

Covid Protocols for Saint John's School Year 2021-22

August 16, 2021

The protocols we used to limit the spread of Covid in our School this year can be informed by the experience we had last year. Last year no one in our staff was infected with Covid during the School year, and only one of our students tested positive for Covid and that was during the Christmas break. This student had no serious symptoms. As a side benefit to our efforts, the spread of colds and flu and stomach viruses in our School also was greatly diminished. All of this was the result of the protocols we followed and the grace and goodness of God.

As we enter this School year, vaccines against Covid are widely available and we strongly encourage all staff and students to be vaccinated. The vaccines are very effective in preventing infection, even with the current Delta variant. Even more importantly, when "breakthrough" infections occur, the risk of serious illness is extremely rare. Symptoms would be similar to a mild cold or flu. We have all heard the news that people who are getting sick and being hospitalized are the unvaccinated. These vaccines help us enter this School year with much less uncertainty than we experienced last year.

However, we still have challenges to face. The vaccines, while effective, are not available at this time to children under 12. The Delta variant is not a more dangerous coronavirus, but it is much more infectious. Even vaccinated people can become infected and carry enough of the Delta variant to infect others. Children can get Covid. Typically their symptoms are less severe and their risk of serious illness is less. Also, the spread of Covid among children to one another, especially younger children under age 9, has been shown to be minimal. However, studies are not yet available to see if this will change with the Delta variant. With all these things in mind, it will be our goal to do all that we reasonably can to limit the spread of Covid in our School.

Based on our experience last year, below are the guidelines with which we will begin our School year. These guidelines may change if conditions in the community also change.

Cohorts/Classes: We will not separate into cohorts, but we will keep classes distanced from each other as best we can. For example, classes will be kept apart in the hallways by entering different doors, and they will be distanced from each other in the lunchroom and at prayers in the Church.

Masks: CDC guidelines recommend universal masking indoors for all staff and students over age 2. However, last year our older students wore masks only for a small portion of the year, and the younger children did not wear masks at all, and we did not have any spread of Covid in the School. So we will begin the School year without requiring students to wear masks indoors, but will be ready to adopt this guideline if evidence becomes available that shows the Delta variant of Covid spreading widely and quickly among students in classrooms. This might be especially important for the older grades. Teachers and staff who are fully vaccinated will not have to wear masks indoors. Staff who are not vaccinated will have to wear masks indoors at all times. Students can wear masks if they want to or their parents want them to, but teachers will not be required to enforce this. Students or staff who are at increased risk for severe disease should consider wearing masks at all times indoors. All visitors to the School, including parents, should wear a mask indoors regardless of vaccination status.

Testing/Screening: Our School will soon be able to access the rapid Covid tests that may be provided by the State, every adult staff member will be tested on the first day of each week of School, before classes begin. These tests are simple. They can be self-administered, and take only 20 minutes. We may also consider offering tests to students in certain situations and with parental permission.

Symptoms of Illness or Sickness: This is where we must be just as strict as we were last year. Any student or staff who show the usual signs of potential Covid infection must be kept home. If they are in School and get sick, parents will be called and the child sent home. The child should be tested for Covid on the first day they miss School and also 3-5 days later. The child can return to School only when they have received a negative test and are no longer symptomatic or cleared to return by their doctor. Staff members must also take the same precautions if they are sick or have symptoms that may be Covid.

Close Contact or Exposure to Covid: We will follow these [CDC guidelines](#):

- If you've had [close contact](#) with someone who has COVID-19, you should get tested 3-5 days after your exposure, even if you don't have symptoms. You should also wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until your test result is negative. You should isolate for 10 days if your test result is positive.
- [Fully vaccinated](#) students, teachers, and staff with no COVID-19 symptoms do not need to quarantine at home following an exposure to someone with COVID-19 but should get tested 3-5 days after exposure. In addition to wearing masks in school, they should wear a mask in other indoor public settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test.
- You should still watch out for [symptoms of COVID-19](#), especially if you've been around someone who is sick. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should get [tested](#) and [stay home](#) and away from others. If your test is positive, isolate at home for 10 days.

Covid Incident in the School: If any student or staff members tests positive for Covid and has been in class, that entire class will follow the CDC guidelines above for close contact. Unvaccinated students or staff will stay home and should be tested 3-5 days after the close contact. If the test is negative and they have no symptoms, they can return to School. Fully vaccinated staff or students who have no symptoms can remain in School, but must wear masks at all times indoors. They should be tested 3-5 days after exposure. If the test is positive they should isolate for an additional 10 days.

Surface Disinfection, Ventilation, and Hand Sanitizing: These protocols will be maintained as strictly as we did last year.

As Orthodox Christians we trust in the care of God for everything we do. We also take every responsible measure within our abilities to ensure our health and safety from any illness or disease. We enter into this School year, then, with this spirit. We will do what seems good and reasonable, based on science and our experience, and all the while pray to God for His love and direction in whatever He allows.

Special note to Parents:

Please read the attached guidelines our School will be following as we start School. Be aware that we will change these guidelines any time we deem it necessary to ensure the safety of our staff and students. If you are not comfortable with the guidelines we have established, you may want to enroll your student in a different school or consider homeschooling.

We especially want highlight following for parents:

- *We will be strict as we were last year about sending children home immediately if they have symptoms of illness that could potentially be Covid. If your student is sick, please keep them home until they test negative for Covid and are no longer symptomatic.*
- *If there is an incident of Covid positive in member of a class, student or staff, all the students in that class will be sent home immediately, under the assumption this will have been a “close contact.” After 3 days at home, each student should be tested (PCR test, not rapid Antigen) and may return to class if the test is negative and the student has no symptoms. If the test is positive, the student must stay home for an additional 10 days. Any student who is not tested will have to quarantine for 14 days before returning to School.*

As all of this is a community effort we ask that you do your part. We expect eligible family members of students to get vaccinated unless their doctor recommends against it, and we expect you to help keep our school open by limiting your exposure to large groups when case counts in the broader community are high. We appreciate your commitment to our School and to each other. We look forward to seeing you and your children in just a few short days to begin a new school year.