

Pandemic Preparedness & Readiness Plan 2021-2022

** This plan is subject to change throughout the school year. **

We love your kids. Our desire is to help them to be healthy, happy, and holy. Fulfilling this desire has become more difficult with the arrival, continued presence, and surging variant of the coronavirus.

When we completed the school year last May, we were optimistic about our ability to significantly modify our COVID-19 health and safety policies for the 2021-2022 school year. The end of the pandemic seemed to be in sight. Thanks to our cohort model, dedicated staff, collaboration between home and school, willingness of our parents to keep sick children home, and many other mitigation efforts, we had fared well throughout the year.

We learned a great deal about how to educate and form youth in new, stressful, and ever-changing circumstances. What we learned, and what we continue to learn, will inform our updated pandemic preparedness and readiness plan for the 2021-2022 academic year. The policies presented on the following pages are meant to help us offer safe, in-person learning with realistic expectations of our students, parents, and staff.

We formulated these policies using recommendations and directives from the Archdiocese, CDC, and MDH. We considered several coinciding realities, including:

- COVID-19 hospitalizations, ICU hospitalizations, and deaths for Minnesota children ages 0-14 remains very small. This is a reason to be grateful.
- Nationally, positive COVID-19 cases among children are increasing.
- The impact of COVID-19 generally, and the Delta variant specifically, on school children this fall remains uncertain. Time in school will give us a clearer picture.
- Children spread COVID-19 as efficiently as adults.
- Masks, when properly worn, reduce the transmission of COVID-19 and other illnesses.
- Prolonged use of masks by children carries negative consequences – including negative consequences for learning.

We cannot ignore the divisive nature of what we are facing. People within the Good Shepherd community hold varying (and sometimes strongly opposing) beliefs about the severity of the coronavirus and its threat to the health and lives of adults and children, about the recommended mitigation practices proposed by health and government bodies, and about impositions on personal choice and freedom. Our pandemic preparedness and readiness plan will be another place of disagreement. This is unavoidable.

We pray that this virus and our response to it will not permanently damage our community life, the health of our school, or the bonds we have formed. And we ask all our families to approach this year and each other with charity, recognizing that we at Good Shepherd are committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for our entire community – students, faculty and staff, parents and guardians, and volunteers and visitors. Thank you for your continued support, patience, flexibility, and trust.

Stevi Evans, Principal

Father Luke Marquard, Pastor

Good Shepherd School Advisory Board

Good Shepherd Pandemic Preparedness & Readiness Plan Team

Mitigation Practices

Hand Hygiene

Teachers and staff will reinforce proper hygiene practices. Students and staff will wash hands for at least 20 seconds at different times throughout the day. Hand sanitizer will be available, and students are welcomed to bring their own from home.

Respiratory Etiquette

Teachers will model and help teach students proper respiratory etiquette, such as how to reduce spread of germs when coughing and sneezing.

Physical Distancing

We will encourage physical distancing during the school day only when it does not disrupt the development and learning of our students. Desks will be set apart when feasible. Students will utilize different entrances and exits for the beginning and end of day.

Cleaning & Surfaces

Scheduled cleanings will happen throughout the day. High-touch areas will be cleaned often. Teachers will clean surface areas at least one time during the school day, in addition to their typical cleaning procedures. All classrooms are cleaned in the evening. Student shared supplies will be limited, sanitized, or stored after use. If a classroom is used for an evening activity, the room will be cleaned after use.

Ventilation

The ventilation systems will be monitored daily to make sure they are operating properly. Air filtration systems will be turned on and in each classroom and shared space during the day. Windows will be opened daily.

Face Coverings

We will assess our face covering/masking policy *every month*, if not more often. We plan to begin the year in an abundance of caution, especially in the face of the Delta variant. To begin the academic year:

- Face coverings are **required** for staff, students, and visitors in transition and shared spaces, including, but not limited to: busses, field trip destinations, indoor Masses (when we cannot attend outdoors), time working with other grade levels (such as when with buddies), assemblies, bathrooms and hallways, and in all *shared* classrooms (see *Specialists* section below).
- Face coverings are **strongly recommended** in the class cohort setting. Students will be given ample mask breaks while in their cohort setting. They are with their cohort group much of the day. We will utilize outside learning spaces as much as possible. When student spacing is possible indoors, mask breaks will also be given. We fully anticipate that most of our students will be masked throughout the day.
- Staff is allowed to teach in their cohort with their face coverings down to help students lip read, hear, and see expressions.
- Visitors and volunteers are welcome to be in the building. They will be **required** to wear a mask if working with students or coming to school functions to begin the academic year.

**To discuss exemptions, please contact the school office: schoolinfo@gsgsvschool.org*

**Per MDH guidance, students properly wearing a mask will not be considered a close contact in the event an exposure occurs at school.*

Designated Contact

Parents and guardians should contact the school office regarding positive Covid-19 cases: schoolinfo@gsgvschool.org. **Do not send your child to school if you are awaiting test results for COVID-19.**

Lab-Confirmed Cases of COVID-19

State law requires us to report to Minnesota Department of Health any cases of COVID-19 that occur among students or staff in our building. If your child has COVID-19, we will require that they not return to school or school-sponsored activities until they are no longer contagious. This means:

- Their symptoms are substantially improved;
- It has been at least 10 days since they first felt sick or tested positive for COVID-19;
- They have had no fever for at least 24 hours, without using medicine that lowers fevers.

Like other infectious diseases, we will notify impacted families of a lab-confirmed case of COVID-19 in the classroom. The Minnesota Department of Health has trained staff to conduct contact tracing, especially now that people are in many other events and activities outside of school. We will be ready to assist MDH whenever they request our assistance in this area.

Quarantine

The Minnesota Department of Health no longer requires school leaders to quarantine individuals, entire classrooms, or groups of students on account of potential exposure to COVID-19. We will follow the 7-, 10- and 14-day quarantine options given from MDH if quarantine is recommended for individuals. **Please note, that per MDH guidance, students properly wearing a mask will not be considered a close contact in the event an exposure occurs at school.*

Sick Children

Monitoring your child's symptoms at home before they come to school will help the greater community. Please do not send your child to school after giving them Tylenol or ibuprofen to help diminish a fever. **Keep your sick children home.**

Please contact the school office with any questions about when/if your child can attend school.

Vaccination

Honoring the health care decisions of all in our community and the importance of individual privacy for health related decisions, our school will not be mandating any community member to receive the COVID-19 vaccine nor provide documentation of vaccination.

Glance at the School Day

Social Emotional Needs

The emotional needs of students will be at the forefront of all educators in the building. Teachers will devote time to prayer and reflection to help ease anxieties and encourage kindness and love for our neighbors. The school counselor will be available two days per week.

Classroom Cohorts

Students will spend much time in their class cohort, yet they will be allowed to work with the other grade level cohorts this year. To begin the year, masks will be required when grouping or partnering with other classes *indoors* (buddies, literature circles, math groups, etc.).

Recess (no masks required outside)

Students will be allowed to play with their cohort and the other grade-level cohort in their outdoor zone(s). Each class will have its own set of equipment to play with.

Outdoor Classrooms (no masks required outside)

In addition to working in the classroom, there will be outdoor spaces and areas with tables and benches for students to learn. Frequent outdoor learning is encouraged.

Bathrooms

Bathrooms will be cleaned before, after, and during school – specifically high-touch handles within the bathroom.

Water Bottles/Drinking Fountains

Students are encouraged to bring a clean water bottle from home daily. Students will not be allowed to use the fountains with their mouth. They can use the filling stations.

Lunch and Snack

Lunch will be served in the cafeteria (gym) for K-6 grade students, and in the multi-purpose room for preschool students. Students will sit with their grade-level class to begin the year and be spaced 6 feet from other grade levels. Tables will be washed between uses.

Birthdays

Students' birthdays will be celebrated and recognized. There will be a monthly birthday treat for all students in the school and we will honor each child that had a birthday that month. Non-edible options are available to bring if you contact your child's teacher, but they are not necessary. Children get a birthday book on their birthday from the principal's office.

Allergies

Be cognizant of allergies students have, especially airborne allergens. We are a peanut and tree nut free school.

Specialists

Students will attend specialist classes: Technology, Music, Physical Education, and Spanish. If shared items are used, they will be sanitized or stored away between use. Students will be required to wear masks in shared classrooms to begin the school year, with the exception of Physical Education class. In Music class, students will be allowed to sing, and will be distanced from their peers.

Assemblies

If we have a school assembly, it will be outside weather permitting, and if indoors, each class cohort will be 6 feet from the other class, to begin the year.

Field Trips

We will go on field trips when available. Masks are currently **required** on the bus (public or private), and required in many places we tend to visit (dependent on each classes destinations).

Mass

We will have mass at 9:25 a.m. every Wednesday. We will worship outside weather permitting. Parents/guardians are welcome to attend. Classes will sit in their cohort, next to their other grade-level cohort. There will be more than 6 feet of distance from one grade level to the next when indoors.

Sports and/or Activities

Students will be allowed to participate in athletics and activities before and after school. School safety policies need to be followed.

Before and After School Care

Students will be allowed to attend before and after school care. Face coverings are required at before and after care to begin the year.

Bussing

All people are required by an Order from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to wear face coverings while in public transportation hubs and on all public transportation conveyances (airplanes, public buses, etc.), including school buses (both public and private).

Volunteers & Visitors

Parent/guardian volunteers will be welcomed into the building and must wear masks when volunteering to begin the academic year. If any illnesses or symptoms exist, do not volunteer.

Policies for School Closure

Should the decision need to be made to temporarily close the school building due to concerns about the spread of an infectious disease, we will work with public health officials in alignment with the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

Distance Learning

We will work to **minimize** the change from in-person learning models to distance learning models for individuals and/or full classrooms.

Distance learning will only be considered when a student has COVID-19 or direct exposure and needs to be out of school **longer than 5 full days**. Teachers will provide paperwork and other materials for absences, as they would for regular absences. Depending on projects and student grade level, some instances may occur where teachers ask students to pivot to Zoom for participation from home. In no instance should sick children be participating in distance learning. We will not grant distance learning for extenuating circumstances like: quarantining before/after traveling for vacations.