

COVID-19 Health Protocols at Aquinas Academy

School Year 2021-2022

The Board of Directors and Administration will continue to set school protocols that seek to optimize the educational opportunities for students while maintaining a healthy environment for students. The overall objective is to keep students in school. As we begin the 2021-2022 school year, parents are asked to discuss with their own children the practices that they expect them to observe during the school day. It is still important to wash hands frequently and carry a water bottle that may be refilled at school in the water bottle stations (fountains remain off). Parents should direct their own children on masking at school. Note that on the school busses, masking will be required. We expect that all students, parents, and faculty will respect the personal health decisions made by each family with regard to masking and vaccination. Please help your children to understand that these are family decisions that are not to be discussed at school. Because the quarantine rules (see below) have an exception for exclusion after an exposure if all parties are masked, the Administration, in consultation with the Board and Medical Advisors may find it necessary, if the school has a high number of students needing to quarantine, to change direction and require masks in order to keep healthy children in school. This exception was not allowed during the 2020-2021 school year.

We do ask that you keep your child home from school if they exhibit symptoms that could be COVID-related (see guidelines that follow). It is important to note that even if vaccinated, students/staff exhibiting symptoms of COVID should stay home as there have been breakthrough cases, especially with those who were vaccinated very early. Because there will be times that children are home with minor symptoms, or due to quarantine, we will still make the Google Classroom available for that purpose. (Google Classroom codes or invitations will be issued during the first week of class.) However, we strongly urge that families not take advantage of that technology for the purposes of trips or vacations. The purpose of allowing students to join remotely will be so that they may LISTEN to class. It is very challenging and disruptive for teachers to allow full participation to students who are remote. However, the students may “listen in” so that they do not get behind. It is also challenging for teachers to upload assignments on the spot. It may not be until the end of the school day that teachers are able to upload materials through the Google Classroom. Please be patient.

While we were able to provide for as much normalcy during last school year as possible, we expect that this year will be even better. Because it worked well last year, we will continue to have Mass outdoors until the local COVID cases decline so that students are not crowded in the Chapel. In the case of inclement weather, we will alternate Mass attendance, with either Lower School attending or Middle and High School in attendance. Parents may join us either indoors or outdoors for Mass.

We welcome the opportunities to gather on campus again this school year. We have had several orientations and parent meetings with more to come in the weeks ahead. The Outbox and Inbox have been removed from the front porch because parents are welcome to come to the office. For students in grades 4 – 8, and for high school students as well, our Band program will resume this year under the direction of Mrs. Sherry Traugh. We look forward to reuniting as a school community on a more frequent basis, as we continue to follow some important health protocols that will help to keep the community healthy.

Please make yourself familiar with the information that follows so that you know what to expect this school year.

Self-Monitoring for COVID symptoms and subsequent actions

- A nurse will be present in the school daily from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- All Aquinas Academy students and staff must do a self-assessment for fever and/or symptoms at home immediately before leaving for school. Students and staff should monitor for:
 - Signs of illness:
 - Fever of 100.0 or higher
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Lack of smell or taste (without congestion)
 - Or any two of the following symptoms
 - Sore throat
 - Chills
 - Muscle Pain
 - Headache
 - Congestion, Runny nose
 - Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
 - Abdominal pain

With any of these signs of illness present, students or staff should stay home from school. (See flowchart next page)

- If students or staff develop any of these symptoms in the course of the school day, they will be sent to the nurse's room, and will be separated from any other ill persons as they await the nurse's assessment and potential departure from school.
- Parents should inform their family physician if there are symptoms of COVID-19 and follow their recommendation on testing.
- If testing is recommended, the student may not return to school until and unless a negative test result is received.
- In the event of a positive test result, the school nurse must be informed immediately so that contact tracing may occur.

Flowchart to Identify COVID-19 Symptoms and Next Actions:

Daily Health Assessment

Do you have any of the following symptoms?

- Fever or Chills, Temperature > 100 F
- Cough, Shortness of Breath, Difficulty Breathing
- New Loss of Taste or Smell
- ANY TWO OF:
Congestion, Runny Nose, Sore Throat, Headache, Body Aches, Fatigue, Nausea, Vomiting, Diarrhea or Abdominal pain

Yes

No

Have you been exposed to a confirmed COVID case?

Yes

No

Contact your healthcare provider (HCP) for further evaluation, notify school, and do not return to school until cleared

Further action provided by HCP

No

Yes

Follow recommended action immediately and notify school

Cleared by HCP and school nurse to return to school campus

Cleared by HCP and school nurse to return to school campus

Cleared to come on school campus

For students who test positive for COVID

- Student should follow all recommendations of the Health Care Provider
- Student is to remain home for a minimum of 10 days from the onset of symptoms. The student must be fever free for 24 hours without taking fever-reducing medications, and symptoms must be significantly resolved before return to school (and no earlier than 10 days from onset)
- Please notify the school nurse ([412.398.3274](tel:412.398.3274)) so that she may complete contact tracing and assist in the protocol for return to school.

Aquinas Academy Quarantine Procedures

When a student tests positive for COVID, the Allegheny Health Department requires that any student who is considered a close contact (closer than 6 feet, longer than 15 minutes) be quarantined for 10 days. At Aquinas, that means that the students who were to the left, right, and in front of the ill student for the 48 hours prior to onset of symptoms (which begins the period of contagion) will be quarantined. The quarantine period may be shortened by three days if the quarantined student obtains a test no earlier than Day 6 of the quarantine. If negative, the student may return to school on Day 8 (instead of Day 11)

Exceptions to quarantine:

- A student need not quarantine if he or she was masked AND the Covid-positive students was masked during the time of Exposure.
- A student need not quarantine if he or she is vaccinated. In this case, the vaccinated person must be tested 3 – 5 days after the exposure, and must wear a mask at school until the negative test result is received. If the parent receives a quarantine email for a student who has been vaccinated, the parent should send a photo or copy of the vaccination record to the school nurse in order to be exempt from the quarantine. The parent should also send the results of the negative test when received, at which time the student may remove the mask.
- A student need not quarantine if he or she has had COVID-19 within the last 90 days. If the student had COVID prior to the 90-day window, he or she could obtain an antibody test, and if the antibody result is still strong, the quarantine would be unnecessary.
- Other exceptional situations that may make a quarantine unnecessary will be reviewed by the nurse on a case-by-case basis.

Parents will be notified by email and/or phone call when and exposure presents the need to quarantine. Parents are asked to reply to the email so that we know it was received. The email will have the particular dates and details required for the period of quarantine before return to school.