



DEVOTED TO CHRIST - DEDICATED TO  
EXCELLENCE

**COVID and Illness  
Response Plan  
2021-2022**

Dear Hillcrest Family,

As we are embarking on the beginning of a new school year, know that the HCS Leadership continues our work to ensure the health and safety of our community upon the return to school. Our students' and families' safety is our top priority. We are looking at the most current information that is available to us, and we encourage our families to do the same. We are seeking the guidance of national, state, and association officials in making the decisions for the school. We are also looking at the most recent data in reference to responding to the safety of our students. We have looked at the research on the benefits and concerns of vaccination, the safety of wearing masks, the surface and airborne contraction of viruses, and many other issues in the area of health and wellness.

We are reopening Hillcrest Christian School on August 4, 2021. We recognize that many families have differing opinions on the course of action in which the school leadership should take, and we have considered ways to meet those variations of expectations. In reopening, there will be guidelines in which our students, staff, faculty, parents, and guests will be required to follow. All requirements are listed in this document, and are subject to change based on new information and mandates that may occur.

Thank you for the comments of those that shared concerns and opinions on how to make Hillcrest Christian School a safe and secure school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlie Jackson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "C".

Charlie Jackson, Ed.S.

Head of School

## **COVID Response Plan**

**ALL STUDENTS WILL HAVE THEIR TEMPERATURE CHECKED UPON ENTERING THE SCHOOL BUILDING.**

**ALL PARENTS MUST SIGN UP FOR CLEARANCE 19 <https://clearance19.app/login> OR DOWNLOAD THE APP FROM THE ANDROID OR APPLE STORE. TO SIGN UP, the school code is ORRAQ**

**ALL PARENTS MUST COMPLETE THE CLEARANCE 19 SCREENING FORM EACH DAY BEFORE DROPPING OFF STUDENTS. YOU MUST PROVIDE PROOF ON YOUR PHONE FOR THE TEACHER BEFORE THE STUDENT CAN GET OUT OF THE CAR.**

**THERE ARE NO VIRTUAL LEARNING OPTIONS AT THIS TIME.**

### **Vaccination and Masks Guidelines for Students:**

- All students must wear masks in the buildings. Masks are not mandatory outside as long as distancing is being observed.
- All students that are riding in a school vehicle must wear masks.
- All students should be spaced with three feet between each student.

### **Quarantine Guidelines for Students:**

- All students that are showing specific signs of COVID will be isolated until a parent can pick them up and will be required to go and be tested. They will not be allowed back in school without a test result that is negative for COVID. If the test result is positive for COVID, the student will be quarantined for a total of 10 days from the date of the positive COVID test. A student that tests positive for COVID will have to provide a test result that is negative for COVID before returning to school. If a student tests positive for COVID, they are legally responsible for alerting the school.
- If a student that has been vaccinated has a test result positive for COVID, they will still be quarantined for 10 days.
- All students are subject to contact tracing if within the three feet of an infected person for 15 minutes or more. If contact is traced to within three feet of an infected person, the traced student must quarantine for 5 days.
- If a student is quarantined, the school will provide all assignments and classroom audio of lectures to the student through Google Classroom. The student will need access to the internet and a computer at home. All missing assignments and tests will be due within 7 days of returning to school if quarantined for testing positive for COVID because there should be time during the quarantine to work on assignments. If a student is

contact-traced for a COVID situation and quarantined, the assignments and tests are due by the end of the school day on the day of returning to school.

- If a student has severe complications to COVID, we will deal with each situation on a case by case basis in regards to returning to school and turning in assignments.

**ALL FACULTY AND STAFF WILL HAVE THEIR TEMPERATURE CHECKED UPON ENTERING THE SCHOOL BUILDING.**

**ALL FACULTY AND STAFF MUST COMPLETE THEIR DAILY COVID SCREENING GOOGLE FORM EACH MORNING. IT WILL AUTOMATICALLY SEND DATA TO THE RECEPTIONIST AND HEAD OF SCHOOL.**

#### **Vaccination and Masks Guidelines for Faculty and Staff:**

- All faculty and staff that are not vaccinated, masks are mandatory in the buildings. Masks are not mandatory outside as long as distancing is being observed..
- All faculty and staff that are riding in a school vehicle must wear masks.
- All faculty and staff should be spaced with three feet between each student and other faculty.

#### **Quarantine Guidelines for Students:**

- All faculty and staff that are showing specific signs of COVID will be isolated until a will be required to go and be tested. They will not be allowed back in school without a test result that is negative for COVID. If the test result is positive for COVID, the faculty or staff will be quarantined for a total of 10 days from the date of the positive COVID test. A faculty or staff that tests positive for COVID will have to provide a test result that is negative for COVID before returning to school. If a faculty or staff tests positive for COVID, they are legally responsible for alerting the school.
- If a faculty and staff that has been vaccinated has a test result positive for COVID, they will still be quarantined for 10 days.
- All faculty and staff are subject to contact tracing if within the three feet of an infected person for 15 minutes or more. If contact is traced to within three feet of an infected person, the traced student must quarantine for 5 days.

#### **1. PROTECTION**

On campus screening will be enacted for all students before departure from their vehicles or entry to school. Screening includes checking for temperatures of 100 and over and a series of COVID related questions. Students checking in after the carpool is over will be screened by staff before entry.

Bathroom use will be regulated with disinfectant wipes/spray available between use. Hand washing will be required before exiting the restroom. Assistance will be provided for younger students.

All water fountains will be converted to water bottle filling stations or hand washing stations. We are asking all students to bring personal water bottles daily as our community water fountains will not be accessible.

Visitor access will be very limited. Any visitor (including parents) will be required to check in at the Administration Building and undergo the COVID screening process. Outside vendors will be permitted only in areas where students are not present and preferably when students are not on campus (after hours, weekends).

## **2. DISTANCE**

Social distancing in each classroom will be a priority; preferably 3 feet between students.

Students will walk down the hallway keeping traffic to the far right of the hallway while being conscious of social distancing. Teachers will be at their doors during class change to monitor the transition. Teachers will also be positioned at all hallway intersections to monitor hallway transition.

Middle School and Upper School classes with larger numbers may relocate to bigger campus spaces or outdoor classroom areas to make social distancing easier when weather permits.

All students in grades 6-12 will be assigned a locker as normal. Locker visits will be staggered to allow appropriate social distancing.

## **3. DISINFECT**

Hand sanitizing stations will be available throughout campus and in each classroom. We will ask that all students bring one bottle of hand sanitizer to their first period teacher.

All areas will be disinfected at regular intervals throughout the day with emphasis on shared and frequently touched surfaces.

Desktops, chairs, and commonly used surfaces will be disinfected between classroom rotations. Student belongings will be separated in labeled cubbies, desk caddies, lockers, or other suitable containers.

Students will have their own sets of supplies (no shared items) in classes such as art, science labs, Maker's Space, etc. Cleaning will be done daily in each classroom after dismissal.

Deep cleaning will be done in each campus space weekly.

Playgrounds will be disinfected between use by each class.

#### **4. ADAPT**

Large gatherings such as Lower School Chapel and Middle and Upper School Chapel may be live streamed for the time being.

We will hold classroom activities in outdoor spaces or larger classroom spaces instead of regular classroom space when possible.

Open windows and doors will be used for cross ventilation.

Break/Lunch routines may be altered to begin the year. Schedules may be changed and social distancing will be utilized to reduce close contact between students. Some grade levels eat lunches in their classrooms. All food purchases will continue to be made through your online account and students may bring their lunches. Be advised that microwaves may not be available. More details concerning break/lunch will be provided prior to the beginning of school.

Outdoor eating and learning areas will be created in every available campus space for small groups of students.

Playground and gym schedules will be altered to limit the number of students in these areas at one time.

More time will be allowed between class changes to accommodate staggered locker visits, longer waits for restroom use, and sanitizing classrooms between groups of students.

## **Hillcrest Christian School Return to School FAQ's**

### **Q: Will there be athletics in the fall?**

A: Right now, all Fall sports are participating in conditioning programs adhering to guidelines from the Mid-South Association of Independent Schools (MAIS). MAIS provides a weekly update to our Athletic Director, Reinaldo Dixon, and school administrators. The plan they are proposing at this time indicates our athletic programs will proceed as normal. There are factors that can certainly change this plan, but we are hopeful that the only changes may be a later start for competitions between schools or a change to how fans view athletic competitions.

### **Q: What is the mask policy? Does everyone have to wear one all day?**

A: Our school stance on masks is “Approved face coverings will be required for all faculty, staff, and students.” So, what does this mean? (1) Facemasks will be mandatory for all students/staff entering building, in hallways, cafeteria, and exiting building; (2) Facemasks can be removed

upon entering the classroom by utilizing social distancing. We are requiring each student and staff member to bring an approved face covering each day. The mask should be cleaned nightly. If your child forgets his or her mask, we do have disposable masks available for emergency use. (We ask that you provide a face mask for your child daily. HCS will have an emergency supply but can't provide unlimited masks.) One thing we know for sure is that things are constantly changing with the virus. There may be times when we ask our community members to wear their masks more than they normally would and times when they are used less depending on the level of spread. Another thing we know for sure is that face coverings can help stop the spread of the virus when used correctly. The CDC has shared that COVID-19 spreads mostly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced from an infected person. Studies show that sometimes people with COVID-19 have no symptoms. Even with our diligent health screenings, social distancing measures, and cleaning protocols, the use of cloth face coverings will give us an extra level of protection. To reduce the spread of COVID-19, CDC recommends that people wear cloth face coverings in public settings when around people outside of their household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. There will be instances during the school day where social distancing could be hard to do such as group work situations, severe weather drills, some class changes, and one-on-one work with a counselor or teacher. These situations would require a mask. There are also instances in which the wearing of a mask does not make sense such as playing on the playground, eating lunch, working alone in a classroom or office, or working outside where social distancing requirements are met.

**Q: What if my child has sensory issues or breathing concerns? Will he or she still be required to wear a mask?**

A: We understand that every child is different and has different needs. If your child cannot wear a mask or you have specific concerns regarding mask use, please reach out to Beth Hooks or Claire Jordan with a physician's explanation and to sign a waiver.

**Q: How will it be handled if a child takes his mask off in a “mask required” time?**

A: We will provide a great deal of age appropriate lessons on hygiene and why masks are needed in certain situations to protect the members of our school community. If a child chooses to take his or her mask off during a “mask required” time, we will work with them to explain the “why” rather than being punitive. We will do our best to make sure if the situation requires a mask, it is for as short a period of time as possible- especially for our younger learners.

**Q: What is an “appropriate face covering?”**

A: The most recent studies show that if you choose a cloth face covering, the cloth masks with several layers are the most effective in preventing spread. Keeping the mask clean is vital. We kindly ask that all students remember we have young children on campus; colored, logoed, or patterned masks are fine but anything that could be scary, inappropriate, or controversial should

not be worn on campus. Clear face shields may be more comfortable if students wish to wear those instead and can be cleaned easily throughout the day if needed. Transparent masks or face shields are recommended for students and teachers in classes where the use of enhanced auditory and visual cues is an essential part of learning.

**Q: How will the School monitor social distancing on campus?**

A: Teachers can plan for their classes and make sure the appropriate social distancing strategies are in place at each time during the day. Mr. Jackson will work with each teacher to “walk through” the day and troubleshoot any areas of concern. School personnel will be stationed around campus during any class change times to monitor proper social distancing.

**Q: What will happen if someone in the Hillcrest family tests positive for COVID-19?**

A: As a family, we have an obligation to notify our local health authorities and the school community of a COVID-19 diagnosis. We will use the contact tracing guidelines provided by the CDC and Mississippi Department of Health to notify any families of students who may have been in contact with the infected individual as soon as possible. We are fortunate that we have a small, intimate family and know where our students and teachers spend their time each day on campus. The notification process should be very quick. Hillcrest students/staff who may be affected will follow the health department and CDC protocols which include a 14-day quarantine period. These protocols will guide everyone's return to school plan. Any student/teacher with a COVID-19 diagnosis may not return to campus until they test negative. Students living with that student will have the same requirements. The space where the student was for extended periods of time (e.g., their classroom) will be left for 24 hours and then disinfected, following CDC guidelines for re-entry. Please note that CDC guidelines, testing protocols, and the availability of certain tests change often as more information about the virus becomes available. HCS will use the most up-to-date information from government agencies such as the Mississippi Department of Health and the CDC to guide families in how to respond to any COVID-19 related concern.

**Q: What if my child has to miss school due to COVID-19?**

A: It is imperative for your child to stay home if you suspect your child has COVID-19, your child has tested positive for COVID-19, or your child or your household members have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19. It is vital that each family is very transparent about any COVID-19 related situation so we can inform any other Hillcrest families who may have been exposed. School administration will help you determine the best course of action before your child can return to school. School administration will also work closely with you to develop the best academic plan for your child while he or she is out.

**Q: What if my child needs to be absent but it is not due to COVID-19?**

A: If your child is not feeling well for any reason, please do not send him or her to school. We understand that all absences will not be related to COVID-19 but it is vital that we gather health information on a daily basis, so we are actively monitoring any health-related changes in our school population. Our absence policy remains the same as in previous years.

**Q: What happens if a student or employee does not pass the screening when arriving to school?**

A: All health screenings will take place each morning. If a child does not pass the health screening, he or she will not be permitted to leave the vehicle and must return home. Administration will communicate with parents at that time regarding next steps. If your child drives himself or herself to school and does not pass the health screening, he or she will be sent home, and parents will be notified by phone so they can take the next steps for testing.

**Q: What happens if a student or employee begins to have symptoms during the school day?**

A: If a student or employee begins experiencing COVID-19 symptoms during the day, he or she will be isolated from others immediately. The School has a designated isolation area if these situations arise. Any area the student or employee has visited that day will be cleaned thoroughly. If it is a student, the parents will be called to pick up their child immediately.

**Q: If one student or teacher/staff tests positive for COVID-19, will the entire campus be shut down and go back to virtual learning immediately?**

A: No, we will use contact tracing to determine who has been exposed and require those students and employees to follow our protocols.

**Q: When we get back into “flu season” what will be the protocol for how students/parents should handle the illness and the determination of whether it’s the flu or COVID-19?**

A: Obviously, with either, there already is guidance on students not coming in if they feel sick, have a fever, etc. Because there is much more that we know about influenza we will be treating the two differently. For both cases, the student will not be allowed to come back to school until they have a clearance note from their doctor. For influenza, the student will have to be symptom-free for 24 hours prior to coming back to school without the help of fever reducing medication. Any student with a positive test for COVID 19 will need to follow the School’s requirements for re-entry.

**Q: If school is required to close and I have prepaid for extras such as Cougar Care/Athletic Fees, etc., will I receive a refund?**

A: Yes, assuming a school closure, a prorated refund will be issued for extras. We are absolutely committed to ensuring families are treated fairly and equitably and that we provide a fair policy that prorates for additional school services not utilized.

**Q: What metrics will Hillcrest use to decide that “minimal/moderate spread” level has been reached (a specific number of confirmed cases, percentage of absences, etc.)?**

A: We will rely on our public health department to help make these determinations. Usually community spread of diseases is determined on several statistical models. When the incidence of COVID 19 infection reaches a similar threshold as other common viruses – such as RSV and Influenza, we can consider this to be “minimal/moderate spread.” The number of community COVID-19 cases and the number of confirmed cases within our school or sections of our school will be key to making these decisions.

**Q: Will students and employees be tested for COVID-19 regularly, like on a once a week or twice a week basis?**

A: We do not plan to mandate mass testing at this time. COVID-19 testing should be performed at the direction of the health department or an individual’s physician. If there is a spike in cases in the county, then future COVID-19 testing and the frequency thereof will be determined. If a student or employee exhibits COVID-19 symptoms, he or she will need to be tested.

**Q: If a child at school is diagnosed with COVID, will my family be able to know who the child is so I will know my child’s risk (close friend versus acquaintance) or do privacy laws prevent that?**

A: HIPAA law does not permit disclosure of this information. Having said that, contact tracing will be conducted and we will notify you if your child has been exposed. Depending on the type of exposure your child may be required to quarantine at home for 10 days along with other guidance provided by HCS. Contact tracing must be established and personnel trained in contact tracing will be asked to do that job. In all instances, we will maintain the privacy of the COVID-19 positive individual.

**Q: What must my child have to be considered vulnerable?**

A: Children that are considered vulnerable have certain medical conditions that negatively impact the immune system or respiratory system. Such conditions include cancer, uncontrolled asthma, uncontrolled allergies, organ transplant recipients, auto-immune disorders, insulin dependent diabetes, congenital heart disorders, cystic fibrosis – just to name a few. It is very

important for parents to complete the school required health forms with as much information as possible.

**Q: If the public schools in our area move to a mandatory close, will we do the same?**

A: One of the best aspects of Hillcrest is that we are not bound by what other schools are doing. As an independent school, we are responsible to our Board of Trustees and seek to make our decisions based upon what is best for our school. We are more able to adapt to situations as they arise because of our small class sizes and expansive campus. We are committed to being part of a network with local school districts to share ideas and monitor changes, but our decisions are and will continue to be made based upon what is best for the Hillcrest community as a whole.

**Q: How will the school handle allergies versus the virus? Some of the symptoms are the same and I don't want my child to be sent home just because he is congested.**

A: Congestion would not be the only symptom we would look for as a determination to send a child home. The first symptom the screener is looking for is a fever (where the child will automatically be sent home) and other indicators such as headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing. A note from your child's pediatrician would be helpful if congestion is a normal occurrence.

**Q: Will you be offering field trips?**

A: If the venue is open, is providing a high degree of safety measures, and we can safely transport students using our social distancing strategies, yes. Parents would have the option to opt out of any such trip they believe is not safe.

**Q: Are there special considerations for items students will or will not be allowed to bring to school?**

A: For the time being we are asking students to leave toys, stuffed animals, and other items that are likely to be touched by classmates (such as playing cards and trading cards) at home. Administration and teachers may have more detailed instructions as far as rest mats and cleaning protocols for items that come home each day such as backpacks and lunch boxes. Look for those updates before school begins.