

## **Background**

### **COVID-19**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found mostly in animals. In humans, they can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The disease caused by the new coronavirus has been named COVID-19. While many of the characteristics of COVID-19 are still unknown, mild to severe illness has been reported for confirmed cases. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic in March 2020.

The BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool is available for anyone that develops symptoms and can be used to help determine if you need further assessment or testing for COVID-19.

Link to BC COVID-19 Self- Assessment <https://bc.thrive.health/>

### **Symptoms**

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses including the flu and common cold. Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Chills
- New or worsening cough
- Sneezing
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat and painful swallowing
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Loss of sense of smell
- Headache/Muscle aches
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite

Symptoms can range from mild to severe. Sometimes people with COVID-19 have mild illness, but their symptoms may suddenly worsen in a few days. People infected with COVID-19 may also experience gastrointestinal symptoms like diarrhea, nausea and vomiting a few days after the onset of the above symptoms. If you only have gastrointestinal symptoms you may not have COVID-19. The symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

### **What to do if You have Symptoms**

When a student is symptomatic, they shall self-isolate and follow direction provided by their health care provider. Self-isolation is also advised for those who are considered to be a close contact of a confirmed case and are waiting to see if they develop COVID-19 illness. If a person is found to be confirmed case of COVID-19, Public Health staff will ensure there is robust contact tracing and management of any cluster outbreaks. Public Health will ensure that students, staff and parents have access to health care providers and that appropriate supports

are in place. The BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool is available for anyone that develops symptoms and can be used to help determine if you need further assessment or testing for COVID-19. Link to BC COVID-19 Self- Assessment <https://bc.thrive.health/>

### **COVID-19 and Children and Youth**

- COVID-19 virus has a very low infection rate in children and youth. In BC, less than 1% of children and youth tested have been COVID-19 positive. Most children and youth are not at high risk for COVID-19 infection.
- Children under 1 year of age and those who are immunocompromised or have pre-existing pulmonary conditions are at a higher risk of severe disease (visit the BCCDC Priority Populations page for further details).
- Children and youth typically have much milder symptoms of COVID-19 most often presenting with low-grade fever and a dry cough. Gastrointestinal symptoms are more common over the course of disease, while skin changes and lesions, are less common.
- Many children have asymptomatic disease. However, there is no conclusive evidence that children who are asymptomatic pose a risk to other children or to adults.
- Evidence indicates transmission involving children is primarily limited to household settings, and from COVID-19 positive adults to children. Most cases in children have been linked to a symptomatic household member.
- Clusters and outbreaks involving children and youth are unusual and tend only to occur in areas where there are high levels of community spread.
- Children are not the primary drivers of COVID-19 spread in schools or in community settings.
- Schools and childcare facility closures have significant negative mental health and socioeconomic impacts on vulnerable children and youth.
- Prevention measures and mitigation strategies involving children and youth must be commensurate with risk.
- Adolescent children should physically distance themselves where possible when outside the family unit or household. For younger children maintaining physical distance is less practical and the focus should be on minimizing physical contact instead.

### **Transmission**

Coronaviruses are not known to spread through ventilation systems or through water.

Coronaviruses are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- Respiratory droplets when coughing or sneezing.
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands.
- Touching something with the virus on it, then touching eyes, nose, or mouth before washing hands.

## **COVID-19 Standard Precautions and Controls**

### **1. Stay home if you are sick**

No staff or student who have symptoms of the common cold, influenza, COVID-19 like symptoms, even mild ones are allowed to enter the building.

Health Screening will include the following questions:

Do you have any of the following symptoms?

- Fever or chills,
- Cough or shortness of breath,
- Sore throat *and* painful swallowing,
- Stuffy or runny nose,
- Loss of sense of smell or loss of appetite,
- Fatigue,
- Headache or muscle ache.

### **2. Hand Washing is Essential**

Hand washing is one of the best ways to minimize the risk of infection. Proper hand washing helps prevent the transfer of infectious material from the hands to other parts of the body, particularly the eyes, nose, and mouth or to other surfaces that are touched. Thoroughly washing your hands with soap and water is the best protection against illness.

Follow this instruction for handwashing:

- Wet hands with running water.
- Apply a small amount of liquid soap. Antibacterial soap is not required.
- Rub hands together for at least 20 seconds (sing the ABC's). Rub palms, backs of hands, between fingers and under nails/creating a lather.
- Rinse off all soap with running water.
- Dry hands with a clean, disposable towel.
- Turn off taps, using the paper towel – if required.

#### **Students Will Be Washing Their Hands:**

- Immediately upon arrival at school and before going home.
- Immediately after sneezing, coughing, or using a tissue.
- Immediately after using the toilet.
- Before and after eating, and drinking
- After handling common resources such as equipment or supplies.

- Before and after any transitions within the school setting (e.g. going to the library, going to the gym etc.).
- Before and after any break, e.g. lunch and recess
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty or greasy.

### **3. Refrain From Touching Your Face**

- Try not to touch your face, eyes, nose or mouth (especially with unwashed hands).

### **4. Respiratory Etiquette**

Respiratory etiquette includes the following components:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing or cough and sneeze into the bend of your arm, not your hands.
- Use tissues to contain secretions and dispose of them promptly in a waste container. Wash hands immediately.
- Turn your head away from others when coughing or sneezing.

## **School Site Protocol for Albert McMahon Elementary**

1. No individual (staff or student) who exhibits any of the following symptoms will be permitted to enter the building:
  - a. fever
  - b. dry cough
  - c. aches and pains
  - d. nasal congestion
  - e. runny nose
  - f. sore throat
  - g. diarrhea
2. All individuals who enter the building (staff, students and any visitors with pre-scheduled appointments) are required to complete a Health Screening.
3. All visitors who enter the school with an appointment will be required to sign-in at the front entrance. This documentation is required for Public Health contact tracing.

### **Before coming to school:**

1. Parents are reminded to do a daily health check to assess their child for symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other infectious respiratory disease before sending them to school. Anyone who is symptomatic needs to stay home. If they become symptomatic during the day, parents will be called and the student will be sent home.

Daily Health Check Questions (If you answered “Yes” to any of the following questions, your student needs to stay home)

- a. Have they been ill in the last 24 hours?
  - b. Do they have any of the following symptoms?
    - ✦ Fever or chills,
    - ✦ Cough or shortness of breath,
    - ✦ Sore throat *and* painful swallowing,
    - ✦ Stuffy or runny nose,
    - ✦ Loss of sense of smell or loss of appetite,
    - ✦ Headache or muscle ache.
2. Ensure that your child has a lunch, full water bottle, appropriate clothing for the weather, and their school supplies. We have a water bottle filling station, but water fountains are not to be used.
3. Please remind them to practice physical distancing and minimize physical contact.  
Some key talking points:
- a. Don't forget to wash your hands at your classroom sink when entering and before exiting the classroom.
  - b. Don't forget to give other people space when we are waiting to get into the classroom.
  - c. Don't forget to keep your hands to yourself.
  - d. Don't forget to spread out while playing outside at recess and lunch.

**Arrival at school:**

1. Students are asked to arrive between 8:30am and 8:50am and be outside their classroom door while maintaining social distancing. Teachers will begin letting in students at 8:30 allowing students to wash their hands when they enter the room.
2. Parents are not allowed to enter the building when dropping off their student. Any questions or concerns can be addressed via phone or email. If required, access to the school is by appointment only. This applies to school district staff as well. The district requires that principals approve all visits.

**In the Classroom:**

Each classroom will look a little bit different depending on the learning needs and developmental age of the students.

- Students will be using desks or round tables with considerations for physical space.
- Furniture will be spaced out allowing for movement around the classroom. This measure is in place to minimize physical contact between students as they transition between activities.
- Each classroom sink will be stocked with soap and paper towel for appropriate hand washing.
- Only one student will be permitted at the sink at any given time.

- If a student needs to leave the room for any reason (bathroom, refill their water bottle etc.) only one student will be permitted in the hallway per classroom. This will help with minimizing congestion in the hallways.

**Learning Groups:**

Learning groups are comprised of no more than 60 students, teachers and education assistants, who work and play in regular proximity to each other. Students in the same class and learning group are not required to physically distance according to the guidelines set out by the Provincial COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings. However, physical spacing is encouraged and promoted. As such, the learning groups will be able to partner in school activities as well as play together at recess and lunch. While outside at recess and lunch, students will be allowed to play in their learning group and will be assigned a specific section of the playground. Areas will be alternated between recess and lunch.

**If a student gets sick at school:**

The student would be taken to our student isolation room and will be helped and supervised by the principal or vice-principal. The parent will be called to pick up their child and, if not available, the emergency contact will be called. A mask will be worn by the administrator supervising the student and if the student needs assistance and physical distancing cannot be maintained, the student will be asked to wear a mask as well. The student would remain in the sick room until picked up. Once a student is sent home, they can only return to school if they are symptom-free. Health care providers will provide more information to families.

**School Supplies:**

School supply list are available on the school website. We are not allowing students to share supplies at this time. Please bring a water bottle that can be refilled. The water fountain will be closed but the water refill station will remain open.

**Masks**

The Provincial Health Officer has not recommended that elementary school age children wear masks. The BC Ministry of Education Guidelines for Schools state that they are optional for elementary students, a personal choice. If your child feels more comfortable wearing a mask they should. Please understand that if your student chooses to wear a mask, staff are not permitted to help students with the process. Please teach your child how to take on and off the mask. Each student will be provided with 2 masks for your family's convenience and it is recommended they be washed daily.

**Dismissal:**

Student dismissal time will be between 2:00pm and 2:23pm. Teachers will open their doors at this time and dismiss students to parents/guardians that are at the door. Please remember to maintain your physical distancing. If you have more than one student to pick up, you would unfortunately have to go to both doors. This is because we cannot mix learning groups within the school. Parents/guardians must remain outside of the school when picking up their

children. We kindly ask that once you pick up your student, you continue to respect social distancing guidelines with other families.

**If you need to contact a staff member:**

At this time, we are encouraging communication between staff and our parent/guardian community, through emails or phone calls.

If you need to speak with the principal in person, we can meet outside. If absolutely necessary, an in-person meeting can take place but must be pre-scheduled. Parents will be required to wear masks in the school and complete health check questions and provide information for contact tracing.

**Health Check Questions:**

- a. Have you been ill in the last 24 hours?
- b. Do you have any of the following symptoms?
  - ✦ Fever or chills,
  - ✦ Cough or shortness of breath,
  - ✦ Sore throat *and* painful swallowing,
  - ✦ Stuffy or runny nose,
  - ✦ Loss of sense of smell or loss of appetite,
  - ✦ Headache or muscle ache.
- c. Have you or someone in your household traveled outside of Canada in the last 14 days?

**Transitions**

Traffic in the hallways will be minimized. To help reduce congestion, the gym and office have designated entrances/exits for better flow.

**Assemblies and Field trips:**

At this time, there are no formal school assemblies or field trips. It is possible that assemblies may be virtual and projected into classrooms.

**Hot Lunch Program:**

In consultation with the Health and Safety Committee, Hot Lunch protocol will be reviewed. The committee will also consult with PAC once school is in session.