



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

Office of Catholic Schools

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August 2, 2022

Dear Parents,

As we prepare to begin the third consecutive school year during which the presence of COVID is a factor, we do so with abundant gratitude for the tireless efforts of our school administrators, faculty and staff and the strong cooperation of our students and families.

This year, we also begin with great hope and a sense that things will begin, and pray remain, more normal than the past two years. With that in mind, it is useful to be reminded that a communicable disease policy that predates COVID has been in place for some time and is relevant in our current circumstances. The policy says, in part:

Children with fevers, are contagious, or are with infectious diseases should stay home. If they become ill during the school day, they will be sent home promptly and excluded from school while in that condition, per Virginia Department of Health regulations. Once the student is confirmed to be free of communicable illness by a healthcare provider or is fever free/symptom free for 24 hours without taking anti-fever medications, the student may return to school, after-school, and extracurricular activities.

Earlier in the summer, the Virginia State Health Commissioner spoke about the gradual movement of COVID from an acute pandemic to a more endemic state. His words highlight both the importance of in-person learning as well as the need for vigilance, like that indicated in the policy above, and continual reassessment:

As COVID continues its progression from an acute pandemic to a more endemic state, we must continually reassess our recommendations to the public and our fellow agencies, considering not only potential disease effects, but also unintended non-clinical consequences of any restrictions. CDC evidence suggests that well over 75% of children possess post-infection immunity to COVID-19, in addition to any vaccine-derived protection. Adult rates of immunity, between vaccination and post-infection, likely exceeds 90%. Further, there is evidence that post-infection immunity may be effective for 6 months or longer. It is time to revisit some of our practices for groups that are at low risk for severe COVID-19 disease, especially those whose side effect is a significant limitation of access to daycare, school, or work.

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/statement-from-virginia-state-health-commissioner-colin-m-greene-md-mph-on-updates-to-virginia-department-of-health-covid-19-quarantine-and-isolation-guidance/>

The Governor issued updated statewide guidance on July 14, 2022, that reflects the data and trends noted by the Health Commissioner.



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Effective August 1, 2022, as it pertains to COVID, the Diocese will follow the Virginia Department of Health's "Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention for Students, Teachers and Staff in Child Care, K-12 Schools, and Day Camp Settings." This applies to all diocesan entities, including parishes without a diocesan school as well as the Central Administrative Office and its satellite locations. Current guidance may be found at the following link: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/get-the-latest-guidance/K-12-education-and-child-care/>

Of course, schools in the diocese will continue to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 with sustained awareness, vigilance, and flexibility. I thank all parents in advance for their support of efforts to prevent the spread of illness in schools. Obviously, pastors and school leaders will monitor public health developments closely and should circumstances change, make prudent adjustments to protocol and be in regular communication with families. These adjustments might include additional mitigation strategies and more aggressive approaches in the case of a suspected outbreak. I thank all of you in advance for your continued support of pastors and principals in these efforts.

Sincerely in Christ,

Joseph E Vorbach III, PhD, MEd
Superintendent of Schools