

St. Mary's Catholic School
1088 Gillett Street
Prince George, B.C. V2M 2V3
Phone 250 563-7502 Fax 250 563-7818
E-Mail: jschroeder@cispg.ca



December 10, 2020

Dear St. Mary's School Parents and Guardians;

RE: COVID-19 Exposure at St. Mary's School

The purpose of this letter is to inform you Northern Health has made us aware that a member of our school community has tested positive for COVID-19. The individual is isolating at home under the direction of Northern Health. Northern Health will directly contact any individuals who have been exposed with further instructions. If you are contacted by Northern Health, please follow their advice carefully. If you have symptoms, please stay home and follow the guidance from the BC Center for Disease Control.

Please understand that, for privacy reasons, we cannot provide any specific details other than the information written above. We ask for your patience, and will communicate any additional information as it becomes available. Please make every effort to keep your communication respectful and kind, and to avoid engaging in rumours or further speculations.

I understand that this news may be of high concern to you. Please know that we are working closely with the Medical Health Officer and Northern Health, as the health and safety of our students, families and staff remain our highest priority. Please be assured that St. Mary's School will continue to implement the strict protocols and policies we have in place.

We will provide further communication as it is required. If you have any questions about COVID-19, please call 811 or visit <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support>.

Thank you for working with St. Mary's School to keep our community safe.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Jenny Schroeder
Principal
St. Mary's School

December 10, 2020

RE: Potential COVID-19 exposure to students and staff of St. Mary's Catholic School, Prince George, in attendance December 1st-2nd, 2020.

Northern Health Authority has informed the principal of St. Mary's Catholic School that students and staff may have been in contact with a lab-confirmed case of COVID-19 on **December 1st-2nd, 2020**.

Every school in BC has a COVID-19 safety plan in place. In this circumstance, the safety plan was followed precisely - and because of this, the risk of additional cases is very low. We recognize that learning of a potential exposure to COVID-19 may cause concern for families, and we hope to address some of those concerns with the following information.

COVID-19 is spread by respiratory droplets, when a person who is infected coughs or sneezes. If you are in close contact with an infected person, the virus can enter the body if droplets get into the eyes, nose or throat. It can also be spread when a healthy person touches an object or surface (e.g. a doorknob or a table) with the virus on it, and then touches their mouth, nose or eyes before washing their hands.

Exposure to a confirmed case does not mean you or your child will become sick with COVID-19. COVID-19 has a very low infection rate in children, and most are not at high risk. We expect to see COVID-19 cases in various community settings, including school settings, but we expect the risk of transmission in school to be low in most circumstances. The risk of transmission becomes more significant if someone is considered a close contact.

NH public health staff follows up directly with anyone who is identified as a **close contact** of a lab confirmed case. It is important to note that a close contact is a person who has been in direct, face-to-face contact for prolonged periods of time with an infectious case. People with COVID-19 are considered contagious (infectious) from 48 hours before onset of their symptoms (before they may realize they are sick), up until 10 days after their symptoms began. More information on the definition of a high-risk close contact, can be found here: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/case-definitions/covid-19-\(novel-coronavirus\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/case-definitions/covid-19-(novel-coronavirus))

If you or your child has no symptoms and you have not been informed personally by public health that they are a close contact and should self-isolate – you and your children are not required to self-isolate. However, please take extra care to monitor your child/children for symptoms until **December 16th, 2020 midnight** (which is 14 days from the last date of possible contact with the confirmed case). Testing is not recommended or needed if you or your child has no symptoms because it is not accurate or useful when a person has no symptoms. If you or your child develops symptoms, a health assessment is recommended via your primary care provider or by calling Northern Health's COVID-19 Information Line and Online Clinic at 1-844-645-7811.

If you are identified as a close contact, you will be contacted directly by public health, and supported in any actions you need to take (such as self-monitoring, or self-isolation). If you are not identified as a close contact you will not be contacted directly, as the risk of infection is very low.

That said, everyone is encouraged to monitor yourself and your children for symptoms. Testing is available for anyone with COVID-19 symptoms, however mild. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Cough or worsening of chronic cough
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Muscle aches

While less common, symptoms can also include:

- Stuffy nose
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Dizziness, confusion
- Abdominal pain
- Skin rashes or discoloration of fingers or toes.

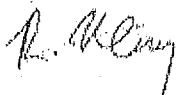
<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/symptoms>

If you or your child have symptoms, please call your Primary Care Provider or the Northern Health Virtual Clinic for an assessment and testing: 1-844-645-7811

If you or your child has symptoms, please see Appendix C in COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings to determine if your child can go to school with those symptoms.

There are many things you can do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your community. Please visit the BCCDC website for more information: www.bccdc.ca.

In health,



Dr. Rakel Kling MSc, MPH, FRCPC
Medical Health Officer
Northern Health