

Learning Groups and Physical Distancing - Updated February 2021

LEARNING GROUPS

A Learning Group is a group of students and staff who remain together throughout a school term and who primarily interact with each other. As part of the Ministry of Education's Stage 2, Learning Groups will be of 60 people. "Learning groups are smallest in elementary and middle schools because it is more challenging for younger students to maintain physical distance" – Ministry of Education (MoEd). "The PHO order on mass gatherings does not apply to schools, as events are defined in the order as an irregular gathering, like a party or celebration" – MoEd

- Learning Groups at St. Bernadette's will remain consistent for all activities that occur in schools.
- Examples of how learning groups will be used at St. Bernadette's:
 - Entering and exiting the school
 - Shared recess time
 - Attending Mass
 - extramural activities.
- Learning group composition can be changed at the start of a new term. Composition should be changed as minimally as possible. No additional safety protocols are required following a change in learning group composition.
- Consistent seating arrangements are encouraged where practical.
- Unless staff members belong to the same learning group, they should maintain physical distance (2m) from one another at all times. Masks are not a replacement for physical distancing between staff from different learning groups.
- St. Bernadette's will minimize the number of staff who interact with learning groups they are not a part of as much as possible while continuing to support learning and a positive, healthy and safe environment.
- When possible, St. Bernadette School will use the principal and/or the learning resource teacher to be a teacher in the classroom as opposed to bringing in a temporary teacher on call. This will minimize the number of adults interacting with the students and will use current staff who are knowledgeable and fully understand the methods and design of the school's health and safety plan.
- St. Bernadette School will have educational assistant practicum students in the school. These students will be assigned to a learning group.

ST. BERNADETTE LEARNING GROUPS

- LG1 – Kindergarten and Grade 1
- LG2 – Grade 2 and Grade 3
- LG3 – Grade 4 and Grade 5
- LG4 – Grade 6 and Grade 7

The following start and dismissal times are indefinite:

School Start

8:45am – LG2 – enter directly into their classroom

8:45am – LG4 – enter directly into their classroom

8:55am – LG1 – enter directly into their classroom

8:55am – LG3 – enter directly into the grade 5 class and through the gym doors for grade 4

School dismissal (except Wednesdays – see below)

2:50pm – LG2 – exit through the doors by the gym or directly out of the classroom

2:50pm – LG4 – exit directly out of their classroom

3:00pm – LG1 – exit directly out of their classroom

3:00pm – LG3 – exit directly out of the grade 5 class and through the gym doors for grade 4

Wednesday School dismissal (see above for entrance and exit doors)

2:05pm – LG2 & LG4

2:15pm – LG1 & LG3

Half Day School dismissal (see above for entrance and exit doors)

11:50pm – LG2 & LG4

12:00pm – LG1 & LG3

Morning Recess

10:25 – 10:40 – LG2 and LG4

10:45 – 11:00 – LG3 and LG1

Lunch Recess

11:40 – 12:10 – LG2 and LG4

12:15 – 12:45 – LG1 and LG3

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Physical distancing refers to a range of measures aimed at reducing close contact with others. Physical distancing is used as a prevention measure because COVID-19 tends to spread through prolonged, close, face-to-face contact.

- Within Learning Groups, physical distancing should include avoiding physical contact, minimizing close, prolonged, face-to-face interactions, and spreading out as much as possible within the space available.
 - Young children may not be able to consistently reduce physical contact.
 - St. Bernadette's regularly reviews all operational activities & services that occur in the school
- Outside of Learning Groups, physical distancing should include avoiding physical contact and close, prolonged face-to-face interactions, spreading out as much as possible within the space provided and ensuring there is 2 meters of space available between people from different Learning Groups.
- For situations where members from different Learning Groups interact (specialist teachers, office staff, etc.):
 - If people will be in the same space for an extended period of time (greater than 15minutes), the space should be sufficiently large, and/or should have limits on the number of people so that 2 meters of space is available between people from different Learning Groups.
- Within and outside of Learning Groups, there should be no crowding.
- Staff and other adults should seek to reduce the number of close, face-to-face interactions with each other at all times, even if wearing a non-medical mask. This includes during break times, in the staff room and in meetings.

To support physical distancing requirements, St. Bernadette's has the following strategies implemented where possible:

- Staff/students will avoid close greetings (e.g. hugs, handshakes).
- Staff will regularly remind students about keeping their hands to themselves.
- Teachers will create spaces between students/staff as much as possible:
 - Maximize distance between students and staff through their learning environments when possible
 - Use consistent or assigned seating arrangements where practical
 - Store excess equipment to free up more space
- The school has implemented strategies that prevent crowding at pick-up and drop-off times
 - Classes are to enter and exit through their classroom doors (grade 4 will use the gym doors)
 - Start and end times are staggered, and classes will exit a few minutes apart.
 - Kindergarten and Gr. 1 will be picked up from the classroom. All other grades will have a designated waiting area for pick-up.

- Recess times are staggered based on Learning Groups
- Teachers are advised to take students outside more often when possible.
- Teachers are advised not to share manipulatives or high touch items when possible. Proper hygiene must be followed when items are shared.
- When students change their shoes, they are to do so in their classroom.
- The hallway has floor markings to direct traffic flow through the school. Markings are used around the bathroom area to promote physical distancing.
- In classrooms, physical barriers are installed when physical distancing is not possible.
- Staff and other adults should seek to reduce the number of close, face-to-face interactions with each other at all times, even if wearing a non-medical mask. This includes during break times, in the staff room and in meetings.
- Staff meetings will be held virtually when possible.
- Staff are required to wear masks when indoors, especially when they are unable to maintain physical distancing, and a barrier is not present.