

Plan for the prevention of Covid 19 at St. Therese Catholic School  
2021-2022

Mission Statement:

*St. Therese Catholic School will strive to provide a quality education to every child every day in a safe Christian environment that is rich in Catholic heritage and traditions.*

The Educational Team of St. Therese Catholic School is committed to creating a learning environment where students are safe and ready to learn. Our school community will demonstrate their love of neighbor by complying with the recommendations of our local health authority, Allegan County Health Department. We have members of our extended school family who are immunocompromised and it takes all of us to maintain a safe environment where all are welcome.

ACHD has begun the process of transitioning from the MDHHS Safe Start plan to using the school guidelines for safe operation which are created by the CDC. The key components of the guidelines are:

- Promoting vaccination
- Consistent and correct mask use
- Physical distancing
- Screening testing to promptly identify cases, clusters, and outbreaks
- Ventilation
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- Staying home when sick and getting tested
- Contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantine
- Cleaning and disinfection

“Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love.” -St. Therese of Lisieux

## Promoting Vaccination

COVID-19 vaccination among all eligible students as well as teachers, staff, and household members is the most critical strategy to help schools safely resume full operations. Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are at low risk of symptomatic or severe infection. A growing body of evidence suggests that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are less likely to become infected and develop symptoms and are at substantially reduced risk from severe illness and death from COVID-19 compared with unvaccinated people.

- Anyone wishing to receive the COVID-19 vaccine can visit the website of the Allegan County Health Department to find local vaccination sites in our area. Additionally, anyone wishing to receive the vaccine may go to [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to find out where to get vaccinated against COVID-19 in the community.
- Anyone who will have frequent contact with students; including teachers, staff, and families, is encouraged to receive the vaccine as soon as they can.
- St. Therese Catholic School will partner with state or local public health authorities for the good of our community and is willing to serve as a COVID-19 vaccination site when and if appropriate outside of the regular school day.
- Absences to receive the vaccine and for possible side effects after vaccination are considered excused absences.

Creator, as I prepare to go into the world, help me to see the sacrament in the wearing of this cloth – let it be “an outward sign of an inward grace” –a tangible and visible way of living love for my neighbours, as I love myself.

Christ, since my lips will be covered, uncover my heart, that people would see my smile in the crinkles around my eyes. Since my voice may be muffled, help me to speak clearly, not only with my words, but with my actions.

Holy Spirit, as the elastic touches my ears, remind me to listen carefully – and full of care –to all those meet. May this simple piece of cloth be shield and banner, and each breath that it holds, be filled with your love.

In your Name and in that love, I pray.

May it be so.

May it be so.

-Reverend Richard Bott

### Consistent and Correct Mask Use

When teachers, staff, and students consistently and correctly wear a mask, they protect others as well as themselves. Consistent and correct mask use is especially important indoors and in crowded settings, when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

- Indoors: St. Therese will follow the ACHD recommendation and will require indoor masking for all individuals age 2 years and older, including students, teachers, staff, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status.
- Paper surgical masks will be provided at school. These masks are disposable and intended for single use.
- Outdoors: In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors. ACHD recommends that people who are not fully vaccinated wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people. Fully vaccinated people might choose to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised.
- Within the first two weeks of school, each teacher will provide instruction in how germs are spread, how to properly wear and care for a mask, and safe handwashing. Consistent with our mission as a Catholic School, we will promote “Catholic Handwashing” which uses the recitation of a Hail, Mary prayer to help with the timing of safe handwashing.
- If, because of a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.), a member of our school family is unable to wear a mask, please schedule an appointment with the principal as soon as possible to

discuss the possibility of reasonable accommodation. The U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission clarifies the law under ADA. If it is determined that a reasonable accommodation is required, a written Adaptive Learning Plan will be created.

If your child will be riding a bus through Wayland School Transportation please note: during school transportation: the CDC's order applies to all public transportation conveyances including school buses. Passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses, including on buses operated by public and private school systems, regardless of vaccination status, subject to the exclusions and exemptions in CDC's Order.

### How to Select

When selecting a mask, there are many choices. Here are some do's and don'ts.

DO choose masks that



Have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric



Completely cover your nose and mouth



Fit snugly against the sides of your face and don't have gaps



Have a nose wire to prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask

DO NOT choose masks that



Are made of fabric that makes it hard to breathe, for example, vinyl



Have exhalation valves or vents which allow virus particles to escape



Are prioritized for healthcare workers, including N95 respirators

For more information on choosing a mask visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others.

-Phillipians 2:4

## Physical Distancing

Because of the importance of in-person learning, schools should implement physical distancing to the extent possible within their structures but should not exclude students from in-person learning to keep a minimum distance requirement. Based on studies from the 2020-2021 school year, Allegan County Health Department recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms, combined with indoor mask wearing to reduce transmission risk.

Teachers will set up their classroom environments to keep at least 3 feet of physical distance between students whenever possible. For times when it is necessary for the class to gather as a group, carpet squares or hula hoops may be used to continue to maintain distance even while learning together.

When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, such as screening testing, cohorting, improved ventilation, handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes, staying home when sick with symptoms of infectious illness including COVID-19, and regular cleaning to help reduce transmission risk.

In the event that a teacher, staff member, or volunteer is not vaccinated, the recommendation is to keep at least 6 feet of distance between students and teachers/staff, and between teachers/staff who are not fully vaccinated.

**Cohorting:** Cohorting means keeping people together in a small group and having each group stay together throughout an entire day. For our school, classroom schedules can be adjusted to maintain individual classroom cohorts. Cohorting can be used to limit the number of students, teachers, and staff who come in contact with each other, especially when it is challenging to maintain physical distancing, such as among young children, and particularly when our county is moderate-to-high transmission levels. If, on the recommendation of the Allegan County Health Department it becomes

necessary to cohort our classrooms, recess, lunch, and Mass attendance plans will be adjusted to maintain separation between classroom cohorts.

The use of cohorting can limit the spread of COVID-19 between cohorts but should not replace other prevention measures within each group. At no time will the creation of cohorts take into consideration vaccination status.

We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

-Life and Dignity of the Human Person, USCCB

## Screening/Testing to Promptly Identify Cases, Clusters and Outbreaks

Screening testing identifies infected people, including those with or without symptoms (or before development of symptoms) who may be contagious, so that measures can be taken to prevent further transmission. In K-12 schools, screening testing can help promptly identify and isolate cases, quarantine those who may have been exposed to COVID-19 and are not fully vaccinated, and identify clusters to reduce the risk to in-person education.

With the increasing numbers, especially in the more contagious Delta Variant in Allegan County, St. Therese will continue screening all non-vaccinated students, teachers, staff, and volunteers whenever they enter the building. All families are asked to complete the COVID-19 Symptom Screener in the Family Portal. If families have not completed this screener, temperatures will be taken before children enter the building. People who are fully vaccinated do not need to participate in screening testing and do not need to quarantine if they do not have any symptoms.

St. Therese will not offer testing for COVID-19. Individuals may contact the Allegan County Health Department for assistance in locating a COVID-19 test.



“Things that are good are good, and if one is responding to that goodness one is in contact with a truth from which one is getting something. The truth is doing us good. The truth of the sunshine, the truth of the rain, the truth of the fresh air, the truth of the wind in the trees, these are truths. And they are always accessible!”

— Thomas Merton

## Ventilation

Ventilation is one component of maintaining healthy environments, and is an important COVID-19 prevention strategy for schools and childcare programs. Wearing a well-fitting, multi-layer mask helps prevent virus particles from entering the air or being breathed in by the person wearing a mask. Good ventilation is another step that can reduce the number of virus particles in the air. Along with other preventive actions, ventilation can reduce the likelihood of spreading disease.

- Every classroom has a dedicated air conditioning/heating system so that air from other rooms is not recirculated. Each classroom (cohort) is circulating a fresh supply of air.
- Whenever possible for learning to take place out of doors, that is encouraged.

Wash your hands and say your prayers because Jesus and germs are everywhere.

## Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

People should practice handwashing and respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes) to keep from getting and spreading infectious illnesses including COVID-19. Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

- During the first two weeks of school, all teachers will teach specific lessons on controlling the spread of germs by handwashing and respiratory etiquette.
- The routine before snack and lunch will be prayer and handwashing. "Say your prayer and wash your hands, because Jesus and germs are everywhere!"
- Reminders to wash hands frequently will be posted near all sinks.
- If handwashing is not possible, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (for teachers, staff, and older students who can safely use hand sanitizer). Hand sanitizers should be stored up, away, and out of sight of young children and should be used only with adult supervision for children under 6 years of age.
- Sanitizer will be available at the entrance areas to the school and in each classroom.

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.”

-Matthew 11:28

## Staying Home When Sick and Getting Tested

Students, teachers, and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness, such as influenza (flu) or COVID-19, should stay home and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care, regardless of vaccination status. Staying home when sick with COVID-19 is essential to keep COVID-19 infections out of schools and prevent spread to others.

St. Therese will cooperate with the Allegan County Health Department whether a child becomes sick at school or if a student becomes ill with COVID-19 outside of school.

In the event a student becomes sick at school:

1. The student will be excused from the classroom, or cohort and the teacher will notify the office.
2. The child will remain masked. The parent, guardian or caregiver will be called. The front office will be closed to others until the child has been picked up from school and the area has been cleaned.
3. The parents, guardian, or caregiver will be asked to contact their healthcare provider for evaluation and possible COVID-19 test.
4. The front office will be cleaned and disinfected. The office windows should be opened to ventilate the area. Personal protective equipment should be used in the office for the remainder of the school day.
5. Upon receiving a negative COVID-19 test result or alternative diagnosis, the child may return to school.

Children should remain at home after running a fever until 24 hours fever free has passed without medication to control the fever.

All staff/employees who are sick with or exposed to COVID-19 will remain at home as required by Public Act 339. St. Therese Catholic School will comply with Allegan County

Health Department guidelines for quarantine and isolation and will continue to collaborate with appropriate state and local health departments, to the extent allowable by privacy laws and other applicable laws, to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19. This allows identifying which students, teachers, and staff with positive COVID-19 test results should isolate, and which close contacts should quarantine according the Michigan Administrative Code R. 325.173(9).

- Fully vaccinated close contacts will be referred for COVID-19 testing. If asymptomatic, fully vaccinated close contacts do not need to quarantine at home following an exposure (they can continue to attend school in-person and participate in other activities). In addition to correctly wearing masks in school, they should wear a mask in other indoor public settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result.
- Close contacts who are not fully vaccinated will be referred for COVID-19 testing. Regardless of test result, they should quarantine at home for 14 days after exposure. Options to shorten quarantine will be guided by the Allegan County Health Department.
- Covid-19 Case Counts will be posted on the St. Therese website a per MDHHS Epidemic Order , Reporting of Confirmed and Probable Cases of COVID-19 at Schools.

St. Therese Catholic School will report, to the extent allowable by applicable privacy laws, new diagnoses of COVID-19 to Allegan County Health Department as soon as they are informed. School officials will notify, to the extent allowable by applicable privacy laws, teachers, staff, and families of students who are close contacts as soon as possible (within the same day if possible) after they are notified that someone in the school has tested positive. This is in compliance with Michigan Administrative Code R. 325.174(2).