

**April 9, 2021**

RE: COVID-19 Update

Dear Sooke School District Staff,

The Greater Victoria area has been experiencing a higher number of coronavirus cases in the past few weeks and this may be alarming for many of you. This past week alone, we have experienced the most potential school exposures since the pandemic began. As Dr. Bonnie Henry has shared, the rising numbers of cases in B.C. is cause for concern, but I want to remind you that schools are still safe thanks to regular cleaning protocols combined with our health and safety guidelines for students and staff.

The majority of cases we have seen are the result of community transmission. Most recently, one of our schools was categorized to be a cluster, which Island Health defines as two or more confirmed cases within a 14-day period, with evidence of transmission occurring within the school. The number of current cases in our district translates to less than one per cent of our student population, however, our goal is to get that to zero.

This past week has been a very busy one in our school community. School District leadership has been working closer than ever with Island Health to respond to the increased number of school exposures. This collaborative update is provided to ensure you have the most up to date information about the coronavirus response in schools.

When a coronavirus positive diagnosis is made in a school age child who attends school while they are contagious, the school and public health work to notify and isolate contacts of the case for 14 days. A case and their close contacts must isolate to decrease transmission of the virus to friends and family. To respond to the increased number of exposures in the schools in our community, the school district has undertaken:

- Adoption of the Ministry of Education's new health order which can be found in our COVID-19 Health and Safety Plan [Staff Handbook](#). This includes the mandatory wearing of masks for all staff and Grade 4-12 students. We are encouraging our Kindergarten to Grade 3 students to wear masks, but it is not required.
- Enhanced cleaning of school environments and strengthening signage and guidance in schools to prompt distancing.
- Increased symptom monitoring, absenteeism reviews, and heightened public health measures.
- Reminding parents about daily health checks and other health and safety protocols.

Public health urges community members to decrease social contacts and remain vigilant to illness. It is important to get children tested if they are not feeling well, even with mild illness. Children will often have only mild coronavirus illness, and symptoms that may be overlooked. We are asking parents to please consider having their child tested if their symptoms are new. They can call 811 to book an appointment. It is also recommended that students conduct a daily health check by using the B.C. government's K-12 [Health Check app](#).

We know that schools offer very significant health and wellness benefits, physically, socially, and emotionally. We are working hard to ensure school environments remain COVID safe, to keep Island children in school. Thank you for doing your part to ensure our school community has fewer school exposures by having your child tested if newly symptomatic, and by limiting your social contacts.

As always, practice good hand hygiene, wear a mask and stay home if you are sick.

Huy ch q'u (Thank you),



Dee Hoyano, MD, FRCPC  
Medical Health Officer



Scott Stinson  
Superintendent/CEO, Sooke School District