

August 4, 2021

To the Good and Faithful Families of St. Vincent de Paul School,

Our principal is on maternity leave until October. So, for now, I get to be herald of up-to-the-minute school news and updates. Mrs. Dawson has turned off email – and probably, for a while, also has limited access to sleep, clean clothes, and uninterrupted downtime. We have a good plan to carry on, in her absence, her important work of running the school. Please also keep the Dawson family spiritually supported in your daily prayers.

Many have been contacting us wondering how we plan to handle the latest COVID-19 developments. We have become accustomed to circumstances and regulations changing quite rapidly but wanted to get a message to you based on the current situation. *As of now*, we plan to begin the 2021-2022 school year with the following protocols:

Self-health Check each Morning and Stay Home when Sick.

As with any illness, we require all individuals to stay home when they are sick. We are asking all parents to do a health check before sending your child to school each day. Students can return to school once they are feeling better and their symptoms have substantially improved (including being fever free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication).

COVID-19 Testing is not required before returning from an illness.

Quarantining is not required if your child is exposed to someone who tested positive.

The Minnesota Department of Health no longer requires individuals who have been potentially exposed to COVID-19 to quarantine. In general, our school will not exclude any healthy individual from the learning environment, unless we are specifically counseled to do so in particular circumstances by public health officials. We will not be doing contact tracing of our students or staff. As with any contagious health issue, you will receive a notification if anyone in your child's classroom has tested positive with COVID-19.

Physical Distancing will be encouraged but not required.

We will encourage physical distancing during the school day when it does not disrupt the development and learning of our students.

Good Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette will be reinforced throughout the school day.

Face Coverings in the School Building are not required.

Last year, Governor Walz, through an Executive Order, required all individuals in public and non-public school buildings to wear face coverings. The Governor's legal mandate ended over the summer, and now districts and schools across Minnesota are making decisions based upon the actual COVID-19 circumstances that are present in their respective communities. The CDC and MDH continue to recommend face coverings. The Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis does not have a policy requiring face coverings in Catholic schools. Since there is no legal mandate or Archdiocesan policy regarding face coverings, we are putting the decision for a child to wear a face covering in the hands of each parent. Parents and guardians are well positioned to determine if their child should wear a face covering while outside of the home. We ask all parents and guardians to consider what is best for their child in making this decision while also being vigilant in the monitoring of symptoms and the health of their child.

Face Coverings on the Bus are required by the CDC.

Face coverings are required only on public transportation which includes school buses. This is a federal government requirement as determined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Vaccination or Proof of Vaccination is not a requirement for students or staff.

We know many people have chosen to get this vaccine for themselves and their family members. We also know that some others have chosen not to be vaccinated. Honoring the health care decisions of all in our community, and the importance of individual privacy for health related decisions, our school will not be mandating any community member to receive the COVID-19 vaccine nor provide documentation of vaccination.

Last year we began the school year facing many unknowns. We had to respond to things we didn't fully understand. This year, much more is known and understood. We begin our new school year with a renewed confidence and hope. As always, we offer the best of our love and prayers for those among us who are most hurting or grieving. We are God's family. We step forward in faith together, trusting that our Good Lord will bless us all and build us up in love.

Blessed to be with you for another great school year,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Dennis Zehren". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Fr.", "Dennis", and "Zehren" being capitalized and prominent.

Fr. Dennis Zehren
Pastor