

**Diocese of Harrisburg Catholic Schools**  
**Current Approach to Masking**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled on December 10 that the Department of Health school masking mandate was invalid. Why then are the Catholic schools in our Diocese continuing to require masking?

*The ruling December 10 returned the decision on masking to the local level. Each school district is now able to make its own decision.*

*We would all prefer a situation where masks were not required. However, sudden changes to our protocols do not provide the time necessary for our Catholic schools to make orderly adjustments to their buildings. A sudden change in masking protocols could have a significantly negative impact on quarantines, and **could hurt our ability to offer in-person learning**. We also wish to provide additional time for parents to ensure their children are fully vaccinated, as we have received requests to that end. Therefore our reopening committee concluded that continuing to mask for the moment is the prudent decision.*

What do you mean, when you say a sudden change in masking could have a negative impact on quarantines?

*With all parties masked, CDC guidelines require the COVID positive person to quarantine, and anyone within three feet of the COVID positive person for fifteen minutes. Without masking, the COVID positive person and anyone within **six feet** for fifteen minutes must quarantine.*

How are other Catholic dioceses handling masking?

*Practice varies, but the nearby Diocese of Scranton and Diocese of Allentown are requiring masks in schools at this time.*

Why are masks mandated for our Catholic schools but masking is not required to attend Mass?

*The COVID-19 vaccines have been available for adults for nearly a year, yet were just recently approved for children. By maintaining masking in our Catholic schools at this time, we are allowing time for an orderly transition to optional masking protocols.*

Have protocols changed for qualifying for an exemption from the mask mandate?

*No. Parents who have legitimate medical documentation that shows their children qualify for an exemption from face masks may obtain a waiver.*

The information from the Diocese says the masking situation will be re-evaluated in January. Can you be more specific?

*The DOH masking mandate was scheduled to expire on January 17. While it is our intention to provide information to parents prior to that date on our masking policies, we must also give our Catholic schools the time needed to make any changes to classrooms as a means of limiting potential quarantines and maximizing in-person learning.*

*We hope to return to a mask-optional policy on **January 17**, but we will confirm as we get closer to that date, as we need to evaluate the situation once we return to school from Christmas.*

What other information will be considered prior to the January announcement?

*Throughout the pandemic, we have required weekly COVID data reports from our Catholic schools. These reports have been vital in providing an accurate view of COVID cases in our schools. By using this information, we can make informed decisions on mitigation measures.*

My child has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Does my child still need to wear a mask?

*At this time, students, faculty, staff and visitors will continue masking while indoors in our Catholic schools. However, fully vaccinated students, faculty and staff do not need to quarantine if exposed to a COVID positive person.*

Some scientific reports do not support masking as an effective way to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in children. Why are we continuing to mask?

*The current masking protocols in our Catholic schools are to allow our schools to plan and make adjustments to their buildings in preparation for a return to a mask-optional policy. This extension in masking also provides parents additional time to have their children vaccinated, if they so choose.*