



ST. MARK CATHOLIC SCHOOL
WHERE FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE MEET

**Protocols for the Safe and Healthy
Opening of On-Campus School
2021-2022**

Message from the Pastor and Principal
August 2021

Dear St. Mark families,

We are excited to welcome our students and families back to campus for the 2021-2022 school year.

I would like to remind all Lion's families of the scripture verse, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" – Romans 8:31. It goes without saying that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a formidable challenge for all. Throughout the pandemic and continuing into the plans for this school year, we have been guided by many authorities, including medical professionals within the Diocese, the CDC, Collin County and Dallas County Health, as well as the Catholic Schools Office and Diocesan Presidents and Principals. We are proud of the fact that we have remained open and in person and kept our students, faculty, staff, and families safe. We continue to be committed to this goal above all else.

As you are aware, at both the local and national levels, there has been an increase in COVID-19 hospitalization due to the more transmissible Delta variant. Fortunately, vaccinations seem to continue to protect individuals from contracting severe cases of the virus, and cases are not spreading as quickly in areas with high vaccination rates. What is yet to be seen is how the virus may or may not circulate in children less than 12 years of age, who are, at this time, unable to be immunized.

The fight against COVID-19 has changed due to the Delta variant. As we enter this new chapter in the pandemic, we must look out for those who are most at risk. A core tenet of Catholic Social Teaching is to care for the vulnerable. Until we have more data regarding the variant's effect on elementary children in unmasked situations, we must be cautious and work to protect the vulnerable.

Given this perspective, all persons on campus must be masked, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated in the school building and during the St. Mark school Mass.

We believe that this decision allows us to start the year as normal as possible. Students will attend school-wide Mass, hold school-wide assemblies and pep rallies, attend field trips, be able to participate in athletics and extracurriculars, electives, switch classes, and enjoy the cafeteria.

Our policy will help to ensure learning continuity for our students because, with masks, fewer people will need to quarantine.

We understand that not everyone will agree with our decisions; however, we ask for your understanding and partnership. The remainder of this document outlines all other COVID-19 protocols for the 2021-2022 school year. This plan is subject to change at any time. Please join us in prayer for a safe and successful school year.

Peace & Prayers,

Updated 08/11/21

Overview

At St. Mark Catholic School, the safety and well-being of our community is our top priority. In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, the Texas Education Association, the county Health Department, State Health Officials, the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department, and the Diocese of Dallas, we are taking the following precautionary measures to ensure the safety of our students, faculty and staff on our campus for the 2021-22 academic year. We will continue to respond to guidance from the Diocese and State and Local governments, so please know these guidelines are fluid and subject to change at the discretion of the school. Updates will be provided as needed. It is important to note that these guidelines are mandatory.

We are all in this together

Our goal of keeping our community safe and healthy will only be achieved if we work together. It is important that everyone in the St. Mark community follow the guidelines set forth in this document so that we can provide the best care possible for the members of our community. Guidelines will be developed for monitoring and responding to student and staff health, contact tracing, enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols, spacing and time recommendations, quarantine procedures with ongoing academic support. If your child is feeling sick or showing any signs of illness, please keep them home and contact Rene O'Connor at rene.oconnor@stmcs.net and the school nurse (ann.berard@stmcs.net).

Safety in the School

- Age-appropriate social distancing and protective measures will be implemented in classrooms and hallways while changing classes. Desks for students in grades 1-8 will be arranged so students remain at least 3-6 feet apart, as much as possible.
- We will use enhanced cleaning, hygiene, and disinfecting protocols.
- Masks for both unvaccinated students and vaccinated students are *required* while indoors. Masks for all students are optional while outside. Please note we will continue to follow Diocesan, Parish, and local County Health guidelines in masking policies as this is a fluid policy.
- See-through dividers will be placed in classrooms, as needed.
- The school will ensure students have plenty of outdoor activities and available outdoor instruction areas.
- All classrooms will be equipped with ionic air purifiers.
- Students will have their own individual school supplies in containers. Shared supplies will be disinfected.
- All grades will attend Mass with spacing and assigned seats.
- Lockers will be used this year and the outside of them will be disinfected nightly.
- All classrooms and materials will be disinfected between classes. Classroom high-touch surfaces will be disinfected several times throughout the day and between uses.
- DPL sports will resume with protocols in place.

St. Mark Catholic School COVID-19 Guidelines

The first step in limiting the spread of COVID-19 is preventing those with a confirmed case of COVID-19 (or a high probability of contact with a confirmed case) from entering the school building. This will be accomplished through screening procedures one day a week and contact tracing.

- If anyone in your household is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, all children should be kept home.
- Faculty/staff will self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms before coming onto campus.
- All faculty/staff/students must wash hands upon entering the school building each day. Students will wash hands frequently throughout the day. Students will engage in handwashing for at least 20 seconds when washing hands, in addition to being encouraged to wash hands after using the

restroom, after P.E., and before eating. Proper handwashing technique will be reviewed during the first two weeks of school. Hand sanitizer is available in all classrooms and throughout the building, and will be utilized frequently.

- On Tuesday, prior to exiting the car upon arrival, parents must answer COVID-19 questions during morning drop-off. If the answer to any of those questions is "yes," everyone in the car will be asked to return/remain home.
- Regardless of vaccination, mandatory masking is required for all visitors, vendors, and volunteers.
- Masks for unvaccinated students and vaccinated students *is required* while indoors. Masks for all students are optional while outside. Please note we will continue to follow Diocesan, Parish, and local County Health guidelines in masking policies as this policy is fluid.
- All students must have a spare mask in a Ziploc bag labeled with their name in their backpack. Masks with ventilation valves and gaiters are not permitted.
- All students must bring their own reusable water bottle to school. Water dispensers are available on the water fountains throughout the school. All water fountains will be used for refilling bottles only. Water bottles should be labeled with the student's name. To ensure that your child has a school-approved water bottle, please review the guidelines outlined in the handbook.
- The school buildings will be thoroughly disinfected each night using a safe and effective cleanser. High-touch surfaces, including restrooms, throughout the building will be disinfected frequently throughout the day.
- Students will eat lunch in the Cafeteria and will be allowed to go through the Cafeteria line with spacing. The salad bar will not be offered but premade salads will still be available. Student will sit facing forward and spaced apart, at an assigned table for contact tracing.
- COVID-19 is known to be less transmissible outdoors. Thus, the goal will be to have as many students eating lunch outdoors whenever possible.
- Masks are optional for students at recess and P.E. when outdoors.
- Morning Supervision time in the Cafetorium at 7:15 will resume. Students will sit by grade level with proper spacing. Parents should remain in their vehicles during drop-off and pick-up.
- Lesson and homework accommodations, Off-campus learning, for grades TK-8, will be made available for students who are required to quarantine at home. Students in grades PK3 and PK4, will be given work to do at home and on SeeSaw.

***Student, Faculty, Staff with symptoms:** During the school day, if a student, faculty, staff experience any symptoms, they will be sent to the Nurse. The student's parent will be called and asked to pick the student up immediately. Any teacher, staff member, or student who experiences any symptoms of COVID-19 (listed under the "COVID-19 Symptoms for Screening" section below) should self-isolate until the criteria outlined in the next bullet point have been met.

All students experiencing a fever over 100.0 degrees must be evaluated by a physician. A physician may or may not choose to test a child for COVID-19. If the physician decides not to test the student, a note with an alternate diagnosis must be given before returning to school. (A diagnosis of "virus" or "URI-Upper Respiratory Infection" is not acceptable.)

If a student displays symptoms that could be COVID-19 but does not get evaluated by a physician or tested for COVID-19, it will be assumed that they have the virus and may not return to school until the CDC's return to school criteria listed above have been met.

COVID-19 Symptoms for Screening

People with COVID-19 have reported a wide range of symptoms, from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with the following symptoms may have COVID-19. This list does not include all possible symptoms. Other less common symptoms have been reported.

- Dry Cough
- Shortness of Breath or Difficulty Breathing
- Chills
- Repeated Shaking with Chills
- Muscle Aches
- Sore Throat
- Loss of Taste or Smell
- Diarrhea
- Feeling feverish, or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- Known close contact with a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19

***Student leaving school with symptoms:** Students who show COVID-19 symptoms must be picked-up immediately. They will be kept in isolation while waiting. If a student leaves school with a fever or COVID-19 symptoms, the student may return to school after the following criteria previously mentioned. (Student/Faculty/Staff with symptoms)

***Positive Cases and Teachers, Staff, or Students Showing COVID-19 Symptoms:** If a positive case of COVID-19 is identified, whether a teacher, staff member, or student, we will identify any individuals who had regular or close contact with the affected person. This will include the entire class (students, teachers, staff) and potentially other teachers and staff (if multiple teachers work regularly with the student or staff member). If those teachers or students interacted with other students or staff for longer than 15 minutes in close contact, those students and staff should be considered potentially exposed as well and will be notified. We will notify the school community of a positive case of COVID-19. The school must also notify its local health department.

***Positive COVID-19 Diagnosis:** In the case of any individual who is diagnosed with COVID-19, they must Quarantine for a minimum of 10 days. They may return to school 10 days after their first symptoms appeared, assuming they are fever free, and have had improvement of symptoms for more than 48 hours.

***Positive case in household:** In the case of any student, teacher, or staff member living with someone who experiences any of the symptoms of COVID-19, whether they have a positive COVID-19 test or not:

Fully vaccinated people who have come into close contact with someone with COVID-19 should be tested 3-5 days following the date of their exposure and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result. They should isolate if they test positive or experience symptoms.

Quarantine:

After Contact tracing is done, families will be notified if quarantine is needed.