

# SCHOOL REOPENING

## Family Reference Guide

August 28, 2020 **UPDATED**



**Limestone**  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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## Message from the Director of Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed almost everything about our everyday lives. These changes have also resulted in unprecedented changes to our public education system beginning with the provincially mandated closures of schools following the March Break, to the extension of these orders through to the end of the school year. Because of this, we have had to reconsider and reimagine how we operate our schools.

We know the importance of schools in our communities and understand that required changes to routine and practice were significant. We are proud of the way our students and staff responded to these challenges supported by their families, our community partners and overall community. We know these past few months have been difficult. Our schools are more than places of learning – they are communities that support students to grow intellectually and socially through their interactions with their peers and staff. In many cases, schools are the source of some of the most formative and important relationships in a student's life.

In Limestone, we are ready to welcome students and staff back into our schools in a manner that maximizes safety and well-being, and minimizes risk. Together, we have learned a great deal from our experience these past few months. The sudden movement to emergency remote learning was a challenge, but we gained considerable knowledge which has served us well in the creation of our school reopening plans for the 2020-2021 school year. Safety and well-being are paramount, but we also know that face-to-face learning is best for most learners.

This guide is a framework for how we plan to reopen our schools and sites to students and staff in September. It was developed and continues to be refined based on the Ministry of Education's *Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools*, and is informed by a cross-section of Limestone staff, our labour partners, our neighbouring school boards, our transportation consortium, and local public health officials. Our planning also includes input from students and families through surveys conducted in May and late June.

While there may be a few unknowns ahead of us, as this pandemic has proven it is dynamic and unpredictable, our goal is to reopen and offer the learning and educational opportunities that our families demand, and our students deserve, in a safe and welcoming environment. To be sure, school will look different for everyone. Many of our day-to-day operations and methods of delivering education are shifting, and will require a continuous re-evaluation as the situation continues to unfold. We all need to think differently about how we engage students in learning. We know this plan will not meet every individual situation, but we will work to find creative solutions to help as many students and families as possible so that they can manage their competing demands of work, school and family responsibilities.

Despite the uncertainties, you can be sure that Limestone staff will continue to care for and support students as best we can. We will remain focused on wellness, innovation and collaboration as we continue to evolve with, and respond to, the pandemic and the effect it has on our schools, students and staff. Our success will require the same resilience and grace we have witnessed over the past several months. It will require cooperation and consideration of others to safely manage the demands of reopening our schools. It will require us to continue to work together for the benefit of students. It will require us to take on the very important shared responsibility to keep each other safe by following public health directives and advice. Together, we can do this.

Thank you for your ongoing patience, support and commitment to students and each other.

**Krishna Burra**  
**Director of Education**

# Statement of Support from Local Medical Officers of Health

**August 13, 2020** - As September approaches, we understand that many local families may be feeling some uncertainty about sending their children back to school. We recognize your concerns and want to reassure you that the health and safety of students and staff is our priority. We are working together with school boards to support a safe return to school for everyone.

Every day we are confronted with changing information about COVID-19, which can create confusion and uncertainty. It is important to recognize that there is a notable difference between what is happening around the globe and the situation in our region. In our region, we have been fortunate to have maintained consistently low infection rates throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Starting the school year with very few positive cases, as well as continuous efforts from the community to practise preventative measures will contribute to a successful reopening of local schools. Education is fundamental to good health and we want to ensure that students are not left behind. The decision to send kids back to face-to-face learning is going to be unique to every family. Make the best one for your family for right now, knowing that we completely support the local school boards in the reopening of our local schools as students and staff return to the classroom in September.

The community can be reassured that there are existing processes in place to prevent and respond to any cases or outbreaks of infectious disease in the school environment. With access to some of the best resources in our communities such as surveillance and monitoring, responsive assessment centres, testing, laboratories, and contact tracing practices, we are well equipped to identify and respond to any positive cases quickly and efficiently. Even more importantly, the continued efforts of individuals and families to continue to adhere to public health measures will help keep the number of positive cases low in our area.

Additional information about specific processes that will support a safe return to school will become available in the coming days, including dedicated public health web pages about COVID-19 prevention in schools.

This is a critical time. Now, more than ever, we must continue to remain vigilant. The same proven practices that have kept our community safe will now be implemented in our local schools. We all have a role to play to stop the spread of COVID-19 in our community, and the ongoing efforts of community members, health professionals, educators, families, and students will all contribute to a safe return to school this fall.

Together, we can keep our students and our community safe.

**Dr. Kieran Moore**  
**Medical Officer of Health**  
**KFL&A Public Health**

**Dr. Alexa Caturay**  
**Acting Medical Officer of Health**  
**Hastings Prince Edward Public Health**

# Introduction & Background

As the Limestone District School Board plans for school reopening, the health, safety and well-being of our students, staff and families are essential. We continue to work closely with KFL&A Public Health and the Ministry of Education to provide a safe and successful return to our schools and sites.

On June 19, 2020, the Ministry of Education released its [\*Approach to reopening schools for the 2020-2021 school year\*](#). School boards were directed by the Ministry of Education to prepare three possible scenarios for September 2020 re-entry:

- Normal school day routine with enhanced public health protocols
- Modified school day routine based on smaller class sizes, cohorting and alternative day or week delivery
- At-home learning with ongoing enhanced remote delivery

Since that time, the public health data has changed considerably, with daily confirmed cases of COVID-19 in significant decline. As a result, on July 30, 2020, the Ministry issued its updated [\*Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools\*](#) which directed various protocols and procedures for the resumption of school. Limestone is considered a non-designated board which means our schools will reopen in a conventional model. This means all elementary and secondary students (Kindergarten to Grade 12) will return to in-person delivery of teaching and instruction, five days a week in Limestone in September 2020. The return to a conventional learning model will include enhanced health and safety protocols and changes to some school routines and timetables.

Families will have the option to opt their student out of in-person school, which respects the fundamental role of parents in making the final determination whether they feel safe with their children returning to school. Families will be asked to identify if their student(s) will opt out of returning to in-person school in mid-August to help with our planning. This information will help us to ensure our classes (in-person and remote) are staffed sufficiently according to the Ministry of Education model and staff collective agreements. It is imperative that we learn of your intentions as there will be limited opportunities to return to in-class instruction as per Ministry direction.

This guide is a framework for how we plan to reopen our schools and sites to students and staff in September. The operations outlined in this document are based on the most recent advice from the Ministry of Education, local and provincial public health officials and School Mental Health Ontario. Our plan and school operations will evolve as required, recognizing that public health guidance and directives from the Ministry of Education may change.

We will continue to provide more details and additional resources over the coming weeks for our families, students and staff.

## Guiding Principles

The Limestone District School Board asserts that the mental, physical and emotional health, safety and well-being of all students and staff is the foundation for all decision making.

Our decisions and planning are informed by the following guiding principles:

- Keeping students and staff safe and healthy;
- Maximizing learning opportunities for all students;
- Focusing on student and staff mental health and well-being;
- Providing consistency in routines and scheduling;
- Addressing issues of equity and access for students and families;
- Working closely with community partners to support students and staff;
- Planning for effective transitions as may be necessary;
- Meeting the needs of rapidly changing contexts and changing conditions; and
- Keeping everyone informed through regular communications.

## Communication

The board is committed to regular, timely and transparent communications with families, students, staff, labour partners, Trustees and community members surrounding school reopening plans. The board's Communication department and school administrators will communicate regularly with families and students over the next several weeks using a variety of methods to reach all households. Information and updates will be shared through, but not limited to, the board website, social media channels, mobile app, local media outlets, and direct communication to families using the *SchoolMessenger Communicate* broadcast tool (phone, email, text message).

# Gathering Stakeholder Input

Our school reopening planning follows the direction of the Ministry of Education and guidance and direction of KFL&A Public Health and other medical experts. We have also conducted surveys with our families, students and staff to gather important information to inform our plans.

In mid-May, families, students in Grades 4 to 12, and staff were invited to participate in an anonymous and voluntary online survey to understand how our school communities were progressing with learning or working in a remote environment. The board wanted to understand what was working, what were the challenges, and what the ongoing needs might be.

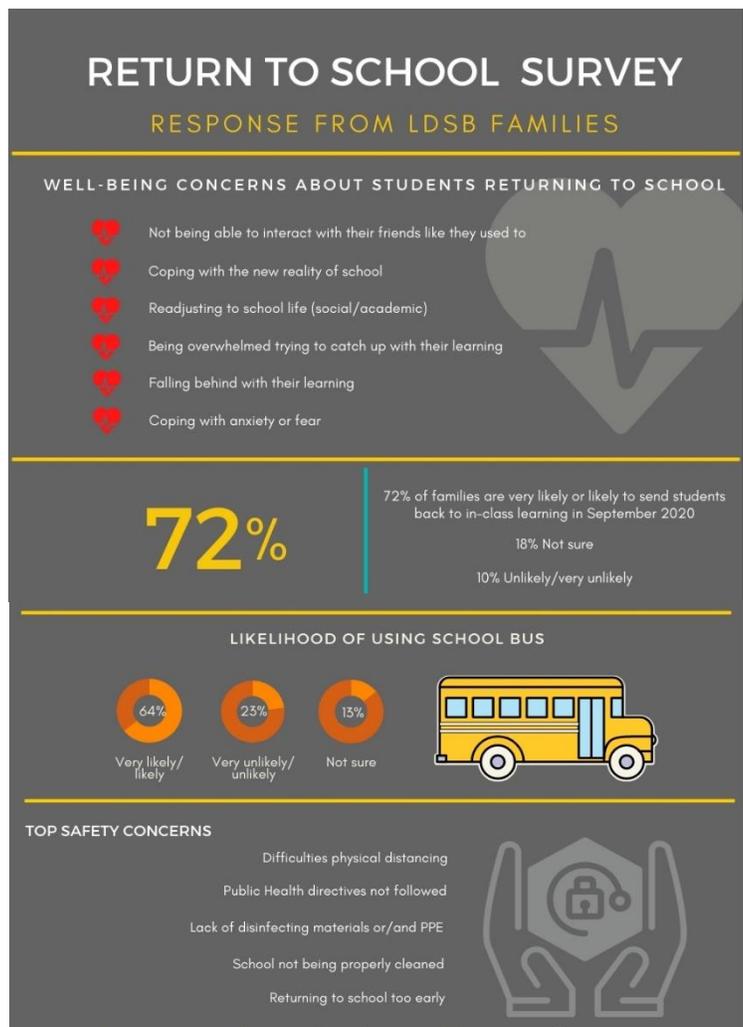
More than 7,600 people participated – 2,169 students, 4,110 families and 1,323 staff – which is 22 per cent of the populations who were eligible to respond. Of the students that responded, 37 per cent are elementary students and 63 per cent are secondary. Family participation was almost reversed with 77 per cent having children in the elementary panel and 23 per cent having secondary students. Of the staff who responded, 34 per cent are educators and 24 per cent are non-educators, such as support staff.

The board followed up with an anonymous return to school survey in late June for families and educator staff. Almost 6,000 families responded to questions surrounding the likelihood their student(s) would return to school in September, use school bus transportation, scheduling options, and safety and well-being concerns.

Seventy-two per cent of families who responded indicated they are very likely or likely to send students back to in-class learning in September. Further, 64 per cent of respondents indicated they were very likely or likely to use the school bus to transport students to school.

In the area of well-being, top concerns about having students return to school included not being able to interact with peers as usual, dealing with the changes to the in-school experience, and coping with anxiety or fear.

The top safety concerns include difficulties with physical distancing in schools, lack of disinfecting or cleaning materials including personal protective equipment (PPE), public health directives not being followed, and a too early return to school.



## Reopening Models

Limestone is finalizing its learning models for the reopening of our elementary and secondary schools. As a non-designated board, Limestone will reopen schools using a conventional model where all elementary and secondary students (Kindergarten to Grade 12) will return to in-person delivery of teaching and instruction, five days a week in Limestone in September 2020. The return to a conventional learning model will include enhanced health and safety protocols and changes to some school routines and timetables.

**Elementary Schools:** The Ministry of Education has directed all elementary schools (Kindergarten to Grade 8) in Ontario to reopen with a conventional in-person delivery model of teaching and instruction, with enhanced health and safety protocols in place. In this model students attend school full time, five days per week starting on September 3, 2020. Students remain with only their class during the day, including during recess and lunch. This class is considered their “cohort,” which is one grouping of students who remain together. Cohorted classes will stay together with one teacher in their classroom where possible. Rotary and specialized staff will travel to students’ classrooms to provide programming for students. All areas of the curriculum will continue to be taught.

**Secondary Schools:** As a non-designated board, Limestone has been directed by the Ministry to open all secondary schools with the conventional model, with enhanced health and safety protocols in place. Students will attend school in person for five hours per day, five days a week, with start and end times remaining the same. **UPDATED (AUGUST 26, 2020):** Secondary school courses will use a “blocked timetable” with one class occurring at a time. This model will further reduce the number of direct and indirect student contacts and enhance existing safety protocols at the secondary level. See additional information on page 10.

There may be some changes to the traditional school day, and activities that would normally occur including, but not limited to:

- Field Trips: No field trips should be planned until further notice.
- Assemblies/Grade Meetings: At this time, school assemblies and large gatherings are not allowed.
- Libraries: At this point, students will not be permitted to borrow library books. Staff and students will be encouraged to use the SORA (online) library.
- EQAO Testing: EQAO for Grades 3 and 6 will not take place this year.

Individual schools may also develop plans for their school site based on the district-wide guide. The plans may include school-specific information on new/late student registrations, first day routines (and beyond), communication with the school/teachers, and other protocols and safety items. Important details will be shared with families and staff before the school year starts. While all school procedures and practices will align with our district-wide plans, the implementation may vary from school to school, based on the local school environment and unique circumstances.

## Elementary Instruction (In-Person)

In each of our learning models, learners will receive grade-level content from the Ontario Curriculum. Quality instruction will require teachers to 1) understand student readiness and 2) to design learning tasks to best meet the individualized needs of their students.

Elementary school students in Kindergarten through Grade 8 will have 300 minutes of instruction per day, five days a week while remaining in one cohort (group) of students for the full day, including recess and lunch. Enhanced health and safety protocols will be in place.

Cohorted classes will stay together with one teacher in their classroom where possible. Rotary and specialized staff will travel to students' classrooms to provide programming for students.

Staggered timing of recesses, lunches, and washroom breaks to support cohorting should be expected.

### Subject-Specific Delivery Guidelines

**Music:** Most overall expectations for the Music curriculum strand can be met without the use of instruments in the secondary Arts curriculum.

**Instrumental Music:** Strings, guitars, and percussion instruments can be used.

**Vocal Music:** Even with the use of face masks, vocal music is considered a high-risk activity and will not be permitted at this time.

**Art and Drama:** Activities should support physical distancing while limiting use of shared materials, costumes or props. If possible, individual students will be provided with an art kit so that materials are not shared or borrowed. The use of digital portfolios would alleviate space restrictions. There should be no performances to audiences outside of the classroom cohort (group) at this time.

**Health and Physical Education:** Classes will be conducted outside, weather permitting. Gyms should only be used where physical distancing measures can be followed. All activities should support physical distancing while limiting use of shared equipment. Shared equipment should be cleaned regularly, and students should practise proper hand hygiene before and after participating in physical activity and equipment use.

**Math:** Manipulatives may be used in direct modeling of strategies by the classroom teacher. Manipulatives may also be available as a tool for students to access in solving math problems on an individual basis. Manipulatives cannot be shared. To reduce the use of shared objects, manipulative kits may be developed for individual student use or manipulatives should be cleaned between use.

## Secondary Instruction (In-Person)

School boards are to adopt secondary timetabling methods that emphasize cohorting (grouping) of students as much as possible, to limit the number of student-to-student contacts. To reduce risk of transmission and to support contact tracing, school boards are to develop timetables that:

- Limit indirect and direct student contacts to approximately 100 students in the school.
- Are encouraged to keep secondary school students in a maximum of two in-person class cohorts.
- Efforts to cohort secondary school students may impact the traditional four course delivery model in a semestered school and as a result, boards may need to adjust the school day for students.

**UPDATED** – In Limestone, secondary school courses will follow a “blocked timetable” with one class occurring at a time. This model will further reduce the number of direct and indirect student contacts and enhance existing safety protocols at the secondary level.

The blocked timetable will see students complete one class (period) at a time. Each block will include 300 instructional minutes per day for 23 days (22 instructional days plus one day for culminating activities/exams). Students will still attempt four credits between September and January as they would under a normal semester system in the order: period 1, 2, 3 and 4. Breaks and lunches will be staggered throughout the day, based on school timetables.

We will still proceed with a staggered entry for secondary schools. School start and end times remain the same and morning and afternoon blocks will include a staggered break for students and staff.

Please note: Granite Ridge Education Centre and North Addington Education Centre will not follow this new model. Due to their smaller student populations, they will cohort all classes by grade level and follow the traditional semester model of four courses per semester.

### Blocked Timetable

Block 1/Period 1: August 31-October 8, 2020	Block 5/Period 5: February 1-March 4, 2021
Block 1 Exam/Culminating: October 8, 2020	Block 5 Exam/Culminating: March 4, 2021
Block 2/Period 2: October 9-November 11, 2020	Block 6/Period 6: March 5-April 15, 2021
Block 2 Exam/Culminating: November 11, 2020	Block 6 Exam/Culminating: April 15, 2021
Block 3/Period 3: November 12-December 14, 2020	Block 7/Period 7: April 16-May 18, 2021
Block 3 Exam/Culminating: December 14	Block 7 Exam/Culminating: May 18, 2021
Block 4/Period 4: December 15, 2020-January 28, 2021	Block 8/Period 8: May 19-June 21, 2021
Block 4 Exam/Culminating: January 28, 2021	Block 8 Exam/Culminating: June 21, 2021

Academic support for students will include assessments to identify key strengths and gaps in learning at key instructional times throughout the course to ensure students have not missed key concepts from last year. Adaptations may be needed for some subjects/courses to ensure safety protocols are in place.

## Subject-Specific Delivery Guidelines

**Instrumental Music:** Strings, guitars, and percussion instruments can be used.

**Vocal Music:** Even with the use of face masks, vocal music is considered a high-risk activity and will not be permitted at this time.

**Art and Drama:** Activities should support physical distancing while limiting use of shared materials, costumes or props. If possible, individual students will be provided with an art kit so that materials are not shared or borrowed. The use of digital portfolios would alleviate space restrictions. There should be no performances to audiences outside of the classroom cohort (group) at this time.

**Health and Physical Education/Weight Room:** Classes will be conducted outside, weather permitting. Gyms should only be used where physical distancing measures can be followed. All activities should support physical distancing while limiting use of shared equipment. Shared equipment should be cleaned regularly, and students should practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in physical activity and equipment use.

**Math:** Manipulatives may be used in direct modeling of strategies by the classroom teacher. Manipulatives may also be available as a tool for students to access in solving math problems on an individual basis. Manipulatives cannot be shared. To reduce the use of shared objects, manipulative kits may be developed for individual student use or manipulatives should be cleaned between use.

**Science:** Labs/experiments should only be completed when physical distancing can be maintained, and equipment does not need to be shared by students. It may be necessary for the teacher to model hands-on activities and experiments for students. Lab equipment and shared objects (e.g., microscopes, hot plates, , etc.) should be cleaned before and after use. Students should practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in physical activity and equipment use. Safety protocols and procedures should continue to be followed. (deleted some to make it more “the same” as the others in length)

**Co-operative Education:** In-person community placements can be arranged, and co-op placements can also be offered virtually, where feasible. Students will be provided with PPE for co-op placements as needed, and pre-placement must include a safety component related to COVID-19 precautions.

**Technology/Foods Classes:** Technology shops should only be used where physical distancing measures can be followed. Activities should support physical distancing while limiting use of shared equipment . Shared equipment should be cleaned regularly, and students should practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in equipment use. Students should have individual safety equipment where possible, and if shared, must be cleaned between use.

## Remote Learning/LDSB Virtual School

**UPDATED** – The Limestone District School Board is establishing an [LDSB Virtual School](#) to accommodate students who have decided to opt for remote learning for the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

The LDSB Virtual School (for Kindergarten to Grade 12) will use the same content and expectations set out in the Ontario Curriculum as regular in person learning. Programming will include opportunities for guided instruction, large- and small-group learning, live (synchronous) check-ins, and scheduled (asynchronous) independent work. Students are expected to engage for 300 minutes of learning as they would in in-person school.

The LDSB Virtual School will be staffed with an administrator and teachers, all of whom are Limestone staff.

In Limestone, we are supporting Elementary Virtual School students using a phased approach to ease them into remote learning, establish a positive connection with their home school, and give families some additional time to decide if they wish to opt in or out of in-person and remote learning. This also allows the regular elementary staffing process of matching teachers with classes to unfold.

Secondary Virtual School will follow the same "blocked" timetable as most LDSB secondary schools (other than GREC and NAEC).

At this time, students cannot attend in-person school part time and participate in remote learning part time. Families must choose one model, or the other. The Ministry of Education indicated that students may not be able to move between in-person and remote learning and vice versa at any time. Students will only be permitted to switch formats at set points during the school year.

In Limestone:

- **Elementary students wishing to opt in or out from remote learning to in-class learning or vice versa will need to notify their home school by September 14, 2020.**
- **Secondary students wishing to opt in or out from remote learning to in-class learning or vice versa will need to notify their home school anytime in the preceding block for the next block and only if space exists.**

While efforts will be made to accommodate requests for a change, families should expect that they might need to be wait-listed if they change their minds due to capacity challenges at their home school or the LDSB Virtual School. School staffing is funded and completed based on student numbers so choosing to move from one mode of learning to another is complicated.

Technology and Internet access will be provided for students who are learning remotely and require it.

See the following pages for more specific information on the elementary and secondary panels.

**\*Live (synchronous) learning:** Learning that happens in real time. Synchronous learning involves using text, video, or voice communication in a way that enables educators and other members of the school- or board-based team to instruct and connect with students in real time. Synchronous learning supports the well-being and academic achievement of all students, including students with special education needs, by providing educators and students with an interactive and engaging way to learn. It helps teachers provide immediate feedback to students and enables students to interact with one another.

**\*Scheduled (asynchronous learning):** Learning that is not delivered in real time. Asynchronous learning may involve students watching pre-recorded video lessons, completing assigned tasks, or contributing to online discussion boards.

## Remote Learning in Elementary

Elementary students (Kindergarten to Grade 8) who opt out of in-person learning will be registered in the LDSB Virtual School. Remote learning will be delivered via a variety of board-approved platforms including Google Classroom, Minds Online (D2L Brightspace) or MS Teams. All curriculum areas will be taught, evaluated and reported on. All teachers providing lessons for a class will create a schedule for students to follow indicating which activities are live (synchronous) and which are scheduled (asynchronous). More information to follow.

The first day of school for remote learning in elementary is September 8, 2020

## Remote Learning in Secondary

Secondary students (Grades 9 -12) who opt out of in-person learning will be registered in the LDSB Virtual School. Students will take courses delivered via Minds Online (D2L Brightspace) on the same blocked timetable that exists in most of our LDSB schools. These courses will have LDSB students from other schools and will be taught by an LDSB teacher. The board is still mapping student course selection with available staff to honour existing course selection as much as possible. These offerings may change depending on numbers and staff availability. In some cases, Grade 11 and 12 students may choose to also take a course(s) through the LDSB e-learning consortium as has always been an option for students within Limestone. The consortium courses run on a different timetable (semester or quadmester), and students may be taking courses from a teacher from another school board.

The first day of school for remote learning in secondary is September 8, 2020

## Changes to Learning Models (due to outbreaks)

If the status of COVID-19 changes in our region and it becomes necessary to switch from the conventional in-person delivery model to the adapted or remote model, the board will share amended plans to assist with the transition.

The board already has access to students' "at-home" technology needs as gathered last spring during the extended school closures. Staff would work with students in their class at the start of the school year to determine current needs to prepare for continuity of learning should it be required.

All staff will be trained on available district level tools that may be used for a return to remote learning. Remote learning would continue to be delivered via a variety of board-approved platforms include Google Classroom, Minds Online (D2L Brightspace) or MS Teams. By putting these steps in place, a potential shift to remote learning will be more efficient and responsive to student and family needs.

## Access to Schools/Sites

### Family and Visitor Access

Non-essential visitors to the school will be limited including families. Visits to ensure school safety (by health and safety authorities) will continue under current health and safety protocols. All visitors will be required to self-screen, wear a non-medical or cloth mask while indoors, and present themselves to the school office where they must sign in and out (for contact tracing purposes) and wait for further direction. In the exceptional case where families must enter the school (in an emergency and as approved by the school administrator), they will be required to follow the same protocols above: self-screen, wear a non-medical or cloth mask while indoors, and present themselves to the school office where they must sign in and out (for contact tracing) and wait for further direction. Families will not be permitted to attend classrooms or other common areas of the school. At entry and dismissal times, families are to remain outside the school in designated and identified areas and adhere to physical distancing protocols.

### Child-Care Centres and Before/After School Programs

All our Child-Care Centres and Before/After School Programs are operated by third party operators. Students attending these programs would be included as part of two separate cohorts, or groups (Child-Care/Before/After School and classroom). Student attendance lists and information will be maintained and available to public health for contact tracing purposes in accordance with all applicable legislation, including the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act . Please submit any inquiries about child care directly to the operator. A [list of available operators](#) is listed on the Board website.

### Community Use of Schools

Currently, our priority is providing a safe environment for our students and staff. For that reason, we will not be issuing any permits for community use of schools in buildings so that we can focus on enhanced cleaning schools daily.

# School Day Operations

## School Arrival and Dismissal

**School Arrival:** Schools will use all possible doors for entry and exit to the school. Schools will create designated routes for students to get to and from classrooms at the beginning and the end of the day, and the use of entry/exit doors that are closest to the class to minimize movement in hallways. Appropriate directional signage or other tools will be used to assist with the movement of students and staff. Hand sanitizer will be required to be used by students when they enter and exit the school and classrooms.

**Elementary Arrival:** The elementary school day timetable will remain generally unchanged. Entry and dismissal times may be staggered to reduce congestion. Schools will organize and timetable recess and nutrition breaks to minimize congestion in hallways and allow for safe play on the yard by cohorts (groups).

**Secondary Arrival:** Classrooms will be open to students 15 minutes before period 1 begins. Students who do not ride the bus to school should not arrive prior to 15 minutes before the start of period 1. Students who drive themselves or are dropped off must use designated parking and drop-off areas and proceed to the appropriate entry designated for their use. Walkers should do the same. Students who ride the bus and may arrive at school with more than 15 minutes before class will proceed to a designated area within the school where physical distancing may be maintained (i.e. cafeteria or gym), and they will be supervised by staff.

**School Dismissal:** Dismissal times may be staggered to reduce congestion in hallways. Students should leave the building immediately after classes so cleaning can begin.

## Lunch Breaks

Schools will develop site-specific plans, which may vary due to school size, location, and physical space. Class dismissal times may need to be staggered to ensure hallways are not congested.

While eating and drinking at school, it is expected that:

- Staff and students will perform proper hand hygiene before and after eating.
- Each student will have their own individual meal or snack with no common food items.
- Each student will be required to bring their own drink bottle that is labeled, kept with them during the day, and not shared.
- Water fountains will be closed. Students may use water-filling stations to fill personal water bottles for drinking.
- Schools will remove all self-serving food items and microwave use will not be permitted.
- Schools will not plan non-instructional activities that involve students preparing or serving food.
- Third-party food services, including nutrition programs, will be delivered in a way that any student who wishes to participate can do so. A "Grab and Go format" is preferred. All surfaces, bins and containers for food should be disinfected prior to and after each use.

**Elementary:** Students will eat lunch in their classrooms with their cohort (group). Intermediate students who have parent/guardian permission to leave the school property at lunch are encouraged to remain at school and in their cohort.

**Secondary:** School cafeterias will not be operational during first semester. Secondary students can eat within their classrooms as a class cohort or other designated areas where they can physically distance. Students will also be encouraged to eat outdoors where possible.

## Use of Washrooms

High-touch surfaces in washrooms will be cleaned throughout the day. The use of washrooms will be staggered where possible to support cohorting (grouping) of students. Signage will be posted to indicate the maximum number of people using washrooms at any given time. Depending on the size of the school and the location of washrooms, schools may assign students to specific washrooms.

## Use of Lockers

At this time, student lockers for Intermediate (Grade 7 and 8) and Secondary students will not be available. Students are to keep their belongings with them at their desk and are encouraged to only bring the materials they will need for learning. This will be revisited prior to late fall/winter season. If lockers are made available, access will be restricted to particular times of the day.

## Sharing of Resources/Materials

Staff are to limit the sharing of supplies, equipment, textbooks and toys. Adequate supplies for instructional courses will be provided to each student. Where it is not practical to give each student their own resources, classroom resources that are used regularly will be cleaned daily and students will clean their hands before and after use. Staff will review specific safety precautions required for classes that traditionally involve the sharing of resources between students (e.g. construction, auto shops, hospitality, science, arts, physical education etc.). Plans will be established for specialized protective equipment that cannot be cleaned between use (e.g. welding gloves, chaps, coat, coveralls, aprons, oven mitts, lab coats).

## Outdoor Recess/Playgrounds

Elementary schools will develop school/site specific plans for cohorts (groups) and yard space depending on school population and yard size. Playground structures will reopen for student use during the school day. Equipment will not be cleaned. Students will be required to clean their hands before and after outdoor play. Recess and lunch breaks may need to be staggered to avoid congestion and allow yard play.

## Field Trips

The Ministry of Education had indicated that schools should not plan field trips and activities requiring group transportation at this time, until public health data suggests otherwise.

## Extra-curriculars/Sports

In the initial stages of school reopening, extra-curricular clubs and sports will not be permitted. School clubs that can maintain physical distancing, or run virtually may proceed. Clubs where physical distancing or virtual meetings are not possible will not be permitted at this time. Limestone is working with KFL&A Public Health on what precautions would be required to offer sports (if physical distancing is possible and equipment and spaces are cleaned between each use). The board will share more information as it becomes available.

## Transportation

Where possible, families will be encouraged to make use of active forms of travel (walking, biking) are encouraged for students. Private transportation by families is encouraged where possible, to ease pressure on transportation demand. Families who choose to drive their student(s) to school will need to follow school directions on drop off and pick up, likely parking away from the school to drop students off to avoid congestion at the school site.

The Ministry of Education guide provides guidance for busing. In Limestone, busing is provided by Tri-Board Student Transportation, which is a separate legal entity providing transportation to the Limestone District School Board, Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic District School Board and the Hasting & Prince Edward District School Board. Please visit the [Tri-Board website](#) for updates.

Student transportation safety and cleaning protocols are informed through consultation with KFL&A Public Health, the Ministry of Education's *Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools* and federal guidelines. Tri-Board will be working with local public health officials to optimize the health and safety of student riders and bus drivers.

Daily active screening will be required **before** using student transportation. This includes screening of all bus drivers, students, staff and bus monitors for any COVID-19 symptoms. Families will be required to screen students for COVID-19 symptoms before they attend the bus stop.

Tri-Board will work with KFL&A Public Health to ensure enhanced cleaning protocols using products recommended by Health Canada and provided by the Ministry of Education. High touch surfaces such as the tops of seats, hand railing, etc. will be cleaned twice daily. All other enhanced cleaning will be performed either before or after the shift. Due to the extra precautions, boarding the buses may take longer and buses may be late getting to bus stops and to school.

To the extent possible, the same drivers will use the same vehicle and keep the same work schedules to limit contacts as much as possible. Some limits to busing have been imposed to start the school year, such as adding and renewing courtesy rides, processing late applications for busing and bus stop relocation reviews. Tri-Board expects longer than normal response times regarding transportation inquiries.

Students are required to maintain two metres of physical distance at the bus stop. Where possible, the seat directly behind the school bus driver will remain empty to maintain physical distancing. Students will be assigned seats and a record of the seating plan will be kept to assist with contact tracing in the case of a student or driver/monitor contracting COVID-19. Students who live in the same household or are in the same classroom cohort (group) should be seated together

Windows should be opened when feasible to increase ventilation.

Riders in Grades 4 to 12 will be required to wear non-medical or cloth masks as in school. Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 will be strongly encouraged to wear masks on student transportation. Exceptions will be made for students or drivers with medical conditions or special needs that prevent masking. Bus drivers/monitors riding the bus will also be required to wear masks. Drivers and monitors will wear masks and may wear face visors during loading/unloading.

## Mental Health & Well-Being

Ensuring the mental health and well-being of students and staff remains a priority for Limestone. We will continue to use a tiered approach for mental health supports by providing tier one classroom and whole school level supports to students and targeting tier two and tier three interventions to those students who require more intensive supports, including referrals to community mental health providers.

School-based mental health supports will continue to include access to Student Support Counsellors, Adolescent Care Workers, Attendance Counsellors and Social Workers. School Mental Health Ontario will also provide school boards with a professional learning framework and toolkit to focus on building students' social-emotional learning skills so that they can build resilience, manage their stress and build positive relationships. Professional learning will be provided for system leaders, educators, support staff and mental health professionals to support the approach to school re-entry, as well as throughout the school year.

In late July 2020, the Ministry of Education announced more funding (\$125,608) for mental health supports for the 2020-2021 school year. The board's Educational Services department will review student needs in the system to determine how best to utilize this additional funding.

Additional supports in the area of mental health and well-being are being provided to students over the summer months including:

- Social Workers (SWs) are providing ongoing support to students from their 2019-2020 caseloads (elementary and secondary) in the form of one-to-one counselling support via telephone and/or secure virtual meetings. The continued connection to school-based regulated mental health clinicians will help facilitate a smooth transition back to school for students for whom a return to school would be challenging.
- SWs and Clinical Consultants (CCs) are providing short-term mental health support to any students registered with the Limestone District School Board via a non-crisis telephone support line (and/or the use of a virtual platform).
- SWs and CCs can also provide consultation services to families/caregivers regarding the mental health of their children;
- SWs and CCs are available to consult, complete well-being check-ins, and/or assist students and/or parents/caregivers in navigating community resources.
- Each of these supports and services are available from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday - Thursday until August 27, 2020. This is not an emergency crisis support service. The telephone number for the LDSB Mental Health Support Line is 613-417-3375.
- Short videos will be available by August 24 on the LDSB website that are targeted at parents/caregivers of children with mental health needs designed to enhance parent capacity in supporting students with their mental health and well-being, as well as their return to school. Topics may include anxiety and transitions and re-establishing routines.
- Student Support Counsellors (SSCs) and Adolescent Care Workers (ACWs) will be available at the end of August to support school-based teams with the transition of students to school

## Special Education Supports

We are committed to supporting our students who require special education supports to successfully engage in learning. Staff will work with families to determine the support required to develop safe learning environments for students. For this work to continue to be successful during these changing times, a great deal of collaboration and flexibility will be required to enable a student's support network to adjust to the changing needs of the student and the potential changes in learning environments as we work throughout the year with COVID-19 in our community.

The board's Educational Services staff will continue to work with school staff to ensure that innovative supports and services are in place to meet a range of special education needs including:

- access to Educational Assistant (EA) support to meet the medical, physical, safety and learning needs of students;
- access to a full complement of special education supports and services provided through Educational Services at tier one, two and three levels (i.e., clinical support, speech language support, SST/LPS support etc.);
- development and implementation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that meet differentiated student needs;
- use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to facilitate close contact between staff and students when required as per public health protocols;
- access to Special Equipment Amount (SEA) equipment to allow access to the curriculum;
- addition of 13 new EA positions and an additional \$200,000 added to short-term EA support;
- collaboration with community partners to meet individual student needs;
- inclusive opportunities for students in special education programs as per public health protocols; and
- professional learning and training provided to staff to support students with special education needs

In late July 2020, the Ministry of Education announced more funding (\$113,141) for special education supports for the 2020-2021 school year. Educational Services will review student needs in the system to determine how best to utilize this additional funding.

Over the summer months additional supports for students with special education needs are being provided to support a successful transition back to school including:

- Student Support Counsellors (SSCs), Adolescent Care Workers (ACWs), and School Attendance Counsellors (SACs) will work with school-based teams to prioritize those students who are currently on their caseload and require support to transition back to school; schools will also establish transition meetings, or class/school visits as deemed appropriate that would normally take place in May or June but due to school closures, were unable to occur.
- Targeted work may involve:
  - Supporting students with meeting or reconnecting with school staff: teacher, EA, Administration if available;
  - Supporting students with becoming re-acquainted with the school building: classrooms, washrooms, entry and exit doors;
  - Reviewing and practicing hygiene rules, social distancing, and safety practices with students and reestablishing routines for school readiness.
- Students in the After Schools Skills Development Program (ASSDP) continued to receive virtual programming over the summer

- The Summer ABA Transition Program for students placed in District Autism Classrooms (August 24-28, 2020) will use the principles of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) to teach skills to students and will also focus on establishing new routines which may be required as students re-enter buildings during the 2020-21 school year (i.e., transition skills, wearing masks, hand washing and physical distancing).

## Health & Safety Protocols

As always, our health and safety protocols are based on the advice, guidance and directives of provincial and local public health officials. The Ministry of Education guide provides guidance on safety and cleaning measures to help keep students and staff safe at school such as the use of masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE), additional school custodians, enhanced cleaning supplies and protocols and additional health and safety training for school-based staff. In addition, the government is providing funding for additional public health nurses to assist schools in local health protocols.

It is important to note that a safe school reopening is contingent on limiting community spread of COVID-19. If circumstances change, and we experience an increase in regional cases across the KFL&A region, we may need to adjust our model. We encourage everyone to follow public health guidelines and remain vigilant in helping to keep our communities safe.

### Self-Screening

Daily screening of students, staff and all individuals who require access to schools/sites as per [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#) is required. All students and staff must self-screen every day **before** attending school. We will provide families and staff with a checklist to perform daily screening of their student before arriving at school. If a student or staff member is experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, they must stay home from school and should seek testing and appropriate medical attention. Staff and students feeling sick should remain at home while waiting for test results. If a symptomatic individual tests positive for COVID-19, they should continue to remain in isolation at home and follow the directions of KFL&A Public Health. Public health nurses will assist schools with screening of potential cases of COVID-19.

### Safety Audits

Each school/site will undergo a safety audit performed by school administration and Joint Health and Safety Committee members to ensure compliance with all safety procedures and to identify school/building specific needs and supports. These audits will take place prior to student entry on Thursday, September 3, 2020.

### Staff Training

All staff will be provided with COVID-19 training, prior to the start of school, which will include the following:

- Background information on COVID-19 and how it is transmitted;
- Protective measures including the care, use and limitations of PPE, proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and physical distancing measures;
- Prevention and mitigation.

## Building Access

Staff and students will be directed to designated entrances at each school/site which will be configured with the following:

- COVID-19 screening signage;
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizing stations;
- Visual cues, including signage and floor decals to promote physical distancing and traffic flow;
- Log books required for visits by health and safety authorities, board staff and other required personnel to support contact tracing; and
- Student and staff attendance processes to support contact tracing.
- Room capacity signage (adjusted for physical distancing) will be placed on all rooms (not including classrooms).

## Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Proper hand washing is one of the most effective ways to minimize the risk of transmission of COVID-19. In conjunction with support from KFL&A Public Health, schools will train students and staff on appropriate hand hygiene practices including the use of hand sanitizers and scheduled breaks to allow students to clean their hands at appropriate times throughout the day. Schools will ensure that hand hygiene products are available in all rooms where possible, and at school entrances (e.g. hand wash sink with soap dispenser or hand sanitizer). All staff, students and essential visitors will be expected to conduct proper hand hygiene (washing hands with soap and water for at least 15-20 seconds or using hand sanitizer) at the following times:

- Upon entering and exiting the school;
- At regular time intervals throughout day;
- Before and after eating food;
- After using the washroom;
- Before and after outdoor play;
- After sneezing or coughing; and
- Before putting on and after removing PPE and/or non-medical masks/face coverings.

The following resources are available from KFL&A Public Health:

- [When to wash your hands \(English\)](#)
- [When to wash our hands \(French\)](#)
- [Correct hand washing procedures](#)
- [How to use alcohol-based hand sanitizer](#)

Respiratory etiquette includes:

- Covering the nose and mouth during coughing and sneezing with a tissue or sneezing or coughing into your sleeve or elbow.
- Disposing of used tissues into the garbage immediately after use.
- Practicing proper hand hygiene immediately after coughing or sneezing or touching one's face.

The following resources are available from KFL&A Public Health:

- [Cover your coughs and sneezes \(English\)](#)
- [Cover your coughs and sneezes \(French\)](#)

## Physical Distancing

The Ministry of Education has indicated that standard physical distancing of two metres is not possible in most schools under the current reopening model. Schools will provide two-metre spacing as much as possible and try to reduce face-to-face interaction.

Other strategies to promote physical distancing will include:

- Cohorting (grouping) of students to limit the number of contacts;
- Using assigned seating charts in classrooms, so they are available for contact tracing
- Adapting classroom settings and other shared spaces to provide as much space as possible between students and staff such as removing unnecessary furniture;
- Moving larger classes into larger spaces;
- Keeping lunchtime in the classroom, designated area or outdoors, where possible;
- Using visual cues, signage and floor decals, including directional arrows for traffic flow, where appropriate;
- Staggering measures to minimize traffic in shared spaces such as hallways and washrooms;
- Encouraging the use of the outdoors or into larger spaces to further reduce risks, where possible; and
- Educating students about the importance of physical distancing.

Maintaining physical distancing at all times will be challenging. Students and adults will sometimes forget this important safety measure or will unintentionally enter someone else's space. It is important to recognize that we are aiming for the best efforts and not perfection. A friendly reminder will be provided when someone is failing to keep the required distance apart or when friends are seen in physical proximity to one another.

Because physical distancing is not possible in most schools, masks are mandatory for staff, and students in Grades 4 to 12. Limestone and KFL&A Public Health strongly recommends the use of face masks for students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 wherever possible. See the section on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for more information. KFL&A Public Health has also indicated that students and staff can travel safely through hallways that do not provide two metres of distance provided they are masked, and they remain walking with no stopping or talking.

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is recommended for anyone who enters a school/site. All staff will be provided with the appropriate PPE specific to their role to safely interact with each other and with students. PPE provided to staff may include medical face masks, face shields, gloves and gowns, based on their job responsibilities. All staff will be provided with COVID-19 training, prior to the start of school.

## Face Masks

All students in Grades 4 to 12 are required to wear a non-medical or cloth mask when attending in-person school at school including in hallways and during classes. Outdoor times like recess and certain physical activities (if physical distancing is possible) may be used as opportunities to provide students with breaks from wearing masks. Students may remove their mask when eating or drinking. While not required, students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 are strongly encouraged to wear a mask, if possible. The board recognizes that masks may not be tolerated by

those with underlying health issues or mental health concerns. Please contact your school principal if this is a concern for your student.

Families are encouraged to teach students about the proper use of masks including how to put it on, take it off and store it when not in use. KFL&A Public Health has created some resources to support families in the proper use of masks. Students are encouraged to practice wearing masks and learn what type of mask is most comfortable for them. Any logo or design on a mask will be subject to normal school dress code policies.

The following resources are available from KFL&A Public Health:

- [How to use a cloth mask \(video\)](#)
- [How to clean a reusable face covering \(English\)](#)
- [How to clean a reusable face covering \(French\)](#)

A supply of non-medical masks will be available at schools for those students who require one. For those students who choose to wear a cloth mask, families will be responsible to ensure that it is appropriately cleaned.

All board facilities will have PPE kits if a student, staff member, or visitor becomes ill. The PPE kit is intended to be used by the ill individual and the staff member attending them. Direction on these kits will be provided by KFL&A Public Health.

## Cleaning Protocols

The board is implementing enhanced cleaning protocols as identified by KFL&A Public Health as a key consideration to help minimize risk. The board will continue to use asthma-safe, hospital-grade, green-based cleaning products where available. Scent-free products continue to be recommended for cleaning.

Custodial staff will perform routine cleaning of general facilities through the day and will conduct enhanced cleaning of high-touch surfaces twice daily including:

- light switches
- handrails
- door handles
- accessibility push plates
- faucet handles
- hand dryer buttons
- toilet handles
- water filling stations
- countertops
- sinks

Special attention will also be focused on classrooms and the isolation room when anyone is sent home for exhibiting any signs of illness. Shared items will be used minimally and will be cleaned between users. Porous and soft surface materials such as rugs and plush animals will be removed from classrooms wherever possible.

Washrooms (including class washrooms, health rooms, change rooms, staff and barrier free) will be cleaned twice daily or as required with special attention to high-touch surfaces. Soap, paper towels and hand sanitizer will be refilled as needed on a regular basis.

Classroom garbage will be collected and disposed of daily. All garbage pails/bins are lined with plastic bags. Students will be asked to bring home all containers and recycle in their own home rather than at school. Schools can continue to recycle items such as paper and cardboard boxes from school-based activities.

Additional custodians are being hired to support the enhanced cleaning protocols.

All cleaning protocols will continue based on current advice from KFL&A Public Health and directions from the Ministry of Education.

## **Ventilation**

Mechanical heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems have been checked during the summer months to ensure they are operating as designed and the board will increase the frequency of filter changes. In addition, the intake settings will be adjusted, where possible, to increase the amount of fresh air and reduce recirculation. Where possible, windows will be opened to increase natural ventilation.

# Confirmed Cases & Outbreaks

## Symptomatic Students & Staff

Following the guidance from KFL&A Public Health and the Ministry of Education's *Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools*, the board will follow the protocol (summarized) outlined below. This protocol may change as additional information is received.

- Any student or staff member (or visitor) who develops COVID-19 symptoms while in school should be immediately separated from others, in a separate room where possible, until they are able to go home.
- Parents/guardians will be notified immediately if a student becomes unwell during the day. Students from the same family may need to be picked up as well if exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms .
- Isolated students will be supervised as per school procedures, with physical distancing and PPE provided consistent with public health guidance until they can be picked up.
- Students will be escorted to the front door by staff for pick up.
- Students or staff who have left school due to the presence of COVID-19 symptoms should use the Ministry of Health [online self-assessment tool](#) and follow the instructions.
- KFL&A Public Health and/or the family doctor should also be notified.
- Schools must immediately report any suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the school to KFL&A Public Health and will provide documentation (e.g., daily attendance and transportation information) to public health officials to support case management and contact tracing.
- An online tool will be available for schools and the board to report suspected or confirmed cases; no personal information will be collected.
- KFL&A Public Health officials will determine any additional steps required, including but not limited to the declaration of an outbreak and closure of classes and/or schools.
- Persons who test positive may not return to school until they are cleared according to KFL&A Public Health.
- Persons who retest negative (after an initial positive test) can return to school once they are symptom free for 24 hours.
- Schools will maintain records of classes, seating charts, bus cohorts and daily records of any approved visitors to the schools to assist in contact tracing.

**Isolation Room/Area:** Each school will designate an isolation room/area. This room/area will be used for the temporary placement of any individual who becomes ill during the day. A PPE kit will be available for use by the ill individual and staff member attending to them. This will include hand sanitizer, gloves, surgical/procedural masks, eye protection, tissues and a gown.

**Confirmed cases of COVID-19:** When a student or staff member has been diagnosed as positive for the COVID-19 virus, the school and board will follow the directions of KFL&A Public Health. This may require one or multiple classes to move to a remote learning model or may require the school to be closed to in-person instruction for a length of time necessary, based on the time recommended by public health. Students or staff who test positive for COVID-19 will not return to school until directed by public health. Targeted cleaning and disinfecting of any area accessed by someone reported as testing positive for COVID-19 will occur.

**Privacy:** The board and KFL&A Public Health will work cooperatively to ensure privacy is maintained. Staff will follow the directions from KFL&A Public Health in terms of what medical/health information related to students,

colleagues or their families can be shared. All stakeholders will have to understand that not all personal information can be shared due to privacy concerns.

## **Outbreak Management**

An Outbreak Management Protocol is being completed by KFL&A Public Health and will be shared with staff and families once it is released. All staff will receive training on the outbreak protocol once confirmed.

## Attendance Reporting

Limestone will track student and staff attendance to assist with contact tracing in the event of an outbreak. Families will continue to report their student's absences through our SafeArrival absence reporting tool. Families will report any absence using the SchoolMessenger app, [website portal](#) or toll-free telephone at 1-855-257-9349. A new reason for absence – COVID-related illness – is being added.

If your student is marked absent and the absence has not been reported in advance, our new SafeArrival system will attempt to reach the student's priority contact (parents/guardians) by telephone to confirm the absence. If you receive a call regarding your student's absence, you can enter the reason for the absence (COVID-related illness) during this call.

Student attendance will be taken for all students who arrive at school, and a record will be maintained when students are in areas of the building other than their classroom.

Daily attendance will also be taken for any student participating in remote learning.

A separate, school-based process will be in place for staff and the admittance of restricted visitors to schools/sites.