



January 1, 2022

Dear Faculty, Staff, and Parents,

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! I hope you had a Merry Christmas and safely enjoyed spending time with family and friends.

I write today to inform you that our diocesan schools will be following the new COVID-19 CDC guidance on isolation and quarantine that was issued on December 27, 2021, and adopted by the VDH on December 30, 2021. From the start of the pandemic, we have followed the recommendations put forth by the CDC and the VDH.

This new guidance has specific guidelines that vary based on vaccination status for quarantining after being in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. The diocese has not and is still not requiring that individuals be vaccinated. We do encourage vaccinations and want you to be aware that vaccination status will impact the amount of time individuals will need to be out of school.

In addition to vaccination status, the new guidance includes guidelines about masks being worn. The public health order issued on August 12, 2021, is still in place and **masks are still required in our schools**. If the public health order is rescinded or amended, you will receive an updated diocesan mask policy; until that time, our current policy, based on the public health order, remains in place. So, for now, the masking component of the new guidelines are not applicable in our schools because masks are being worn by all regardless of having tested positive or having been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.

Here is a summary of changes:

POSITIVE CASES: Regardless of vaccination status, you must stay home for **5 days**, if asymptomatic or symptoms have improved and fever-free - you may return to school wearing a mask for 5 additional days. (Masks currently must continue to be worn in schools even after the 5 days).

CLOSE CONTACT/EXPOSURE TO SOMEONE WHO HAS TESTED POSITIVE – there are two different scenarios:

- IF FULLY VACCINATED AND BOOSTED, or FULLY VACCINATED WITHIN 6 MONTHS (2 months for J&J vaccine) or HAVE HAD COVID IN THE LAST 90 DAYS – AND YOU HAVE NO SYMPTOMS – you can return to school and no quarantine is necessary, but you are to wear a mask for 10 days. (Masks currently must be worn in our schools even after the 10 days).
- IF FULLY VACCINATED MORE THAN 6 MONTHS AGO (2 months for J&J vaccine) AND HAVE NOT BEEN BOOSTED or ARE NOT FULLY VACCINATED – you should stay home for **5 days; then if no symptoms**, - you may return to school wearing a mask for 5 additional days. (Masks currently must continue to be worn in schools even after the 5 days). **The VDH recommends that school-age children adhere to a minimum 5-day quarantine after exposure, and this will be followed in our schools.** (Masks currently must be worn in our schools even after the 10 days).

I know we are looking forward to the day that COVID-19 is behind us. It is encouraging that in Governor Northam's last statement he referred to this an endemic and not a pandemic! There is light as we hopefully are approaching the end of this very, very, long tunnel.

Your schools will notify you directly of any changes to the individual school's policies and procedures as we return from Christmas break.

Thank you for your continued support of your individual schools and for Catholic education as a whole in the Catholic Diocese of Richmond.

Yours in Christ,

Kelly Lazzara

Kelly M. Lazzara, M.Ed
Superintendent of Catholic Schools