

Village School Covid Safety Plan Fall 2021

The Village School successfully opened and stayed open all last school year. There were no proven cases of Covid transmission from the school. With similar care, precautions and parent cooperation, we will keep children safe and healthy again this year.

The Village School plan is based on Mass. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education guidance released in July 2021. For the full DESE fall guide, go to

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/fall-2021-covid19-guide/fall-2021-covid19-guide.pdf>

This plan has three sections:

- 1) Requirements of children, staff and parents
- 2) The general safety plan
- 3) Protocols when someone is sick
- 4) Diagnostic testing and Pooled testing

1. Requirements for Children

Children get their masks wet and dirty during the school day. **All children should have 3 clean masks at school with them every day.** Please check that they have clean masks when they leave the house in the morning.

Children will wear masks when inside the building, except for eating. Children are not required to wear masks outside. Children will be given, and can take, mask breaks throughout the day, when they can go outside and breathe freely without a mask.

In car pools, in alignment with DESE guidance, children wear masks in the car with mixed family groups.

In the morning, K-6th children enter at the main recess entrance and leave their street shoes or boots on the racks inside the entrance, and proceed to their classrooms.

Requirements for Parents and Staff

All parents and staff are required to wear masks when inside the building, whether or not they are vaccinated. Parents can be in the building at drop off and pick up, as long as they are wearing masks.

2. General Safety Plan

Whenever possible, children will practice distancing inside, 3 ft apart with masks. Each classroom is separately ventilated and has a separate source of fresh air. Windows will be open in warm weather. Surfaces are disinfected at least once a day. Children are asked to wash hands with soap and water upon arrival in the morning, before snack, before lunch, after recess, and whenever reentering the building.

3. Protocols when sick or after exposure

This is a shortened version. To read the full memorandum, with many different protocols, provided by DESE and Mass. DPH, please go to

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/protocols/protocols.pdf>

As last year at the Village School, when children are sick, they must stay home. If your child comes down with a cold, please give them a Rapid test before sending them to school in the morning. Then only send them to school if you think they can function fully with a mask on, otherwise keep them home. If presenting with Covid symptoms, children must be tested and cannot return to school until they have results. When in doubt, call Rise.

COVID-19 symptoms

Below is the full list of symptoms for which caregivers should monitor their children, and staff should monitor themselves.

Unvaccinated individuals and any close contacts presenting these symptoms should follow testing and quarantine response protocols as outlined in <https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/protocols/protocols.pdf>

Vaccinated individuals who are not close contacts should follow the testing and quarantine response protocols *if they are experiencing symptoms in bold*. These individuals may also seek clinical guidance to assess the need for PCR testing if they have other symptoms on this list.

COVID-19 symptoms list:

- **Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills**
- **Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath**
- **New loss of taste or smell**
- **Muscle aches or body aches**
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Sore throat, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Headache *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Fatigue, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) *when in combination with other symptoms*

If your child has a runny nose, or a single non-italicised symptom above, please test them on the day symptoms appear, with the Binax rapid test. If negative, you can send them to school. The Binax rapid test is 95% accurate on the first day of symptoms.

Definition of a close contact

Close contacts are defined as individuals who have been within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive individual while indoors, for at least 15 minutes during a 24-hour period. Please note that the at-risk exposure time begins 48 hours prior to symptom onset (or time of positive test if asymptomatic) and continues until the time the COVID-19 positive individual is isolated.

In general, close contacts should follow the testing and quarantine response protocols in Section 2 of this document. **However, certain close contacts are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols as noted below.**

Close contacts who are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols

The following close contacts are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols:

- **Asymptomatic, fully vaccinated close contacts:** Individuals who are asymptomatic and fully vaccinated are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
- **Classroom close contacts:** An individual who is exposed to a COVID-19 positive individual in the classroom while both individuals were masked, so long as the individuals were spaced at least 3 feet apart, is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
- **Bus or car pool close contacts:** Individuals on buses or carpools must be masked according to federal requirements. As such, individuals who are masked in carpools or buses when windows are open are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
- **Close contacts who have had COVID-19 within the past 90 days:** An individual who has been previously diagnosed with COVID-19 and then becomes a close contact of someone with COVID-19 is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols if:
 - The exposure occurred within 90 days of the onset of their own illness AND
 - The exposed individual is recovered and remains without COVID-19 symptoms.

Recommended testing and quarantine response protocols

This section outlines testing and quarantine response protocols for individuals – students and staff – who test positive for COVID-19, close contacts who are not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols, and symptomatic individuals. Each scenario outlines the duration of any recommended quarantine or isolation, the conditions to be met in order for the individual to return to school, and any additional considerations.

Overview of Protocol Categories:

- Protocol A: For individuals who test positive for COVID-19
- Protocol B: Protocol for asymptomatic close contacts
- Protocol C: Protocol for symptomatic individuals

This list of Protocols is a shortened version. For further details on these protocols, please go to <https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/protocols/protocols.pdf>

Protocol A: For individuals who test positive for COVID-19

- **Duration:** Self-isolation for COVID-19 positive cases is a minimum of 10 days after symptom onset or after positive PCR or antigen test, if asymptomatic.
- **Return to school:** After 10 days and once they have:
 - Been without fever for 24 hours (and without taking fever-reducing medications); and
 - Experienced improvement in other symptoms; and
 - Individuals who do not meet these criteria after 10 days may receive clearance from either public health authority contact tracers (the local board of health or Community Tracing

Collaborative) or school health professional before returning to school.

• **Note:** Return to school should be based on time and symptom resolution. Repeat testing prior to return is not recommended.

Protocol B: Protocol for asymptomatic close contacts

Close contacts who are not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols and are asymptomatic follow the guidelines in Protocol B below. Please recall that all asymptomatic, fully vaccinated individuals are exempt from close contact testing and quarantine response protocols and therefore do not need to follow Protocol B. However, fully vaccinated individuals are expected to monitor for symptoms and stay home and get tested if they experience symptoms, in alignment with statewide guidance⁶ and Protocol C.

Note: In some cases, individuals may be asked to follow specific testing and quarantine response protocols (including durations for quarantine/isolation) provided by contact tracers or local health officials which may differ from the recommended protocols below.

Protocol B for asymptomatic close contacts who are not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols

Districts who participate in the statewide COVID-19 testing program or another similar testing program are strongly encouraged to utilize the new Test and Stay (B-1) protocol option to minimize the amount of time individuals are out of school. This testing and quarantine response protocol has been shown to be generally equivalent to quarantine for school-based contacts, and a safe alternative to at-home isolation. If schools choose not to participate in the statewide COVID-19 testing program and do not participate in a similar testing initiative, unvaccinated individuals follow the traditional quarantine (B-2) protocol.

Protocol C for symptomatic individuals:

Protocol C-1 (Recommended): Return to school post-symptoms with test

- Duration: Dependent on symptom resolution
- Return to School: Individuals may return to school after they:
 - Have received a negative PCR test result for COVID-19. Note: So long as the individual is not a close contact, if a medical professional makes an alternative diagnosis for the COVID-19-like symptoms, the individual may use this recommendation (e.g., for influenza or strep pharyngitis) in lieu of a PCR test.
 - Have improvement in symptoms
 - Have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Note: If the symptomatic individual was a close contact who is not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols, after symptoms resolve and they receive a negative PCR test, they should follow Protocol B-1 for Test and Stay.
 - If Test and Stay is not available or the family or adult individual opts not to participate, they follow Protocol B-2 or B-3.

Protocol C-2: Alternative protocol for symptomatic individuals who are not close contacts and choose not to receive a COVID test to return to school

- Duration: Isolation is at least 10 days from symptom onset
- Return to School: After 10 days, returning on day 11, assuming they:
 - Have improvement in symptoms
 - Have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.

4. TESTING

As of August 23, 2021, The Village School entered into an arrangement, provided by the state and CIC health, to provide diagnostic testing and pooled testing, free of charge, to the school. All parents will receive a consent form for testing, and no child will be tested without consent.

Routine COVID pooled testing protocols

Routine COVID pooled testing involves combining several test samples together and then testing the group sample with a PCR test for detection of COVID-19. Testing for all consenting students and staff members will typically take place once per week.

Unvaccinated district and school staff and students who submit consent forms are strongly encouraged to participate in voluntary routine COVID pooled testing. This includes contracted staff and drivers. Vaccinated staff and students may also participate in pooled testing if they submit consent forms; however, this is not recommended. Also, it is not recommended that any individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days participate in pooled testing. Protocol for routine COVID pooled testing.

If the routine group pooled testing result is negative, then:

- All individuals within that group are presumed negative and should remain in school.

If the routine group pooled testing result is positive, then:

- All individuals within that group should be retested individually by rapid antigen (e.g. BinaxxNOW) test.
- If asymptomatic, members of the group should return to school until and unless an individual is identified as positive. Individuals in the group should wear masks until the positive individual is identified.
- Symptomatic members of the group should stay home and follow Protocol C.