

October 18, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Our school division is informing parents and guardians that a student or staff member in our school has been diagnosed with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). This person was on the school premises on 10/1/2021 but did not have direct exposure with other members of our community. The local health department has determined there was no exposure to students or staff while at school.

Although there was no reportable exposure to students or staff while in school, parents should continue to monitor their own health and the health of their families for [COVID-19 symptoms](#), especially if they are not fully vaccinated. 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. If the person has a condition or is taking medications that weaken the immune system, the person may not be fully protected even if they are fully vaccinated. These people should continue taking all [precautions](#) until their healthcare provider says they no longer need to do so. Children with COVID-19 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.

A person who is not fully vaccinated needs to be tested if they had close contact with someone with COVID-19, even if they do not have symptoms. [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. 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 early. 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 have recovered from COVID-19 or have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19, you do not need to stay home or be tested, but should still watch for symptoms for 14 days.

Those who develop COVID-19 symptoms should stay home and contact their healthcare provider to be evaluated and arrange for testing. A list of [COVID-19 Testing Sites](#) is 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.

Schools continue to utilize CDC recommendations on cleaning and disinfecting to reduce viral transmission and keep our children and school personnel healthy and safe. 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 and up 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 is 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 schools and parents](#) 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,

Amanda Gibson

Principal, West Salem Elementary School