



CATHOLIC INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS OF THE DIOCESE OF VICTORIA

1 - 4044 Nelthorpe Street, Victoria, BC V8X 2A1
Phone: (250) 727-6893 Fax: (250) 479-5423

January 7, 2022

Dear Island Catholic School families,

Listed are important updates for you to read before we head into next week and the return to regular classes. ICS's goal is to ensure you are as current as possible with Health & Safety as well as any operational changes to our schools.

HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATES

The Provincial Health Office (PHO) has directed schools to remind parents of the following information:

- Students and staff should be wearing 3-layer masks in classrooms and buses (if applicable). Masks are required for everyone Kindergarten - Grade 12. Any requests for mask exemptions should be shared with school administration.
- Parents, guardians, students and staff are being reminded to wash your hands regularly and perform a **Daily Health Check**. You can download the K-12 Health Check App [HERE](#). Please stay home if you are not feeling well.

Due to the short incubation period of the Omicron variant (3-5 days), as well as the high transmissibility of the virus, Contact Tracing will no longer be done by schools. The PHO has indicated to us that it is not possible to complete this process in a timely way with the Omicron variant. Instead, schools will monitor the attendance records and inform Vancouver Island Health of any notable drops. The PHO and BCCDC are strongly encouraging Self-Management if you have COVID-19 or are displaying symptoms of COVID-19. This includes staying home to self-isolate as well as seeking medical attention if you require it. You can find detailed information on this process [HERE](#).

Part of our work this week included preparing for a Functional Closure. A Functional Closure may occur if our school cannot operate in-person due to a shortage of healthy staff. Please know that each school is maintaining strict safety plans to do all we can to prevent such a closure from occurring. At the same time, we are planning for all possible scenarios. Should a Functional Closure of the school be necessary, this will be communicated by the individual school. Please understand that if a Functional Closure is necessary, as much notice as possible will be given, however due to the nature of a Functional Closure, notice may be less than 24 hours. During a Functional Closure, families can expect that learning will move on-line. The duration of a Functional Closure will be determined at the time of the closure and may vary in length, depending on a number of factors.

PLANNING FOR JANUARY

Individual schools will contact families with school specific details that may be happening as we adapt to new protocols – this could include things such as limiting school access, program or scheduling changes, staggered bells, and any site-specific health and safety information.



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Two potential types of closures:

Health Closure - A Health Closure of a school is determined by the Island Health Authority. The immediate health issue is the possibility of a high COVID-19 case count in a school. Island Catholic Schools would receive an Order from Island Health to temporarily close a school. We would then move to a temporary Remote Learning program for all students.

Functional School Closure - A Functional School Closure is determined by Island Catholic Schools when there is insufficient staff to run a school because of illness. The school would be unable to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, or custodial services to ensure the health and safety of the students. While our district has replacement lists for many of our employees, we may not be able to adequately replace workers to ensure sufficient student safety. When this happens, we will be closing the school for a minimum of 1 week (7 calendar days). We anticipate this will allow staff to sufficiently recover from their illness so that in-person learning can resume. During the Functional Closure, the school would transition to a Remote Learning program for all students.

FUNCTIONAL SCHOOL CLOSURE PROTOCOLS

Announcement Day

1. Communication with parents/guardians that a school will need to be closed for 1 week (7 calendar days)
2. Students unable to return home immediately would be held until the end-of-the-day dismissal.
3. Students take home all learning materials.

Day 1 – Transition Day

1. The school is closed for all students.
2. Parents, guardians and/or students will be contacted by the school or teacher about the Remote Learning program.
 - i. Details of the Remote Learning program (minimum of 5 school days)
 - ii. The process of accessing a mobile device if required

Day 2-7 – Remote Learning (Regular School Weekdays)

1. The school is closed for all students. Remote Learning instruction begins.
2. Hours of instruction will be designed for an age-appropriate amount of screen time per day. Primary students can expect approximately 1 hour per day with secondary students receiving longer times because of their multiple courses. Schedules will be determined by teachers and school administration.
3. Day 7 - Communication with parents and guardians on the return to in-person learning

Day 8 – Return to In-person Learning

1. Anticipation of a return to in-person instruction at school (based on adequate staffing levels)



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Schools endeavor to provide families with as much notice as possible about a functional closure, however, as absences due to illness may not be known well in advance, our plans for communicating with families will be as follows:

- If a school needs to be closed, the school will contact parents via email, preferably the afternoon of the day before the closure (they may also use Bright Arrow).
- If the school closure is determined once the school day has begun, students unable to return home in the middle of the day, will be kept at school and supervised – regular instruction would not be possible. School closure would start the following day.

These continue to be uncertain times; however, by providing you with the above information, my hope is that it gives you some time to make alternate arrangements should we not be able to keep a school open. Please be assured that each of our schools is dedicated to not only teaching your children but safeguarding them as well.

You can expect communication from your school before we begin classes next week.

Blessings,

Katja Groves, Superintendent of Island Catholic Schools