

Monday, August 25, 2020



Parent FAQs

When will be my child's first day of school be?

Elk Island Catholic Schools will reopen to students on September 1st, 2020. Students will return using a staggered entry the first week of school. School administration will develop these staggered entry times and will share them with their school community. This will allow schools to explain the new routine and health and safety measures to students in smaller group setting.

Do I have to screen my child for symptoms prior to sending them to school?

Mandatory Daily Health Checks

Parents and caregivers must assess their child daily for symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other infectious respiratory disease before sending them to school.

- School Administrators will use the Division developed school protocol to clearly communicate with parents and caregivers their responsibility to assess their children daily before sending them to school. ([Screening Tool](#))
- Parents / guardians are required to keep students home who are showing symptoms listed on the health check form.
- Staff must assess themselves daily for symptoms of common cold, influenza, or COVID-19 prior to entering the school.
 - School Division along with School Administrators / Site Supervisors will ensure staff are aware of their responsibility to assess themselves daily prior to entering the school. ([Screening Tool](#))

Stay Home When Sick

In order for school re-entry to be successful, all students, families and staff must work together to minimize the risks. Should anyone answer “Yes” to any of the daily health screening questions in [Appendix B](#), they are prohibited from entering the school

Procedure for a child returning to school if the child has been kept home or sent home because of symptoms.

- The student or staff member should get tested if they have any COVID-19 symptoms. (Outlined in question 1 of the screening tool.)
- If the student or staff member displays these symptoms they are [legally required to isolate for at least 10 days](#) from the start of their symptoms or until they resolve, whichever is longer.
- Close contacts are legally required to isolate for 14 days from their last exposure to a person who tested positive for COVID -19.
- Proof of a negative test result will not be necessary.

Students and employees must stay home until they can answer no to all of the questions on the screening questionnaire, and have followed the protocols listed above.

Those unsure if they, or a student, should self-isolate should be directed to use the Alberta [COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) or call 811.

School staff have no role for assessing student symptoms, or COVID-19 testing. Such activities are reserved for health care professionals.

- Students who are at home for extended periods of time due to COVID protocols should reach out to their school for educational support during this period.

What will happen to students who develop symptoms during the school day and are awaiting pick up?

- Students exhibiting signs of illness must be moved to the infirmary room.
- Parents / caregivers must be notified and advised to pick-up their child immediately.
Parents must designate an emergency contact for student pick-up. Within the Alberta Government’s pandemic response, this is something that all families

- must adhere to.
- EICS will communicate to families that they are expected to designate an emergency contact who will be able to immediately pick up the student if parents / guardians are unable to do so.
 - An immediate pick-up assumes that the student will be picked up in less than an hour.
 - Staff supervising symptomatic students must;
 - Keep all other staff out of the infirmary room;
 - Provide the student with a face mask;
 - Use strict handwashing techniques;
 - Maintain physical distancing.

What will be the Arrival and Pick Up Protocols for Parents/guardians entering the school?

- Parents/guardians are to remain outside of the school to drop off their children. They are not to enter the school during high traffic times unless approved by the principal.
- School leaders will determine student entry points and if the drop-off and pick-up schedule needs to be staggered based on local factors.
- Physical distancing of 2 meters should be maintained regardless of the number of parents/ guardians arriving.
- Parents / guardians of Learners with Diverse Needs, as required will communicate with staff via email prior to arrival to communicate any additional information that may be needed regarding supporting their child (how the morning went, etc.). Please consult with the CRC and administration if support is needed

What if my child has a pre-existing medical condition with COVID-19 symptoms?

Individuals who have allergies or ongoing health issues must be tested for COVID-19 at least once according to the [Alberta Health Services Guidance Document](#) to confirm that the pre-existing condition is the source of their symptoms before entering or returning to the school. This will establish a baseline for the individual. If symptoms change (worsen, additional symptom, change in baseline), the individual must follow the **Stay At Home When Sick** protocol which is listed above.

How will special learning needs be supported?

Children are screened case by case to determine levels of support required to safely bring students into the school environment and any specialized supports will be noted in the ISP and/or BSP. Please refer to the [Parent Re-Entry Handbook Appendix C](#) for more information.

Will there be access to mental health support and counselling for staff and students should a staff member, student or staff or student's family member fall seriously ill?

Family Wellness Workers, Division Psychologists and consultants, MHCBC wellness coaches, School Counsellors, Collaborative Response Coordinators and school Chaplains, form the backbone of mental health support in our school communities. An array of resources for support are available. Resources for students and parents can be [found here.](#)

Are face masks for staff and students required?

The Medical Health Officer and Minister of Education announced on August 4th, that mask use is mandatory for staff and teachers in all settings where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

- Masks are mandatory for all Gr. 4 – 12 students. Gr. 4 – 12 students will be required to wear masks in all shared and common areas such as hallways and on buses. Students are strongly encouraged to wear masks when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Mask use for kindergarten to Grade 3 students will continue to be optional but is strongly encouraged. Mask use for younger children is a challenge due to difficulties with proper fit and compliance.
- Exemptions will be made for students and staff who are unable to wear a mask due to medical or other needs.
 - Guidelines and standards on the use of non-medical face masks is accessible at the following webpage: <https://www.alberta.ca/masks.aspx>

Have schools been provided with necessary supplies and equipment?

Elk Island Catholic School has allocated \$800,000 towards providing a safe environment for students and staff. This includes the purchases of health grade cleaning systems, the necessary hand sanitizer stations, masks, face shields, thermometers, plexi glass reception stations, signage and other various supplies.

Placement of hand sanitizer will include entrances, exits, classrooms, as well as near other high traffic areas throughout the schools.

The following guidelines will be in place for students:

- hand hygiene expectations when entering and exiting the school and classrooms, before and after eating
- continual reminders of the importance of respiratory etiquette (e.g. cover coughs and sneezes, avoid touching the face and disposal of used tissues promptly, followed by hand hygiene)
- guiding foot traffic flow through entrances and hallways by using markers on the floor or pylons/barriers.

What is meant by 'cohorting' students?

A cohort is defined as a group of students and staff who remain together. As the risk of transmission of COVID-19 is reduced by limiting exposure to others, cohorts are recommended where possible. Cohorting will decrease the number of close contacts a case of COVID-19 would have in a school and assist public health officials in their efforts to trace contacts and contain an outbreak. For the purpose of contact tracing, consider limiting capacity of room to a number that allows for increased physical distancing.

While schools cannot control what happens outside of school hours, cohorting or other control measures within a school will still help lessen the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Physical distancing is a very effective control measure for COVID-19 and should still be the goal even within a cohort. If two meters of physical distancing is not possible within a cohort, additional strategies can be used (i.e., arranging desks/tables so students do not face each other).

How will physical distancing be maintained in hallways, entryways and boot rooms?

The following physical distancing strategies should be implemented where possible:

- Schools must develop procedures and plans for in-person learning that supports physical distancing where possible, and to separate cohorts to the greatest extent possible.
- Consider different classroom and learning environment configurations to allow distance between students and adults (e.g., different desk and table formations).
- Strive to organize students into smaller group cohorts that stay together throughout the day.
- Strive to minimize the number of different teacher(s) and educational assistant(s) that interact with groups of students throughout the day (e.g. minimize the amount of mixing between student and different staff in the setting).
- Schools must develop procedures for drop-off/pick-up that support physical distancing where possible between all persons (except household members). Consider strategies such as staggering times and locations to limit contact.
- Stagger lunch/snack breaks to maintain physical distancing among children/students.
- Avoid close greetings (e.g. hugs, handshakes, high-fives, fist bumps). Regularly remind students about keeping their “hands to yourself”.
- Incorporate more individual activities or activities that encourage more space between students and staff.
 - For younger students, adapt group activities to minimize physical contact and avoid shared items.
 - For adolescent students, adapt group activities and avoid activities that require physical contact.
- Consider how to best address traffic flow throughout the schools. This may include one-way hallways and designated entrance and exit doors. Note that it is important not to reduce the number of exits and ensure the fire code is adhered to.
 - Manage flow of people in common areas, including hallways and bathrooms.
 - or decals and arrows for traffic flow and direction.
 - Schools can also use pylons / barriers if available.

- Remove and re stage seating in public areas to prevent gathering.
- Consider limiting bathroom occupancy.

- In situations where physical distancing is not possible (ie. buses, classrooms, and some sporting activities), extra emphasis on hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, cleaning and disinfecting on a regular basis before and after activities is strongly recommended.
- Assemblies and other school-wide events should be held virtually to avoid large gatherings of people in one space.

Will there be shared items in the classroom (e.g. glue sticks, scissors, art supplies, etc.)?

There will be little to no shared items. Students may not share pencils, pens, rulers, toys, crayons textbooks, food.

Books, tablets and computers will not be shared. Parents will be provided with a list of items a student may need. Students are encouraged to bring their own device from home. While shared items are not encouraged, class items can still be shared if cleaned between uses.

Will hand sanitizing stations be available?

Schools should implement health education with all students within the first two weeks of school. Base hand hygiene frequencies more on activity than on time:

- Entering/leaving school / classroom;
- Boarding / bus;
- Moving spaces within the school;
- Before and after using manipulatives (hands-on learning);
- Before and after donning and doffing a mask;
- Before and after eating.

Schools will post signs encouraging good hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene and how to wash hands (e.g. in bathrooms and classrooms); Ensure there is a means to clean/disinfect hands at all points of entry/exit including washrooms, classrooms, and at other locations where employees and students handle items. Placement of hand sanitizer in entrances, exits, classroom entrances, high-touch equipment and other high traffic areas.

Are school playgrounds accessible to students at recess?

School playgrounds are accessible to students at recess. Students are to hand sanitize prior to playing on the playground and following recess.

Alberta Health Covid-19 Information – [Guidance for Playgrounds](#)

Can students leave the school for lunch and spares?

All schools should consider a closed campus in their local context. At minimum, it is suggested that elementary and junior high students be restricted in their ability to leave at lunch. Sr. high schools will need to assess their local situation.

What are lunchtime expectations?

- Nutrition programs will continue to run, with an emphasis on pre-packaged food and requiring staff service of food.
- No food sharing for staff or students. Staff and students will be required to pack-in and pack-out all food and not share food each day.
- “Skip the Dishes” style food delivery to students and staff is not permitted.
- Parents / Guardians will be asked to provide their child lunch in clean containers with their own utensils. Efforts should be made to bring a lunch/snack that does not require a lot of preparation at the school. Communal use of microwaves is not to occur
Students must not be sharing utensils, dishes, and water bottles or drink containers. Students are to bring their own utensils for eating lunch.
- Food provided by the family should be stored with the student’s belongings.
- Students should practice physical distancing while eating.
- There should be no common food items (e.g., salt and pepper shakers, ketchup).
- If a school is using a common lunchroom and staggering lunch times, ensure that all surfaces are cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- Classes that teach food preparation may occur as long as students do not share the food they prepare with other students or staff.

Food Service Programs (Cafeteria & Hot Lunch)

- Food service establishments must follow the Alberta Health [guidance for restaurants](#).
- School Cafeterias must implement alternate processes to reduce the numbers of people dining together at one time.
 - Remove/rearrange dining tables to maintain physical distancing.
 - Place tape or other markings on floors to maintain a physical distancing of 2 metres.
 - Stagger meal service times to reduce the numbers of people present at any one time.
 - Adapt other areas to serve as additional dining space to increase spacing among persons in the same room.
- Buffet style service is not to occur. Hot Lunch service of individual pre-packaged meals may occur providing the Alberta Health [restaurant guidance](#) is followed.
- Hot Lunch program volunteers must pre-screen using the questionnaire in Appendix B and follow necessary protocols.

Are students able to access their locker?

Student lockers use should be discouraged. Schools should encourage participants to come dressed for their activity. In specific cases, lockers may be used but measures should be in place to minimize crowding:

- Space lockers out by closing certain lockers;
- Assign lockers based on cohort/grade/class;
- Consider having students bring what they need for the day and keep school supplies and textbooks in their backpack to minimize locker visits.

Will my student be able to access water fountains in the school?

All water fountains will be closed, however water fillable stations will remain open to fill personal water bottles. Student may bring in their own personal water bottle; filled from home or from a water filling station at the school.

What about the Physical Education Program and Sports for Life?

Gymnasiums can be used for physical education programming.

When possible physical education should be done outside instead of inside as the risk of transmission is more likely to occur indoors rather than outdoors. Follow the [Guidance for Outdoor Activity](#) as relaunch progresses.

Locker Rooms and Change Rooms:

Student lockers use should be discouraged. Schools should encourage participants to come dressed for their activity. In specific cases, lockers may be used but measures should be in place to minimize crowding:

- Space lockers out by closing certain lockers;
- Assign lockers based on cohort/grade/class;
- Consider having students bring what they need for the day and keep school supplies and textbooks in their backpack to minimize locker visits.

Will sports and extracurricular activities continue in the fall?

As of now, extracurricular (team) sports and activities are not proceeding. Alberta School Athletics Association is working with Superintendents on any future steps.

What will happen with Music, Dance and Theatre Programming?

Practice, rehearsals and instruction of dance, music and theatre may proceed as long as the [guidance for music, dance and theatre protocol](#) is followed. Music, dance and theatrical performances are cancelled at this time.

Learning experiences involving unprotected (without a mask or physical barrier) in-person singing, cheering or shouting or playing wind instruments must be postponed at this time. Consider alternatives: Choosing low-risk instruments: percussion or string over wind instruments. Recording or live-streaming individual performers in separate locations and including more lessons focused on music appreciation or music theory.

What will be the impact on large group gatherings and school masses and parish partnerships?

Large Group Gatherings

Avoid students spending unnecessary time at school before and after school.

Avoid unnecessary travel and gatherings. School assemblies or other large gatherings (e.g., concerts or dances) are cancelled at this time. Virtual options could be offered instead of in person gatherings. Field trips, group transportation, performances or celebrations are to be cancelled until further notice.

School Mass Celebrations and Parish Partnerships

Whole school in person student masses or religious celebrations will not occur either at the school or the local parish. We recommend schools to celebrate as a class, or the use of digital means to support whole school celebrations. Outdoor celebrations are encouraged.

The relationship between the school and the local Priest is key for our Catholic Schools. Where possible, and within proper protocols, we encourage continued in-person visits from our Priests, as well as innovative and digital methods of engagement. Elk Island Catholic Schools will continue to follow the guidance and protocols of the Archdiocese of Edmonton with respect to parish interaction and the Sacramental preparation of our students.

What about parent teacher interviews?

All parent teacher interviews will be conducted in an alternative format rather than in person as decided by each school.

What about field trips and travel?

All field trips and travel are suspended until further notice. Virtual trips and online guest speakers may supplement this aspect of school programming.