



ST. PAUL SCHOOL

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Dear St. Paul Parents,

Sept. 1, 2021

It is with a joyful heart that I welcome all our families back for another school year. The summer seemed to go very fast, and I hope it was filled with memory-making moments with family and friends. The staff have been eagerly preparing their classrooms to receive your children next week to begin the 2021-22 academic year; we look forward to celebrating our year as ***One Family, One Hope in Christ.***

Mixed in with back to school excitement is, I'm sure, apprehension for how the pandemic will continue to play out in our society. I know that some families will have concerns for what life at school is going to be like for their child, and that is certainly understandable. The guidance from public health served BC schools well last year, and we will continue to trust and adhere to the provincial health and safety guidelines for K to 12 schools that have been updated for the 2021-22 school year.

Last week I participated in an informational webinar with Vancouver Coastal Health for all Principals in VCH. Some key takeaways that VCH provided were the following:

- Cluster sizes in schools last year never went beyond 2 to 3 people, even with the Delta variant.
- Children are less likely to get and spread COVID-19, and have a lower risk of serious outcomes.
- VCH is not seeing an increase in severe outcomes of confirmed cases.
- More damage was done by the restrictive societal measures in place last year, such as:
 - Poor mental health
 - An increase in household conflict
 - Loss of connection to family and friends
 - Increased use of substance abuse to cope

With schools being considered as low-risk sites for COVID-19 transmission, we are confident that with infection prevention and control measures in place, as per our newly created school **Communicable Disease Plan**, we can help create a safe environment by reducing the spread of communicable diseases like COVID-19.

So what will school look like?

Many regular school activities and protocols can safely go back to how they were before pandemic restrictions were put in place. At the same time, and for the sake of caution, we will gradually ease back into other protocols as the year gets underway. Here are a few items of note:

- **Masks:** will be required for all students in Gr. 4 to 7 when indoors, and for all staff. Masks for primary (Gr K to 3) remains optional.

St. Paul School would like to acknowledge that our school is located on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Coast Salish people, and that we are guests who work and learn on the territory of the Indigenous peoples of this land.

- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette** will continue to be enforced.
- **School arrival time:** All students will enter the school during a 15 minute window of time between **8:30 and 8:45 am**. No staggered arrival (like last year) and no class lineups in the covered area. (like pre-pandemic)
- **School dismissal time:** All students will be dismissed at 3:00 pm (2:00 pm on Wednesdays). (like pre-pandemic)
- **Parents/caregivers may now park and exit their car, and walk their child to and from the school upon arrival and dismissal.** (like pre-pandemic).
- **The FRONT drop off/pick up lane will be available for older students.** (Front of school by music portable). This drop-off/pick up lane will **NOT be supervised like it was last year**, so your child must be able to watch for your car, and enter/exit the car independently. School staff will **NOT** be escorting children to/from this drop off/pick up lane. Please note that parking is also permitted in the front parking lot, however please know it is generally full with parishioners in morning Mass.
- **Back Parking Lot** – will be for **parking only**. There will be no drop off/pick up line in the back parking lot. The back exit/entry gate will be open, but will NOT be supervised by a traffic volunteer.
- **All students** will enter in the morning, and exit at the end of the day, through the covered area doors. **The main office doors will not be used for student entry/exit this year.**
- **Hand Sanitizing Stations** will be stationed in the covered area each morning. Students will sanitize before entering school in the morning, and will sanitize in the classroom prior to leaving at the end of day.
- **School Sports** – will resume as normal, including inter-school play. Decisions are yet to be made between schools as to allowing spectators, so more to come on that.
- **School Assemblies** – will resume, however out of an abundance of caution, **parents will not be permitted to attend**. This may change as we settle into the year. ***(Please note that the information about school assemblies in the school letter that will come home on the first day of school is incorrect. This is the correct information for assemblies.)***
- **School Masses** – will resume, however out of an abundance of caution, **parents will not be permitted to attend**. This may change as we settle into the year.
- **Cohorts/Learning Groups** are no longer required.
- Wherever possible, **areas of movement** will be provided with fewer people, ie. Taking turns at lockers, moving in hallway, etc.

- **Staggered Recesses** will continue (primary first, then intermediate) however students will be free to play where they choose.
- **Drinking Fountains will be open again.** Also of note, we have installed a touchless water-bottle filling station in the parish centre where your child can fill his/her water bottle without coming in contact with the spout or touching any buttons.
- **Cleaning/Disinfecting protocols** will meet health and safety guidelines.
- As a cautionary measure, **plexiglass barriers** will be used on student tables as the year gets underway.
- **Daily health check** for students and staff will continue.

Of course, the number one prevention control measure for safety is to be vaccinated. Public Health has clearly stated that vaccination for those who are eligible (people aged 12 yrs and up) will help keep our school community safe, and according to Vancouver Coastal Health, we anticipate further information on vaccines for elementary school aged children this Fall.

For full details on the updated **Health and Safety guidelines for K-12 Schools**, please click [here](#).

For the St. Paul School **Communicable Disease Plan**, please visit the home page of our school [website](#), under the Principal's welcome message.

More information will be coming home tomorrow in our first *Thursday Letter* of the year, as well as a *Moorehead Message* video coming home on Friday. *The Moorehead Message will demonstrate our NEW arrival and dismissal procedures, so please watch it before the first day of school.*

I thank you in advance for your attention to the various information that will come home from both the office and your child's teacher as we start the year. We are ready, we are excited, and we can't wait to see you all!

Yours in faith,

Maureen Moorehead.