August of 2021

Bishop Heelan Catholic Schools recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic is still present in the lives of many in our community. We are grateful for your continued patience and understanding as we navigate this situation with continual reassessment of conditions in Siouxland while seeking the professional guidance of Siouxland District Health, the Iowa Department of Public Health, the Iowa Department of Education, the Governor of Iowa, the Diocese of Sioux City and the Center for Disease Control.

The following is from the most recent correspondence from the Iowa Department of Health:

**Vaccination** - While not required, vaccination for those eligible continues to be the most effective way to prevent COVID-19 and stop its spread.

**Testing** - Individuals (including students, teachers and other staff) can seek testing through their normal healthcare channels or through other sites that provide testing services.

**School Illness Reporting** - IDPH continues to ask K-12 schools to report when greater than 10% of students are absent due to illness. Public health will contact the school to provide best practices and support tailored to the specific types of illnesses being reported.

**Masks and Cloth Face Coverings** - HF847, signed by Governor Reynolds on May 20, 2021, prohibits a school district from adopting or enforcing a policy that requires employees, students or the public to wear a mask while on school property. As such, masks must be optional for students, teachers and visitors.

HF 889, signed by Governor Reynolds on May 20, 2021 prohibits the mandatory disclosure of whether a person has received a COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of entry.

COVID-19 positive persons can return to normal activities after:
- 10 days since symptoms first appeared and
- 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and
- Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving*

* Loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation.

**Additional information released on August 6, 2021 by Siouxland District Health states:**

"Contact Tracing and Care Investigations: Public health departments are no longer doing contact tracing. Positive cases are still reported to public health, but we are not calling them to find out where they go to school or who else they may have been in close contact with. Without that information, Siouxland District Health Department will not be notifying schools of positive cases or close contacts. School personnel will rely on parents to report when students have tested positive which is the same system that’s used for other childhood illnesses.

Everyone understands that this approach will not keep all the schools COVID-free. You’ll be dependent on self-reporting and we know that not everyone with COVID will be diagnosed. However, we know that your students have very little risk of serious illness, kids and schools have not been shown to be primary drivers of community outbreaks, and stable school experiences are very important to the student, families and the community. The guidelines are not intended to prevent all COVID. We’re trying to focus on what is most risky and strike a balance between infection control and the student’s education.”
Due to this guidance and information, Bishop Heelan Catholic Schools will begin the 2021-2022 school year:

- Mask wearing is recommended for unvaccinated individuals as it is one of the layered prevention strategies to keep students healthy. Parents should determine what is best for their child(ren), and also discuss the importance of respecting the face-covering decisions of others.
- We ask that any student, faculty or staff member that tests positive for COVID-19 to please contact your school office and alert them of your test results and remain home for the duration of your 10-day quarantine. We ask for your strict adherence to this request.
- Water bottles will continue to be used.
- BHCS will offer remote/virtual learning for only those students sick with COVID or in quarantine due to a family/household member testing positive for COVID-19.
- Anyone with an exposure to someone with COVID-19 should closely monitor for symptoms and are not required to quarantine unless they become symptomatic.
- Travel inside and outside of the country is available to the extent of current travel restrictions or lack thereof.
- Daily and regular cleaning of classrooms, desks, tables, chairs, doorknobs, railings, etc. will remain a high priority for our custodial staff, teachers and students.
- Volunteers and visitors will be permitted, however those who have tested positive for COVID need to follow isolation requirements and may not come on site for a minimum of 10 days.
- All protocol decisions will be continually monitored and reviewed if new information is released by Siouxland District Health, the Iowa Department of Public Health, the Iowa Department of Education, the Governor of Iowa, the Diocese of Sioux City and the Center for Disease Control. Local and state guidance will most likely drive our decisions as opposed to national information. This is the way we operated in 2020-2021 and we found our school year to be extremely successful.

Bishop Heelan Catholic Schools is extremely proud of our 2020-2021 school year where all our classrooms and buildings were open and education occurred every day. We also consider ourselves blessed to have had such low infection rates amongst our students, teachers and staff, even those who might have been more vulnerable. We thank you for your continued support of our schools. Everyone has a part in keeping our schools open by staying home if you are ill and actively learning in school when you are healthy. We pray that this new academic year will bring us God’s blessings of health, faith, academic growth, friendships and activity. Thank you for all you do and we look forward to seeing your child(ren) in school soon.

God bless you and your family,

Chris Bork, Principal, Bishop Heelan Catholic High School
Kate Connealy, Principal, Sacred Heart and Dual Language Academy
Mary Fischer, Principal, Mater Dei School
Wendy Roder, Principal, Holy Cross School
John Flanery, President, Bishop Heelan Catholic Schools