

Holy Family Holy Name School

Fall Reopening Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Introduction

This document is designed to answer more questions and to provide clarification about the reopening plan that is currently on our School Website. This plan continues to be refined and evolve and we ask that everyone follow our email and other updates to stay current. Most of these FAQ's were taken from the FALL Reopening FAQ's recently published by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

What is the overall goal for our school in the academic school year 2020-21?

Our goal is the safe return for as many students as possible to in-person learning, to maximize learning and address our students' holistic needs.

Why are DESE and the medical community recommending in-person learning?

After weeks of discussion with many stakeholders, including members of our [Return-to-School Working Group](#), infectious disease physicians, [pediatricians](#), and other public health experts, and given low transmission rates of COVID-19 in the state, there is a clear consensus that in-person learning is the preferred model. While remote learning has improved over the course of the school closures, there is no substitute for in-person instruction when it comes to the quality of students' academic learning. In-person school plays an equally important role in supporting students' social-emotional needs, including their mental and physical health, and mitigating the impacts of trauma.

What safety measures will be in place for students and staff?

It is important to note that the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) has affirmed that children, particularly younger children, are less likely than adults to be infected with COVID-19. Furthermore, if they become infected, it appears younger children may not have the same transmission potential as adults. The health and safety requirements for school reopening use a combination of strategies that, taken together, will substantially reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in schools. This combination approach includes masks/face coverings, physical distancing, hand washing/sanitizing, and staying home when sick.

What are the guidelines for safe distancing requirements between students?

Medical experts advising DESE have stated the distance of 6 feet is preferred whenever feasible but that the minimum acceptable distance is 3 feet when done in combination with masks and other safety measures. Establishing a minimum physical distance of 3 feet between students when masks are worn is informed by evidence and substantiated by guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization. It is the practice in several other countries that have successfully reopened their schools. Here at HFHN we have been able to establish a 6 foot distance within the classrooms.

Who needs to wear a mask, and when do they have to be worn?

Students in first grade and above and adults, including educators and staff, are required to wear a mask that covers their nose and mouth at all times, except for designated breaks. Students in preschool and kindergarten are strongly encouraged to wear masks. Masks must be worn by everyone, regardless of age, during school bus transportation. Teachers, staff, and parents should reinforce mask-wearing.

When, if ever, should students and staff get tested for COVID-19?

Current Massachusetts Department of Public Health guidance states that anyone who shows any COVID-19 symptoms, even if mild, should get tested. Medical experts recommend close contacts of those who test positive also get tested four to five days after their last exposure to that person. If an individual chooses not to get tested (whether they are exhibiting symptoms or are a close contact of someone who tested positive), the student or staff member should remain home in self-quarantine for 14 consecutive days and until asymptomatic.

In what circumstances does someone need to self-quarantine (when they have been exposed but are not sick) or isolate (when they are sick)?

Individuals are required to self-quarantine if they have been exposed to a COVID-19-positive individual. All close contacts should be tested but must self-quarantine for 14 days after the last exposure to the person who tested positive, regardless of test result.

Individuals are required to self-isolate if they test positive for COVID-19. In these scenarios, the self-isolation period is a minimum of 10 days with at least 24 hours having passed with no fever and with improvement in other symptoms.

The guidance states that individuals who are exposed to COVID-19-positive individuals should stay home and get tested four or five days after their last exposure. If the exposure is ongoing (e.g., exposure to household members or other close contacts who are unable to self-isolate), what is considered the “last exposure?”

If a student’s or staff member’s exposure to an infected individual is ongoing, then the student or staff member should stay home in self-quarantine until the infected individual is no longer considered infectious per [Department of Public Health guidance](#). Once the infectious period is over, the student or staff member should be tested four or five days later.

If someone in a classroom tests positive for COVID-19, is the whole class required to self-quarantine? If so, when is the earliest students can return to school?

The guidance states that in elementary schools, close contacts should stay home and get tested. If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, their close contacts will be defined as only those who have been within 6 feet of distance of the individual for at least 15 minutes while the person was infectious. All close contacts must self-quarantine for 14 days, regardless of test results. During the period that students are in self-quarantine, it is the school’s duty to provide them with remote learning.

The guidance states that if an individual tests positive for the virus, they must self-isolate for at least 10 days and until at least 24 hours have passed with no fever and with improvements in other symptoms. At what point do you start the 10 day count and 24 hour count, respectively?

The 10 day period begins with the onset of symptoms, and the 24 hour period without fever begins no earlier than the last 24 hours of that 10 day interval. If an individual develops symptoms, regardless of when tested, they may return on the 10th day, provided that they have had no fever on days 9-10 after symptom onset and have had improvements in other symptoms. The duration may be longer than 10 days if a fever persists or symptoms do not improve.

Is ten students the maximum number in one class in the fall (as provided in the Initial Summer School Guidance issued on June 4, 2020)?

No, guidance has evolved since the *Initial Summer School Guidance*. For the fall, there are no required maximums on cohort or group sizes, so long as schools adhere to physical distancing requirements.

Can students in Prek & kindergarten who are unmasked sit together on a rug?

Students in kindergarten and first grade should be encouraged to wear a mask/face covering. We aim to keep prek and kindergarten students six feet apart but lesser distances are acceptable (but no less than 3 feet). This is permissible given the lower susceptibility of the age group.

When students are in the cafeteria or in classrooms or other spaces to eat, what is the space requirement?

During meals, because masks are not worn, 6 feet of physical distancing is required. To provide adequate distancing, we use the gym, classrooms and lunchroom for meal breaks for smaller cohorts of students

Do we have to keep classroom windows open?

To increase facility ventilation, we are encouraged to keep classroom windows open, if feasible, as much as possible throughout the school year.

How did we measure how many desks can fit into a classroom?

When masks are worn, 3 feet is the minimum distance allowed from seat edge to seat edge regardless of whether that seat is at a desk or a table. Desks and tables should face in the same direction. There is no maximum number for group size, so long as schools adhere to the physical distancing requirements. Six feet of physical distance is required between students who are not wearing masks, e.g., when eating, taking a mask break, or for students who cannot wear a face mask due to medical conditions, disability impact, or behavioral challenges. Please see guidance about unmasked kindergarten and first grade students below and exceptions to wearing face masks in the All Audiences section above.

Are plexiglass barriers permissible between desks or tables?

In general, it is not recommend to set up plexi-glass barriers in typical classrooms, since they represent an additional high-risk surface to clean and disinfect.