

# **Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic School**

## **COVID-19 Policies**

### **Effective 2/28/2022**

Our St. Thomas community has been fortunate this school year, even during the surge in COVID-19 cases that we saw in early 2022, to be able to teach and learn in-person and resume many of our “normal” activities. Approximately 87% of students who are eligible for the vaccine have reported that they are fully vaccinated (with more still in progress) and the data suggests that the vaccine is safe and effective at preventing severe illness and hospitalization. We would like to continue to encourage, in consultation with your healthcare provider, all vaccine-eligible staff and students receive the Covid vaccine series. A COVID booster has been emergency-use approved for children >12 years old, so eligible children are also encouraged to get boosted.

The data also suggests that the rates of positive cases, serious illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19 are currently in sharp decline. We have not had any new COVID-19 cases reported in our School over the last week.

The CDC, Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH), Marion County Public Health Department and Archdiocese of Indianapolis continue to update recommendations regarding masking and quarantine. After much contemplation and discernment, we have decided that it is time to update our school policies to reflect the most recent ISDH recommendations, which can be found [here](#).

The remainder of this document outlines our current policies related to COVID-19 (effective February 28, 2022):

#### **Face Masks**

**STA will move to a masks-optional policy effective February 28, 2022.** We will continue to strongly recommend mask wearing for unvaccinated students, staff, vulnerable individuals who may be at increased risk of illness, and anyone who feels more comfortable wearing a mask. Persons who return to school following a COVID diagnosis will be required to wear a mask through Day 10. And, persons who are COVID-negative but have symptoms of other illnesses are also expected to wear masks at school. Please know that if St. Thomas begins to see a high positivity rate, and student quarantine numbers increase, we may resume wearing masks in order to continue with an in-person learning and extracurricular experience.

St. Thomas also does not tolerate bullying on any topic, including a person’s choice to wear a mask for any reason.

#### **Contact Tracing**

Contact tracing is no longer required by the state. However, please continue to report positive cases to the school. If there is a positive COVID-19 case in your child’s classroom, you will be notified so that you can monitor your child for symptoms.

#### **Quarantining/Isolation**

- Students who are exposed to a positive COVID-19 case, do **NOT** need to quarantine regardless of vaccination status or whether the school requires masks.
- Regardless of vaccination status, individuals who **test positive** for COVID-19 must **isolate for five days and may return on Day 6** if they have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of medication

so long as symptoms are improving, according to [guidance](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Individuals should **wear a mask through Day 10** at school or in public. (Day zero is the first day of symptoms or the date of a positive viral test for asymptomatic persons.)

To review the ISDH guidance, click [here](#).

### **Building Safety**

The regular cleaning and sanitizing procedures at St. Thomas will continue to be extensive. We will encourage proper hand washing and hygiene practices for all of our students and staff.

### **Prevention and Testing**

The most important thing that all students, staff, and families can do to protect St. Thomas, in addition to getting vaccinated, is to stay home if you have any symptoms of COVID-19.

COVID symptoms - like runny noses and coughs - are common in children and can be due to a number of common illnesses and conditions like allergies. Accordingly, COVID testing may be necessary for children who have any symptoms to ensure that the student is COVID-free. We are recommending all families purchase rapid COVID tests to have on-hand in the case that their child or family members develop symptoms of COVID.

#### **These symptoms may include:**

- A fever of 100.4 F or greater
- Upper respiratory symptoms (congestion, sneezing, runny nose)
- Cough
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Sore Throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

It is important that the STA community works together to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to the school community. Prior to coming to school each day, employees of STA will be asked to self screen using the above checklist. We ask that you use this checklist to screen your children each morning before coming to school. Students who need to stay home should communicate with their classroom teachers regarding make-up work.

### **Personal Hygiene**

All of our students, staff, families, and guests will be educated on and requested to practice the following:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer. St. Thomas will provide hand sanitizing stations in common areas and hand sanitizer in each classroom.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Please continue to monitor your students each day before bringing them to school.

### **Visitors in the Building**

- Adult volunteers/visitors who are **vaccinated** may choose the mask optional route.
- **Unvaccinated** adult volunteers/visitors - we ask that masks be worn at all times.