



February 10, 2022

Dear **Families of SES**,

We are writing this letter to provide you with **an update** regarding our **COVID-19 Health and Safety Plan** and **mitigation strategies**. With the cooperation and collective efforts of each of you, we have been able to keep our students in school for in-person instruction, limit the number of quarantines, and keep our students and staff safe.

At the beginning of January, we saw a high number of students, family members and some staff testing positive for COVID-19 and needing to isolate or quarantine. Thankfully, we have recently seen a significant decline in isolation and quarantine numbers and are therefore amending our mitigation strategies.

Therefore, on **Monday, February 14**, Saint Ephrem School will be moving to a **mask optional policy** with mask mitigation as a strategy to slow down any potential spread in the school. The Office of Catholic Education and their Task Force which has been meeting to discuss all Covid-related issues are moving toward a similar decision. We will share the letter from the Office as soon as we receive it. Obviously this decision, both locally and as an Archdiocese, has not been made lightly. We are all aware that both those in favor of masks and those who strictly oppose masks will probably not agree with all aspects of the plan. However, as a Catholic Community, **we know we can depend on each family** respecting the position of every other family.

This updated policy decision is based on current case counts, past case counts, vaccination rates, and in consultation with the Bucks County Health Department, our Pastor, and the Office for Catholic Education.

While masks will be optional beginning February 14th, it is important to keep in mind that there are **several situations** where individuals will **still be mandated to wear**

[a mask in school.](#) It is important that you carefully review our updated Health and Safety Plan which will replace the current policy which has been on our website.

The **highlights of the plan for SES** are detailed below:

- We **encourage staff and students who prefer to wear a mask to continue** to wear a mask to their comfort level.
- **Masks will be required to be worn:**
 - If **over a 5 day span**, more than **8% of our school community** has tested positive for Covid. In this case, our **entire school will be required** to wear masks. Masks would be required for 5 consecutive days (when in the building). [Since 8% represents 27 students testing positive, may I assure you that we have never come anywhere near that number.]
 - If there are **more than 2 cases in a homeroom over a period of 5 days**, the members of that **homeroom will be required** to wear masks for 5 days.
 - We will continue to follow the **latest CDC Guidelines** when a student or a family member tests positive and/or has been exposed:
 - If a family member is diagnosed with COVID-19, the student/staff member will be quarantined for five days followed by strict mask use for an additional five days in school.
 - In households with multiple positives, the mask wearing period may be extended after consultation with our school nurse and principal. If any symptoms develop during this timeframe, the individual should be immediately excluded from school.
 - If a student/staff member tests positive, he/she must be isolated for five days and until symptoms improve and he/she is fever free for 24 hours. This will be followed with five days of wearing a mask when around others to minimize the risk of infecting people they encounter.
 - If a student/staff member is exposed to someone outside the household, he/she may return to school but may be required

to wear a mask for a minimum of one week depending on the results of contact tracing by school personnel.

- Student/staff members must remain at home if symptoms are severe or if mask-wearing is not possible or preferred by the family.
- Due to **Federal Regulations**, masking is still required on **school buses** until/unless any of our school districts inform us otherwise.
- If you do not want your child to wear a mask in any of the above situations, it is always your decision to keep your child at home. They will be considered absent and will make up work as they would for any other absence. Synchronous or asynchronous instruction **will not** be provided, as has been our policy this year.
- As we have over the last 18 months, we will **continue to rely on our parents/families** to move forward and keep our students in school.
 - We must continue to **keep sick children at home**.
 - We must **report all positive Covid cases** in a household to our **school administration** to ensure proper protocols are being followed.

We ask you to prepare your child for this change in the masking policy and be sure that your child understands your expectations. Again, as we move to a mask optional policy, we thank you for respecting the decision of others on this issue.

We will be **monitoring** the wearing of masks when mandated, but **will not be able to enforce students wearing masks** per parental request.

As always, the health and safety of our students and staff continue to be our top priority, and our **mitigation strategies will continue to be reviewed regularly**.

Thank you for your **continued support** as we **navigate our next steps** during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Respectfully and gratefully,

**Father Michael Speziale,
Parochial Administrator**

**Sister Shaun Thomas, IHM
Principal**