



Introduction

As we prepare to return to school this fall, the health and safety of our staff and students is our top priority. Covid-19 has impacted the lives of the entire St. Catherine of Siena Community. While we are excited to welcome students and staff back to the building, we understand that many members of our community are unsure and even afraid to reenter the school. The purpose of the following document is to outline the protocols and procedures put in place to ensure the safety of everyone in our school community.

School protocols will be different, just as every other aspect of our lives has looked different since March. However, we are committed to still offering the best and safest possible school and work environment. This is a fluid document. As Covid changes and the state and county response to Covid changes, how the Rockford Diocese and St Catherine's respond to those changes might alter this plan. St. Catherine's will be in communication about any changes to the plan. This plan was created following the guidelines outlined in the Rockford Diocese Reopening Plan. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to the school administration.

Cohort Model

St. Catherine's will operate using the cohort model. In this model, students are grouped by homeroom (grade level). These groups are static, keeping the same group of students together throughout the entire day. Students in PreK through 4th grade will remain with the same teacher, and if applicable, with the same assistant throughout the day. Students in grades 5th - 8th will remain in the same classroom with departmentalized teachers coming to them. PE will be held outside, weather permitting; otherwise in the gym. Locker rooms will not be used therefore there are no gym uniforms this school year.

The cohort strategy maintains a safe environment by eliminating interaction between grade levels. It also allows a single class to be quarantined in the event of an infection, allowing the rest of the school to continue in-person learning. Homeroom teachers and assistants are considered part of the students' cohort and will quarantine with the class. Even when using the cohort model, we are requiring that students socially distance as much as possible and wear masks.

E-Learning vs. In Person Learning

In response to parent surveys, St. Catherine's will be offering a choice of in-person learning or full-time eLearning. Families must commit to either in-person or eLearning for the first quarter. A student eLearning may switch to in person learning at the end of a quarter. Because eLearning and in-person learning will be happening simultaneously, eLearning will not be identical to the eLearning St. Catherine's offered this past spring. However, we are still committed to making eLearning as rigorous and engaging as in-person learning.

E-Learning at St Catherine's will consist of the following:

- Synchronous Instruction: Live, staff-taught instruction for some subjects
- Office Hours: St Catherine staff available for one-on-one support from 12:45-2:30 (teachers will take a lunch break in this time-frame)
- Online Communication: St. Catherine staff available to answer questions and offer support via email again from 12:45-2:30
- Students must log on every day during school hours to be counted as present for attendance

Cleaning, Sanitization, and Safety Protocols

St. Catherine's is committed to ensuring a safe and clean environment for our students and staff. The following cleaning and sanitizing will happen before school, after school, and during the day.

Before School and During the School Day:

- Bathrooms cleaned and sanitized regularly throughout the school day.
- Drinking fountains cleaned and sanitized (for bottle filling only).
- Classroom materials, lab equipment, and shared devices will be cleaned and sanitized between users. (We will make every effort to not share materials.)
- Desks and tables will be cleaned and sanitized.
- Recess, playground, and PE equipment will be cleaned and sanitized between cohorts. Most recess equipment will be used one time a day and sanitized before the next day.

After School:

- All classrooms will be cleaned; all classroom surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected.
- All bathrooms will be cleaned and disinfected.
- All offices and additional rooms will be cleaned and disinfected.
- Drinking fountains will be cleaned and disinfected (only used for water bottle filling).
- All surfaces throughout the building will be disinfected, including doorknobs and handrails.
- Playground equipment will be disinfected.

Safety Protocols

Masks:

Every person in the building must always wear a mask. The only exception to this is when students or staff are eating or are outside and maintaining six feet of social distance. Students and staff may wear face shields only if they are also wearing a mask. Face shields alone are not permitted. Families should provide masks for their children. Attaching a lanyard to the mask is helpful so the students do not have to put the mask on a surface and will not misplace the mask. We will have extra disposable masks on hand for emergencies, but will not be able to provide masks to all students on a daily basis. Masks must cover the nose, mouth, and chin.

If students are wearing reusable masks, they must be cleaned daily. We suggest having three masks per child at home. If students are wearing disposable masks, they must have a new mask each day.

Social Distancing:

Even while wearing masks, students and staff must remain socially distant. Students must be at least three feet separated from one another, but in most cases will be six feet away from each other. If students are seated at tables, there will be fewer students at each table to ensure social distancing. Desks will be placed two to six feet apart. Extra furniture has been removed from classrooms to allow for more distancing.

Signage:

Developmentally appropriate signage will be displayed throughout the building reminding students of safety protocols. Tape and decals will appear in hallways, classrooms, and bathrooms ensuring students navigate the correct way.

Schedule:

The schedule was created to include bathroom breaks, snack breaks, and transition times and routes, to ensure social distancing.

Arrival / Dismissal:

Arrival and dismissal procedures will be shared separately with all families.

Hygiene:

Hand sanitizer will be available in every classroom, every office, in the gym, and After Care spaces. Students will engage in handwashing multiple times a day. Students are asked to come to school in freshly washed clothing daily.

Classroom doors and windows will remain open to allow clean air flow. If it is an extremely hot day, the AC will remain on, doors will remain open, but windows may be shut.

Classroom Setup:

All desks have been moved into rows that do not touch each other and all face forward in the same direction. Extra furniture has been removed from classrooms to allow for even more distancing between the desks. If tables are used, such as in preschool, students will be sitting all on one side of the table, thus ensuring they are all facing the same direction, and only two on each side spread apart.

All grades will also be assigned an area of land outside on the school grounds that they can use whenever they desire. They can do a lesson outside, read together, eat their snack, or whatever else the teacher chooses. **We are asking that every student brings a 6 ft beach towel to keep at school to be used when outside.** This way they can take off their masks and socially distance while enjoying the weather.

Illness Protocol

If your child, a member of your family, or a person that comes in close contact with your child on a regular basis tests positive for Covid-19, please inform the principal immediately by emailing or calling the school at (847) 426-4808.

Parents are encouraged to follow the CDC “If You Are Sick” guidelines for caring for oneself and others. The guidelines are at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/ifyou-are-sick/index.html>).

When can my student return to school?

1. If it is determined by a doctor or a test that your child DOES NOT have Covid, they may return to school after their symptoms subside, they have been fever free for 24 hours, and parents have provided a doctor’s note confirming the negative Covid-19 diagnosis. Parents should provide the note to the principal.

2. If a student either tests positive for Covid-19 or a doctor provides a diagnosis of Covid-19, the student must isolate at home and not return to school until the student meets the following criteria to discontinue home isolation:
 - a. 24 Hours with no fever;
 - b. No Covid-19 symptoms or a doctor’s written permission to return to school;
 - c. Ten days since Covid-19 symptoms first appeared;

- d. Parents must confirm each of the foregoing in a written note to the principal before sending their student back to school at St. Catherine's.
3. If a student with symptoms is not tested or seen by a doctor, or is seen by a doctor but refuses a recommended Covid-19 test, the student must isolate and not return school until the student meets the CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation, which currently includes:
 - a. 24 Hours with no fever;
 - b. No Covid-19 symptoms or doctor's written permission to return to school;
 - c. Ten days since Covid-19 symptoms first appeared;
 - d. Parents must confirm each of the foregoing in a written note to the principal before sending their student back to school.
4. St. Catherine students will be allowed to participate in eLearning during time away from school.

What are the procedures for notification and quarantine regarding a confirmed case of Covid-19?

1. St. Catherine's will communicate with all parents, faculty, and staff using a Covid exposure letter if there is a student or staff member who is isolating due to a potential or confirmed case of Covid-19. Individual student and staff member names will not be used.
2. If one student or staff member in a Cohort is diagnosed with Covid-19, that individual will be required to quarantine until such time the individual meets the return requirements or the Cohort discontinues quarantine, whichever is later.
3. The entire Cohort will receive a cohort quarantine letter and will quarantine if any student or staff member in the Cohort is diagnosed with Covid-19. The Cohort will quarantine for 14 days or until Cohort members meet the return requirements.
4. Any of the students' siblings, parents or relatives that attend or work at St. Catherine's in which the student has had close contact with will also quarantine for 14 days. If that family member or relative also tests positive, their class will quarantine. The student should continue to quarantine until it has been 14 days from their positive test result, and the student meets the return requirements.
5. St. Catherine will communicate with all parents, faculty, and staff if an individual and/or Cohort is required to quarantine.
6. A Cohort will shift to eLearning while in quarantine.
7. The entire classroom will be deep cleaned, disinfected, and the windows will remain open to increase airflow.
8. In addition, the principal will work with the superintendent to confirm when the entire cohort or parts of the cohort may return to learning in person.

Under what circumstances would the entire school be required to quarantine?

In cases of widespread illness, such as illness affecting multiple Cohorts, the entire school may need to quarantine. If that were to happen, St. Catherine's will communicate the plans to all parents, faculty, and staff as swiftly as possible and we will shift to eLearning. Please be sure your cell phone carrier is filled in on your School Speak profile so that you receive emergency text messages. Please call the school office if it is not.

If a family member or close contact has a confirmed case of Covid-19 or if their doctor believed that they have Covid-19

1. If a family member of a student or other person in close contact with a student has either a confirmed case of Covid-19 or Covid-19 symptoms, the student should isolate at home for at least 14 days from the last exposure to the individual.
2. If the student has continuing contact with an individual who has either a confirmed case of Covid-19 or Covid-19 symptoms, the student should isolate at home for 14 days from the time when the individual has met the following criteria:
 - a. 24 Hours with no fever;
 - b. No Covid-19 Symptoms;
 - c. Ten days since Covid-19 Symptoms first appeared.
3. St. Catherine students will be allowed to participate in the eLearning Program during time away from school.

Symptom Checklist and at Home Monitoring

We know that isolation and quarantine have been difficult on everyone. We expect our families to take personal responsibility for the common good as well as their own safety. We rely on parents to keep children home when they are sick. We know that sometimes it is hard to tell in the morning if a child is truly ill or just isn't interested in coming to school that day, but we ask that you use caution, as well as your best judgement, during this time.

Children should not come to school if they are experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

In addition, we ask that you seek advice from a medical professional. If a child comes to school ill, or answers that he or she had been feeling ill during the arrival check in, he or she will be sent home immediately.

If a student exhibits symptoms while at school:

1. If a student has a temperature above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or if the student exhibits Covid-19 symptoms while at school, the following procedures will be followed:
 - a. The student will be immediately separated from others, but with a staff member. Staff members will ensure that they are sensitive to student emotions and will separate students from class in a way that will not draw attention or embarrass the student.
 - b. The student's parents will be immediately contacted so the student may be taken home.
 - c. Due to current conditions related to COVID-19, we request at least two emergency contacts that are NOT the parents. Parents will always be contacted first. The other two emergency contacts must all be local contacts. The staff will attempt to call parents first. If no contact is made after ten minutes, the staff will continue calling emergency contacts until they are identified to pick up the student. If you need to update your emergency contacts or add anyone to your list, please call the school office or email the school secretary.
2. The student should see a doctor to assess symptoms and/or administer a COVID-19 test.
3. Parents are encouraged to follow the CDC "If You Are Sick" guidelines for caring for oneself and others. The guidelines are at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/ifyou-are-sick/index.html>.

Outside Snacks, Drinks and Birthday Treats

Snacks will be brought in daily by students on an individual basis. Birthday and shared treats will not be permitted at this time. Students are encouraged to bring a water bottle to school with them. Students will not be able to use traditional water fountains throughout the day. They will only be able to use the water fountains to fill up their water bottles. Water fountains will be cleaned and disinfected multiple times each day. Students should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer after using the water fountain. Students may take off their masks to take sips of water but must quickly put them back on. Students do not need to be six feet apart if only removing their mask for seconds to take a drink of water. If a student's mask gets wet, they must immediately change their mask. Water bottles must be kept closed when not in use.

Travel

Students and staff should remain at home for at least two weeks after traveling to another country or to states experiencing significant Covid-19 outbreaks (as determined by the CDC or by the guidance of the Governor of Illinois). If a parent or family member works out of state and has regular contact with a student, please reach out to the principal.

Mass

Mass once a school week is still being arranged A schedule of which grade attends on which day will be distributed later. There will not be an all school Mass for the 2020-2021 school year at this time.

Front Office

Access to the school office will be extremely limited. Visitors will be prohibited during the school day to the greatest extent possible. The main office is open from 7:30 AM to 3:00 PM. No entry into the building is allowed before or after that time unless office staff is present. All parents and visitors need to stop at the school office for all school business. Parents are also not allowed to enter the school building with their child before or after school. This is to help to keep all staff and students safe and healthy. Visitors that need to enter the school building must adhere to the following using the main school front entrance to the building:

1. Ring the doorbell located at our front door. School Office staff will be able to identify the visitor and determine if their visit is essential.
2. Visitors will proceed to the office, Visitors will enter the following information: name, date, company name (if applicable), time in/out, and the reason for the visit.
3. A mask MUST be worn.
4. Temperature checks will be conducted.
5. Symptom checks will be asked.
6. Hand sanitizer must be used.
7. Wearing a visitor badge while in the building is required.
8. Maintain proper distance following traffic flow marking.

Staff and Administration Meetings

Other programs and events such as Back to School Night, and Parent-Teacher conferences and more will be held virtually. Information on each will be sent as they approach.

Meetings with staff and/or administration should be by appointment and virtual, if possible. Please reach out to the staff member you wish to meet via email to schedule the appointment. If the meeting must be in person, visitors will be subject to visitor protocol procedures.

Large Gatherings and Fundraisers

Large in-person gatherings are canceled until we receive notice from the Rockford Diocese. Most Fundraisers or events will be held virtually. We are determining if some fundraisers can be held in person, socially distanced, and staggered.

Accommodation for Preschool Students

We recognize that in any circumstance, the decision of choosing a preschool program for your child is significant. In past years, many families have chosen St Catherine's as an extension of their home and we have been privileged to share these precious years with our students and their families.

We strive to provide a well-rounded, play based approach that focuses on relationships, social emotional learning and nurturing the whole child. As we open for the 2020-21 school year, we expect to welcome students to in person learning. We all know that things will look different in our classrooms this year, but we want you to know that our school mission and the foundations of our program will remain our guiding force. We expect our students to engage in play, explore their learning environment, socialize with classmates, and build trusting relationships with teachers.

While our preschool teaching team will be working on different student expectations than in the past, please know that encouraging young children to try new things is our area of expertise. Creating attainable goals and moving one step at a time, it will be our job to help children experience the benefits of following the guidelines.

How we will support safe in-person learning:

- Virtual introductions so that your child knows what their teacher looks like and sounds like with and without a mask.
- Videos demonstrating procedures and routines.
- Masks will be worn by all members of the preschool cohort--we are looking into having an area of the classroom where a child may take a short break from the mask without putting the cohort at risk
- We expect to have learning centers where children can use classroom materials. We will begin with attainable goals such as rotating to table centers with teacher support and hand sanitizing in between.
- As we see that children are mastering the safety guidelines, we will open up more centers; giving our students the opportunity to make more choices which is a best practice in early childhood classrooms.
- Each child will have some materials that are for their use only such as crayons, markers, and glue sticks.
- Masks can be removed for snack and outdoor play. Physical distance must be kept during times when masks are removed.

Parents

- Routines are very important for young children. Creating new routines or re-establishing usual routines can help children feel safe.
- Keeping regular mealtimes and bedtimes, setting a daily time to play games together, talking with each other, reading together, having family prayer time, or singing songs together all help.
- Support from parents or caregivers is very important during periods of stress. Parents may be physically present but not available emotionally because they are so stressed themselves. It is important to make time to reassure children and spend time with them.
- Explain why things are different. Children may not understand why things have changed (like why they cannot go outside or play with other children) but talking with them will help them to feel supported by you. Help the children in a way that is appropriate for their age. Keep explanations simple.
- Take care of yourself. This is very important. Even young children can recognize stress and worry in adults in the house.

Please know we are doing everything we can in the school building to make sure that students and staff remain safe and healthy. We ask that you, in turn, practice safe actions and follow similar protocols when not in school to further ensure students and staff safety.

Thank you for all your support and prayers!