



Date: February 23, 2022
Re: IDOH Announces Changes in Covid-19 School Guidance

Dear Parents/Guardians, Pastors with Schools, Administrators, Faculty, and Staff,

It states in the book, *The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools*, "Educators, administrators, parents, and the bishops (pastors of schools) guide the school to make choices 'overcoming individualistic self-promotion, solidarity instead of competition, assisting the weak instead of marginalizing, responsible participation instead of indifference'" (pg 30). I want to thank everyone for cooperating with our pastors and elementary and high school principals in consultation with their advisory boards when they made difficult mitigation and control measure decisions. Likewise, we are grateful for the past, current, and future extraordinary efforts of our administrators, faculty, and staff to lessen the spread of Covid-19 in their buildings; while being beacons of hope for the students and their parents by keeping students in schools as much as possible.

Thursday, the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) announced changes in COVID-19 guidance for K-12 schools and childcare programs to reflect declining cases across the state. The department also will begin to reduce its COVID-19 response operations because there is less demand for testing and substantial availability of COVID-19 vaccines and treatment at health provider locations.

- "These changes reflect the rapid decline in COVID-19 cases as we emerge from the omicron surge and the fact that all school-age children have been eligible to be vaccinated since November," said State Health Commissioner Kris Box, M.D., FACOG. "While they do not remove the need for continued vigilance, they will ease the reporting burden on schools and help ensure that children can stay in school."
- Beginning Feb. 23:
 - All schools must be masking optional, discontinuing mandatory masking (Diocesan directive).
 - Schools no longer have to conduct contact tracing or report positive cases to IDOH.
 - Schools no longer need to quarantine students exposed to a positive COVID-19 case, regardless of vaccination status or whether the school requires masks.
 - Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 should 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. In addition, individuals should wear a mask through Day 10 any time they are around others inside their homes or public.
 - Per federal guidelines, students will continue to mask when riding busses.
- Schools are expected to continue assisting local health departments with notification in the event of an outbreak or cluster and are encouraged to continue to share information with families when they identify a case so parents can monitor their children for symptoms.

Please continue to join me in prayer for an end to the pandemic. Know you are in my prayers.

Sincerely,


Superintendent of Schools

Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend