

Marlborough Elementary School
Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan
2022 - 2023 School Year
August, 2022

This update to the *MES Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* has been made in consultation with the Chatham Health District, upon review of the Connecticut Department of Health's Guidance, and in accordance with updated CDC guidance.

We have an ample supply of at-home test kits to distribute as needed to help students and staff identify if they are positive for COVID-19 and isolate accordingly. We also have an ample supply of high quality masks for staff use. We have also worked to make access to vaccination convenient by hosting a number of free clinics at MES, and will continue to offer additional clinics in partnership with the local health district.

2022-2023 school year: Returning to Normal School Functions

- Students will return to the cafeteria for lunch. Cafeteria cleanliness will remain a priority and hand sanitizer will be available for students to use upon entering and exiting.
- Breakfast will continue to be Grab & Go from the two drop-off locations, with students eating in their classrooms.
- Snack break in the classroom will be integrated into a time that fits into the class's schedule.
- There will no longer be scheduled "mask breaks".
 - Students/Staff may remove their mask when they feel they need to.
 - Teachers will return to typical "movement breaks" as they deem appropriate.
- Students will return to having one essential arts special each day.
- A thirty minute recess will either be scheduled before or after children's lunch block.
- Student drop-off and pick-up will continue to take place at the Community Room location. Drop-off procedure will continue as it ran last year, however, pick-up will return to a park and pick up your child(ren) in the cafeteria.
- Whole school assemblies will be scheduled throughout the year.
- Volunteers and visitors are welcome (unless positive for COVID-19 and required to be isolating). Please let us know that you are interested in volunteering / visiting and be sure to enter (once buzzed in / exit through the front door).

Mask-wearing will continue to be optional at MES. While not mandatory (except for those who tested positive for COVID-19*), we support the DPH's recommendation that students and staff wear masks as a mitigation strategy while respecting each person's choice whether or not to.

*A person who tests positive for COVID-19 must isolate at home for at least five days since symptom onset or a positive test. Individuals may return to school on day six if symptoms have markedly resolved (fever-free for at least 24 hours and other symptoms are significantly improved) and are required to wear a mask upon return to school through day ten for the health and safety of others.

We will continue to work closely with our state and local health departments and the State Department of Education to be adaptable in all of our decision-making. We will not hesitate to consider adding other COVID-19 mitigation strategies, if the Commissioners of the DPH and SDE deem it necessary for us to add recommended or mandated measures (primary indicator is increased hospitalizations as a major threat to the healthcare system) or local metrics become uniquely concerning (such as a local or school outbreak that poses a heightened risk to students, staff and families, as well as our ability to be fully staffed to remain open).

The following COVID-19 protocols remain in place:

- Students and staff should stay home if sick, particularly if experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19.
- Parents/guardians shall notify the school as soon as they become aware that their child has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Continue to notify specific families and staff when a positive case has been reported to school and the child or staff member may have been potentially exposed. The following email message will continue to be used for this purpose: *We were notified that an individual in your child's class has tested positive for COVID-19. The individual was last in school on (date). We are notifying you so that you can monitor your child for symptoms and consider testing. Your child can remain in school as long as they are asymptomatic and feeling well. Unless symptomatic or testing positive, your child does not need to quarantine or isolate based upon this notification.*
- Continue to practice good hand hygiene; hand-washing or sanitizing after bathroom use, prior to eating, and after nose-blowing or a messy sneeze or cough.

MES COVID-19/Respiratory Disease Management

MES will continue to employ what the DPH describes as “Routine Strategies” for COVID-19 prevention as follows:

- Encourage COVID-19 vaccination.
- Support students and staff who choose to continue wearing a mask even when not required to.
 - The school will not discriminate against any student or staff member who chooses to wear or not wear a mask, nor will we tolerate any criticism, bullying or harassment related to an individual’s choice as to mask-wearing. As always, our classrooms are student-centered, friendly environments and we will not allow children to tease or target one another about their mask choice.
 - Please note that our employees will not be checking, reminding, or managing students in regards to mask-wearing. We ask parents to please discuss their expectations for school mask-wearing with their children. We have masks available for those who need or forget them.
 - Staff have been advised to maintain a supportive atmosphere for all children by simply stating, “Wearing a mask in school is now an

individual's choice and we respect one another's decisions." Staff have been asked to minimize class disruption related to mask choice.

- We will not seat or group students according to their mask status.
- Recommend testing and masking for students and staff, following illness or known or potential exposures to COVID-19 cases.
- Continue to report cases which are reported to school to the CT DPH.
- Follow isolation guidelines for students and staff who have symptoms associated with, or have tested positive for, COVID-19. Persons who test positive must isolate at home for at least five days since symptom onset or a positive test. Individuals may return to school on day six if symptoms have markedly resolved (fever-free for at least 24 hours and other symptoms are significantly improved).
 - Parents have the option to keep their children home for 10 days instead of returning to school wearing a mask.
 - **Students who have to isolate will be provided with at-home school work in order to provide continuity of learning.**
- Be prepared to respond quickly to rapid increases in cases in schools, in consultation with local public health officials including the possibility of mandatory universal masking for students and staff on a temporary basis as well as notifying families and staff of outbreaks at the school.

General COVID-19 Public Health Guidance

In order to protect yourself, your children, and others from COVID-19:

- Avoid large indoor social gatherings if you are unvaccinated or at high risk for severe COVID-19 disease.
- Get vaccinated if you are eligible and have not already done so.
- Get a booster shot if you are eligible.
- Get tested for COVID-19 especially if you are sick, or as close as possible before gathering in large groups even if you feel well.
 - At-home tests are a convenient way to accomplish this.
- Stay home if you are sick or have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 5 days, and do not leave home (isolate) until at least 5 days have passed since your symptoms began or since you tested positive, and you are feeling much better, and you no longer have a fever.
- Consider wearing a mask in crowded indoor public settings.

Tips for Talking With Children About Mask Choice

Let your child know that some children and adults will choose to wear masks in school and some will choose not to. You might say, "These are the choices we are making for our family and we respect the choices that others are making for themselves." It is advisable to limit how much is vocalized about other adult's decisions if they differ from your own.