



DIOCESE OF MADISON  
OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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702 S. High Point Road, Suite 225  
Madison, Wisconsin 53719

608/821-3180  
FAX 608/440-2812  
schools@madisondiocese.org

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## Return to School Guidance 2021-2022

The success of any school year depends on a close partnership between parents and schools. This partnership was key to our ability to hold classes in-person last year, and it will be key to minimizing students' time out of school due to illness and/or quarantine this year. Success in this effort requires that everyone understand the guidelines and protocols for this school year. As we saw last year, it also requires a high degree of flexibility, as the situation may change, sometimes rapidly.

There are 44 Catholic schools in the Diocese across an area from Berlin to Beloit and Kieler to Watertown. The resources, physical space and enrollment of each school varies widely. Schools should follow these guidelines to the greatest extent possible. However, in recognition of varying situations in schools across the Diocese and adhering to the principle of subsidiarity, decisions regarding which recommendations to implement and how to do so, rest with the school principal and/or pastor who must consider and may be limited by such factors as:

- The amount of available space in which to distance students and/or maintain cohorts.
- Overall enrollment and class size.
- The degree of disease transmission in their community
- Any local or county ordinances that may be issued.

The Diocese trusts the leadership of its principals and supports their ability to use this guidance in a manner that will best serve their community. At a minimum, this means:

- Continuing to clean and sanitize high touch surfaces.
- Providing hand sanitizer in the classrooms and promoting frequent handwashing.
- Reminding parents to keep students home if they have symptoms of illness
- Following quarantine protocols for those exposed to the virus.
- Making masks optional at parental discretion. (Some schools may choose to require masks.)

Parents in schools where masks are optional should consider the medical, mental health and practical needs of their family, including the possibility of missed school time due to illness and quarantine, when deciding what is in the best interest of their children and family.

NOTE: Due to potential outbreaks and changing conditions in various locations, some schools may decide to require masks in the best interest of their students and communities. This is consistent with the principle of subsidiarity and these guidelines.

The Diocese also recognizes that communication between school and home is critical, as is the cooperation and partnership of parents as we all aim to provide a successful Catholic school experience for our children. Toward this end, the guidelines and protocols listed on the next page are provided to Catholic schools, students and families for the 2021-2022 school year.

## Guidelines & Protocols for the 2021-2022 school year

### Parents & Guardians:

- Children must be kept home from school if they:
  - show symptoms of illness
  - have a fever of **100.3° F** or higher.
- Send children to school ONLY if the answer to each of these questions is “NO.”
  - Have you been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
  - Have you had a fever in the last 48 hours? (100.3° F or higher)
  - Have you had nausea, vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours?
  - Do you have a new loss of taste or smell?
  - Do you have muscle aches, pains or chills?
  - Do you have a new headache?
- Have children tested for COVID if they exhibit symptoms of COVID.
- Follow all quarantine measures as if your child either:
  - Has COVID symptoms.
  - Tests positive for COVID.
  - Is confirmed as a “close contact” of another person who has COVID.

NOTE: Schools might not offer online instruction for students who are out-of-school ill or on quarantine. Absences and make-up work will be handled individually by each school.

### Schools:

- Schools will continue to distance students as close as practicable to the 3 foot recommendation. Student behaviors such as keeping your hands to yourself and not invading others’ personal space, will be emphasized and reinforced by teachers.
- Hand sanitizer will available, in each classroom. Frequent sanitizing and hand washing, along with basic hygiene practices will be emphasized. (i.e. coughing and sneezing into your elbow, proper use of tissue and washing of hands afterward, not touching eyes, nose or mouth, etc.)
- Schools will continue to sanitize high touch areas such as doors and hand rails every day.
- Schools will continue to limit non-essential visitors and will require visitors to wear masks.
- If a child displays symptoms of illness at school, s/he will be isolated from other students, provided with standard care (ie. taking a temperature), and the parents will be contacted immediately.
- Any student who displays any symptoms of COVID will be recommended for a COVID test.
- Work closely with county health departments and follow all quarantine measures for students who have tested positive for COVID or have been confirmed as “close contacts” of one or more individuals with COVID.

## **Quarantine FAQs for unvaccinated children** (ages 12 and under)

NOTE: The need to serve a quarantine and its duration will be determined by the county health department based on the specific details of the exposure. The following information is based on quarantine guidelines provided by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS).

### **Who has to quarantine?**

- A. Any person who has COVID.
- B. Any person who has come into “close contact” with someone who has COVID, regardless of any lack of symptoms or negative test result. These only impact the length of the quarantine that must be served.

### **What is considered to be “close contact?”**

In the school setting, a “close contact” is anyone who:

- A. Was in direct, physical contact with a person found to have COVID.
- B. Contacted the respiratory particles (produced by a sneeze or cough) of a person found to have COVID.
- C. Was within 6 ft. of a person found to have COVID, for 15 minutes or more within a 24 hour period. This could be one contact of 15 minutes or longer, or several contacts in a single day that add-up to 15 minutes or longer.

### **How long is the quarantine?**

Quarantines for unvaccinated persons who either have had a positive COVID test or who are a “close contact” of someone with COVID, range from **7-14 days**. The exact duration of the quarantine will be determined by the county health department for each case.

### **Are there any exceptions to the quarantine requirement?**

Yes. There is one exception for the indoor K-12 setting if ALL of the following apply:

- The school uses multiple mitigation strategies  
AND
- All students involved were *engaged in consistent and proper use of well-fitting masks...*  
AND
- All students involved were at least 3 feet away from the affected student during the entire 15+ minutes they were together.

If ALL of these conditions are met, students would not be considered to be “close contacts” and would not need to quarantine.

### **Could students still be considered “close contacts” if everyone is wearing masks?**

YES. If any of the above conditions are not fully met, students would be considered to be close contacts and would be required to quarantine and miss school.

This means that even though all students were wearing masks, they would be “close contacts” if:

- They were closer than 3 feet together for a total of 15 min. or more in a day
- They were wearing masks improperly (below the nose, on the chin, etc.)
- Their masks did not fit well (i.e. were too loose or had gaps)