

A Parent Guide for Reopening St. Peter School – Belleville

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT THIS YEAR

This plan is designed to help St. Peter successfully reopen our school building to students this fall. Our Catholic schools have a long history of providing high quality Catholic education. We look forward to continuing this tradition in the school year to come.

ALL STUDENT IN-PERSON LEARNING

Our plan allows us to welcome back all students for full-day instruction, five days a week, in our school buildings.

REMOTE LEARNING OPTION

Families who choose not to have their children return to school in person will have a remote learning option through St. Peter.

BUILDING LAYOUT

St. Peter school is evaluating pick-up and drop-off procedures, routes within the school building, etc. Signage and tape on the floors will be used to assist clarity in traffic flow.

FACE COVERINGS

All individuals over the age of 2 will be required to wear a cloth face mask when they arrive at school. Face coverings may only be removed during designated times and activities and during lunch, if students remain physically distant, six feet away from each other.

TEMPERATURE CHECKS

Parents will be required to take the temperatures of their children daily, prior to dropping them off at school. Temperature checks will also occur as students enter the school building and as needed throughout the day.

CHANGING LEARNING OPTIONS

If parents decide to change their child's learning option, the change may only be made at the end of the trimester.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We know that parents have many questions about school. In this document, we have outlined many of the frequently asked questions (FAQ) received from parents about our reopening plan.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Q: What does "reopening our schools" really mean?

A: Gathering as a school community is an integral part of Catholic education. Our plan is to reopen our school buildings to students this fall. This means that all students are welcome to return to classes for in-person instruction five days a week. This plan addresses numerous aspects of the reopening process, and how schools will function once reopened.

Q: Will students be safe when school is reopened?

A: Safety is always our top priority in Catholic education. In constructing this plan, we have closely studied guidance from federal and state and Archdiocesan authorities and can implement the requirements.

Q: Will all students be allowed to return to school at the beginning of the year?

A: Yes. Our plan provides for the return of St. Peter School students for full five day a week instruction. We have small class sizes and lower overall student numbers.

Q: Will students need to wear face coverings at school?

A: Yes. As per directives of the State of New Jersey, all individuals above the age of two will be required to wear cloth face masks while at school. Face coverings may be removed for periods of time under certain circumstances such as lunch. When face coverings are removed, students must remain at least six feet apart.

Q: Do I need to purchase face coverings for my child?

A: Yes. Parents must send their children to school with cloth face coverings. Cloth face coverings must be cleaned after each use and parents should send extra cloth face coverings to school to be held by the teacher in case a student forgets to bring one or needs to change during the day. Due to the variety of quality in the disposable masks, cloth face coverings are recommended.

Q: Will teachers teach children how to use face coverings?

A: Yes. We know that students (especially young children) will need training to learn how to properly wear face coverings. We will spend time at the beginning of the year helping children learn how to safely keep face coverings in place. We encourage parents and families to spend time prior to the start of school, working with your children on wearing a face covering for longer periods of time.

Q: Will students be required to physically distance at school?

A: Yes. Students will be required to physically distance.

Q: Will parents/families be required to take their child's temperature every day before coming to school?

A: Yes. A high fever is a key symptom of COVID-19. Parents will be required to take their child's temperature every day before taking their child to school. If your child has had a fever of over 100.4°F within the last 24 hours, your child should be kept home from school. You should contact your child's doctor and the school's main office. Similarly, you should ask your child if he/she has any of the other symptoms of COVID-19, such as a sore throat, coughing, or nausea. If your child complains of these symptoms, you should keep him/her home and contact your doctor and the school office.

Q: How will drop-off and pick-up at school be handled?

A: St. Peter School is carefully evaluating drop-off and pick-up procedures. Staggered drop off and pick up times will be used. Parents will be asked not to congregate near school doors or in parking lots. Your principal will communicate specific drop-off and pick-up procedures to you ahead of the start of school.

Q: What does the plan require regarding safety and cleaning of school buildings?

A: The plan includes specific requirements for the ongoing cleaning and sanitizing of all school buildings. Buildings will be cleaned frequently, focusing on high traffic areas and common surfaces. Windows and/or vents will be opened to maximize air flow.

Q: How will lunch take place when school reopens?

A: Lunch will be delivered to classes. Students will eat in their classrooms at their desks.

Q: What about recess?

A: Schools may conduct recess and will follow defined safety requirements. If recess is outdoors, depending on the activity, face coverings may be removed if students stay at least six feet apart.

Q: Can parents/family members come into the schools to drop off and/or pick up their child?

A: Parents will not be able to enter the building for drop-off or pick-up. Staff will meet parents and their children outside the building.

Q: My child and/or another member of my household is in an at-risk group for COVID-19. Should I send my child to school?

A: The CDC has defined conditions in which certain people may be more at risk for severe illness through COVID-19. If your child or another member of your household is at-risk, we encourage you to speak to your doctor. Ultimately, you must decide whether you believe it is safe for your child to attend school. A remote learning option will be available for families who decide that their children will not return to school in person (see next question).

Q: What do I do if I do not feel safe sending my child back to school?

A: We are carefully preparing for our students' safe return to school this fall. However, we understand that some families still may not wish to return. Some families may include individuals in at-risk groups for COVID-19, while others may feel more general concern. As such, the schools are developing a remote learning option that will be available to any family that does not wish to return. The family will remain enrolled at their current school and will be required to continue paying tuition.

Q: What happens if there is a COVID-19 surge in New Jersey and the state imposes more restrictions on schools?

A: St. Peter is preparing to switch from in-person to remote learning should there be a stay at home order for schools. The plan takes into account all the current recommendations but is subject to changes depending on the health and safety situation within the school and/or the State of New Jersey.

ACADEMICS AND PROGRAMMING

Q: Will my child's curriculum be changed this year?

A: St. Peter School will continue to deliver high-quality instruction in core subjects (religion, language arts, math, science and social studies). Special requirements will be in place for departmentalized classes and special area subjects (see sections below). The implementation of safety and health requirements (outlined earlier in this FAQ) will create new complexities in instruction, but our commitment remains to provide your child an academically rigorous, faith-based education.

Q: Will my child's classroom look different?

A: Desks and tables in classrooms will be spread out six-foot apart. In order to maximize floor space, teachers will be removing non-essential furniture and other items. We have also asked that desks and tables be arranged so that they all face in the same direction of the room. These strategies will minimize risk of any infection in the classrooms.

Q: Will students share school supplies?

A: No. We are requiring that students not share school supplies (e.g., books, crayons, technology, etc.), including for such subjects as art and music.

Q: I have a child in preschool or kindergarten. Is high-quality learning possible?

A: Yes. We are working closely with our early education teachers to continue the best possible instruction in preschool and kindergarten. While health and safety requirements are in place, our teachers will continue to work hard to support your children's intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth.

Q: Will students still change classes or classrooms?

A: In order to protect classes, students will not move to different classrooms in departmentalized settings. Instead, teachers will go to the students' homerooms and teach there.

Q: Will schools still offer classes in special subject areas (e.g., art, music, physical education (PE),

A: Yes. As with departmentalization (see last question), special subject area teachers will travel to each homeroom for instruction whenever possible.

Q: Will tests be given this year?

A: Yes. It is important that we continue to gauge student academic growth throughout the school year. As such, students and families should anticipate tests to be administered in your child's class.

Q: Will students participate in field trips?

A: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools will not arrange in-person field trips during the 2020-21 school year, or until such time field trips are deemed safe.

Q: My child has an Individualized Service Plan (ISP) because of an identified learning, behavioral or physical need. Will the needs of my child still be met this year?

A: As each Individualized Service Plan (ISP) is different, your school will be evaluating each plan to determine whether additional accommodations or modifications are needed for COVID-19-related health and safety protocols. Your school will contact you if it is determined that changes need to occur. If you have urgent questions, contact your school directly.

Q: If a parent wants to meet with the teacher or principal, how can these meetings occur?

A: These meetings can take place virtually, via phone or video chat.

Q: What about fundraising and community events?

A: Fundraising and community events will be reimaged to comply with physical distancing guidelines.

Q: Will school Masses still take place?

A: The diocese has created a plan for parishes that allows for the celebration of Mass under specific conditions. Schools must follow this plan, through close coordination with the local pastor and parish, in determining whether/how Masses will be celebrated. In some cases, the Masses will be livestreamed.

Q: Will First Communion, Reconciliation, and Confirmation take place this year?

A: Your child's school and parish will continue to provide preparation for the Sacraments of First Communion, Reconciliation, and Confirmation. For the celebration of the Sacraments, schools and parishes must follow a specific plan defined by the diocese. Your pastor and parish will determine the timing and schedule of these sacraments.