

# Princeton Charter School

Princeton Charter School Staff and Families,

With the recent rise of cases at Princeton Charter School, I want to share with you the most recent protocols required by the school regarding Covid-19 and as they apply to the prevention of spread of transmissible illnesses, i.e. flu, RSV, and Covid-19. Despite the fact that last spring the pandemic was officially declared “over,” we are still seeing cases of Covid-19 at school as you may have read in the email notifications of cases in your child’s classes.

We will continue to emphasize best practices and follow the NJDOH guidance on the mitigation of Covid-19 or any transmissible disease.

Note specifically in these guidelines that all students who are symptomatic regardless of a Covid-19 test result must be kept home, i.e. a student with a fever should not come to school even if he/she has had a negative Covid-19 test result. Also, please note that if a *household member* has tested positive for Covid-19, the student may come to school if asymptomatic *and* has tested negative for covid, but he/she must wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days.

Please read these guidelines carefully. The safety of the community relies on the collective compliance and behaviors of all families, students, and staff.

Sincerely,  
-Larry Patton

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## On-going Response to Covid-19/Influenza and Seasonal Viruses

The Charter School follows the New Jersey Health Department (NJDOH) guidelines and uses the CDC and local health official’s recommendations to set our procedures with the goal of ensuring the safety of our students while maintaining a consistent, in-person learning environment. We believe that the best approach is to remain informed. [See link to CDC Guidance.](#)

Last spring, The CDC changed its guidance to replace *COVID-19 Community Levels* with *COVID-19 Hospital Admission Levels* to guide prevention decisions. These levels are posted in the NJDOH Weekly Covid-19 Activity report which lists activity levels by county.

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**NJDOH Public Health Recommendations for K-12 Schools, August 31, 2023 (Lastest):** NJDOH recommends that schools/ECE continue to implement the following COVID-19 prevention and control strategies:

- Encourage students and staff to stay up to date with vaccination.
- Encourage students and staff to stay home when sick.
- Maintain school policies for reporting positive test results and illness.
- Enforce exclusion for those who are symptomatic or have tested positive for COVID-19 and other illnesses.

- Provide information to parents, students, and staff on prevention strategies including testing and masking following illness and exposure.
- Support mask use by students and staff who choose to mask at any time.
- Implement control measures recommended by Local Health Departments (LHDs) in response to clusters of cases (including increases in respiratory illness) and confirmed outbreaks.
- Continue to report outbreaks and suspected outbreaks immediately to LHDs.
- Follow NJDOH reporting requirements for reportable diseases.

**Masks:** The “[COVID-19 Activity Level](#)” determines whether masks are required at school or optional. If Mercer County is in the “High” category, then as per CDC and NJDOH recommendations, students and staff will be required to wear a mask indoors. (Note the Mercer County Activity level currently “LOW” as it has been for several weeks.)

**From NJDOH Guidance August 31, 2023 - Masks:**

Wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator consistently and correctly reduces the risk of spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. At high COVID-19 Hospital Admission Levels, universal indoor masking in schools and ECE programs is recommended, as it is in the community at-large. Recommendations for masking in nurses’ offices may depend on factors such as COVID-19 Hospital Admission Levels, outbreak status, and patient access.

NJDOH recommends that schools/ECE require masks in the following circumstances:

- During periods of elevated COVID-19 activity – when the COVID-19 Hospital Admission Level is high, NJDOH recommends universal masking for all students and staff, especially if there is difficulty incorporating other layered prevention strategies (e.g., adequate ventilation, adequate spacing of students). This would apply to school transportation as well.
  - At a high COVID-19 Hospital Admission Level, people who are immunocompromised or at risk for getting very sick with COVID-19 should wear a mask or respirator that provides greater protection.
- During an active outbreak – during an outbreak or a general increase in cases, schools/ECE should consult with their Local Health Department (LHD) as to whether short-term universal masking or masking in affected classrooms should be required to control the outbreak/increase in cases.
- After returning from isolation – students and staff who return to school after 5 full days of isolation should be required to mask during days 6-10, or until they test negative using two antigen tests collected at least 48 hours apart starting on day 6.
- After a COVID-19 exposure – *exposed individuals should wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days from last exposure, regardless of vaccination status.*
- When illness occurs in school/ECE – students or staff who become ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while in school or care should wear a mask until they leave the premises. Note that the school reserves its right to make a local decision to maintain masks if deemed in the best safety interest of the school population regardless of the Covid-19 Activity Level.

High quality masks are recommended - *See these links for good children’s masks:* [option 1](#), [option 2](#). It is important to have a good fit and to wear masks properly.

**Daily Screening:** Parents should check for any symptoms daily and if a child is demonstrating Covid-19, flu or cold symptoms, the child must stay home i.e. if a student demonstrates symptoms, do not send the child to school.

## What if a child or staff member tests positive for Covid-19?

**Positive Test: If a student or staff member tests positive for Covid-19:**

Individuals regardless of vaccination status who test positive for Covid-19 should:

- Stay home for five (5) days
- After 5 days, if fever free\* without the use of fever reducing medications (Tylenol, Motrin)/symptom improving - the staff/student may come to school but must wear a mask for another five (5) days
- Upon return, the staff/student will eat separately since eating requires that the mask be removed.

**Note that day zero (0) is the first day of symptoms or if asymptomatic, the day of positive test.**

## What if a child or staff member is symptomatic?

**From NJDOH Guidance - Exclusion:** Parents should not send students to school/ECE when sick, and symptomatic staff should not come to work.

For school/ECE settings, NJDOH recommends that students/staff with the following COVID-19 compatible symptoms be promptly isolated from others and excluded from school/ECE:

Student/Staff demonstrates two (2) symptoms:	Student demonstrates one (1) symptom:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● chills,</li><li>● rigors (shivers),</li><li>● myalgia (muscle aches),</li><li>● headache,</li><li>● sore throat,</li><li>● nausea or vomiting,</li><li>● diarrhea,</li><li>● fatigue,</li><li>● congestion, or</li><li>● runny nose;</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● fever of 100.4° F or greater</li><li>● cough,</li><li>● shortness of breath,</li><li>● difficulty breathing,</li><li>● new loss of taste or smell</li></ul>

For students with chronic illness, only new symptoms, or symptoms worse than baseline should be used to fulfill symptom-based exclusion criteria.

Note: If symptoms appear while at school, the students will be isolated from others, asked to wear a mask, and sent home.

## When can a symptomatic child or staff member return to school?

**If Covid-19 Activity Level is Low:** Individuals with COVID-19 compatible symptoms who have not been tested and do not have an alternative diagnosis from their healthcare provider should:

- Individual can return to school if
  - symptoms are resolving and are fever-free (without the use of fever-reducing medication) for 24 hours, i.e. No Doctor's clearance is required when Covid levels are "Low"
- *We strongly recommend that symptomatic individuals have one negative Covid-19 test result before returning to school. (Home rapid home tests are accepted).*

\*CDC considers a person to have a fever when he or she has a measured temperature of 100.4° F

**When Covid-19 level is classified as "high" by the State of New Jersey:** Individuals with COVID-19 compatible symptoms who have not been tested and do not have an alternative diagnosis from their healthcare provider should:

- Student or staff may return to school if:
  - Symptoms are resolving and are fever free for 24 hours, and the student has had two negative Covid-19 tests 48 Hours apart. (Rapid home tests are accepted).
  - Or
  - Symptoms are resolving and are fever free\* without the use of fever reducing medications (Tylenol, Motrin) for 24 hours, and **medically cleared by physician** (Use school form)

Note students at home due to illness *will not* have the option to Zoom into classes. Students should follow Schoology for course work.

## What if a child or staff member has an exposure to someone with Covid-19?

If a student or staff member has an exposure to Covid-19

- Return to school (no quarantine) regardless of vaccination status.
- It is recommended to test after five full days of exposure (on day 6).
- Monitor for symptoms - If an individual becomes symptomatic, stay home and follow protocol listed above.

# What if a household member tests positive for Covid-19?

Note: If an individual has a household member who tests positive for Covid-19, the individual should be tested, and with a negative result, may come to school but **must wear a mask (indoors) for 10 full days after last exposure to Covid-19 positive individual (Regardless of vaccination status)**

## Hand Hygiene

**From NJDOH Guidance May 23, 2023 (latest) - Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette Schools/ECE should:**

- Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and increase monitoring of students and staff. If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
- Encourage students and staff to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue if not wearing a mask. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hand hygiene as outlined above should be performed immediately.
- Have adequate supplies including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, and no-touch trash cans.
- Assist/observe young children to ensure proper handwashing.

**Updates on Cases:** Parents and staff can expect to receive an email message if a student or staff member in their child's grade tests positive for Covid-19.

**Immediate Treatment:** If a student or family member tests positive, we recommend that the individual consider an immediate consultation with their home physician.