



# ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE SCHOOL

Under the direction of the Basilian Fathers

September 1, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As we gear up for another year of learning, I hope you have had a chance to read the SMCS Return to School Blueprint 2021-22. Although our summer experience may have been filled with hope and the expectation of a full return to more familiar school life, the Delta variant and fourth wave are casting doubts on how we manage the freedoms we anticipated.

Our Blueprint is based on the provincial return to school guidelines, which were prepared in July and approved by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. As the news continues to evolve, we must continue to be socially responsible and contribute to the health and well-being of the community.

You have recently received:

- [SMCS Return to School Blueprint 2021-22](#)
- Vaccine Status Disclosure for students
- Web-based Daily COVID-19 Screening directions and expectations
- Camp updates by grade
- Our regular summer mailing
- And this, one week out update and clarification

In these days of constant change, our best laid plans continue to be altered. Today's note is to highlight a few key areas of concern for the community that have been pressing this past week as we navigate the days ahead.

## **Vaccine Policy:**

At St. Michael's College School (SMCS), we are committed to providing and maintaining a safe and welcoming school environment for all. Consistent with this commitment, SMCS has established a Student COVID-19 Vaccination Policy. **The Policy strongly encourages all students at the school that are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, to be vaccinated as soon as it becomes available to them. All students will be required to provide proof of vaccination status prior to the commencement of school.**

## **Disclosure expectation:**

The objective underlying this policy is to provide a healthy and safe school environment for students, teachers, and staff, and safeguard the broader communities in which they live. The COVID-19 Science Advisory Table reports that as of August 20, 2021, 96.2 per cent of new cases in the province are caused by the Delta variant. It stated that the Delta variant is more transmissible and may be more dangerous than other variants of COVID-19, including the Alpha variant. The Delta variant is the dominant form of the virus in Ontario. Medical experts warn that as the Delta variant increases significantly in Ontario, unvaccinated populations remain most vulnerable.

Safe and reliable vaccines are an important tool to help stop the spread of COVID-19, build immunity in Ontario, and protect our communities. We recognize not all individuals are able to receive this vaccination, which is not mandated by regulation. As a school, we have a responsibility to ensure we are doing everything we can to protect all of our students, staff, and their families.

To best protect all of our students, including those who are not able to be vaccinated, the school requires disclosure of vaccination status.

We remind families that proof of vaccination status is required by Wednesday, September 1. Please click [here](#) to complete the vaccination disclosure form if you have not already done so.

### **Block schedule:**

As outlined in the Blueprint, we allowed for a contingency to reduce cohort size and student contacts. We will begin the school year with a 15-day block schedule model. This strategy will reduce cohort contacts and allow us to provide further access to clubs and other activities. Students will take the same four classes for a stretch of 14 or 15 days and rotate to their second set of four classes. This model has shorter blocks than what was in place a year ago and allows for less time between transitions and a more expedient return to regular programming if the COVID situation allows for that to occur.

### **Camp:**

We are still committed to providing a safe orientation and camp experience in a modified format. Details of camp protocols and schedules will be communicated in targeted grade level memos. Please note that the Grade 7 and 8 day camp orientation destination has been changed to Trails Youth Initiatives Centre in Stouffville as the original location is no longer available.

### **Daily COVID-19 Screening:**

A simple reminder and request to access our daily screener today at [smcsscreener.com](https://smcsscreener.com) using the login information provided to test out the process this week. Students will not be permitted to enter the building upon arrival at school if the screener is not complete. This is one of the most significant and powerful mitigating strategies in keeping our community safe while at school.

### **Antigen (Rapid) Testing Programme:**

To promote the safest possible environment for its students, the school is participating in the Provincial Antigen Screening Program. The school's testing program is supported by Creative Destruction Lab (CDL) located at the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto and is part of a consortium of other independent schools, companies, and organizations. The antigen test is a non-invasive, frontal nasal swab that may be administered at home by students or parents, takes approximately five minutes plus some wait time for the result, and will be required at least twice a week. The program will be introduced in stages. Initially, the school will require any student who is not vaccinated, has not disclosed their vaccination status, or has an approved exemption to participate in the testing program. Further details and direction will be shared as the program is rolled out.

### **Dignity and Respect:**

*We continue to confront the disruptiveness of the COVID-19 pandemic and collectively cope with increased stress and anxiety as we manage living in this unpredictable time. Therefore, it is important to remain respectful of individual approaches to managing the pandemic. We are all committed to community safety. Making assumptions will lead to judgement and discrimination. We consciously promote an environment that emphasizes dignity and respect that upholds the spirit of inclusion.*

We have received inquiries regarding the school's position on mandatory vaccination policies for staff and students. From the beginning, SMCS has promoted every possible mitigating

strategy to reduce the spread of COVID-19. That is why we continue to encourage all staff and students to be fully vaccinated as it is proven to reduce the spread and severity of illness. Vaccinations, at this time, are not the cure. They are one of many strategies applied to keep people safe, engaged, and at school.

**Arrival and Departure:**

To manage traffic flow and encourage a safe drop-off and pick-up, we encourage students to utilize the north gym entrance as well as the front main student entrance. The north gym entrance is often underutilized and will help to alleviate some traffic during these busy periods in the day. Safe Officers will be available at both of these entrances.

Thank you and we look forward to greeting the boys on Tuesday,

Mr. James McKinnon  
Principal



