**Information Bulletin for Parents/Guardians**

**January 21, 2022**

As a follow up to the Ministry of Education letter dated January 18, 2022, to parents and guardians, we want to highlight the actions currently in place at Sudbury Catholic.

COVID-19 school screener:

The link for the updated screener can be found on our board website at: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/> . This new screening tool provides a more sensitive COVID-19 symptom list and reinstates daily activescreening of all students and staff in schools and child-care. Anyone who has symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 or is a confirmed positive case must self-isolate, regardless of vaccination status. Updated testing and isolation guidelines are also reflected in the new screening tool.

Rapid Antigen Tests for staff and students:

We have provided each elementary student participating in in-person learning with two Rapid Antigen Tests for home use. A limited supply of tests are currently available at secondary schools for students that are symptomatic, however we are expecting an additional supply of tests to be delivered in the coming week to send each secondary student participating in in-person learning home with two Rapid Antigen Tests. These are to be used when your child is symptomatic as per the screener. Please note that we only have the inventory to provide each student with one kit of two. Once used we will not be able to replace at this time.

Masking:

**Staff:** While the guidance remains that all education staff must wear a medical/surgical mask, the ministry has provided education staff, with the option of a non-fit-tested N95 mask. SCDSB has received 28,000 non-fitted N95 masks for indoor use which are available at each school. Staff have the choice to use either the non-fit tested N95 mask or the medical masks which continue to be available.

**Students:**SCDSB has also received 16,000 high-quality three-ply cloth masks to be distributed to students who need them. Parents can continue to provide the mask of their choice. Parents have been advised of this option and schools will also monitor and provide as needed (i.e. when a student forgets their mask, it gets soiled during the day, etc.).

Deployment of additional HEPA filter units:

To date, SCDSB has acquired a total of 265 HEPA filter units since the beginning of the pandemic. Our allocation of the 3.000 additional units being deployed by the ministry is 19 units and we are scheduled to receive them from the Ministry later this month.

We currently have 233 units deployed in schools. We have an additional 28 units deployed on a temporary basis in areas where ventilation units are undergoing repairs. Once these ventilation units are repaired the HEPA filter units can be removed and used as back up to support our systems going forward.

SCDSB has deployed units as follows:

* 100% of FDK classrooms have HEPA filters
* 100% of classrooms without mechanical ventilation have HEPA filters
* Common areas such as gymnasiums, libraries, lunchrooms.
* Overall, 35% of classrooms are equipped with HEPA filters.

The additional 19 HEPA filter unit will be deployed across the system, to add an additional layer of protection to support larger class sizes.

Improved Ventilation Strategies

School boards are required to ensure ventilation systems in all schools are inspected and in good working order prior to the start of the school year and continue inspection and maintenance throughout year. School boards are also expected to continue using and/or adopt ventilation improvement measures that are applicable to the school’s existing ventilation system.

SCDSB has implemented the following over the course of the pandemic and continues to operate with:

* upgraded filtration for all central ventilation systems to Merv 13
* increased from 2 to 4 filter changes in a school year for all HVAC systems
* operate ventilation systems 2 hours or more before and after school occupancy
* all HVAC systems have had fresh air increased from 10 to 20% at a minimum. All HVAC systems receive at a minimum 2x annual preventative maintenance inspections and service.

Lunch and Recess Cohorting and extra-curricular activities

*Cohorting measures*

To mitigate risks associated with the colder weather and gatherings/travel over the winter holidays and to limit the number of contacts for more vulnerable populations, elementary students are required to cohort during recess and outdoor breaks to limit contacts as much as possible during this period. Cohorting means that our students stay with their classmates during outdoor play.

*Paused sports and extra-curricular activities and community settings*

 On the strong advice of the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH) indoor high contact and high intensity activities, such as wrestling or basketball, multi-cohort choirs and wind instrument ensembles, will be paused temporarily. 

Cleaning Protocols

To minimize the transmission of viruses within our school environment, we adhere to a very strict cleaning and disinfection protocol.  During the day all high touch points are disinfected at least once with a focus on additional disinfection cycles for high use areas such as washrooms and the main entrance whenever possible.  High touch points disinfected during the day include all entry and exit door hardware, interior door touch points, light switches, stair railings, elevator touch points, washroom touch surfaces and reception counters and chairs. After school, in addition to cleaning all classroom horizontal and vertical surfaces, offices and common areas, all daytime high touch points are again disinfected as well as phones, all student desks and table tops, all chair touch points, coat racks, gymnasium walls and main entrances.

Vaccination Clinics

To support greater uptake of vaccination for children 5-11, we are working with the Public Health Sudbury and District and local providers to support vaccination clinics that focus on students and education workers. We continue to plan for education sector-focused clinics which may operate before and after school hours, either in schools or in other sites.

We have also been actively sharing all information from PHSD and the ministry with respect to vaccination information including: [COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet: For Children (age 5-11)](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/vaccine/COVID-19_vaccine_info_sheet_kids_5_11.pdf), [COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet (age 12+)](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/vaccine/COVID-19_vaccine_info_sheet_kids_5_11.pdf), sample [COVID-19 Vaccine Children/ Youth (Age 5-17) Consent Form](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/vaccine/COVID-19_vaccine_consent_form_youth.pdf) and other resources available at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccines-children-and-youth>.

In working with our partners, we will be required to:

* Distribute and collect information and consent forms;
* Identify initial school locations to host vaccine clinics based on consent forms collected and discussions with PHUs;
* Identify other school locations that can serve as vaccination hubs for multiple schools/community that would support broader student and family access; and
* Provide necessary resources to make space available in schools for vaccination to take place during the instructional day, and support local PHUs in planning efforts, including communication to families.