



St. Michael's School

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August 26, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I would like to welcome our new parents, students and staff to our school community. For those parents, students and staff who have been part of the journey in education and faith, I extend a welcome back.

I do hope you were able to spend some quality time with your family over the summer. I am beyond grateful that our Lord has given me the strength to return to the St. Michael's school community. I have missed you. It has been a difficult year, on so many levels, and I look to the future with hope and optimism.

We are blessed to have our faith community to support us. This 2020-21 school year theme is: "Walk with Jesus our Living Hope". Jesus was sent to us to be our hope. In this time of great uncertainty, we need to keep in mind that He is the hope that inspires us as members of the Catholic educational community, and in the church's mission to announce the Good News to the world. May our Catholic community continue to be a place where Christ ignites within us an abiding confidence, in a future that is filled with hope.

At this time, it is important to acknowledge the range of feelings and concerns of families as our children return to in class instruction. I can appreciate that once school begins, we will all need time to adjust to new learning models and safety protocols. I can also appreciate how you will undoubtedly have questions.

St. Michael's Restart Plan for September has been developed based on the advice and recommendations from the Provincial Health Office to ensure health and safety measures are in place to protect students and school staff. It also includes the latest information released from the Ministry of Education on July 29th and August 17th along with the B.C. Centre for Disease Control and the Provincial Steering Committee.

Please carefully read the School Safety plan on the school website at the following link: <http://www.stmichaelschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Final-St.-Michaels-Operational-School-Safety-Plan-Covid-19-August-2020.pdf>.

Also please read the information below so you fully understand the ways in which B.C schools are required to operate during phase 2 of the restart plan. The information shared here is based on the most current information we have.

What are the general procedures for students returning to school?

Students in **Grades 1 to 7** will be welcomed back to school on **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10th** and will be dismissed at **NOON** on this day.

Kindergarten students will come to school at their designated intervention assessment time on either **September 10th OR September 11th**. Kindergarten students' first official day of school will be September 14th. Kindergarten students will follow the gradual entry schedule posted on the school's calendar. *Please note that since this is the first year of school for our Kindergarten students a staggered drop off on September 14th will NOT apply for them.*

1. Staggered Morning Drop Off

- Parents will drop off their child punctually at their designated staggered time.
 - Surnames beginning with **A-K** will drop off between 8:30-8:40 am.
 - Surnames beginning with **L-Z** will drop off between 8:45-8:55 am.

- If you are required to walk your child to the drop off area, please ensure that you enter the parking lot **before 8:30 am**, park in the lower parking lot and stay in your vehicle until your child's drop off time.
- Children will line-up in their designated grade area and are to maintain social distancing between learning groups. Staff will meet children in their designated area.
- In the fall, when routines are established, areas will be marked:
 - Kindergarten and Grade 1 will enter via the main front door.
 - Grades 4 and 5 will enter via the side door on Holmes St.
 - Grades 2 and 3 will enter via the north side door.
 - Grades 6 and 7 will enter via the north fire door.

2. After School Pick Up

- Parents will pick up their child punctually at their designated staggered time.
 - Surnames beginning with **A-K** will pick up between 3:00-3:15 pm (M, T, Th, F)
 - Surnames beginning with **L-Z** will pick up between 3:15-3:30 pm (M, T, Th, F)

 - Surnames beginning with **A-K** will pick up between 2:00-2:15 pm (W)
 - Surnames beginning with **L-Z** will pick up between 2:15-2:30 pm (W)
- Kindergarten and Grade 1 will exit the main front door.
- Grades 4 and 5 will exit via the side door on Holmes St.
- Grades 2 and 3 will exit via the north side door.
- Grades 6 and 7 will exit via the north fire doors.
- Teachers/EAs will escort their students to the parking lot and have them wait in their designated grade area.
- Children are to go straight home and not to play on the school grounds after school.

3. Staggered Recess and Lunch Break

Recess Break

- 10:15-10:30 am – K & 1, 6 & 7 Recess Break
- 10:30-10:45 am – 2 & 3, 4 & 5 Recess Break

Lunch Break

- 12:00-12:25 pm – Play K & 1, 6 & 7 / Eat 2 & 3, 4 & 5
- 12:25-12:55 pm – Play 2 & 3, 4 & 5 / Eat K & 1, 6 & 7

The Playground will be divided into sections A, B, C and D. Each classroom will be designated to play in a particular section. These will rotate daily.

What are some of the enhanced health and safety measures that will be place in the fall?

1. Daily Health Assessment

- Please know that students and staff who are sick or showing symptoms will not be allowed at school.
- Parents will be responsible to assess their child each day and acknowledge that their child is symptom free.
- Parents/guardians will be given ONE health check form to sign and return to the school at the start of the year. This is to confirm that all parents/guardians understand that it is their responsibility to assess their child on a daily basis **before** sending their child to school. Please take the time to complete the daily health check carefully, and err on the side of caution by keeping your child at home if any symptoms manifest.

To download the Daily Health Assessment, please visit the school website – parents/forms: <http://www.stmichaelschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Daily-Health-Check-forms.pdf>

- Should your child become sick during the school day, your child will be isolated, parents will be called and asked to pick up their child immediately.

*** Note: There is no role for screening students or staff for symptoms, checking temperatures, or COVID-19 testing. Such activities are reserved for health care professionals.**

2. Restricted Access to the School Building

- Access to the building will be **restricted**. Only staff and students are permitted access, unless it is an urgent matter and only by appointment. Parents/guardians will remain outside when they drop off their children and will not be permitted to enter the school during the school day to drop off lunches/supplies, etc.
- Visitor access during school hours is prioritized to those supporting activities that benefit student learning and well-being (e.g. speech language pathologist, behaviour interventionist, public health nurses, etc.).
- Visitors will be made aware of health and safety protocols and requirements prior to entering the school.
- Visitors must confirm they have completed the requirements of a daily health check before entering.
- The school office staff will keep a list of the date, names and contact information for any visitors who entered the school.

3. Parent Participation Program

- In light of established public health orders restricting gatherings/events in order to contain COVID-19 spread, the St. Michael's Parish Education Committee, in collaboration with the COVID-19 Restart Planning Committee, will be adjusting this year's participation options. In this regard, our Parent Participation Program will be flexible and fluid throughout the 2020-2021 school year. Opportunities, including some new and reconceptualized, will be made available as we learn better how best to navigate restrictions imposed by the government. These opportunities will be communicated to you once activities and/or events are confirmed to proceed, and measures to protect the safety of all involved have been considered and implemented.
- Currently, participation jobs carried out by parents in the school will be **minimized** and will continue to depend on approval by the Parish Education Committee. Participation parents will be expected to be trained and to follow all health and safety guidelines, including wearing a mask and maintaining physical distance (2M).

4. School Supplies and Storage

- Due to limited space in the classrooms, the students will be using the hallway hooks to store belongings. Each student is to bring a backpack with what they need for the day. **All belongings**, including lunches will be kept in the child's backpack. Students are to take all their belongings home each day.

The classroom teacher will give more specifics but, in general, students are to bring:

- Filled water bottle (water fountains are disabled); water bottles may be filled at the filling stations.
 - Snack/lunch in a container.
 - Outdoor play equipment (e.g. ball, skipping rope, hula hoop, etc.,).
 - School supplies will be divided and each child will be given a labeled bag with their own supplies. There is no communal sharing of supplies.
 - Personal size hand sanitizer-labeled with child's name (optional).
- Parents will be asked to label **all** personal items, including water bottles.

5. Handwashing

- The school will ensure that adequate hand-washing facilities are on site. Hand washing signs will be posted near all sinks.
- Teachers will provide instruction and assist younger students (as needed) to correctly wash their hands. Teachers will incorporate additional hand hygiene opportunities into their daily schedule.
- The use of lower floor kitchen sinks and changeroom sink will be used in addition to the washroom facilities and classroom sinks.

6. School/Classroom Cleaning

- The school will be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the B.C. Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) *Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings* guidelines. Cleaning practices will be in line with the Provincial Health Officer's COVID-19 *Public Health Guidance for Childcare Settings*.

Will Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) be required to attend school?

Non-medical face masks are not required for elementary students, but students may wear them as a family choice. Re-useable face masks will be made available for staff and students if someone should become ill while at school.

Personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks are going to be supplied by the school where mandated by the Ministry of Education. If families choose to send their children to school with masks, both cloth and disposable masks are to be labeled with the students initials and grade and kept in a paper envelope or cloth bag.

Staff will be required to wear non-medical masks or face coverings in high traffic areas, in common areas (e.g. hallways) or in situations where physical distancing cannot be maintained and the person is interacting with people outside of their learning group (e.g. Teachers on Call, specialist teachers and Education Assistants required who work in close proximity to students across learning groups).

Why aren't younger students expected to wear masks?

On the advice of the Provincial Health Officer, non-medical masks are not recommended for elementary students because of the increased likelihood they will touch their face and eyes, and because they may require assistance to properly put on and take off their mask (which means increased close personal contact from school staff). However, students will need to wear a mask if they become sick at school.

Some students may choose to wear a mask for personal reasons and they will be provided one if they make that choice. Everyone must treat each other and those wearing or not wearing masks with respect.

Is it safe to send the students and staff back into the classrooms in the fall?

Based on **current** public health advice and the health and safety plans put into place, schools are safe to re-open in Stage 2 in September. Schools will also have the necessary plans in place to shift quickly between stages if and when required.

As has been the case since the beginning of the pandemic, the Ministry of Education will continue to make **fact-based** decisions, while following the direction of the Provincial Health Officer to ensure the safety of students and staff remains paramount.

Are students required to attend school in-person in September?

Students who are registered in "bricks and mortar" schools, including St. Michael's are **expected** to attend school in-person, unless they are ill.

According to the B.C. Centre for Disease Control and the BC Ministry of Health schools are considered a controlled environment by public health. Based on the current epidemiology of COVID-19 in B.C., the latest research, guidance from the Provincial Health Officer, and evidence that children are at a lower risk of developing and transmitting COVID-19, **K-12 students can return to full-time, in-class instruction in accordance with current public health guidelines for schools.**

In-class instruction provides students with peer engagement, supports social and emotional development and decreases feelings of isolation. School also provides many students access to programs and services they cannot access at home and is integral to their overall health.

St. Michael's school will not provide an online program or supplemental learning packages for parents who choose to keep their children at home. If you choose to register your child in a distributed learning program or a homeschool program you will need to withdraw your child from St. Michael's school. Regretfully, we cannot guarantee at this time, that once you withdraw your child from the school that there will be a spot available if you wish to re-enroll your child.

I am not sure I want to send my child to school in September. What are my options?

Like every September, parents have options for their child's education including home schooling or registering for online distributed learning. Both options are **different** from the remote home learning, which took place in June.

Online and distributed learning

- Both public and independent distributed learning schools offer classes.
- There are 48 school districts with 56 public schools offering distributed learning courses. Sixteen independent schools are currently offering distributed learning courses. CISVA (Catholic Independent Schools of the Vancouver Archdiocese) is prohibited from offering distributed learning.
- To register for online distributed learning, please visit <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/support/classroom-alternatives/online-distributed-learning>

Homeschooling

- Homeschooling is an alternative method of teaching offered outside the B.C. educational system. Typically, a family member delivers the entire educational program to children at home.
- To register for homeschooling, please visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/support/classroom-alternatives/homeschooling>
- St. Michael's School will not be accepting homeschool registration.

Students with Immune Suppression

- According to the Provincial Health Officer and the B.C. Centre for Disease Control, most children who are immunocompromised can return to in-class instruction when safety measures are in place. Protective self-isolation is only recommended for children who are severely immunocompromised, as determined on a case-by-case basis.
- The advice from the Provincial Health Officer and the B.C. Centre for Disease Control for parents/caregivers of children with complex medical conditions or underlying risk factors, or parents/caregivers who are immunocompromised themselves, is to consult with their medical health care provider to determine the level of risk regarding their child's return to in-class instruction. Parents/caregivers seeking an alternative to in-class instruction, and who do not wish to register their child in a distributed learning program or homeschooling, will be required to obtain a note from the specialist team indicating the need for accommodations due to health-related risks.

- St. Michael's will work with families whose child and/or parent is severely immunocompromised, on a case by case basis, and only once supporting documentation is presented to the school by their medical health care provider and approved by our Fraser Health Authority.

A few more things...

- Our annual Meet the Teacher Night on Tuesday, September 15th will be held virtually. More information about how to access this evening will be sent out closer to the date.
 - Assemblies will be conducted virtually to avoid a large number of people gathered in one space.
 - Small gatherings will occur only within a learning group.
 - A gathering can include the full learning group (60) and the minimum number of people needed to meet the gathering's purpose.
 - "Buddy" class activities are suspended at this time.
 - If we need to have students meet in a learning group, please note the learning groups are as follows:
 - K & 1
 - 2 & 3
 - 4 & 5
 - 6 & 7
- Sports, Clubs & Extracurricular Activities
 - Our goal is to continue providing students with extracurricular activities including sports, arts and special interest clubs within the guidelines of physical distancing being maintained between members of different learning groups and reduced physical contact by those within the same learning group.
- BC Children's Hospital is hosting a free webinar on August 31st entitled: Setting Children & Youth up for a Successful Return to School in the Era of COVID-19. To register, please visit: <https://keltymentalhealth.ca/event/2020/08/setting-children-youth-successful-return-school-era-covid-19>

I can appreciate that once school begins, we will all need time to adjust to new learning models and safety protocols. I can also appreciate how you will undoubtedly have questions. The staff and I also thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation to help us maintain and enforce the health and mandated safety procedures.

Please know that regular updates will be communicated through our website and via school subscribed email and **not** through phoning parents.

It is with deep appreciation that I thank you for your patience, support, cooperation and prayers as we work through this difficult time to ensure a smooth and safe return to school.

Sincerely,



Mrs. C. Kennedy
Principal