



TCS Covid Plan 2021-22

INTRODUCTION

The Children's School welcomes its students, families and teachers for another year of great promise as children learn and grow to their full potential. Just as the campus is on the cusp of fall's bloom and our classrooms are brimming with engaging learning materials, books and technologies, so has The Children's School staff been dedicated to preparing for a safe, engaging beginning of school.

You, our parents, can trust that the tradition of care, thought and research for which the School is known has been followed in preparing for the 2021-22 school year during the pandemic. As the plan illustrates, the School is committed to mitigating the risk of Covid, maximizing the safety of all and assuring that our mission to offer an exceptional, individualized learning experience to students is fulfilled during the pandemic.

This plan has been developed in close consultation with highly respected health experts, including area pediatricians as well as Dr. Sten Vermund, dean of the Yale School of Public Health, who is both an infectious disease specialist and a pediatrician. City of Stamford and State of Connecticut health authorities, along with the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools, have also been advisers during our planning. The Children's School will continue to communicate with these experts frequently so that it can continue to maintain the best health and safety protocols in its classrooms and outdoor play areas, and make adjustments as necessary.

The families at The Children's School can start off the year knowing that the staff is primed to offer superior learning programs in an environment that has been—and will continue to be—prepared meticulously to safeguard the health and well-being of their children.

Maureen Murphy
Head of School

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To meet the needs of its students and teachers during the pandemic, The Children's School will follow these guiding principles:

- The School's work is always essential, and it is even more so now during this extended period of unusual circumstances. Our role as educators is to support children and communicate to them that in difficult times, everyone comes together in support of one another so that all can move forward with strength and purpose.
- The School's first priority is always the health and safety of its students, staff, faculty and families. A safe reopening of school depends upon six practices: maximizing the use of outdoor space, wearing masks, maintaining physical distance, dividing each grade level into cohorts, frequent handwashing and disinfecting surfaces.
- Students will be welcomed back to campus this fall because in-person instruction is most effective in nurturing good habits of mind, heart and physical development for children ages 3 to 8. At the same time, the School recognizes that it cannot control many factors and must work within the larger context of an unpredictable pandemic. As such, the School will monitor students and staff carefully and will consult with Stamford's Department of Public Health should a case of Covid be confirmed in the school community.
- The School takes its role seriously as a support to students and members of the TCS community during this historic disruption, and it remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring that each student's individual needs are met in their development and learning.
- Strong communication among the staff, students and parents will be critical to children's safety and success at school.
- The Children's School will remain nimble and continue to develop its ability to deliver effective, innovative learning programs. Adjustments to the School's health and safety protocols and processes will be made as needed.

COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

To keep everyone safe, we ask members of the School community to work together in a responsible and informed way to protect the health of all. The School has made many modifications to its usual procedures to protect members of its community, and these changes will require clear communication and collaboration. TCS will continue to modify and fine-tune its community safety guidelines in response to the pandemic.

- Even when not on campus, all families are expected to follow the directives of government health authorities regarding appropriate social distancing, the use of face masks in public, and other measures to prevent the spread of Covid.
- Before leaving home each morning, parents will be required to take their child's temperature and verify that he or she meets all the requirements on our health screening. This daily checklist will be a new routine, and the Greeter will verify verbally at drop-off that each child has been screened. Parents must wear face masks when dropping off and picking up children.
- Keep your child at home if they show any symptoms of illness. Any daily absence must be reported to the School. Notify us immediately about any health changes in your household.
- Parents will be contacted if a child is not feeling well at school, and the child will need to be picked up right away.

TRAVEL

- Adults who are fully vaccinated for Covid can travel freely within the U.S. However, because children under 12 cannot yet be vaccinated, family travel with children outside the state of Connecticut should be reported to the School before making the trip.
- For families who are not vaccinated and travel outside the State of Connecticut, your child must get a PCR test 5 days after your return and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel. Your child may return to school on Day 8 after submitting a negative PCR test to the School.
- For families who do not want to test after travel, your child must observe a 10-day quarantine starting the day after your return. (The day of your return from a trip counts as Day 0.)
- For international travel outside the U.S., both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals are required to self-quarantine upon return and to take a PCR test for Covid on Day 5. (The day of return counts as Day 0.) Students may return to School on Day 8 after submitting a negative PCR test.

HEALTH & SAFETY PROCEDURES OVERVIEW

FACE COVERINGS

- Children will be expected to bring and wear a face covering/mask that effectively covers the nose and mouth. The school will have extra masks on hand when needed.
- Teachers and staff members will wear masks at all times.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- To reduce crowding, there will be staggered times for drop-off and pickup.
- The schedule will allow each discreet cohort to move to different areas while social distancing. At times, specialist teachers will move between classrooms to provide instruction for the children.
- Staff are trained in these guidelines, ensuring a safe workplace.

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE

- All students will complete a daily health screening before the school day begins.
- Handwashing will be built into the day, taking place upon entry to the school as well as before and after eating.
- Students will have frequent lessons and modeling on the importance of handwashing and social distancing.
- Hand sanitizer and wipes will be abundant and available throughout the campus.
- Protocols will be created for hanging coats and locker storage to avoid group gatherings.
- Hand dryers will not be used in the bathrooms and will be replaced with disposable towel dispensers.
- Water fountains will be shut off.
- Trash cans will offer no-touch operation or will not have a lid.

OUTDOOR SPACES

- The use of outdoor spaces will be maximized whenever possible. The School's spacious campus offers many options for individual lessons, small groups and play.
- Lunch, music and movement will be reconfigured and held outside (weather permitting).

INDOOR AIR QUALITY

- Our LEED-certified building utilizes a top-of-the-line ventilation system that allows fresh air to circulate throughout the building.
- Windows and doors will be open as much as possible to increase ventilation.

ENHANCED CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- The School has intensified its daily cleaning and disinfection practices in compliance with CDC recommendations.
- High-touch surfaces will be cleaned throughout the day, and classroom materials and workspaces will be wiped with antibacterial/antiviral products after use.
- A professional service will deep-clean all buildings six days a week.

VISITORS ON CAMPUS

- Only visitors deemed essential will be allowed on campus. All visitors will be required to have an appointment.
- Visitors must show proof of vaccination and complete a temperature check and health screening before being allowed on campus. A face mask must be worn during the visit. Hand sanitizer will be available for use.
- Visitors will have limited access to campus and only allowed to enter areas deemed necessary.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

- Teachers will be sensitive and responsive to each child's emotional and social well-being while at school.
- If you sense your child is experiencing significant emotional challenges regarding the pandemic or any of the health and safety measures, please let us know and we will provide additional support and resources.

FIELD TRIPS

At this time, excursions off campus will be suspended.

LARGE GROUP GATHERINGS

- At this time, large group gatherings are suspended. We will continue to follow the advice of public health experts regarding the safety of group gatherings.

MONITORING THE HEALTH OF STUDENTS & STAFF

SYMPTOMS REQUIRING THAT STUDENTS STAY HOME

People with Covid have reported a variety of symptoms ranging from mild to severe illness. It is important to remember that while children often exhibit mild (or no) symptoms, the illness is no less serious or contagious when a child is a carrier of the coronavirus. An abundance of caution should be used any time a child seems unwell or is exhibiting even the mildest symptoms.

The symptoms of Covid to look for are:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

CONTAINMENT GUIDELINES

The School will monitor all staff and students regularly and will remind parents to notify the School of any family illness, a possible exposure or any travel outside the state with unvaccinated children. We recognize that even with vigilance in these actions, the virus may be introduced to our community. Since early identification and contact tracing are essential tools, TCS will implement the following containment guidelines in the event that there is a diagnosed case of Covid among the students or teachers at school:

- Students and staff members are required to stay home if they develop any of the symptoms listed above.
- If Covid has been ruled out and the child or staff member has received an alternate diagnosis (e.g., tested positive for influenza), the criteria for returning to School or work will be based on that diagnosis.
- TCS will monitor student and staff absenteeism and track the reasons for their absences to identify any trends that would suggest illnesses such as Covid or others are spreading.
- If a child is not feeling well at school, there will be a dedicated room where he or she can wait to be picked up.
- Guidance from the school nurse will be sought. The family will be instructed to pick up their child right away at an identified dismissal area.

- The same isolation procedures will be followed if a staff member feels ill while at school.

IF A MEMBER OF OUR COMMUNITY TESTS POSITIVE

If any person in your household tests positive for Covid, the following actions are required:

1. You must inform the Head of School as soon as possible. Your family's privacy is assured.
2. Any student, family or faculty member with a case of Covid must isolate at home for 10 days from the date symptoms first appeared. Please follow the federal guidelines on self-isolation or self-quarantine in this situation. Staff or students with signs or symptoms of the illness may only return to school with a documented negative Covid test result or a note from a health care provider clearing them to return to the school community safely, based on a negative virus test and an absence of further symptoms.
3. In the case of a positive infection in our school community, The Children's School will work closely with the Stamford Health Department to conduct contact tracing and evaluate the possibility of in-school exposure.
4. Household members and close contacts of a Covid-positive individual will be asked to quarantine for 10 days from the last known contact they had with the infected person. A child may return to School after a negative Covid test, per State of Connecticut guidelines.
5. Students in the same cohort as a Covid-positive individual will be required to quarantine as a result of a positive test in our community.
6. The Children's School is prepared to pivot quickly based on changing circumstances or new instructions from state or local health authorities.

POSSIBLE CLOSURE OF SCHOOL

If there is an additional surge of illnesses in our area, it is possible the State will close all schools. The Children's School will monitor the situation closely, communicate with the City of Stamford and the State of Connecticut, and will be prepared to resume distance learning if needed. In the event that Covid is detected and present in our community, The Children's School and its Covid Task Force will work with local authorities to determine if a partial or complete shutdown is appropriate. In that instance, we will also be prepared to resume distance learning.

CONCLUSION

The saying “We are all in this together” has been invoked many times by public health experts in the past two and half years, and for good reason. Compliance with the guidelines outlined in this Plan has a multiplier effect, in the sense that precautions taken by individuals will have a cumulative beneficial effect on The Children’s School community as a whole.

Acting on behalf of others, such as fellow students and teachers, is very much in keeping with the School’s mission, in particular the value of respect, which is emphasized again and again in our classrooms. Self-respect and respect for others come together powerfully in this Plan. It is our hope that, despite the great tragedy of the pandemic, the opportunity it gives your children to act for the common good will stay with them forever.

Though some of our procedures and traditions may be different this year, the School’s child-centered mission and culture of warmth and respect will remain unchanged. As always, our teachers are looking forward to the year ahead, eager to foster your children’s curiosity, stoke their love of learning and coax their intellectual, social and emotional potential to its fullest expression.

All of us at The Children’s School are grateful for your commitment to stay the course and to weather the weeks and months ahead with us. We are all in this together and are better for it.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Connecticut Covid-19 Response: <https://portal.ct.gov/coronavirus>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- World Health Organization (WHO): <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

This is a working document. It will be updated as the rapidly changing conditions of the pandemic yield new information about safety, health and screening standards as well as effective, evidence-based treatments. As warranted, additional recommendations from local, state and federal agencies related to Covid will also be incorporated into this Plan.