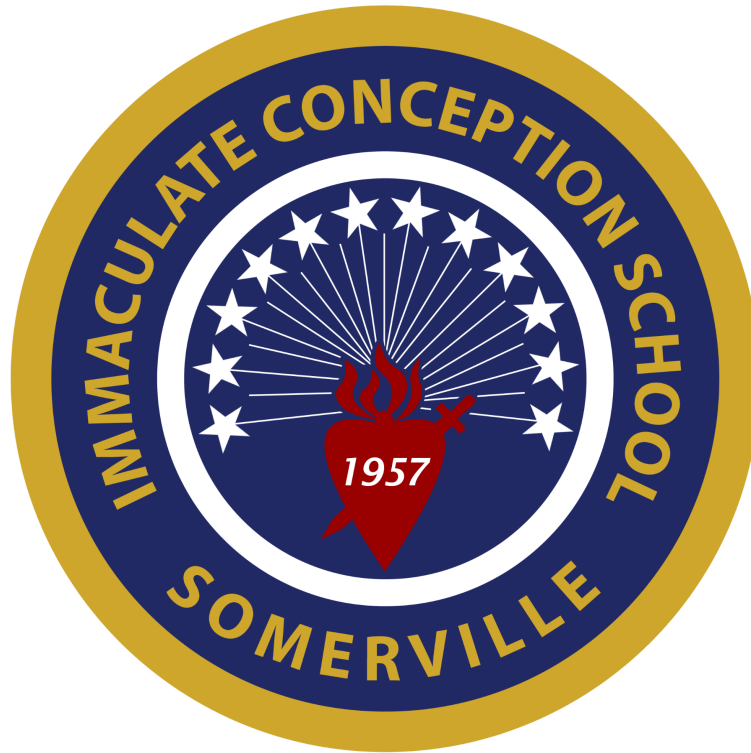


# COVID RESPONSE PLAN 2021-2022



## Disclaimer

The purpose of this plan is to outline current protocols. It serves as a guide and source of information for parents, students, and staff of the school.

Immaculate Conception School reserves the right to update this plan according to directives of government, medical, and diocesan authorities.

August 23, 2021

Dear Immaculate Conception School Family,

We hope your families have found time to refresh and reconnect during these summer months. As a school community, our halls have been buzzing for the past many weeks as we continue to navigate the ever-changing climate, and our school's response to it. Many of you have reached out to express concerns of all kinds, and as we listen to the desires, hopes, fears, and needs of our families, I hope you that the Immaculate Conception School administration is doing our very best to ensure a safe in-person learning environment that is adaptive, responsive, and nurturing. Though it is at times difficult to cut through the noise, we are certain that God is at the helm of our ship, and that the Holy Spirit has strengthened our focus and mission to provide an excellent Catholic education to our students.

For those ICS families who were a part of our school community 'shut-down' in the Spring of 2020, you will easily recall the nervous uncertainty of that following Summer. We know that the pandemic's reach extended far beyond the issues related to education, and that many families endured the heartache of missed events, gatherings, and even the loss of loved ones. Through the intercession of Mary, our Mother, we pray that the pain and struggles of our community will be lifted up, and that all those affected will find peace.

One year ago, the ICS COVID-19 Task Force worked tirelessly to create a plan that addressed health threats, school modifications, exposure response, and the need to maintain in-person learning. We are so proud of our students, faculty, and staff for their ability to adapt, adjust, and successfully complete the 2020-2021 school year. Though there were challenges, Immaculate Conception School is proud to have remained open for the duration of the year - most importantly, because we know it was to the benefit of our students.

This year, our Task Force convened once again. We are still met with COVID-19-related challenges, though many have become more finely tuned. We remain optimistic that our 2021-2022 school will bring about a greater sense of normalcy for our families. The NJ Department of Health and NJ Department of Education released health and safety guidance for the 2021-2022. This document is titled, *The Road Forward* and the following Immaculate Conception School document seeks to address our response to these guidelines. *The Road Forward* document is just guidelines and are not considered mandates. It can be found in its entirety here:

[https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/school\\_health\\_and\\_safety\\_standards.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/school_health_and_safety_standards.pdf)

However, effective August 9, 2021, Governor Murphy issued a mask mandate for K-12 schools (E.O. 251 <https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-251.pdf> ) that does apply to parochial schools including ICS.

In closing, we are excited to greet our students back into the halls this Fall! We know firsthand from last year that the joy and energy of our school community cannot be overcome. We are dedicated to making sure that our community members stay safe, while also maintaining a measured and sensible approach to COVID restrictions. Just as St. Jude, patron saint of hope, preached the Gospel with great passion, often in the most challenging circumstances, so will we continue to be emboldened by our mission to impart the teachings of Christ to our students. We thank you for your continued support and prayers.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Pray for Us!

Mrs. Kelly Seccamanie  
Principal

Mrs. Victoria Proctor  
Dean of Students

# Health and Safety \_\_\_\_\_

## 1.1 Vaccination

The Catholic Church has encouraged vaccination of all people when eligible. Immaculate Conception School certainly encourages this as an important step to assuage the pandemic in our area, not to mention the more immediate logistical benefits of not getting sick and not having to quarantine for close contact. However, it is important to note that there are no changes to the student/faculty vaccination schedule at this time. In short, the vaccine is not required, but encouraged. When age-appropriate, families are invited, though not required, to share their child's vaccination status with the Nurse.

For more information regarding the COVID-19 Vaccine and the Catholic Church's response, please refer to the following documents:

Nov. 2020 USCCB Memo to Bishops re: COVID Vaccine Clarification:

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/memo-to-bishops-on-vaccines-for-covid-19.pdf>

Jan. 2021 'Answers to Key Ethical Questions About COVID-19 Vaccines:

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/Answers%20to%20Key%20Ethical%20Questions%20About%20COVID-19%20Vaccines.pdf>

Mar. 2021 Press Release re: Pro-Life issues concerning COVID-19 Vaccine:

<https://www.usccb.org/news/2021/us-bishop-chairmen-doctrine-and-pro-life-address-use-johnson-johnson-covid-19-vaccine>

## 1.2 Communication

The NJ DOH provides information in COVID-19 Transmission rates at the regional level. This website: <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml> will be the preeminent source of information used by Immaculate Conception School.

## 1.3 Masks

Governor Murphy's executive order (E.O. 251 <https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-251.pdf>) requires that masks be worn by all in PreK-12 schools, including parochial schools, regardless of vaccination status. This means that masks will be required by all Immaculate Conception School community members for the start of the 2021-2022 academic year. Masks will not need to be worn outside.

Masks may have colors, fun characters, and patterns — as long as they are not deemed graphic, violent, or inappropriate. Also, the bandana and gaiter types are not allowed. Disposable surgical masks or N95 respirator masks are preferred, but cloth face coverings are permissible.

When Executive Order 251 expires, it is the desire of the Immaculate Conception School administration to have a "Mask Optional" policy whereas community members that feel more comfortable wearing a mask are certainly permitted, but general COVID risk assessment regarding masking is made by the community members or their parents.

## 1.4 Physical Distancing and Cohorting

Immaculate Conception School will encourage strategies that maximize opportunities to increase the distance between students. For the time being, teachers will be utilizing a variety of desk configurations to maintain necessary distance, and limit unnecessary group mixing.

Classrooms for Art, Library, Music, Gym, and Computer will resume normal use, with appropriate distancing.

## 1.5 Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Immaculate Conception School will continue to supply soap in all of the restrooms and hand sanitizer stations throughout the school. Community members will be encouraged to hand sanitize often and wash their hands when possible. Employees are required to wash their hands when using the restroom.

Hand hygiene will be encouraged through signage and verbal announcements. Masking will be requested upon entering the building through signage and community announcements.

Community members are required to provide their own mask. Immaculate Conception School will have extra disposable face masks available for those that forget, have to change a soiled mask or it breaks in some way.

## 1.6 Meals

The Immaculate Conception School Cafeteria is open for business as usual. Lunch will be offered daily in the servery.

Grade levels will be equally spread across three lunch periods. Students will be encouraged to not share food items or drinks.

Students will be assigned a lunch table, and Immaculate Conception School will maintain a seating chart to address contact tracing if necessary. Grades 4-8 will have Cafeteria arrangements similar to their classroom desk groups. Grades 1-3 will have Cafeteria assigned seats.

Shields will be used in the cafeteria

## 1.7 Transportation

Any time students are riding the bus, masks must be worn. This is based on the CDC's federal order which can be found here: [https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/pdf/Mask-Order-CDC\\_GMTF\\_01-29-21-p.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/pdf/Mask-Order-CDC_GMTF_01-29-21-p.pdf)

# *Cleaning, Disinfection, and Airflow*

## 2.1 Limit use of Shared Supplies and Equipment

When possible, Immaculate Conception School will provide students with materials that avoid the need to share. This, however, may not impede the forward progress of instruction. Therefore, if items need to be shared by students, efforts will be made to disinfect equipment routinely. All equipment will be disinfected between use.

Hand hygiene practices will be encouraged, and reminded of during times when school equipment is shared.

## 2.2 Cleaning and Disinfection

Immaculate Conception School maintains a regular cleaning and sanitizing schedule. The entire building is cleaned nightly. The restrooms, cafeteria, and other high touch areas are cleaned throughout the day as well.

If a community member exhibits COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19 within 24 hours of being in the building, our school maintenance department will close those areas used by the community member and disinfect the areas involved. Before reopening, and after cleaning, the affected areas will be closed for several hours.

The CDC no longer recommends fogging, fumigation, electrostatic spraying, sanitizing tunnels, high intensity UV radiation and similar methods for disinfection in school settings. Therefore, Immaculate Conception School will not employ those methods of disinfection.

## 2.3 Improving Airflow

Immaculate Conception School will engage in efforts to increase circulation of outdoor air. New filters have been purchased for the classroom AC units, and will be changed on a schedule to maintain air quality.

Every classroom is equipped with an air purifier.

Windows may be open to increase airflow, as long as it doesn't negatively affect classroom temperature and impede on educational operations.

Teachers may use outdoor spaces (at which time masks may be removed) as long as it doesn't negatively affect or impede on educational operations.

# *Screening, Exclusion, and Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff* \_ \_ \_

## 3.1 Parental Screening

Parents and Community Members are encouraged to monitor their health for signs of illness every day as they are the front line for assessing illness. Students who are sick should not report to school. Immaculate Conception School will maintain the 'exclusion criteria' for all community members (section 3.3 Exclusion).

Community members that are **awaiting COVID-19 results (regardless of the reason for having taken the test) may not report to school until the results are in and negative for COVID-19.**

If a community member is experiencing symptoms, they are to stay home and notify the school by calling 908-725-6516. At that point, our school nurse or someone from the school's administration will contact the family to conduct contact tracing and explain next steps.

## 3.2 Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff

Community members that become ill while in school will report to the Nurse's Office. The Nurse's Office has a COVID-19 Isolation Room that will be used for symptomatic community members.

Students' parents will be contacted at that time. Students will be sent home with a 'Student Health Referral' that will need to be completed before returning to school. Students that are **awaiting COVID-19 results may not report to school until the results are in and negative for COVID-19.**

The Health Office and/or Isolation Room may close to follow the guidance of 2.2.

### 3.3 Exclusion

#### 3.3.1 Definition of COVID-19 Compatible Symptoms:

- Two of the following symptoms: Fever, Chills, Rigors (Shivers), Myalgia (Muscle Aches), Headache, Sore Throat, Nausea or Vomiting, Diarrhea, Fatigue, Congestion, or Runny Nose **OR**
- One of the following symptoms: Cough, Shortness of Breath, Difficulty Breathing, New Olfactory Disorder, or New Taste Disorder

#### 3.3.2 When Illness Occurs in the School Setting:

- Community members with COVID-19 Symptoms will report to the Nurse's Office Isolation Room (See 3.2)
- Student's parents will be notified and the student will be sent home with a 'Student Health Referral' for COVID-19 testing.
- Ill community members will follow the "NJDOH School Exclusion List."
- Immaculate Conception School will notify community members that are considered to have been in 'Close Contact' <6ft for >15 min

Regardless of Vaccination status, community members experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 should be isolated from others and be clinically evaluated for COVID-19 and tested.

#### 3.3.3 Exclusion

##### **Symptomatic and COVID Positive Community Members:**

- Symptomatic individuals who have not been tested or have tested POSITIVE must stay home for 10 calendar days after symptom onset and at least 24 hours have passed after resolution of fever without fever reducing medications and improvement in symptoms.
- Asymptomatic individuals who have tested POSITIVE must stay home for 10 calendar days from the date of the positive test.
- Individuals with an alternate diagnosis (including Strep and Flu), but do not have a negative COVID test, must stay home for 10 calendar days.

##### **COVID-19 Close Contact Exclusion Criteria:**

*Per the CDC, close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of someone with suspected or known COVID-19 for 15 or more minutes during a 24 hour period. In certain situations, it may be difficult to determine whether individuals have met this criterion and an entire cohort, classroom, or other group may need to be considered exposed.*

The CDC and NJ DOH continue to endorse the 14 calendar day exclusion as the preferred quarantine period- and thus preferred school exclusion period- regardless of community transmission level. However, due to the burden this causes weighed against the small possibility of spreading the virus, we are permitted to use the following procedure for close contact individuals:

High (Orange) = 14 Calendar Days

Moderate or Low (Yellow or Green) = 10 Calendar Days OR 7 Calendar Days with a negative COVID test on day 5-7

Date of exposure is considered Day '0'

**Exposed Close Contacts who are fully vaccinated and have no COVID-like symptoms Do NOT need to quarantine or be excluded from school.** However, they should continue to monitor their health. Immaculate Conception School will ask for proof of vaccination at which time a community member is considered to have been in 'close contact.'

### **Attendance/Remote Instruction**

Immaculate Conception School will not be offering an optional virtual only attendance allowance in place of in-person instruction. All students are required to be in school on all school days according to the Immaculate Conception School attendance policy as enumerated in the Parent/Student Handbook.

If we are confronted with a positive incidence of COVID-19 in our school community that requires a student(s) to stay home, this decision will be made by the school administration and appropriate attendance considerations will be made at that time. Most likely this will be in the form of asynchronous instruction the day(s) that will count as in person days while the school facility is open and operating normally. If larger groups of students, groups or classes meet the exclusion criteria, the Immaculate Conception School administration may decide to have synchronous instruction.

## *Contact Tracing* \_\_\_\_\_

Immaculate Conception School will cooperate with the Somerset County Department of Health and their contact tracing efforts to the extent possible.

Immaculate Conception School will define 'Close Contact' per the CDC definition. For close contact individuals, Immaculate Conception School will do the following:

- Immaculate Conception School will identify community members who are considered to have been in 'Close Contact.' Our primary mode for this will be student schedules and teacher seating charts.
- Immaculate Conception School will notify community members and/or parents of potential close contact exposure using our 'School Messenger' system.
- Immaculate Conception School's Nurse's Office and Main office will reinforce exclusion requirements.
- Immaculate Conception School administration will address any academic notification and ensure academic progress is maintained by students while on exclusion criteria.

## *Testing* \_\_\_\_\_

Immaculate Conception School encourages unvaccinated community members to test often for COVID-19.

Immaculate Conception School will require testing from unvaccinated community members considered to have been in 'Close Contact' and wishing to return from the exclusion criteria on the reduced quarantine protocols.

Immaculate Conception School will not engage in screening testing, temperature checks at the entrance doors or other COVID-19 screening attestation forms.