



ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE SCHOOL

Under the direction of the Basilian Fathers

Dear Parents and Guardians,

COVID update - Easter 2022

So often during these pandemic days, we approached windows of optimism only to have them closed and re-opened at different times. We have certainly been living the Life, Death, and Resurrection cycle of life. We continue to find ourselves managing data, epidemiology, emotions, beliefs, mental health, and a human desire to improve the conditions of the world around us.

This detailed update is to inform you of the expectations at school for the remainder of the academic year, keeping in mind that regional and provincial mandates may change that require further adjustments to our plans.

We had committed to review the school's protocols following the March Break and the province's easing of community restrictions to mitigate COVID-19. We are experiencing another wave of a new variant that is impacting all our lives. It is difficult to determine the severity of the illness being experienced, but we know more individuals are being infected and some now for the second time.

We have done well and will continue to monitor our lived experience here at SMCS and respond accordingly.

The update

Our student illness rate is similar now as it was prior to the March Break, but is creeping upward as would be expected with reduced restrictions in the community. Our staff situation is similar, but with the increase in the volume of student activities and athletics in April and May, teacher absences are a major operational concern. We attribute this success to date to the high vaccination rate (96.3%) and the commitment of our staff, students, and families to diligently adhere to the daily screener and stay home if they experience any symptoms or high-risk exposures. This is extremely important, even with a negative rapid test result and especially for athletic or school events. As much as we don't want students to miss out, we do not want more staff and students to become ill or need to isolate. This will become increasingly important as we move closer to final evaluations.

New protocols beginning Tuesday, April 19

Masks:

Dr. Kieran Moore and the Ontario Science Table continue to recommend the use of masks in crowded indoor public settings. The Ontario mask mandate has been dropped for public settings since March 21. We have taken a slower approach, as suggested by Dr. Juni, formerly of the Ontario Science Table, "It's not black or white... as long as we take it slow, gradually, we should be OK."

At SMCS, we will move from mandatory indoor masking to highly recommended indoor masking practices. We will need to grow in our comfort and confidence in managing our

world with COVID. We must also respect the personal decisions of all and treat each other with kindness and understanding, honouring the needs of others. Every individual will be doing their best to protect themselves, their peers/colleagues, and family members. If an individual opts to not wear a mask or take mask breaks, they must respect personal space and be cognizant of keeping distanced from others. Be respectful and treat every stranger as a friend and brother!

Please note based on recent news, it is possible this requirement could be reinstated by mandate or should the school experience a rise in absences in staff and students in the coming weeks.

Visitors and Vaccine Passports

As we approach the year-end, we will see an increase in the number of school events that parents and students have not seen for a couple of years. More traditional graduations may be possible, concerts, and even a final exam schedule that looks a little more familiar. The provincial mandate for proof of vaccination has also been dropped since March 21. Again, we have been prudent and will slowly move in the direction of less restricted access to visitors and parents in the closing months of school, while monitoring the health and absenteeism in the community.

Proof of vaccination will no longer be required to enter the school for visitors, however, all visits will need to be scheduled by appointment and screening questionnaires will remain in place. Attendance at games, concerts, and larger events will have controlled access for this purpose. Masks while indoors will continue to be highly recommended.

Vaccination Policy Update for September 2022

We have updated our student vaccination policy for September 2022. The full policy can be found here: <https://wp.stmichaelscollegeschool.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/SMCS-Student-COVID-Vaccination-Policy-11-21-Academic-2022-23.pdf>. In summary, we will maintain our commitment to a mandatory proof of vaccination policy for all students new to the school in September 2022. Students currently enrolled will be accommodated by request. The policy amendments are based on our commitment to programming in and beyond our classrooms and ensuring access to the complete programme SMCS offers which is rich in co-curricular activities and experiential learning. This policy is only in place for the 2022-23 school year.

Continued measures until year-end

Ventilation

Our upgraded UV and HEPA-filtered rooms and offices continue to be a primary source of keeping the air circulated and as clean as possible.

Daily Screener

This one strategy is likely our best defence against the spread of COVID-19 and its impact on the community.

Distancing

All in the community are expected to respect the personal space of others and be sure to cough or sneeze preferably in a tissue but at least into your elbow or sleeve.

Cafeteria

We will continue to assign eating areas by grade cohort. Students must remain seated while eating and clean and disinfect surfaces before and after eating. Our cleaning staff will support and follow up on the cleaning of the cafeteria.

As with so many of the decisions during these pandemic days, these directives will be met with a variety of views and opinions. We will continue to monitor the health and well-being of those we serve and respond accordingly. All these updates are subject to change due to regulation and public policy mandates from the province, public health, or the lived experience at the school.

We thank you for your ongoing support, patience, and respect for all those in our community who are finding their way forward out of pandemic living, with hope. In this Easter season, it is important to remember that we do not see all the crosses that others may bare. Whether prophets, heroes, or sinners we will all have questions in times of despair, but our faith gives us strength in the healing, power, and joy in the resurrection.

Have a blessed Easter, Alleluia, He Has Risen.

Mr. James McKinnon
Principal

