

March 31, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians,

During an announcement this past Monday by Dr. Bonnie Henry, new health and safety guidelines and regulations for schools were released. This update to the health and safety measures is being introduced as an extra layer of protection in response to recent increases in COVID-19 cases across the province, including Vancouver Island. Read the full release [here](#). A summary of the changes is provided below. We are currently updating our School Safety Plans and these updates will be available on our [District Website](#).

Masks

Masks must now be worn at all times while indoors at school by:

- Students in Grades 4-12
- All staff
- Adult volunteers and visitors

This requirement includes while seated/standing at desks or work stations.

Please remember to send a reusable mask with your child to school each day.

Exceptions

Masks are required to be worn unless:

- A person is unable to wear a mask because they do not tolerate it (for health or behavioural reasons);
- A person is unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person;
- The mask is removed temporarily for the purposes of identifying the person wearing it;
- The mask is removed temporarily to engage in an educational activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask (e.g. actively playing a wind instrument, high-intensity physical activity, etc.);
- A person is eating or drinking;
- A person is behind a barrier;
- A person is communicating to another person who has a disability or diverse ability (including but not limited to a hearing impairment), where visual cues, facial expressions and/or lip reading/movements are important.

On the school bus

Staff, adult volunteers and all Grades 4-12 students are required to wear a mask on the school bus.

Exceptions

The recommendation above should not apply as follows:

- To a person who is unable to wear a mask because they do not tolerate it (for health or behavioural reasons);
- To a person unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person;
- If the mask is removed temporarily for the purposes of identifying the person wearing it; or
- While eating or drinking.

Kindergarten to Grade 3 students

Primary students are encouraged to wear a mask at school and on buses, but are not required to do so.

Please remember to send a reusable mask with your child to school each day.

Implementing this new requirement

For some of our schools, mostly elementary schools, where students are not used to wearing masks indoors, staff will spend the next few days helping students to adjust to this change. ***Please have a conversation about these new guidelines with your children.***

Places masks are not required

Students will be able to remove their masks while outside, including at recess, lunchtime and while learning outside. As the weather improves, teachers will continue to look for opportunities to move their classes outside.

Teachers will go through these updates and changes with your children and we encourage you to do the same at home.

Families and students can find up-to-date information about K-12 schools at: <https://www.gov.bc.ca/safeschools>. The [BCCDC Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools](#) and the [Provincial COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#) have been updated to reflect the amended mask requirements for K-12 staff and students.

Thank you again for helping us adapt to these changes.

Sincerely,



Scott Stinson
Superintendent of Schools/CEO