



Return-to-School Plan and Details

Dear HCS Parents and Community;

We hope that you and your families have been enjoying the summer break. We know that many of you are anxious to know about plans for your children for the upcoming school year. Our leadership team has been working hard to develop our return-to-school plan. These efforts have been complicated by the reality that COVID 19 conditions, and health and government guidance, are constantly changing. Nevertheless, we now have a plan in place that is supported by both the Minister of Education and the Huron Perth Health Unit, and will always place the health and safety of your children at the forefront, every day.

Stated briefly: our plan is to provide a full-time return to in-person schooling on September 8, with students grouped into cohorts by grade, with safety measures in place. Of course, we will need to remain flexible and ready to adapt if conditions or government regulations change. For the present, however, we are excited to be able to welcome our students back to in-person schooling. This update provides further details about our plan.

General Context

Our leadership team has considered the three general scenarios put forward by the Ontario government (See “Ontario Approach to Reopening Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year” at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/approach-reopening-schools-2020-2021-school-year>) as possibilities for schooling that public schools were asked to prepare for:

- Return to “normal” school
- Remote learning with school closed
- A hybrid or “cohort” model.

Although we all would love to return to fully “normal” schooling, current uncertainties caused by COVID-19 require that we be prepared for each of these possibilities. We have considered each option and are prepared to adjust quickly based on recommendations from the government and public health. We have focused our planning efforts on the third option, and more specifically on a “cohort” model instead of the hybrid. We have done so for these main reasons:

- We believe that we can readily pivot back to “normal” school or to remote learning models depending on conditions, but the cohort model requires more extensive planning.
- Most medical experts advise that younger (elementary-age) children are at relatively low risk of contracting or getting seriously ill from COVID-19, and that children are best served by a return to in-person schooling with appropriate precautions. See, for example, recommendations from Sick Kids Hospital pediatricians at: cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/sickkids-experts-recommendations-1.5667023 . You can find the full updated report here: sickkids.ca/PDFs/About-SickKids/81407-COVID19-Recommendations-for-SchoolReopening-SickKids.pdf
- We believe that we can successfully and safely implement a cohort model, within Ontario government and Public Health guidance, and with a modest additional cost.



- We believe that in-person teaching/learning is more effective and is preferred by most of our students, families, and teachers.

Guiding Principles

We adopted the following guidelines for our planning:

- Profess that God is fully in control of all of our planning. He is the one who leads.
- Provide quality Christ Centered education
- Provide an education that strives to meet the needs of all children, regardless of their abilities.
- Put the safety of students and staff first, by following regulations and guidance of the Ontario government and Public Health officers.
- Provide continuity of learning in core subject areas
- Be collaborative, creative, and innovative in developing solutions to meet the needs of our students. (E.g. staff working in teams, outdoor ed, additional DPA, etc.)
- Be supportive of students and families who are may be at very different comfort levels with returning to full time schooling.

Plan Outline

We will provide in-person learning at school 5 days per week with each student placed in cohorts by grade. In the cohort model, the objective is to have the cohort stick together with minimal contact with those who are NOT in one's cohort. (See the note about our current cohort sizes at the end of this document.)

This means:

Within the cohort, we are able to support physical distancing of 1 metre.

- Masks (non-medical) will be required for students in Grades 4-8, as well as for staff, when indoors or on the bus. For students in JK – grade 3, masks will be optional.
- Each teacher will be responsible for the majority of instruction of all subjects for their class.
- Some rotation will occur as necessary for teacher prep times, French in grades 4 – 8 and Band in grades 7 and 8 only. Proper handwashing and mask protocols will be followed as teachers move in and out of the spaces. Students will not move from room to room.
- To eliminate large gatherings, all-school events like chapels and assemblies will be shifted to video.

Safety Measures

We will have a variety of safety measures in place that we will need to enforce strictly. Without detailing all of those measures, some of them include:

1. **Active pre-screening to be done at home:**



- i. Parents will be provided with a health checklist to apply daily to ensure that they do not send children to school if they are ill or showing COVID related symptoms. Staff will be required to follow the same protocol.
- ii. Immediate isolation of students or staff if they show symptoms of COVID. A room will be dedicated for this purpose. Parents will be contacted immediately to pick up their child from school.
- iii. If a student or staff member exhibits any COVID-related symptoms, they must be tested. They may return to the school once they receive a negative test result and their symptoms have cleared.
- iv. Policies and procedures for positive COVID cases will be developed in consultation with the public health authority and shared with families at a later date.

2. At school:

- i. Staggered entry and exit of students with cohorts socially distanced as much as possible. Recesses also will be staggered by cohort (grade).
- ii. Students in Grades 4-8 are required to wear a mask provided by the family. This is optional for students in JK – grade 3. Cloth masks are recommended, as they are washable and reusable. Disposable masks will be on hand for children who forgot theirs. Face shields will also be available to staff who wish to use one.
- iii. Signs and floor labels throughout the school to remind students of social distancing and traffic flow.
- iv. Regular hand-washing and use of hand sanitizer (each classroom will have a supply) for each cohort.
- v. Regular disinfecting of high-touch areas of the school throughout the day by custodial staff.
- vi. Minimize shared items within the classroom. Each student should have their own school supplies (we will be providing parents with an updated school supply list).
- vii. Minimize sharing of toys to items that can be wiped down regularly with sanitizer. Cloth items like stuffies, etc., should be removed from use and/or kept home.

Bussing

We will offer our regular bussing services, with safety precautions in place as much as possible:

- a) Loading and unloading of buses at school to be supervised by staff to ensure distancing of cohorts.
- b) Hand sanitizer will be provided on each bus.
- c) Students in Grades 4-8 must wear a mask on the bus. Masks are optional on the bus for students in JK – grade 3.
- d) Students will be assigned seats with siblings, or will be assigned to their own seat if they have no siblings on the bus. If there are not enough seats, students will be placed with members of their classroom cohort to minimize the number of contacts.
- e) Bus drivers will be provided with a check-list and with equipment to do a disinfecting wipe down of their bus at the end of every ride.



Cohorts and cohort sizes:

In order to keep our cohorts at a manageable size, the board has approved the formation of an additional JK/SK class. This will keep our kindergarten cohort size to about 15 students/cohort. It should be noted that if a family decides to send their child to Building Blocks, (our optional non-kindergarten day program), that child would automatically be part of the JK/SK class, since he/she might be interacting with children from either JK or SK in the Building Blocks cohort on non-kindergarten days.

Based on enrolment numbers at the time of writing this letter, our cohort sizes would be the following:

JK – 15	SK – 15	JK/SK – 13	Gr. 1 – 21
Gr. 2 – 18	Gr. 3 – 20	Gr. 4/5 – 20	Gr. 5/6 – 19
Gr. 7 – 16	Gr. 8 - 14		

Tuition

Tuition will be the amount that was approved at the Spring Membership meeting on June 29, 2020.

Uniforms

Due to the uncertainty of this school year, and the inability to have the regular fitting and ordering days, the following uniform expectations are in place for the start of the school year:

- All students will be required to wear a school uniform shirt.
- If students have McCarthy uniform pants that fit, they are expected to wear them. If not, the uniform committee may have some in stock that can be purchased. Otherwise students can wear khaki pants that have been purchased from Old Navy/The Gap.
- JK and SK students are required to wear the school uniform shirt only; they may wear any pants they want.

Urgent Survey and Upcoming Virtual Town Hall Meeting

To help us in our planning of class cohorts and busing, we need to hear from you regarding how comfortable you are with sending your children to HCS as we enter the new school year. You will receive a link to a brief survey. **Please complete the survey by Friday, August 14.** This will allow us to complete our planning. Thank-you!

On Monday evening, **August 17, 2020, at 8:00**, we will host a virtual town hall meeting for general questions around this return-to-school plan for those who wish to participate. An invitation will be sent out separately.

We pray, and trust, that these measures will allow us to return to regular schooling safely for the benefit of our students and their families. Please be assured that we will carefully follow government and Public Health guidance throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and will be ready to adapt quickly as needed.

In Christ Alone,

Nick Geleynse
Principal
Huron Christian School