



March 10, 2020

## Pandemic Response Plan

This Plan provides specific guidance to students, families, faculty, and staff in the event normal school activities are suspended due to a pandemic crisis.

The Catholic Diocese of Arlington Office of Catholic Schools has revised and updated the attached Pandemic Response Policy. The purpose of this Plan is to communicate the specific steps that St. Joseph Catholic School will take if school is closed due to such a crisis.

Our attention is currently focused on the health crisis in China and globally associated with novel coronavirus infections (COVID-19). To prepare for possible community transmission of COVID-19, the most important thing for our school community to do now is plan and prepare. As the global outbreak evolves, St. Joseph Catholic School is preparing for the possibility of community-level outbreaks. We want to be ready if COVID-19 does appear in our community.

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) virus, and we are learning more about it every day. There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. At this point, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes it. Stopping transmission (spread) of the virus through everyday practices is the best way to keep people healthy.

St. Joseph Catholic School will remain in close contact with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), and the Fairfax County Health Department for the most current information and recommendations. The current risk of COVID-19 infection to the American public is still considered low. As of March 5, 2020, there are no reported COVID-19 cases in Virginia. The most up-to-date information about the COVID-19 outbreak can be found on the [CDC website](#).

The St. Joseph Catholic School Pandemic Response Plan will be revised and updated as new information becomes available. The plan addresses the specific activities necessary to keep school open and operating while providing a clean and safe environment during an outbreak, and the essential functions that must be performed by our school, if we close. While the full impact of an outbreak cannot be predicted, planning for operations under such conditions can mitigate the impact of the event on our students, families, faculty, and facility.

We have updated our website to include a link with information regarding the COVID-19 crisis and will continue to communicate information as we monitor this evolving situation.



## Pandemic Response Plan (cont.)

### Strategies for Reducing Spread of a Virus

As a reminder, common cold and flu viruses are not unusual during the winter season. Precautions are recommended. We ask that everyone do their part to stay healthy. Our faculty and staff will be requiring students to follow the precautions below in order to reduce the spread of viruses.

- Wash hands frequently
- Cover sneezes and coughs
- Stay home if fever or other symptoms arise
- Consider staying home an extra day once symptoms are gone to ensure complete recovery

Our faculty and staff will exercise the following precautions to help stop the spread of germs.

- Hand sanitizer available in all classrooms
- Use anti-bacterial wipes for regular cleaning of desktops and students' hands throughout the school day
- Ensure students and staff who become sick at school or arrive at school sick are sent home as soon as possible.
- Keep sick students and staff separate from well students and staff until they can leave.
- Alert local health officials about large increases in student and staff absenteeism, particularly if absences appear to be due to respiratory illnesses (like the common cold or the "flu," which have symptoms similar to symptoms of COVID-19).

### The Necessity of Closing School

The closure of school would be enormously disruptive to the lives of our families, but planning for that possibility is necessary. Additionally, it is important for all families to make a contingency plan if St. Joseph Catholic School is closed for an extended period.

If local health officials report that there are cases of COVID-19 in the community, St. Joseph Catholic School may need to take additional steps in response to prevent the spread of the disease in the school. The school will work closely with local health officials to determine the need to close the school. The school will seek specific guidance from local health officials to determine if, when, and for how long to close the school. Large event cancellations or school dismissals may be recommended for 14 days, or possibly longer if advised by local health officials. The nature of these actions (e.g., geographic scope, duration) may change as the local outbreak situation evolves.



## Pandemic Response Plan (cont.)

If it becomes necessary for St. Joseph Catholic School to close, families will be notified by email, phone messenger, and the school website. (Please be sure that the school office has your updated contact information including home phone, cell phone, and email address.)

Local health officials may recommend temporary school closure if a student or staff member attended school prior to being confirmed as a COVID-19 case. St. Joseph Catholic School will work with the local health department and the Catholic Diocese of Arlington Office of Catholic Schools to communicate the possible COVID-19 exposure. In such a circumstance, the school will maintain confidentiality of the student or staff member as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

If a student or staff member has been identified with COVID-19, St. Joseph Catholic School will seek guidance from local health officials to determine when students and staff should return to school and what additional steps are needed for the school community.

### Additional Steps During a School Closure

If it becomes necessary to close St. Joseph Catholic School, the following steps will be considered.

- Temporary cancelation of extracurricular activities and school events
- Discouraging students and staff from gathering or socializing anywhere

### Continuity of Education During School Closure

During an extended school closure, it will be necessary to continue the education of students at St. Joseph Catholic School. The following steps are being taken as part of the learning continuity plan. Teachers will continue to use Google Classrooms for their students, and other e-learning platforms to ensure no loss of learning time.

It is critical that families support the efforts of our teachers to continue learning for students during an extended school closure. Parents are asked to be proactive in checking for daily communication from your child's teacher.