



St. Mary of Carmel Catholic School
Protocols for a Safe Opening
2020-2021

The information below is based on the public health situation as we understand it today and is intended to support planning for the school year 2020-2021 activities and instruction beginning August 12th, 2020. Changes to the public health situation over the course of the summer may necessitate changes to this guidance, including additional restrictions to school operations. Our goal is to re-evaluate all policy and procedures each quarter for needed changes and modifications. We will keep you informed of any changes that need to occur.

As always, our top priority is to be able to serve our students by providing a quality, Catholic Education in a safe and nurturing environment. A safe environment is more important now than ever and we have developed these protocols with special care to ensure the health and safety of our students upon their return. We know that nothing can replace in person, face to face learning and our goal is to prepare stringent safety and cleaning protocols so that students can return to school safely. However, we understand the uncertainty of these times and are reading to provide flexible options for families so that your students can continue to receive the highest quality education in the environment most comfortable for your family.

For the 2020-2021 School Year, St. Mary of Carmel will provide our families both:

- An On-Campus Learning Model
- An Online Distance Learning Model (“Virtual School”)

Both models will be available for our families beginning on August 12th 2020 with students utilizing the Online Distance Learning Model functioning on a one day delay from the in person model. We invite your family to consider which model is a better fit for your family after learning more about the details of both models below. Providing both models will require all of us to work together to ensure the highest quality learning for all of our students. The virtual school option will especially require partnership and a time commitment from families.

All of the policies and procedures for a Safe Reopening have been categorized into 4 areas, as outlined by our initial guidelines from the Catholic Schools Office of the Diocese of Dallas.

1. Student and Faculty Health
2. Limiting Interactions
3. Cleaning and Disinfecting
4. Contingency Planning

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Student and Faculty Health

COVID-19 Response

We have all had to make significant behavioral changes to reduce the spread of COVID-19 over the last few months. In order for SMC to remain open with as safe an environment as possible, we will need to continue these practices, remembering it is for the health and safety of our entire community.

- Staying home when sick
- Social distancing (specifically, staying 6 feet away from others when feasible)
- Frequently washing hands or using hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available
- Wearing cloth face coverings
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth
- Medical self-screening and reporting
- Cleaning and Disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces
- Providing instruction to students on the appropriate hygiene practices consistent with mitigating the spread of COVID-10

Health Screening

All students, faculty and staff at St. Mary of Carmel will participate in daily screening to ensure they are free of COVID-19 symptoms listed below.

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle Aches
- Sore Throat
- Loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea
- Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit
- Known close contact with a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19

Faculty and staff will self-screen using an online form daily before reporting to work. Families will be sent a questionnaire weekly through an online survey to self-report symptoms as listed above. You must fill out the survey for each child before arriving to school on Monday morning. Anyone experiences any of the symptoms listed above should stay home. Please contact Mrs. Ibarra at alma.ibarra@smcschool.org if your child or anyone in your household becomes symptomatic at any point during the week.

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In addition to the weekly screening for symptoms/contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, students will be screened for their temperature upon arrival at St. Mary of Carmel each morning. At three drop off locations (to lessen traffic), St. Mary of Carmel staff will check your child's temperature before leaving the car. Students with a temperature of 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit or higher will not be able to attend school that day. After screening, students will report directly to their homeroom classroom.

Procedures for Diagnosis of COVID-19 Symptoms/Cases on Campus

In order to maintain the health and safety of our community, it is imperative to act quickly when someone on campus is sick or has had possible exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

Anyone who has come in close contact with someone who has a lab-confirmed case of COVID-19 is asked to quarantine for 14 days. St. Mary of Carmel will work with your family to ensure continuation of learning if your child is healthy enough to do so.

If your child is experiencing any of the above symptoms during the school day, the school will contact you to come pick up your child. Parents are asked to come immediately when called to pick up their child. Students with these symptoms will be immediately separated and isolated until a parent or emergency contact can pick them up.

Should a faculty or staff member or student test positive for COVID-19, St. Mary of Carmel will follow CDC and TEA guidelines for when they are able to return to campus. This includes being symptom free for at least 72 hours.

While maintaining confidentiality, the School is required to notify the local health department, teachers, staff and families of all students if a lab-confirmed COVID-19 case is identified among students, teachers, or staff who participate in any on-campus activities.

Handwashing and Hand Sanitizing

Handwashing is perhaps one of the most important techniques for mitigating the spread of germs and all faculty, staff and students will be trained in proper handwashing protocols to prevent the spread of germs! Signs in restrooms and around the school will help to reinforce these protocols for students and staff.

Additional measures St. Mary of Carmel is taking to ensure frequent and proper handwashing or hand sanitizing include:

- Elementary teachers being encouraged to supervise student handwashing at least twice a day
- Providing time for all students to wash their hands with soap and water before eating and after using the restroom
- Additional handwashing and hand sanitizing stations being added around campus, especially at entrances

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- Hand sanitizer will continue to be used in classrooms, with additional hand sanitizer dispensers being placed around the buildings
- Tissues will be provided in classrooms and common areas to encourage students and staff to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and if not able, to cover with their elbows. Used tissues will be thrown into the trash and hands washed afterwards.

Masks/Face Covers

Masks are another key tool to mitigating the spread of germs, especially from respiratory droplets. While a change for all of us, mask wearing is a socially responsible and healthy choice to make when around others. At St. Mary of Carmel, all faculty, staff and students (5th and up) will be required to wear masks daily. Students younger than 5th grade are also encouraged to wear masks. Masks should be at least 3-ply and should cover the mouth and nose.

Students will be given “mask free” times such as when they are at gym or recess and are able to maintain 6 ft. separation from others outside.

Given the challenges of consistent mask//face covering wearing by young children, the Catholic Schools Office is taking the care to consult with experts before making a final policy decisions on who and what type of masks will be required daily. We will share additional guidance and policies with you as needed.

Face Shields are also being explored as alternatives for within the classroom when 6 ft of distance is able to be maintained. St. Mary of Carmel will provide 2 face masks and a face shield for all students. In addition to providing masks, we will be publishing short “how to” videos about mask wearing to help students acclimate to the new expectations of the school year. Despite providing masks, you are encouraged to look for and purchase additional masks that are the proper size and comfort level for your student.

Social Distancing

Another key effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 is the ability to maintain a distance from others, especially in closed areas. While working with young children presents unique challenges to separation, we will keep students separated as much as possible and developmentally appropriate.

All classrooms K-8th grade will have individual student desks instead of tables so that students will have individual work spaces. Desks will be placed 6 ft. apart, where possible, and as close to 6 ft. apart where it is not possible. Traffic patterns within classrooms and hallways will be established to ensure a separation of students and that students are maintaining their distance. In lower school classrooms, students will use carpet squares and plastic desk shields to maintain additional separation.

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Limiting Interactions

Throughout a normal school day, many students come into contact with one another but every effort is being taken to reduce cross mingling and the spread of germs throughout the building. We are taking special care to separate students by homeroom as much as physically possible in order to contain and mitigate the spread of any possible germs.

At this time, no whole school gatherings, assemblies or meetings are planned in person. Announcements and other events/activities may take place virtually to join the school together. At this time, no whole school Masses are being planned through August 31st. Masses may be live streamed to classrooms or done by class to ensure separation of students.

Reconfiguration of High Transmission Areas

Areas such as the playground, computer lab, cafeteria, bathrooms and water fountains are all being evaluated and adjusted so that we can limit contact between students. New policies will be put into place and changes will be made to many of these areas.

- **Computer Lab:** The computer lab will be utilized as teacher “office space” this year and computers will be distributed to classrooms for usage. Students will not visit the computer lab as a whole class.
- **Library:** Students will have the opportunity to browse our catalog and select titles they are interested in, but classes will not visit the library. Students will be able to request that a staff member check out books for them or schedule individual appointment times in the library.
- **Cafeteria:** Students will eat their lunches in their classrooms or in designated outdoor spaces for their class. We are working with 12 Oaks to offer a boxed lunch that can be picked up through the cafeteria service line window. The cafeteria will also be used as a contingency plan location for rainy days so that students can stretch and have indoor recess. A schedule is set for classes to allow for disinfecting between class usage.
- **Water Fountains:** All water fountains on campus will be closed and students are asked to bring re-usable water bottles from home. Each classroom and common area will have 5-gallon jugs of water available for refilling bottles throughout the day.
- **Gym:** PE will be held outside as much as possible, weather permitting. If students do need to use the gym for PE, it will be for individual, spaced out activities and the gym will be disinfected in between classes.
- **Playground:** The playground equipment will be available for PreK-2nd grade students only and will be disinfected in between classes. All other classes will be assigned time slots for using the courts/soccer field so that only one class is using the space at a time. In addition, several outdoor learning/play spaces are being added to campus and all classes will be assigned at least 2 outdoor times throughout the day. These spaces will be disinfected in between class usage. Each class will have their own bucket of outdoor/PE equipment so that there is not sharing of materials across classes.

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- Restrooms: Classes will be required to use the assigned restroom closest to the homeroom. Students will be trained in new protocols for checking the restroom for the number of students in the restroom and waiting until appropriate to enter. Decals will be used to help students maintain safe spacing while waiting.

Limiting Student Movement in the Hallway

In an effort to help with contact tracing should it be necessary and to mitigate the spread of germs, all students in PreK-8th grade will be contained in their homeroom classes each day. Specials teachers (with the exception of PE) will come to the classroom to deliver instruction. Middle School teachers will rotate between homeroom classrooms instead of having the students rotate.

The clinic is being moved to the Science lab to begin the 2020-2021 school year. This will allow students from all grade levels to access the clinic without passing through the main building and being in the hallway since there is direct outside access to the Science Lab. In addition, the larger space will allow for greater separation of students from different grade levels.

Additional furniture and items from the main building hallway will be removed so as to discourage gathering/sitting in the hallway. Decals will be placed on the floor to help students maintain appropriate social distance.

Limiting Shared Materials and Supplies in Classrooms

This year, there will be no communal supplies (pencils, crayons etc) in classrooms and students will use individually purchased or assigned items to limit possible sharing of germs. We are adding additional computers/devices to classrooms and will be using a Bring Your Own Device program in 5th-8th grade to limit the sharing of devices. Students will not share textbooks or desks wherever possible.

Adjusting Morning and Afternoon Carline

In order to accommodate staggered arrival times by family and the additional time required for temperature screening, school will begin at 7:55 this year. Morning carline will be staggered into 3-10- minute shifts; 7:15-7:25, 7:25-7:35 and 7:35-7:45. All families will be asked to sign up for a time slot to arrive at the beginning of August. We will fill requests as closely as we can on a first come, first serve basis at the beginning of August. We understand that mornings can be hectic and there are many factors beyond your control, but we ask you to arrive in your window as much as possible in order to reduce lines. We will have three drop off locations which will be assigned to your family closer to the beginning of school. This will allow us to screen families quickly and efficiently. After being screened, students will report directly to their homeroom classroom where we will begin with morning announcements and prayer at 7:55. Additional carline drop off maps and directions will be shared closer to the start of school, as well as the survey to sign up for your drop off time.

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Afternoon Dismissal will similarly be altered to ensure that we are separating students by grade level as much as possible. Students will stay in their homeroom for dismissal (3:15-3:40) and will be called by their family number. Upon hearing their number, students will proceed to the carline decals in front of the gated area by PreK to wait for their car. Students will wait 6 ft apart by family. We will load students in the drive way between the church and the school parking lot. Additional maps and directions will be sent closer to the start of school.

Visitors/Entering the Building

St. Mary of Carmel will be restricting visits on campus during school hours to only those personnel essential to school operations (teachers, staff, Catapult teacher, food service etc.). Parents will not be able to enter the building during school hours. A room is being repurposed in the convent for parents to schedule essential business with the office/teachers so that parents can still do things like meet with teachers, make payments, drop off lunches/forgotten items etc. Please call the office ahead of time to schedule an appointment or to notify us if you have dropped off something in the drop off location.

Volunteers

Although volunteers will not be allowed on campus during school hours, we need volunteer support more than ever this year! Volunteer opportunities may be limited to off campus support and out of classroom projects/activities. Please communicate with office staff and your child's teacher if you have talents and skills you'd like to share with us so that we can find opportunities that are a great fit for you and your family!

Cleaning and Disinfecting

In these unprecedented times, maintaining a safe and nurturing environment is more important than ever! St. Mary of Carmel will utilize Josh Huffman Janitorial services to provide thorough cleaning and disinfecting at night. We will also follow all CDC guidelines on standards for cleaning and disinfecting, including recommended products. We have invested in new products such as an electrostatic sprayer to ensure that we are cleaning in a safe and thorough manner.

Following CDC Guidelines

CDC has published guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting that allow us to ensure we are cleaning to the highest possible standards. All disinfecting and cleaning supplies used are on the CDC product list and come recommended as safe alternatives from nursing/cleaning professionals.

Faculty and Staff Training

All SMC faculty and staff will receive additional training in August regarding COVID-19 safety and cleaning protocols. This includes learning what products are safe to use with students present

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and which products are safe to use overnight. Teachers will be trained in order to help ensure that high touch areas (door knobs, phones etc.) are wiped down frequently throughout the day. All faculty and staff will play an important role in cleaning and disinfecting.

Students will have the opportunity to clean their own spaces before and after they are used in ways that are safe and developmentally appropriate.

High Touch Surfaces

High Touch Surfaces will be wiped down consistently throughout the day. Bathrooms will be sprayed and disinfected hourly. Playground, common areas and outdoor spaces will be disinfected in between class uses.

Contingency/ Academic Planning

The learning and growth of our students is of the utmost importance as we seek to form Saints and Scholars. While e-learning and distance learning are not ideal circumstances for learning for most students, there is a distinct possibility there will be situations throughout the year that necessitate temporary school closure. In the event that SMC will need to transition to e-learning for all students, we are prepared and have carefully constructed a schedule and new policies based on feedback from parents, teachers and students.

Full School E-Learning

A transition to a full e-learning schedule during the 2020-2021 school year is a possibility and we will be actively preparing teachers and students for that transition from the onset of school. Our e-learning model will be quite different than the emergency transition we made in the spring and will include synchronous (live instruction in core content) and asynchronous (independent or teacher guided work at a child's own pace) instruction throughout the week. Our full e-learning policies are still being finalized, but all teachers, students and parents will receive training and support in e-learning policies at the beginning of the school year. In addition, all teachers will begin to use our learning platforms in their live, physical classrooms as well to help ensure a seamless transition.

General E-learning Policies

- SMC will use SeeSaw as the learning management platform for PK-2nd Grade.
- Google Classroom will be used as the learning management platform for 3rd-8th grade.
- Google Classroom and FACTS will be integrated for a more seamless transition of grades and assignments from Google Classroom to FACTS (RenWeb) gradebook.
- All students and parents will use Zoom for video conferencing and communicating with teachers.
- Students will be expected to participate in live Morning Prayer and homeroom each day.
- Our E-Learning schedule will include a daily schedule for students with a mix of live classes with students, recorded teacher videos and on screen and off screen work time.

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- Weekly calendars of assignments will be provided

Additional, e-learning information will be communicated throughout the summer and all staff, parents and students will have the opportunity to ask questions and receive clarity before any whole school transition to e-learning.

Virtual School

St. Mary of Carmel will provide a full-time ‘Virtual School’ Model for any family wanting the quality, Catholic Education that St. Mary of Carmel provides, but who is not ready to attend in-person classes at this time. Choosing to continue to partner with St. Mary of Carmel from home means that your student will continue to have access to all resources (faculty and staff, counselor, library, software etc.) that is available to our students, but the mode and method of delivery will be different. While St. Mary of Carmel will provide high quality direct instruction and engaging learning activities from teachers, this model will still require significant partnership and commitment from parents. Teachers and parents will need to work together closely to ensure that student work is turned in and returned in a timely fashion, that student questions are addressed thoroughly and that schedules are followed closely.

While this new learning model presents a learning curve for both the school, teachers, and students, we are committed to working together to ensure high quality instruction for your students. Our virtual school policies and procedures are currently being refined and finalized, but know that the program will include the following:

- Teachers will record all of their daily direct instruction and post it online for students learning at home to view
- All homework and classwork assignments will be completed via our learning platforms (SeeSaw and Google Classroom)
- Students will have access to all textbooks, software, videos and resources that students in the classroom have access to
- Individual conference/question and answer/discussion time will be set up for students to have live interactions with their teachers on at least a weekly basis
- A staff member on campus will be our virtual learning coordinator and will serve as the point of contact for all questions and support

Additional Contingency Planning

As our current public health situation is changing so rapidly, St. Mary of Carmel is developing additional plans for any and all possible scenarios that may arise. We are working hard to ensure that we are prepared for whatever might come our way and will be sure to continue to keep you notified of any updates we receive. All of our decisions are mission centric and focused on keeping students, families, faculty and staff healthy and safe while providing a quality, Catholic education.

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