning practices, are used for cleaning. A brush and thorough rinse are used for hard-to-reach areas prior to disinfecting.
- d) Disinfecting: Common, commercially available disinfectants are used for disinfecting.
- e) When cleaning and disinfecting:
 - i) Always wash hands before and after handling shared objects.
 - ii) Items and surfaces that a person has placed in their mouths or that have been in contact with bodily fluids should be cleaned as soon as possible and between uses by different people.
 - iii) A dishwasher can be used to clean and sanitize dishwasher-safe items if the sanitize setting is used with adequately hot water. Regular practices should include general cleaning of the premises.
- f) Frequently touched surfaces are cleaned and disinfected at least once in a 24-hour period and when visibly dirty.
 - i) Frequently touched surfaces are items touched by larger numbers of students and staff. They can include doorknobs, light switches, hand railings, water fountains, toilet handles, as well as shared equipment (computer keyboards, PE / Sports and music

equipment, appliances, and service counters and may change from day to day based on utilization.

- ii) Frequently touched items like toys or manipulatives that may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g., fabrics) or at all (e.g., sand, foam, playdough, etc.) can be used. Carpets and rugs can also be used.
- iii) Proper hand hygiene should be practiced before and after shared equipment use. Equipment that touches the mouth (e.g., instrument mouth pieces, water bottles, utensils) or has been in contact with bodily fluids should not be shared unless cleaned and disinfected in between uses.
- g) Bodily Fluids: When cleaning and disinfecting bodily fluids (e.g., runny nose, vomit, stool, urine):
 - i) Wear disposable gloves.
 - ii) Wash hands before wearing and after removing gloves.
 - iii) Follow regular health and safety procedures and regularly used PPE (e.g., gloves, protective or woven sleeves) for blood and bodily fluids.
- h) Garbage containers are emptied daily.
- i) Pillowcases and blankets are laundered after each use using the school facilities if they are not single-use items.

3) General Ventilation and Air Exchange

- a) Windows may be opened when the weather permits if it does not impact the functioning of ventilation systems.
- b) All classrooms and closed spaces have portable HEPA filter units. The filters in the units are cleaned as needed and replaced every 6 months, as per instructions.
- c) Sacred Heart Air systems include fine grain filters, such as MERV 13.
- d) When placing fans in ventilated spaces, air should be moved from high places to lower places instead of blowing air directly from one person's breathing zone to another's. Avoid horizontal cross breezes.
- e) Using of portable air conditioners and fans in unventilated spaces with doors and windows closed should be avoided, except when necessary (e.g., during high or excessive heat events).

4) Hand Hygiene

- a) Rigorous hand washing with plain soap and water or using an effective hand sanitizer reduces the spread of illness. Everyone should practice diligent hand hygiene and schools should facilitate regular opportunities for students and staff to wash their hands.
- b) Sacred Heart School provides regular opportunities for hand hygiene. Hand sanitizer dispensers that contain at least 60% alcohol are available.
- c) Hand hygiene supplies are always well stocked including soap, paper towels and where appropriate, alcohol-based hand rub with a minimum of 60% alcohol.
- d) If hands are visibly soiled, alcohol-based hand sanitizer may not be effective at eliminating microbes. Soap and water are preferred when hands are visibly dirty. If it is not available, use an alcohol-based hand wipe followed by alcohol-based hand rub.
- e) Staff are encouraged to assist younger students with hand hygiene as needed.

5) Respiratory Etiquette

- a) Parents and staff can teach and reinforce good respiratory etiquette practice among students, including:
 - i) Cough or sneeze into elbow or tissues. Throw away tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.
 - ii) Refrain from touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - iii) Refrain from sharing any food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, or vaping devices.

6) Masks and Face Coverings

- a) The decision to wear a mask is a personal one, based on individual preference. Some students and staff may choose to wear non-medical masks or face covering throughout the day or for certain activities. The choice of staff and students to choose whether they practice additional personal prevention measures should be respected.
- b) School-wide efforts are continued to create safe and inclusive learning environments free from discrimination, bullying, and harassment.

7) Students/Staff who Develop Symptoms while at School

- a) Arrangements will be made for the student / staff to go home as soon as possible (e.g., contact student's parent / caregiver for pick-up).
- b) A space will be available where the students or staff can wait comfortably for pick-up and are separated from others. Young students will be supervised when separated. Supervising staff can wear a mask, should avoid touching bodily fluids as much as possible, and practice diligent hand hygiene.
- c) Staff responsible for facility cleaning should clean and disinfect the surfaces / equipment which the person's bodily fluids may have been in contact with while they were ill (e.g., desk in a classroom, the bathroom stall used, etc.) prior to the surfaces / equipment being used by others.
- d) Request the individual stay home until symptoms have improved and they feel well enough to participate in all school-related activities.
- e) After the student is picked up, staff will practice diligent hand hygiene.

8) Visitors and Community Use of Schools, Gatherings, and Events

- a) Schools can follow normal practices for welcoming visitors and the community use of schools.
- b) Visitors, including community groups using the school, should follow applicable communicable disease prevention measures outlined in this document.
- c) School gatherings and events should have communicable disease prevention measures in place in line with those of the school.

9) Communication

- a) Sacred Heart School recognizes that Medical Health Officers play the lead role in determining if, when, and how to communicate information regarding increased communicable disease activity within a school.
- b) Sacred Heart School will maintain contact with Northern Health as directed.

- c) Routine communication with the school community regarding the need to practice health awareness and to stay home when sick will be maintained.
- d) Sacred Heart School will exercise caution in providing communicable disease notifications beyond when they are recommended by public health to protect personal privacy and support accuracy.
- e) A functional closure of a school, is the temporary closure of a school, determined by a school district or independent school authority due to a lack of staff to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, support, and/or custodial to ensure the health and safety of students. This would likely be due to a high number of staff or certain employees away who are required for a school to function, and the inability to temporarily replace them. The Medical Health Officer and the Ministry of Education and Child Care will be notified when a school is considering implementing a functional closure.
- f) A public health closure is the temporary closing of a school ordered by a Medical Health Officer when they determine it is necessary to prevent the excessive transmission of a communicable disease.
- g) Joint Health and Safety Committee meetings are held monthly to review workplace practices.
- h) All information relating to communicable diseases will be posted on the school website.