



November 20, 2024

VCS Communicable Disease Prevention Plan

K - 12 Overall Objective

To continue working towards the mission and vision of Vernon Christian School by Equipping students for a life of discipleship by providing excellent education in a Christ-Centred community.

This document was developed with reference to protocols outlined by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the BC Centre for Disease Control, Indigenous rights holders and education partners – including teachers, parents and school leaders – to outline requirements and recommended measures for K-12 school communicable disease prevention plans.

Communicable Disease Prevention Plans

Communicable disease prevention plans focus on reducing the risk of transmission of communicable diseases. These include ongoing prevention measures and may include temporary additional measures. VCS will continue to document and make plans readily available (e.g., post on the school website, on a bulletin board at the school, etc.).

VCS will regularly review its communicable disease prevention plan, and will do so with the administrative team and the Joint Health and Safety Committee. Reviews will address areas where there are identified gaps in implementation. Reviews will address areas where there are identified gaps in implementation. VCS is also expected to update its communicable disease prevention plan in alignment with updates from the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the BC Centre for Disease Control. Additional information, resources and employer requirements are available from [WorkSafeBC](#).

Environmental Practices

Cleaning & Disinfection

Regular cleaning and disinfection can help prevent the transmission of communicable diseases from contaminated objects and surfaces.

Products & Procedures

For **cleaning**, use water and detergent (e.g. liquid dishwashing soap), or common, commercially available products, along with good cleaning practices. For hard-to-reach areas, use a brush and rinse thoroughly prior to disinfecting.

For **disinfection**, use common, commercially available disinfectants. [Health Canada](#) provides information about products with evidence for use against specific communicable diseases that may be useful in selecting products.

Follow these procedures when cleaning and disinfecting:

- Always wash hands before and after handling shared objects.
- Items and surfaces that a person has placed in their mouths or that have been in contact with bodily fluids should be cleaned as soon as possible and between uses by different people.
- Dishwasher-safe items can be cleaned and disinfected in a dishwasher with a hot rinse cycle.

Frequently Touched Surfaces and Shared Use Items

- Cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces should occur at least once in a 24-hour period and when visibly dirty.
- Frequently touched surfaces are items touched by larger numbers of students and staff. They can include doorknobs, light switches, hand railings, water fountains and toilet handles, as well as shared equipment (e.g., computer keyboards, PE/sports and music equipment), appliances (e.g., microwaves) and service counters (e.g., library circulation desk), and may change from day to day based on utilization.
- Frequently touched items like toys or manipulatives that may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g., fabrics) or at all (e.g., sand, foam, playdough, etc.) can be used. Carpets and rugs (e.g., in Kindergarten and StrongStart classes) can also be used.
- Proper hand hygiene should be practiced before and after shared equipment use. Equipment that touches the mouth (e.g., instrument mouth pieces, water bottles, utensils) or has been in contact with bodily fluids should not be shared unless cleaned and disinfected in between uses.

Cleaning and disinfection activities should focus on spaces that have been utilized by staff or students.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Bodily Fluids

Follow these procedures, in conjunction with school/district policies, when cleaning and disinfecting bodily fluids (e.g., runny nose, vomit, stool, urine):

- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning blood or body fluids.
- Wash hands before wearing and after removing gloves.

- Follow regular health and safety procedure and regularly used PPE (e.g., gloves, protective or woven sleeves) for blood and bodily fluids (e.g. toileting, spitting, biting)

General Ventilation and Air Circulation

VCS will regularly maintain HVAC systems for proper operation. Current filters will include those that catch finer grain material. Staff are also encouraged to open windows if weather permits and the HVAC system will not be negatively impacted.

Natural ventilation (operable windows, etc.) and portable HEPA filter units will be considered in regularly occupied classrooms that do not have mechanical ventilation systems.

Use of portable air conditioners and fans in unventilated spaces with doors and windows closed should be avoided, except when necessary.

Hand Hygiene

Rigorous hand washing with plain soap and water or using an [effective hand sanitizer](#) reduces the spread of illness. Follow these guidelines to ensure effective hand hygiene:

- Facilitate regular opportunities for hand hygiene:
 - This can include using portable hand-washing sites and/or alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers containing at least 60% alcohol.
 - VCS will use [commercial hand sanitizer products that have met Health Canada's requirements and are authorised for sale in Canada.](#)
- Ensure hand hygiene supplies are always well stocked including soap, paper towels (or air drier) and where appropriate, alcohol-based hand rub with a minimum of 60% alcohol.
- If hands are visibly soiled, alcohol-based hand rub may not be effective at eliminating microbes. Soap and water are preferred when hands are visibly dirty. If it is not available, use an alcohol based hand wipe followed by alcohol-based hand rub.

Respiratory Etiquette

Parents and staff of VCS can teach and reinforce good respiratory etiquette practices among students, including:

- Cough or sneeze into their elbow or a tissue. Throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.
- Refrain from touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Refrain from sharing any food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, or vaping devices.

Administrative Practices

Health Awareness & Illness Practices

VCS Administrators will ensure that staff, other adults entering the school, parents, caregivers, and students are aware that they should not come to school if they are sick and unable to participate fully in routine activities. Administration can support this practice by communicating the importance of not attending school if sick and unable to participate fully in routine activities.

A health check means a person regularly checking to ensure they (or their child) are not experiencing symptoms of illness that would limit their ability to participate fully in regular activities before coming to school to prevent spread of communicable diseases within the school settings. VCS does not need to monitor students or staff for symptoms of illness.

Staff, students, or other persons in the school setting who are exhibiting symptoms of illness, such as respiratory illness, should stay home until they are well enough to participate in regular activities or otherwise advised by a healthcare provider. Those experiencing certain illnesses, such as gastrointestinal illness caused by norovirus, may be advised to stay home for longer. Staff, children, or other persons can attend school if their symptoms are consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition (e.g., seasonal allergies) or symptoms have improved, and they feel well enough to return to regular activities. If you are unsure or concerned about your symptoms, connect with your healthcare provider or call 8-1-1.

What To Do When Sick

If a staff member, student, or other person develops symptoms of illness at school and is unable to participate in regular activities, they should be supported to go home until their symptoms have improved or otherwise advised by a healthcare provider. Appropriate infection control precautions should be taken while the person is preparing to leave the school premises, including use of appropriate hand hygiene and cleaning/disinfection of surfaces soiled with bodily fluids. They may use a mask if they are experiencing respiratory symptoms.

VCS Administration will also establish procedures for students and staff who become sick while at school/work.

- Continue to have non-medical masks on hand for those who have forgotten theirs but would like to wear one (for both the person who is sick and for those who may be assisting them).
- Make arrangements for the student/staff to go home as soon as possible (e.g., contact student's parent/caregiver for pick-up).
- Schools should have a space available where the student or staff can wait comfortably for pick-up and are separated from others.
 - Younger children must be supervised when separated. Supervising staff can wear a mask, should avoid touching bodily fluids as much as possible and practice diligent hand hygiene.

- Staff responsible for facility cleaning should clean and disinfect the surfaces/equipment which the person's bodily fluids may have been in contact with while they were ill (e.g., their desk in a classroom, the bathroom stall they used, etc.) prior to the surfaces/equipment being used by others. Cleaning/disinfecting the entire room the person was in (a "terminal" clean) is not required in these circumstances.
- Request that the individual stay home until symptoms have improved and they feel well enough to participate in all school-related activities.

Supporting Students With Disabilities/Diverse Abilities And/Or Receiving Health Services

Expectations

VCS is expected to implement health and safety measures that promote inclusion of students with disabilities/diverse abilities. In-class instruction may not be suitable for some children (or families) with severe immune compromise or medical complexity, which should be determined on a case-by-case basis with a medical care provider. VCS should follow regular practices, where possible, for those needing alternative learning arrangements due to immune compromise or medical complexity to ensure access to learning and support.

Guidelines for Staff and/or Those Working with Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities, Complex Behaviours, Medical Complexities, or Receiving Delegated Care Where Physical Contact May Be Required

- Those providing health or education services that require being in close proximity to a student should follow the student's individual care plan (if one is in place) and their standard risk assessment methods to determine what PPE is needed for general communicable disease prevention in accordance with routine practices (e.g., gloves for toileting).
- Those providing health services may be receiving different guidance related to PPE from their regulatory college or employer. Health service providers are encouraged to work with their employer to confirm what PPE is recommended for the services they provide in school settings.
- VCS will continue to have non-medical masks on hand for those who have forgotten theirs but would like to wear one. For more information, see the Personal Protective Equipment section.

Space Arrangement

VCS will use classroom and learning environment configurations and activities that best meet learner needs and preferred educational approaches.

Transportation

Buses should have communicable disease prevention measures in place in line with those in place in the school, and/or as applicable.

Visitor Access/Community Use

Visitors, including community groups using the school, should follow applicable communicable disease prevention measures outlined in this document.

Gatherings/Events

VCS gatherings and events will have communicable disease prevention measures in place in line with those in place in the school.

Curriculum, Programs, and Activities

All curriculum, programs and activities should operate in alignment with school communicable disease prevention plans, including school-led activities held off campus (e.g. sports academies, community based programs/courses). VCS will continue to implement ongoing communicable disease prevention practices (e.g. cleaning and disinfecting, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette) specific to the activity. Additional considerations are noted below.

Field Trips/Trades in Training/Work Experience Programs

Students enrolled in individual training/work experience programs should follow the communicable disease prevention plan required by the workplace/facility or the field trip venue. Classes (or other similar groupings of students) participating in training/work experience programs or field trips should follow the more stringent measures (if applicable) between the school and the workplace/facility/field trip destination's communicable disease prevention plans.

Personal Practices

Health Awareness

Everyone at school should practice health awareness, including staying home when sick, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.

Masks and Face Coverings

The decision to wear a mask is a personal one, based on individual preference. Some students and staff may choose to continue to wear a non-medical mask or face covering throughout the day or for certain activities. The choice of staff and students to choose whether they practice additional personal prevention measures should be respected. Information on non-medical masks is available from [BCCDC](#).

Masks are one layer of protection used to prevent the spread of communicable disease. To be most effective, wearing a mask should be combined with other important protective measures such as getting vaccinated, staying home when sick, and regularly practicing hand hygiene. Masks are most effective when fitted, worn and handled correctly.

Schools can support those who choose to wear a mask, including:

- Promoting a supportive school environment for mask wearing through mask-specific messaging, including at assemblies, in announcements, signs, and written communications. Include that some people wear masks to reduce risk of communicable disease and it is important to be respectful of other's choices. Include evidence-based, trusted information on masks from [BCCDC](#).
- Continue school-wide efforts to create safe and inclusive learning environments free from discrimination, bullying and harassment. Set, communicate and consistently reinforce clear expectations that bullying and disrespectful behaviour and conduct related to personal mask use is unacceptable. Address behaviour in line with protocols and practices (e.g. student code of conduct).

Hand Hygiene

Staff and students should be encouraged to practice hand hygiene upon school entry and before/after breaks and eating, using the washroom and using frequently touched shared equipment.

Respiratory Etiquette

Staff and students should:

- Cough and sneeze into their elbow, sleeve, or a tissue.
- Throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.

Personal Space

Staff and students should be encouraged to respect others personal space (the distance from which a person feels comfortable being next to another person).

Sharing Food, Beverages, and Other Items That Touch The Mouth

Staff and students should be encouraged to not share items that come in contact with the mouth (e.g. food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, vaping devices).

Shared-use items that touch the mouth should be cleaned between use by different individuals (e.g., water bottles, instrument mouth pieces).

Vaccines

Vaccines are important tools to protect against serious outcomes of many communicable diseases, such as COVID-19 and influenza. Students and staff are encouraged to ensure they are up to date on all [recommended vaccines for communicable diseases](#).

Schools and school districts are expected to work with their local health authority to share evidence-based information about vaccination (e.g. from [BCCDC](#) and [ImmunizeBC](#)), and to explore opportunities to establish school-based vaccination clinics when requested.

Helpful Resources

[Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#)
[Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools](#)