

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are looking forward to welcoming all students back to school on Monday, January 10. As you are no doubt aware we faced a number of challenges with preparing for a return to classes including extensive power outages and poor weather all last week. What you may not know is that we have also had a number of building issues related to power and weather and are still working to correct a few of these. Despite these issues, staff have been working hard to prepare contingency plans for how we will continue to provide learning if large numbers of staff or students are sick because of COVID and the Omicron variant.

What follows is our best information as of today, but throughout the pandemic we have all had to be flexible, and that is expected to continue.

### **Potential School Closures**

School districts, like other employers, have been told to anticipate many absences as the Omicron variant of COVID-19 becomes more widespread.

There are two types of closures that could impact our schools:

- a **health closure**, determined by Island Health, due to unusually high student absences; or
- a **functional school closure** when there aren't enough staff to provide proper care and instruction for students.

If a school must be closed for either of these reasons, the school will announce the closure to students and families through their regular communication methods as quickly as possible. During the closure, the school will transition to temporary at-home learning and teachers will communicate with parents directly on their class/subject and share materials.

The length of a functional school closure is likely to be about a week, but could be shorter or longer as staff absences are re-assessed. The length of a health closure would be determined by Island Health. We encourage families to start planning now for how they will manage if their child's school needs to be closed.

Unfortunately, support for children of essential service workers or children with complex needs will not be available during a closure.

### **Transportation Disruptions**

If there is a shortage of bus drivers some routes may need to be cancelled. If that happens, schools will stay open, but students who take the bus will have to find their own way to and from school.

### **Daily Health Checks & Face Masks**

Daily health checks are still the most important thing we can all do to help keep our schools open and students and staff healthy. Anyone who is feeling unwell or displaying symptoms needs to stay home. Please use the K-12 health check app each day before coming to school: <https://www.k12dailycheck.gov.bc.ca>

The provincial order requiring all students from kindergarten to grade 12, staff, and visitors to wear masks in all indoor areas, including while at their desks/tables and on school buses, is still in effect. However, medical professionals are now recommending 3-layer masks and so we ask parents to send their child back to school with a 3-layer mask, if possible. We will still have masks available in school offices for those who need them.

### **Visitors**

Visitors will not be permitted in our schools until further notice.

Please know that we will continue to try to have schools open and students learning in-person as much as possible. Closures will be a last resort and we will try to get students back in class as quickly as possible. Should you have specific questions or concerns, please contact your school principal.