

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION GUIDELINES

UPDATED: September 1, 2022

INTRODUCTION

Squamish Waldorf School supports children in developing their potential and acquiring the knowledge, skills and abilities they need for lifelong success. The health and safety of students, families, and staff is a top priority. In addition to taking measures to protect physical health, we also need to attend to social and emotional well-being. At the heart of Waldorf education is the connection between a teacher and their students. This connection will continue to be nurtured.

It is of utmost importance that children feel safe. If a child is in a state of fight, flight, or freeze, their ability to learn decreases significantly—not only is it an impediment to learning, it also affects their overall health and immune system. Teachers will look for any changes in student behaviour, including trauma-related behaviours, which may include fear, hyperactivity, aggression, body aches and pain, depression, self-harming, excessive shyness, or withdrawal. Teachers will use resources from both Waldorf pedagogy and the Ministry of Education to assess and aid in such situations.

While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect students, staff and families in many ways, some longer-term influences of the pandemic are yet to be realized. Based on guidance from the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) and experience to date within BC and other jurisdictions, schools are considered low-risk sites for COVID-19 transmission.

The Ministry of Education highlights the need for continued flexibility and responsiveness to changes in transmission trends. As well, we continue to incorporate our learnings into approaches for sustainable communicable disease prevention moving forward. COVID-19 will continue to circulate in our population, and as long as cases occur within our communities, K-12 students and staff members will continue to be affected. However, BCCDC notes that transmission within K-12 school settings accounts for a minority of COVID-19 cases, even amongst students and staff.

As such, the guidance in this document, as directed by the Ministry of Education, supports reducing the risk of transmission of communicable diseases, including COVID-19 and will be modified as needed. The strict requirements which we saw over the last two years are now being eased, and we are returning, for the most part, to reinstitute pre-pandemic routines and practices.

The following document follows BCCDC guidance.

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General Cleaning

SWS regular practices will include general cleaning of the premises.

- **Frequently Touched Surfaces**
 - Cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces will occur at least once in a 24-hour period and when visibly dirty.
 - Frequently touched surfaces are items touched by larger numbers of students and staff. They can include doorknobs, light switches, hand railings, water fountains and toilet handles, as well as shared equipment (e.g., computer keyboards, PE/sports and music equipment), appliances (e.g., microwaves) and service counters (e.g., library circulation desk), and may change from day to day based on utilization.
 - Frequently touched items like toys or manipulatives that may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g., fabrics) or at all (e.g., sand, foam, playdough, etc.) can be used. Carpets and rugs can also be used.

Cleaning & Disinfecting Bodily Fluids

We will follow these procedures, in conjunction with school/district policies, when cleaning and disinfecting bodily fluids (e.g., runny nose, vomit, stool, urine):

- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning blood or body fluids.
- Wash hands before wearing and after removing gloves.
- Follow regular health and safety procedures and regularly use PPE (e.g., gloves, protective or woven sleeves) for blood and bodily fluids (e.g., toileting, spitting, biting).

General Ventilation and Air Circulation

SWS will continue to ensure all mechanical heating systems are designed, operated, and maintained as per standards and specifications for the ongoing comfort of all who are in the building and that they are working properly.

Open windows when the weather permits. Taking students outside more often is no longer necessary for communicable disease prevention.

Natural ventilation (operable windows, etc.) and portable HEPA filter units can be considered in regularly occupied classrooms.

Hand Hygiene

Rigorous hand washing with plain soap and water or using an effective hand sanitizer reduces the spread of illness. Everyone will practice diligent hand hygiene and SWS will facilitate regular opportunities for students and staff to wash their hands.

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SWS will:

- Facilitate regular opportunities for hand hygiene
- If we use hand sanitizer products, we will use commercial hand sanitizer products that meet Health Canada's requirements and are authorized for sale in Canada.
- Ensure hand hygiene supplies are always well stocked, including soap, paper towels (or air drier) and, where appropriate, alcohol-based hand rub with a minimum of 60% alcohol.
- If hands are visibly soiled, alcohol-based hand sanitizer may not be effective at eliminating microbes. Soap and water are preferred when hands are visibly dirty. If it is not available, we will use an alcohol-based hand wipe followed by an alcohol-based hand rub.

Respiratory Etiquette

Parents and staff will teach and reinforce good respiratory etiquette practices among students, including:

- Cough or sneeze into their elbow or a tissue. Throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.
- Refrain from touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Refrain from sharing food, drinks, and unwashed utensils

ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES

Health Awareness

SWS will ensure that staff, other adults entering the school, parents, caregivers, and students are aware that they **should not come to school if they are sick and unable to participate fully in routine activities.**

It is important that everyone does a health check before coming to school. A health check means a person regularly checking to ensure they (or their child) are not experiencing symptoms of illness (including but not limited to [COVID-19 symptoms](#)) that would limit their ability to participate fully in regular activities before coming to school to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, such as COVID-19, within school settings.

Schools do not need to monitor students or staff for symptoms of illness.

SWS will ensure that everyone entering the school is aware and routinely reminded of their responsibility to practice health awareness, including that they should not come to school if they are sick.

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[Illness Practices / What to do When Sick](#)

Staff, students, or other persons who are exhibiting new symptoms of illness (including symptoms of COVID-19 or gastrointestinal illness) should stay home and follow the BCCDC guidance outlined below:

If the person is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms – BCCDC Guidance:

The [When to Get Tested for COVID resource](#) or the [B.C. Self-Assessment](#) tools provide more information on whether you should get a test for COVID-19. Those unsure or concerned about their symptoms should connect with a health care provider or call 8-1-1.

Staff, children, or other persons in the school setting who test positive for COVID-19 should follow the guidance on the [BCCDC website](#) as to how long they should self-isolate. They can return to school when they no longer need to self-isolate as long as symptoms have improved, and they are well enough to participate in regular activities. SWS will not require a health care provider note (e.g., a doctor's note) to confirm the health status of any individual, beyond those required to support medical accommodation as per usual practice.

If the person is experiencing other symptoms, isn't recommended to take a COVID-19 test (most people) or test negative for COVID-19.

Staff, children, or other persons can attend school if their symptoms are consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition (e.g., seasonal allergies) or symptoms have improved to where they feel well enough to return to regular activities and their fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medication (e.g., ibuprofen, acetaminophen). Information specific to COVID-19 is available from [BCCDC](#).

Students, staff, and other adults should follow public health guidance, BCCDC guidance, and/or the recommendation of their health care provider when they are sick.

[What to Do When Sick at School/Work](#)

If a staff member, student, or other person develops symptoms of illness at school and is unable to participate in regular activities, they will be supported to go home until their symptoms improve. Infection control precautions will be taken while the person is preparing to leave the school premises, including the use of appropriate hand hygiene and cleaning/disinfection of surfaces soiled with bodily fluids. They may use a mask if they are experiencing respiratory symptoms.

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For students and staff who become sick while at school/work SWS will:

- Continue to have non-medical masks on hand for those who have forgotten theirs but would like to wear one (for both the person who is sick and for those who may be assisting them).
- Make arrangements for the student/staff to go home as soon as possible (e.g., contact student's parent/caregiver for pick-up).
- Some students or staff may not be able to be picked up immediately. As such, SWS will have a space available where the student or staff can wait comfortably and are separated from others.
- Younger children will be supervised when separated.
 - Supervising staff can wear a non-medical mask, should avoid touching bodily fluids as much as possible, and practice diligent hand hygiene.
 - Staff responsible for facility cleaning should clean and disinfect the surfaces/equipment which the person's bodily fluids may have been in contact with while they were ill (e.g., their desk in a classroom, the bathroom stall they used, etc.) prior to the surfaces/equipment being used by others.
 - Cleaning/disinfecting the entire room the person was in (a "terminal" clean) is not required in these circumstances.
- Request that the individual stay home until symptoms have improved and they feel well enough to participate in all school-related activities

Supporting Students with Disabilities / Diverse Abilities and/or Receiving Health Services

SWS will implement health and safety measures that promote inclusion of students with disabilities/diverse abilities.

In-class instruction may not be suitable for some children (or families) who are severely immunocompromised or have medical complexities, which should be determined on a case-by-case basis with a medical care provider. Schools should follow regular practices for those needing alternative learning arrangements due to being immunocompromised or having complex medical issues to ensure access to learning and support.

Guidelines for Staff and/or Those Working with Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities, Complex Behaviors, Medical Complexities, or Receiving Delegated Care Where Physical Contact May Be Required

Staff and those providing services to students with medical complexity, immune suppression, receiving direct or delegated care, or with disabilities and diverse abilities who are in close proximity to a student should follow routine infection control practices and care plans for the child, if applicable.

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Parents and caregivers of children who are considered at higher risk of severe illness due to communicable diseases (including COVID-19) are encouraged to consult with their health care provider to determine their child's level of risk. Students are not required to wear a mask or face covering when receiving services, though may continue to based on their or their parent/caregiver's personal choice.

SWS has non-medical masks on hand for those who have forgotten theirs but would like to wear one.

Space Arrangement

SWS uses classroom and learning environment configurations and activities that best meet learner needs and preferred educational approaches.

VISITOR ACCESS / COMMUNITY USE

SWS will follow normal practices for welcoming visitors and the community use of schools. Visitors, including community groups using the school, should follow applicable communicable disease prevention measures outlined in this document.

CURRICULUM, PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

SWS will implement communicable disease prevention practices (e.g., cleaning and disinfecting, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette) specific to the activity.

Field Trips

When planning field trips, staff will follow existing policies and procedures as well as the guidance in this document. SWS will consider the guidance provided for overnight camps from [BCCDC](#) and the [BC Camps Association](#) when planning overnight trips that include group accommodation.

Kindergarten Program and Entry

Frequently touched items like toys or manipulatives that may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g., fabrics) or at all (e.g., sand, foam, playdough, etc.) and carpets and rugs (e.g., for circle time activities) can be used.

Music / Physical and Health Education (PHE) / Outdoor / Food / Theatre / Other Shared Equipment Programs

Students are encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after shared equipment use. Equipment that touches the mouth (e.g., instrument mouthpieces, water bottles, utensils) or

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has been in contact with bodily fluids will not be shared unless cleaned and disinfected in between uses.

[School Libraries / Learning Commons](#)

Regular book browsing and circulation processes will occur as per routine practice.

PERSONAL PRACTICES

[Health Awareness](#)

Everyone at SWS will practice health awareness, including staying home when sick.

[Masks and Face Coverings](#)

The decision to wear a mask beyond when it is recommended by public health is a personal one, based on individual preference. Some students and staff may choose to continue to wear a non-medical mask or face covering throughout the day or for certain activities. The choice of staff and students to choose whether they practice additional personal prevention measures will be respected.

ADMINISTRATOR PROTOCOLS FOR MANAGING COMMUNICABLE DISEASE ACTIVITY AT SCHOOL

Most communicable diseases experienced by students and staff within school settings may be managed by the individual/family and through routine preventative measures, such as staying home from school until well enough to participate in regular activities.

Resources are available to support management of routine communicable diseases, including; [HealthLink BC](#), the [BCCDC Guide to Common Childhood Diseases](#), the [Sneezes and Diseases website](#), and other school health resources hosted on health authority webpages ([Vancouver Coastal Health](#)).

Public health may become directly involved if certain reportable diseases, such as measles, are identified where there are effective interventions available to prevent further spread and protect against severe disease. Additional time-limited public health measures may also be implemented at the discretion of the local Medical Health Officer or the Provincial Health Officer in response to broader risk of communicable disease transmission in the community. School or district administrators can contact public health if they have concerns about communicable disease transmission within the school setting and require additional support.

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Communications and Protecting Personal Privacy Medical Health Officers play the lead role in determining if, when and how to communicate information regarding increased communicable disease activity within a school. Public health has encouraged schools to routinely communicate to their school community the need to follow any recommended public health measures, practice health awareness, and to stay home when sick.

To protect personal privacy and to support accuracy, we will follow communication practices as recommended by public health.

Functional Closures

Functional closure of a school is the temporary closure of a school determined by an independent school authority due to a lack of staff to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, support, and/or custodial to ensure the health and safety of students. This would likely be due to a high number of staff or certain employees away who are required for a school to function, and the inability to replace them temporarily.

SWS will notify the Medical Health Officer and the Ministry of Education and Child Care (educ.covid@gov.bc.ca) when they are considering or implementing a functional closure.

Public Health Closure

A public health closure is the temporary closing of a school ordered by a Medical Health Officer when they determine it is necessary to prevent the excessive transmission of a communicable disease.

VACCINES

From BCCDC guidance:

Vaccines are important tools to protect against many serious communicable diseases. Vaccination protects from serious illness due to COVID-19 and is the most effective way to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on our communities. All COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Canada protect against serious complications, including from the omicron variant. It is important to get all recommended vaccine doses to get the most effective protection against serious cases of COVID-19. People 6 months and older are eligible for COVID-19 vaccines. More information about COVID-19 vaccines is available from the [BCCDC website](#). Students and staff are also encouraged to ensure they are up to date on all recommended vaccines for other communicable diseases, including COVID-19 vaccines.

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KEY CONTACTS, ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND LINKS

Medical Health Officer Contact Information by Health Authority (general inquiries)

[Vancouver Coastal Health](#) T: (604) 527-4893

[Special Education Policy Manual - Gov.bc.ca](#) (point of reference providing legislation, policy and guidelines to support the delivery of inclusive education supports and services)

[Resources for Parents/Caregivers of Children with Disabilities and Diverse Abilities](#)

[Provincial Outreach Programs - Gov.bc.ca](#) are to support boards/authorities through professional learning, resources, consultation and training during recovery

[Indigenous Education in British Columbia](#)

[Provincial Outreach Programs - Gov.bc.ca](#)

[BC Tripartite Education Agreement \(BCTEA\)](#)

[Chartered Communities - Métis Nation British Columbia](#)

[Communicable disease prevention - WorkSafeBC](#)

[Communicable disease prevention: A guide for employers](#)

[Managing the mental health effects of COVID-19 in the workplace](#)

[Addressing the mental health effects of COVID-19 in the workplace](#)

[Building Compassionate Communities in a New Normal](#)

[Trauma-informed Classroom Strategies Manual - POPFASD](#)

[Healing Families, Helping Systems: - Gov.bc.ca](#)

[EDUCATION AS A SPECIAL CONSIDERATION - Nactatr.com](#)

[Office of the Provincial Health Officer - Province of British Columbia](#)

[BCTLA Recommendations for Access to Library Learning Commons](#)