**Removal of Public Health Orders- Tuesday, March 15th**

March 11, 2022

Dear Parents,

Over the course of the pandemic, Public Health Orders have been in place to reduce the risk of severe illness and death. These temporary measures were necessary and allowed us to function through these very trying times. However, these measures did have impacts on our well-being, including social, emotional and physical development for our children. With the reduction of case counts and new treatments for vulnerable persons, the Province of Manitoba has decided to remove the restrictions that have been in place effective **Tuesday, March 15th**. Schools are being asked to mirror the changes in Public Health orders. During the transition towards a new normal, we will be shifting our practices to reflect the loosening of these restrictions. Details of these changes, particularly those that impact families, are noted below.

As we enter into this new phase of school operations, we realize that there will be a range of emotions for families. Some may feel relief while others are feeling trepidation and anxiety at the impending changes. I have been very proud of our school community coming together and supporting each other through these two years; I know we will be able to navigate this transition time in the same manner, understanding the range of comfort levels that people are feeling. Our school staff will continue to be responsive to students’ mental health as we make these changes. If parents have concerns regarding their children’s response to the shifts, please reach out to our staff.

**Masks**

The mask mandate that has been in place for schools will be lifted. The province is not recommending masks across the general population as they have done previously. Public Health continues to recommend masks:

* For those who are **higher risk of severe disease**.
* For those at **higher risk of severe illness attending a crowded indoor setting** or if in a setting where many people are at higher risk of severe disease (for example healthcare facilities and personal care homes continue to require mask use).
* For **individuals who are sick** or have tested positive for COVID-19. They should wear a mask for 10 days after symptoms develop when they leave isolation and have contact with others.
* For **individuals caring for someone** who is sick or has tested positive for COVID-19.

We will allow families to choose how they wish to proceed through this transition time. We anticipate some students may wear masks all the time, some may not wear masks at all and some may wear them intermittently. Please have a conversation with your child so they are aware of your wishes for mask use. Staff will endeavour to support your choice, but please know that it will be challenging to remember to consistently enforce the decision when classes are engaged in day-to-day activities. We will reinforce everyone’s right to choose for themselves and ensure that respect, compassion and kindness are practiced by students

Masks will not be supplied by the school as a general practice. However, students who become ill at school will continue to be asked to wear a medical mask while they wait for caregivers to pick them up.

**Cohorts and Distancing Removed**

The requirement to have Kindergarten to Grade 6 students remain in cohorts has been removed. As well, enforcement of physical distancing is no longer required. These changes will allow us to resume a more regular recess schedule, with students playing where they choose. Lunch time will not have to be split; classes will be able to eat together.

**Arrival at School**

We will continue our morning practice of allowing students to **enter the school beginning at 8:15 and transition into their day**. Students can use either the Munroe entrance or the Parking Lot entrance, whichever they choose. We will discontinue the use of the Music Room Stairwell entrance. Nursery families can shift to using the Parking Lot entrance.

**Dismissal**

**Dismissal will move to 3:00 PM for all students**. Kindergarten to Grade 2 teachers will continue to walk their class groups out to the church parking lot to meet parents. Grade 3-8 students will proceed to the pick-up area independently.

**Cleaning and Sanitizing**

We will continue with our strong cleaning routine with frequent sanitizing of high touch surfaces. Hand sanitizer will still be available at all entrances. Students will be expected to wash hands before eating.

**Sick at School**

We ask that parents continue to monitor their children for symptoms on a daily basis and keep them at home if they are ill. Students who become ill at school will be asked to wear a mask and be picked up by a caregiver as soon as possible.

**Testing**

Rapid tests are being distributed at various locations across the city. As well, the school has a supply of rapid tests that we can provide to parents. In the coming weeks, we will send information regarding distribution of these tests for you to have on hand.

**Positive Test**

Although the requirement for self-isolation when an individual tests positive is being lifted, it is still advised that individuals isolate for 5 days when symptomatic or have tested positive. Additionally, the recommendation is that positive individuals wear a mask for 10 days even if symptoms resolve. We ask that parents continue to inform the school of positive COVID-19 results. As well, we ask that families respect the isolation and masking recommendations to safeguard the health of all students and staff.

There are a number of other impacts from the removal of the public health orders. As well, there may be aspects of the above information that changes over the spring. As we move through the next few weeks, we will provide more information to families. Thank you for your patience as we consider how to proceed. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Peace,

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Christine McInnis

Principal