

October 6, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Our school division is informing parents and guardians that a student or staff member has been diagnosed with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). This person was on the school premises on 10/5/2021 and did have direct exposure with other members of our community.

South Salem Elementary School will remain **OPEN** during this time. We are working closely with the Roanoke City and Alleghany Health Department to identify anyone who might have had close contact with the person. [Close contact](#) means being within about 6 feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. In indoor K-12 settings, a student who is within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student is not considered a close contact as long as both students are wearing masks and the school has other [prevention strategies](#) in place. This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in indoor K-12 settings. If you or your child is identified as having been potentially exposed, the Roanoke City and Alleghany Health Department might call you. People who are not fully vaccinated who have had close contact with this person should get tested for COVID-19; monitor for cough, shortness of breath, a temperature of 100.4°F or higher, or other [COVID-19 symptoms](#).

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) recommends that people with close contact exposure who are not fully vaccinated stay home (quarantine) for 14 days after their last exposure. People who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months and recovered do not have to stay home (quarantine) either as long as they do not have new symptoms. Fully vaccinated means 2 weeks or more have passed since getting the second dose of a two-dose vaccine, or 2 weeks or more have passed since getting 1 dose of a single-dose vaccine. People with a condition or who are taking medications that weaken the immune system might not be protected even if they are fully vaccinated. These people should continue taking all [precautions](#) until their healthcare provider says you no longer need to do so.

Staying home for 14 days after an exposure is the safest option for people who are not fully vaccinated. If they cannot stay home for the recommended 14 days and do not have symptoms, they may leave home earlier. Please review these [recommendations on leaving quarantine early and to review safety measures that should still be taken](#) (e.g., monitor symptoms, wear a mask, watch your distance, avoid crowds and poorly ventilated areas, wash hands often). If you are not contacted by the health department, the person diagnosed with COVID-19, or us, and you do not have COVID-19 symptoms, you do not need to stay home or exclude yourself from activities at this time.

Parents should continue to monitor their child's health and the health of their families for COVID-19 symptoms. Children with COVID-19 symptoms generally have mild, cold-like symptoms, such as fever, runny nose, and cough. Vomiting and diarrhea have also been reported in some children.

Children with certain underlying medical conditions, such as chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, serious heart conditions, or weak immune systems, might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is also learning more about a rare but serious condition called [Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children \(MIS-C\)](#). MIS-C is associated with COVID-19, but the cause of the condition and the individuals at highest risk are still unknown. Contact your child's healthcare provider regarding any concerns.

Those who develop COVID-19 symptoms should stay home and contact their healthcare provider to be evaluated and discuss testing. A list of [COVID-19 Testing Sites](#) is also available to find the nearest testing location. If your child has been exposed to or diagnosed with COVID-19, please report this to your school. This information will be kept confidential.

In response to this suspected case of COVID-19, South Salem Elementary School is following the recommendations provided by the CDC and Roanoke City and Alleghany Health Department. This includes appropriate cleaning and disinfection of affected areas. You can help these efforts by promoting the following healthy behaviors and practices:

- Stay home from school or work if sick, even if symptoms are mild.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Get the COVID-19 vaccine if you are eligible. Children aged 12 years or older are able to get vaccinated. For more information about the COVID-19 vaccine in Virginia, visit the [VDH COVID-19 Vaccine website](#).

Until you or your child are fully vaccinated:

- Put at least 6 feet of distance between yourself and other people. This is especially important for people who are at [higher risk](#) of getting very sick.
- Avoid crowds and large gatherings.
- [Wear a mask](#) (also known as a cloth face covering) if you are not fully vaccinated. Masks should be worn when indoors, when in crowded outdoor settings, and during activities that involve close contact with people who are not fully vaccinated.
 - Certain people should never wear a mask. Masks should not be put on children under the age of two or used by people who have trouble breathing, are incapacitated, or who are otherwise unable to remove the mask without help.

VDH has [information about COVID-19 for parents and schools](#) and [frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#) about schools. The Virginia Department of Education produced [COVID-19: A Parent Guide for School Age Children](#) and provides additional considerations for [students with disabilities](#), [guidance for military families](#), and [social emotional wellness for parents and caregivers](#).

Sincerely,

Laura M. James
Principal, South Salem Elementary School