

November 25, 2021

Dear Parents,

I hope this email finds you well. It certainly has been a busy month and we thank you for your patience in waiting for information regarding our Covid “situation” at school.

I am pleased to inform you that all classes have been re-opened and we have had no new cases reported since Sunday. Thank you to those who brought your children in to have them tested last Friday. As a result of this testing, we were able to flag 3 cases and those students were already in quarantine and had been since the previous week. This was encouraging, as it appeared that the transmission with these new cases did not take place at school. Regardless, two classes were closed preventatively until Public Health completed their contact tracing and gave us the green light to re-open, which they have.

I understand that many of you and your children are apprehensive about being at school these days and that is totally understandable. Please rest assured that we are doing all that we can to keep your children safe. As was the case last year and until we feel more confident that the number of cases in our region is declining, we are currently limiting contact between classes so yes, the class “bubbles” are back. We have also changed some of the protocols with respect to how classes circulate throughout the school and procedures for the use of the water fountains and bathrooms. This is not something that we had hoped for in our 2021-22 school year but feel that it is necessary at this time. **We need to work together so please continue to keep your children home when they are sick AND inform us immediately if they receive a positive covid test result.** Unfortunately, Public Health doesn't always get the information to us as quickly as we would like, so it is important that you contact us as soon as you know.

Many of you have emailed or called with questions and I hope that the information below will help to answer them:

Who can get a rapid test at school? If it is likely that a child has Covid ex. the child has 2 or more symptoms, they will not be tested, and their parents will be asked to take them to the testing center. If a child has slight symptoms, but is feeling well enough to be at school, they will be tested to see if they can remain at school. It is important to note that if a child is tested and receives a positive result, parents will have to come and get them, and they will be asked to go to a testing center for follow-up as per Public Health directives. We have been told that while quite effective, the rapid tests can sometimes show false positives, but the negative results are usually accurate.

How does the rapid testing at school work? We received 25 rapid tests for the entire school population. For a child to be tested, their parents must give permission by answering

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a questionnaire at this link <https://forms.gle/UkPPWLeNVve7soum9> The test consists of taking a **shallow** nasal swab and applying a solution to the swab which will determine if it is positive or negative. Please note that this is not the same invasive nasal test that is given at the centers. The older children can take the swab themselves, under the supervision of a trained adult. The entire process from start to finish (including preparation and wait time takes about 20 minutes).

When does Public Health shut down a classroom: From our experience, when there are two or more cases in a classroom, it is shut down temporarily until they do their “investigation” to determine the possible level of exposure to the virus by other students in the class. Once they finish their investigation, if they determine that the risk of other people being exposed to the virus is moderate or high, they recommend a period of closure for quarantine purposes. As I mentioned previously, this has been our experience, but this could change.

I received a letter saying that my child must quarantine. When can they return to school? Please read the letter carefully and if it is unclear, please contact Public Health. It’s not that we don’t want to answer your questions, we just don’t want to risk giving you the wrong answer, so it is important to get this clarification directly from them. *When a class has been closed and is re-opening, your child’s teacher will notify you as soon as they know. It is important to check your email regularly as directives can change quickly.*

If my child becomes sick at school and is showing symptoms of Covid, can they take the bus home? Unfortunately, the answer is “no”. They will be asked to self-isolate and you will be asked to come and pick them up. Exceptionally, if a rapid test is administered and the result is negative, they will be allowed to stay at school and take the bus home providing that they are feeling well enough to do so.

I’ve heard that LES is full of Covid now. Is this true? A very small percentage (4.8%) of our school population tested positive for Covid. Some students have finished their quarantine period and are already back at school.

Can I keep my child home until this all goes away? Unless your child has a medical exemption or is sick and unable to attend school, they need to be here. We understand that these are stressful times for students and parents alike, but we are doing everything we can to provide a safe learning environment for everyone.

Will Public Health be vaccinating children at our school? We have been told that as it stands, this option will not be offered at the school. Parents who wish to have their children vaccinated must make an appointment online and go to a designated vaccination site in the area.

Thanking you in advance for your usual cooperation.

Sincerely,

Dawn Irving, Principal

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