



# ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE SCHOOL

Under the direction of the Basilian Fathers

March 10, 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are all looking forward to a well-deserved March Break. We would also like to provide a brief update on provincial directions regarding COVID-19 mitigation factors in the coming weeks.

Our community has been through much in the past two years since March Break of 2020, when school life, among other things, changed drastically.

As we head into March Break we share renewed hope that the remainder of the school year will begin to look and feel a little more like what we regularly expect, especially with the reduction in provincial and regional restrictions and mandates. As spring is near, hope is eternal.

## **Please Note:**

Although we are all tired of living with COVID-19, the virus has not disappeared and continues to be a concern, particularly for vulnerable populations. The fact that requirements are lifted does not signal the end of the impact of COVID-19. The lifted restrictions are not without risk which will certainly include a higher rate of transmission. The expected result will be increased student and staff absence, with hopes that infection is mild and short-lived. *Staff infections and absences are limiting factors in our ability to provide the full SMCS school experience in and out of the classroom. We must work to continue to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 at school.*

Following the March Break, we will return with a commitment to safely moving forward, however, we will maintain a few of the mitigation strategies that have kept our student absenteeism rate, due to COVID, just under 10%. If absences remain steady following the break as we approach Easter, we will review our next steps in removing further mitigation strategies.

## **Expectations following March Break:**

### **What is continuing?**

- Masks will still be required while in the building. Masking in crowded indoor spaces is still recommended (although not publicly required) and our settings are crowded. Masks are still required when riding all public transportation until at least April 27. This will be important as students and families return from travel and vacation time. The masking requirement will be revisited once again following the Easter weekend.
- Daily screening will continue upon arrival. This is truly our best line of defense in reducing the spread of COVID-19 at school. Please keep your sons at home if they have any signs of illness, even if they have an important school event

- In support of adhering to the daily screener, we will continue to provide remote access to classrooms following our current protocol. Parents and guardians can request remote access due to COVID or a daily screening alert by emailing [attendance@smcsmail.com](mailto:attendance@smcsmail.com) before 8 a.m. to ensure seamless access for the day.
- Our current proof of vaccination policy will be in place for the remainder of this school year, which includes proof of vaccination provided by all visitors and vendors to the school property.
- Students will continue to eat lunch with their grade cohort.

### **What's new?**

- Cross-cohorting of grades in after-school activities will be permitted. This will open up most of our clubs and activities for student gatherings.
- Student and parent spectators will be permitted at school events. Visitor proof of vaccination is still in place at this time.
- The directional arrows and stairway traffic will be removed. Although this may sound simple, it will improve and facilitate much better student traffic flow in the building.
- Washrooms will be open to all grades which will certainly save on some travel time during scheduled classes.
- The Odette Library Learning Commons will return to its pre-COVID design and we will be reviewing access times by grade.

Over the spring months, we will continue to monitor the impact on student and staff illness and absences due to COVID to determine what other mitigation strategies can be removed before June. The goal is to have complete in- person Grade 8 and 12 graduation celebrations.

We are thrilled to announce that we have booked the Grade 12 Mother & Son Mass and Brunch for April 24, with details and invitations following the break. A venue for a graduation prom has also been booked for June 17. We hope these events will begin to transpire in a fashion more familiar to what we all expect.

As we head into the break, the future looks bright. We are not there yet, but we are certainly moving forward to a full return to the life and 'Unlocking the Spirit of St. Michael's' which was the puzzle-solving work of this past week's Teacher Advisor Group (TAG) sessions.

Have a wonderful break.

Sincerely,

Mr. James McKinnon  
Principal