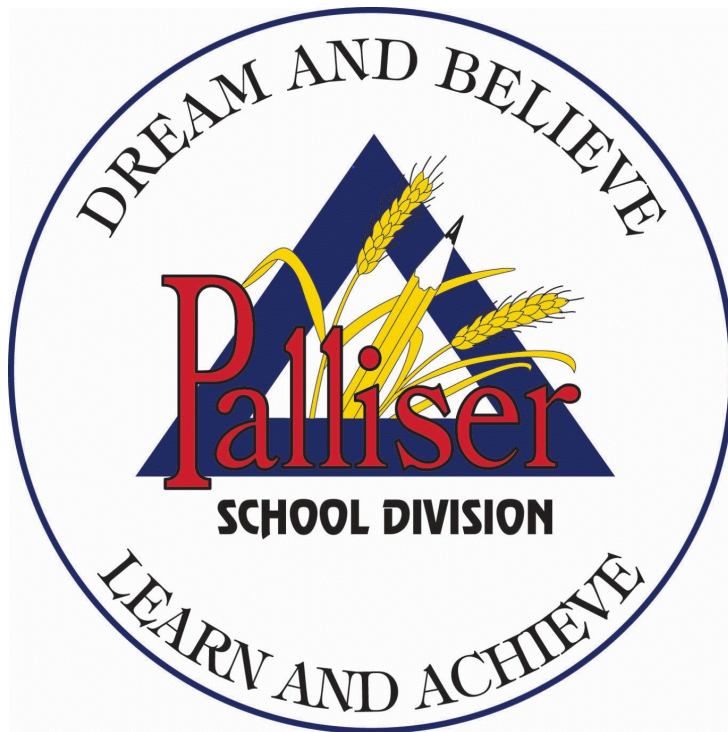


Palliser School Division COVID-19 School Guidance



Updated: February 14th, 2022

Updates:

February 14, 2022

- We have included updated requirements outlined from the Government of Alberta in the updated [COVID-19 Guidance for Schools \(K-12\) and Buses](#) and [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#). Our [Stay at Home Guide](#) for students and [Response to Illness](#) guide for staff that outlines requirements for symptoms and/or reports of a positive COVID-19 test.
- Masking is no longer required for students in K-12 while at school nor in extracurricular school activities. Masking during the school day remains a personal health choice for students and their families.
- Health measures around field trips, extra-curricular athletics, and school visitors have eased with further details in the School Activities section.

Palliser School Division Three Key Strategies

Palliser School Division will emphasize three key strategies to minimize the risk of transmitting COVID-19 within our school communities and division. The three key strategies are:

- **Follow Expert Advice** – It is an expectation that we all become knowledgeable about the protocols, guidelines, recommendations and directives for school re-entry from Alberta Education and Alberta Health Services.
- **Keep The Virus Out** – The first and most important action that we can take is to prevent anyone that is ill or has COVID-19 symptoms from entering schools, division owned facilities or getting on our division buses.
- **Prevent The Spread** – In addition, we must take steps to reduce the possibility of transmission from someone who is ill, has COVID-19 symptoms or is asymptomatic but able to spread the virus.

If we can follow these three strategies and apply sound professional judgement, we will greatly decrease the likelihood of transmitting the virus within our schools and throughout the division. ***These strategies apply to the three operational scenarios Alberta Education has provided and may be modified at any time depending on the following three scenarios:***

- **Scenario 1:** In-school classes resume (near normal with health measures)
- **Scenario 2:** In-school classes partially resume (with additional health measures)
- **Scenario 3:** At-home learning continues (in-school classes are suspended/cancelled)

Follow Expert Advice

The first step in minimizing the transmission of COVID-19 is to become knowledgeable about, and follow directives and guidance from Alberta Education, Alberta Health

Services, and Chief Medical Officer of Health. The contents within this document and our COVID-19 response may change based on guidance from the government or the school division. Schools leaders and employees must use sound professional judgement when applying these protocols to their unique context. Ultimately, we must act reasonably and prudently to ensure the safety of all stakeholders in the division.

Information from the Government of Alberta is continually updated on the webpages in the links below. ***Importantly, mandatory health measures implemented by the Province of Alberta that are routinely changed may not reflect immediately in this guidance document and school re-entry documents, therefore it is important to understand the most recent [enhanced public health measures](#).***

Links to Alberta COVID Guidance Documents

[Alberta.ca/returntoschool](https://alberta.ca/returntoschool) includes a main page for parents, students, and school staff on essential health measures to reduce transmission of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses.

- [COVID-19 information for K-12 Schools and School Buses](#)
- [2021-2022 School Year Plan](#)
- [2021-2022 Parent Guide](#)

Keep The Virus Out

The next step (and likely the most important) is preventing the virus from getting into our schools, division facilities or on a division operated bus. Therefore, anyone that is ill or has COVID-19 symptoms will not be permitted to enter schools, division owned facilities or get on a division operated bus.

Please note, the items listed below may change from time to time based on guidance from the government or the school division. Schools leaders and employees must use sound professional judgement when applying these protocols to their unique context. Ultimately, we must act reasonably and prudently to ensure the safety of all stakeholders in the division.

Staying home when sick

Before leaving home, any student, staff, or visitor must continue to screen for symptoms using the [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#). There is a checklist for students and children under 18 and a checklist for adults 18 and older. Anyone that exhibits and/or reports COVID-19 symptoms must stay home and are recommended to take a rapid antigen test. We will never be able to guarantee that our schools and division will be COVID-19 free. However, we believe that if the division, schools, individual employees, individual students, parents and school communities work together we can minimize the possibility of exposure and continue to ensure our schools and facilities are safe for everyone. Specific information on isolation requirements for symptoms can be found at the Alberta webpage for [Isolation and Quarantine Requirements](#).

We have updated our [Stay at Home Guide](#) for students and [Response to Illness](#) guide for staff outlining requirements for symptoms and/or reports of a positive COVID-19 test. Both of these guides outline what is required if you have a positive rapid test result.

Prevent the Spread

Cleaning

Schools will ensure regular cleaning and disinfection. Difficult to clean furniture will continue to be prohibited in schools.

Hygiene and respiratory etiquette

Schools will continue measures to promote frequent hand washing/sanitizing and good respiratory etiquette. Further details on practices that encourage hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette are detailed in the [COVID-19 information for K-12 Schools and School Buses](#).

Physical distancing

Schools will continue protocols to reduce crowding and support physical distancing as much as possible between all students/staff in areas inside and outside of the classroom, including hallways, common areas, and washrooms. This may include staggering start and end times for classes, posting signs and marking floors with arrows to control the flow of traffic, and removing seating in public areas to prevent gathering. If two metres of physical distancing is not possible within a classroom, additional strategies need to be used, such as arranging desks and tables so students do not face each other.

Cohorting

Elementary schools are to implement class cohorting. This includes that students within a classroom should remain together throughout the day to minimize the number of different staff and students mixing. Based on our varied school contexts, school spaces may be shared with other cohorts, such as outdoor recesses, as long as protective measures are taken such as using markers or partitions to cordon off areas for different groups. During recess and lunch, elementary schools must limit the size of overall groups that are in contact with each other to either a grade level or a group smaller than 100 students in a shared outdoor space.

Masks

Masking is no longer required for students in K-12 during curriculum-related activities or when participating in extracurricular school activities. Masking during the school day remains a personal health choice for students and their families.

Masks are required for teachers, staff, visitors and volunteers while in school settings and on a school bus. Masks are also required for anyone 13 years and older while attending spectator events.

Individual exceptions to the mask requirements for staff, volunteers, and visitors include if an individual:

- is unable to place, use or remove a face mask without assistance;
- Is unable to wear a face mask due to a health condition;
- Is consuming food or drink in a designated area;
- Is engaging in physical activity;
- Is seated at a desk or table i) within the classroom or place where instruction is taking place and ii) where the desks, tables and chairs are arranged in a manner to prevent persons who are seated facing each other, and to allow the greatest distance between seated persons.
- Is providing or receiving care or assistance where a non-medical face mask would hinder that caregiving or assistance; or
- Is separated from every other person by a physical barrier.

School Activities

Please see the list of curricular and extracurricular activities below. In some instances, additional health measures will be recommended or required to ensure the safety of students and staff, and you can find additional safety requirements in [COVID-19 information for K-12 Schools and School Buses](#). These activities also are subject to changes based on current health restrictions or requirements from the school division.

- Field trips and student transportation - currently allowed with safety requirements.
- Performance Activity (Music, singing, dance, and theatre) - currently allowed with safety requirements.
- Physical Activity - - currently allowed with safety requirements.
- Extracurricular Athletics - currently allowed with spectators 13 and older required to mask.
- Food services - currently allowed with safety requirements.
- Work Experience - currently allowed with safety requirements.
- Gatherings - Where possible, we will avoid large gatherings of students and staff, such as assemblies or large in-person professional development day activities.
- International student programs
- Visitors to the school - visitors and volunteers may attend schools and will continue to be required to complete the Alberta Health Daily Checklist and sign in.

Rapid Tests

Additional information about rapid tests is available [here](#). A [video](#) and [rapid test program fact sheet](#) offer tips on how to use the rapid tests. While using the test kits is recommended, it is not mandatory.

Student Transportation

Each bus will provide hand sanitizer for drivers and students. Students will be offered a squirt of hand sanitizer when they board the buses and we encourage that they use it unless they have sensitivities to the sanitizer.

Responding to illness

Schools will have a plan in place if a student or staff member develops symptoms of illness while at school, including sending home students or staff who are sick where possible, or having a separate area for students and staff who are sick and waiting to go home.

We are providing publicly accessible [COVID-19 cases and student absence data](#) for Palliser schools on our Palliser website.

Possible shifts to at-home learning

AHS is not currently shifting individual classes to at-home learning based on reported cases within a classroom. However, we may shift classes or sections to at-home learning due to operational reasons and will factor in both availability of staff and student absences. Approval from the Minister of Education is required for a short-term shift of a school to at-home/online learning for operational reasons. A decision for a school authority request will be based on student absentee rates, the ability of a school or school authority to have staff available to operate in-school classes, and other relevant information including local health data.

Additional Student Support

Alberta Education is providing an e-Tutoring Hub launched the week of January 10th to help students catch up on skills and learning they may have fallen behind on because of the pandemic. Initially, students in Grades 4 to 9 will be able to access pre-recorded video tutoring sessions online anytime to build their literacy and numeracy skills. Later this year, Alberta Education will expand the online tutoring services to cover more grades and subjects, including live tutoring. The sessions will be free for all students and parents. Feedback from school authorities, parents and students will inform topics and English and French needs for new tutoring sessions. Find out more and view a tutoring session on the e-Tutoring Hub at [New.LearnAlberta](#).

Mental Health and Wellness Supports for Staff and Families

Palliser School Division supports students through a comprehensive wellness goal. We recognize that mental health and wellbeing is tied to academic and personal success, and as such are committed to providing mental health supports to our students and families. By focusing on a comprehensive continuum of support, we will continue to be responsive to the needs of students, staff, and families within our division. For more information around supporting positive mental health and/or impacts of COVID-19, please see:

- [Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan](#)
- [Homewood Health Employee & Family Assistance](#)
- [Wellness Supports](#)
- [Alberta COVID-19 Youth Mental Health Resource Hub](#)
- [Student Learning Hub – in particular, Mental Health Supports for Parents, Guardians and Families](#)

Alberta Government Health and Supports for Staff and Students

- Alberta Health Services
 - [Help in Tough Times](#)
 - [Healthy Together](#)
- *Mental Health Helpline: phone 1-877-303-2642*
- *Health Link - phone 811*
- [alberta.ca/COVID-19 info for Albertans](https://alberta.ca/COVID-19-info-for-Albertans);

Other Information

For any general inquiries regarding where to find specific information that may not be in our Palliser COVID-19 Guidance, please contact inquiries@pallisersd.ab.ca. You can also find some additional information and resources in the links below.

Frequently Asked Questions

Health Measures

Q: Can a cohort of students share common items?

A: Yes. However, there are some critical considerations for teachers such as ensuring hand-hygiene for students and that hands are cleaned before and after use.

Responding to Illness

Q: What are the expectations for individuals who are exposed to someone confirmed to have COVID-19?

A: AHS is no longer requiring those in school settings who were exposed to someone confirmed to have COVID-19 to quarantine. All individuals, including those who may be informed that were exposed, are asked to routinely monitor for symptoms, stay home and seek testing if they are feeling unwell. [Please see Isolation guidelines on isolation for more Information.](#)

It is strongly recommended, but not legally required, that unimmunized or partially immunized household contacts of COVID-19 cases stay home for 14 days from the date of last household exposure.

Q: With the change of isolation requirements based on vaccination status, what is expected?

A: If a student is required to isolate, the length of isolation will be at the discretion of parents and guardians based on their knowledge of a student's vaccination status. Our [Stay at Home Guide](#) for students and families outlines the requirements.

Vaccinations

Q: Can schools ask students about their COVID-19 immunization status?

A: Students and families are not required to provide proof of vaccination status. It is important to note that the decision to be vaccinated is a personal choice, and the decision made by parents/guardians for their children is private. In accordance with Alberta's privacy legislation, the Personal Information Protection Act and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, staff must respect the health privacy of students, including their vaccination status.