



**CATHOLIC  
SCHOOLS**  
DIOCESE OF RICHMOND

August 9, 2021

Dear School Administrators, Faculty, Staff, and Parents,

I hope that this letter finds you well. This letter serves as an update to the guidance being given to all our Diocesan Catholic Schools regarding the wearing of masks in our schools.

At this time, along with other measures to ensure a safe educational environment, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) *recommend* – but do not mandate – indoor masking for all individuals aged 2 years and older, including students, teachers, staff, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status.

We take this guidance very seriously. Therefore, the Office of Catholic Schools *encourages* administrators, teachers, and staff – along with encouraging parents, volunteers, and students – to make prudent decisions concerning the recent CDC recommended guidance for schools dated August 5, 2021.

- **Indoors:** CDC recommends indoor masking for all individuals aged 2 years and older, including students, teachers, staff, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status.
- **Outdoors:** In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors. CDC recommends that people who are not fully vaccinated wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people.
- **School Buses:** passengers and drivers *must* wear a mask on school buses, including on buses operated by public and private school systems, subject to the exclusions and exemptions allowed by the CDC.

In addition to recommending masks, the following guidance is being given to Diocesan Schools:

- Multiple layers of prevention strategies should be in place. Strategies in our schools will include handwashing, respiratory etiquette, proper ventilation, cleaning, disinfecting, and incorporating distancing, when possible. Schools will notify their communities of what school specific strategies will be in place.
- It is critical that faculty, staff, and students closely monitor their health and must stay at home when they are having any symptoms of infectious illness. Students or employees who are exhibiting symptoms or have a temperature over 100.4 degrees will be sent home and not be able to return until their symptoms have subsided, and they are temperature free without fever reducing medicines for at least 24 hours.
- Schools will still monitor exposure and positive cases. Contact tracing will be conducted, and quarantining based on current CDC and VDH recommendations for those exposed to and positive for COVID-19 will be followed. Only individuals directly exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be notified. The wearing of masks and being fully vaccinated may reduce the need to quarantine if exposed to someone with COVID-19.

Additional information:

- In keeping with the language of the CDC and previous diocesan guidelines, masks are being recommended, *not required*, when indoors at school but are *required* on school buses.
- We encourage and fully support all adults and students who wear masks while at our schools – indoors and outdoors.
- Masks may be required for school Masses if proper distancing cannot be in place. Schools will notify you directly.
- Our schools will not require COVID-19 vaccinations, disclosure of COVID-19 vaccination status, proof of COVID-19 vaccination, or COVID-19 testing of any individuals.
- If the CDC or VDH guidance changes or Executive Orders are put into place that require us to alter these plans, you will be notified.

Last year at this time, there was a lot of uncertainty as we prepared for the opening of school. Our plans worked, and we had a very successful and safe academic year during the height of the pandemic. I am looking forward to another successful and safe school year. It is vital that throughout this school year we extend grace to all and treat each other with the respect we all deserve as God's children.

I am grateful for all the hard work of our school administrators, leadership teams, faculty, staff, and school advisory boards as they make their final preparations for the opening of school. I am thankful to all our parents and students for supporting their schools and for their commitment to Catholic education.

Yours in Christ,



Kelly M. Lazzara

Superintendent of Schools