



January 14, 2022

Return to School January 17, 2022

As you may already be aware, the government of Ontario has confirmed that elementary and secondary students in Ontario will return to in-person learning on **Monday, January 17, 2022**, with enhanced health and safety measures in place. Students who have been learning virtually since the beginning of the school year, will continue with online learning.

In response to the highly transmissible Omicron variant, the Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, has modified public health recommendations. **Please read [COVID-19: Interim Guidance for Schools and Child Care: Omicron Surge](#) to learn the new guidelines that will be enforced in our schools, effective immediately.**

Daily Screening

As directed by the Ministry of Education, [Ontario's Daily School Self-Screening Tool](#) has been modified and **daily proof of completion is required, prior to students' arrival at school, until further notice.** We request all families take time to review the updated school and child-care screening tool prior to their return to school.

- **Elementary:** Please visit [your school's website](#) or Edsby for details on your school's confirmation collection method(s).
- **St. Joseph-Scollard Hall:** Students must complete the daily self-screening by visiting <https://covid.npsc.ca>, and logging in using their NPSC username and password ([username@npsc.ca](#)).

Contact Management

As per the government's announcement, in light of the new Omicron variant and changes to the provincial testing approach, *schools and child care operators will no longer be routinely notifying families of positive cases or if an individual is absent due to symptoms associated with COVID-19.* Testing and contact management will now focus on the highest risk settings, which excludes schools. Schools are required to monitor their own absenteeism rates and report on student and staff absences and school closures daily through the government absence reporting tool. Families will be notified by the local public health unit and the school board when absenteeism among staff and students is 30% greater than normal absenteeism rates for the school.

Rapid Antigen Tests

The Ontario government will provide two rapid antigen tests for all in-person students and all school board staff who come into contact with students. Distribution to *elementary* students is to be prioritized and will be completed on Monday January 17, 2022. Current supply of rapid antigen



tests is limited and will be distributed to secondary students as they become available, with deliveries anticipated during the week of January 17.

Individuals experiencing symptoms **will be required to take two rapid tests at least 24 hours apart, and upon consecutive negative results and if symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours, can return to class.** For information on when and how to use a Rapid Antigen Take-Home Screening Kit, please [click here](#).

Masking

Students in grades 1 to 12 will continue to be required to wear a well-fitted mask that covers their nose and mouth while at school. Kindergarten students are only required to wear masks on school transportation however, *it is highly recommended that Kindergarten students also wear masks when at school.* While students can continue to wear their own masks, the Ministry of Education will be providing high-quality three-ply cloth masks to students. The use of these masks is not being mandated at this time, but rather is strongly encouraged and free of charge. In addition to medical/surgical grade masks currently used, staff will have the option of using non-fit tested N95 masks supplied by the provincial government.

Cohorting and Enhanced Cleaning

Elementary students will be required to cohort during recess and outdoor breaks to limit contacts as much as possible during these periods.

Regular enhanced cleaning measures continue to be in place and include disinfecting and thoroughly cleaning all areas that students and staff are in contact with. In addition, ventilation systems have been modified to increase the amount of incoming fresh air and have been programmed to operate longer hours to ensure occupied spaces have full air exchanges before, during, and after class time. Stand-alone HEPA filtration units have also been provided in all occupied areas where mechanical ventilation is not available.

Short Term Virtual Learning

Our goal is to be as flexible and compassionate as possible in our current context. Families who have concerns about in-person attendance due to the current public health context should contact their classroom teacher or school principal to discuss **temporary**, virtual learning arrangements in the **short term**. As a reminder, the NPSC Virtual School was planned to accommodate students for the full year. Short-term virtual learning can take many forms facilitated at the school level including remote learning work packages, access to regular asynchronous materials through Google Classroom and Edsby and accessing [TVOLearn](#). Please note that short-term virtual learning may vary from the guidelines for synchronous learning located in [Requirements for Remote Learning PPM 164](#).



What Will Happen If There Are Staff Shortages?

Our first priority is to keep schools open however, if there are staff shortages, we may need to temporarily move to remote learning in a particular classroom and/or school that is impacted. This will be a short-term solution until we can arrange appropriate coverage. We will strive to provide advance notice where possible, and we encourage families to make contingency plans should their child's classroom and/or school be closed to in-person learning.

Sports and Extracurricular Activities

To ensure the health and well-being of students, the Ministry of Education has required that all indoor high contact and high intensity activities, such as wrestling or basketball, multi-cohort choirs and wind instrument ensembles, be paused temporarily. More information regarding this announcement and its impact on our local sports teams will be made available in the near future.

Vaccination Clinics

Our local Health Unit continues to offer vaccination clinics in our community throughout January. Please visit [this link](#) for times and locations.

The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit [website](#) has numerous resources for parents and guardians, and are available to answer COVID-19 related inquiries between 8:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at **1-844-478-1400**.

As the situation continues to evolve across the province and in our community, we ask that everyone remain respectful, patient and understanding of one another. We have all been impacted by the pandemic in different ways and treating others with respect and kindness are foundational to our Catholic school communities.

We wish everyone a safe and healthy return to school. We look forward to reconnecting with all of our students and their families.