

Dear parents, students and staff,

As you may have heard, in New Westminister we have now had our first few confirmed COVID-19 exposures and wanted to connect with all of you and let you know what to expect for future cases.

First and foremost: we are acting under the guidance of both the Ministries of Health and Education. But as it pertains to identifying positive cases and the contact tracing process, the Fraser Health Authority takes the lead in our region.

When a member of our school community tests positive for COVID-19:

- Fraser Health is notified of all positive COVID-19 cases in our region. They will interview the individual and/or others they may determine need to be consulted.
- If they determine that someone was in a contagious period while inside one of our schools, they will notify the School District.
- Both the school and School District will provide Fraser Health with any information and assistance they need to complete contact tracing, such as providing contact information or supporting communication with families and staff.
- The school will send – on behalf of the school, District and Fraser Health – a joint “Early notification letter” to all staff and families, to make them aware of the possible dates of exposure. A notification does **not** mean your child has had a confirmed exposure to COVID-19 – the letter informs you that an investigation is occurring.
- The school will follow up the emailed early notification letter with a recorded phone message to all families: serving as a notification for families who don’t have regular access to email or as a prompt to ask families to look for the email.
- If Fraser Health determines there is any risk to members of our school community:
 - Fraser Health will follow up directly with families and staff if they have determined anyone needs to either self-monitor or self-isolate.
 - Fraser Health will determine if any additional measures are required.
- Only Fraser Health can determine who is a close contact and who needs to self-isolate. In general, school-based measures to protect against onsite transmission have been implemented successfully. Fraser Health is likely to contact only a small number individuals in the school.

If families or staff at the identified school are not contacted by Fraser Health, it has been determined that you are not at higher risk. The key thing to remember: Fraser Health will contact you directly if it’s been determined that you’ve been exposed. Please follow their advice carefully.

As a reminder, Daily Health Checks must be completed every morning, for each student attending school (or any adult entering a building). If new key symptoms of illness develop, you must follow the directions on the form. And regardless of what the symptoms are, stay home when you’re sick. If you have additional health questions, we encourage you to call 8-1-1. We have also included the following helpful FAQ page for your easy reference.

Thank you all for your cooperation and kindness as we navigate this together,



Karim Hachlaf
Superintendent of Schools / CEO

Frequently asked questions around positive COVID-19 cases in our school community:

1. Can you tell us who it was or what learning group they are part of?

For privacy reasons, we cannot give out any further details. Fraser health will contact you directly in case of any school exposure involving your child.

2. Should I send my child to school if there's been a COVID-19 exposure?

If your child is not sick and you do not receive a phone call or letter from Public Health directing you to keep your child home, your child should continue to attend school. You can monitor your child for COVID-19 symptoms daily using the BC COVID-19 Health Assessment Tool.

If for any reason you decide to keep your child home, please remember to let the school know.

3. What is the contact tracing process and how long does it take?

If a student or staff member receives a confirmed positive COVID-19 test result, Fraser Health Public Health follows a rigorous protocol. Contact tracing is initiated to determine how the individual was infected and who they were in close contact with. Fraser Health will identify and **directly notify** close contacts who may be at an increased risk, and advise them to self-isolate and monitor for symptoms for 14 days.

Typically, the process takes two to four days from the time Fraser Health is notified of a positive case. The exact time to complete contact tracing can vary depending on the number of case contacts, types of interactions, speed of replies.

4. Are schools being shut down for cleaning and disinfection?

Strict cleaning protocols remain in place, including daily deep cleans of every building and a minimum twice daily cleaning and disinfection for high touch surfaces.

As soon as the District is notified of a possible exposure, the custodial team is engaged to verify the school has been fully cleaned and disinfected since the last date the person with the positive case was on site and to determine whether additional cleaning and disinfection needs to be done.

5. What happens if there's a rumour about a COVID-19 case at the school?

We understand there may be rumours, and it is easy to speculate when it is noticed that someone is away (which can happen for many reasons). It's important that we work together and act only on the facts we have. Early notification letters can reassure parents and staff that public health is following up on confirmed COVID-19 cases in our school community.

Please know that we're doing everything we can to be open and communicate with our families and staff. It's why there are Early Notification Letters and recorded calls. When a positive case is confirmed, Fraser Health will quickly and diligently complete their contact tracing, and they will connect directly with families or individuals if they determine someone may be at risk of exposure. Any confirmed case are also publicly listed here:

<https://www.fraserhealth.ca/schoolexposures#.X3SonNpKiUk>

The work to keep our schools safer involves everyone working hard, together.

Want to learn more about the new protocols and things you can do to help, check out this website post:

<https://newwestschools.ca/how-you-can-help-keep-new-westminster-schools-safer/>

