

# FRENCHTOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT 2023-24 SAFE RETURN PLAN



**2023/24 Health and Safety Protocols**

Revised/Presented: December 19, 2023

# Frenchtown Elementary School District

## 2023/24 Health and Safety Protocols

### INTRODUCTION:

The physical and mental health and safety of our students and staff remain our highest priority; we cannot create an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning without it. While it is impossible to eliminate all risks, every decision will be made with an eye to minimizing it to the greatest possible extent.

As we have since the onset of the pandemic, the District's health, safety, and learning environment protocols follow recommendations provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the NJ Department of Health (DOH), the NJ Department of Education (DOE), and requirements set forth in NJ Statutes, Codes, and Executive Orders. Protocols are intended to reduce risks to students and staff from SARS-COV-2 while allowing for full-time in-person programming.

*Procedures will be updated as information is received from the CDC, NJDOH, and NJDOE, and as NJ Statutes, Codes, and Executive Orders are implemented or edited.*

### Health and Safety Protocols

In accordance with the New Jersey Department of Education and Department of Health's "The Road Forward: Health and Safety Guidance for the 2023-2024 School Year," the Frenchtown School District offers the Fall 2023 health and safety protocols.

1. General Health and Safety Guidelines
  - 1.1 Vaccination
  - 1.2 Communication
  - 1.3 Masks
  - 1.4 Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette
2. Cleaning, Disinfection, and Airflow
  - 2.1 Limit Use of Shared Supplies and Equipment
  - 2.2 Cleaning and Disinfection
3. Screening, Exclusion, and Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff
  - 3.1 Parental Screening
  - 3.2 Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff
  - 3.3 Exclusion
  - 3.4 Remote Instruction/180 Day Requirement
4. Contact Tracing
  - 4.1 Overview

# Frenchtown Elementary School District

## 2023/24 Health and Safety Protocols

Guidance Document/Resource (history below):

[The Road Forward: Health and Safety Guidance for the 2021-2022 School Year](#) New Jersey Department of Education/New Jersey Department of Health - June 2021

[Executive Order No. 251](#) (8/6/21) (Lifted March 7, 2022)

[Executive Order No. 253](#) (8/23/21) (Lifted June 17, 2022)

*\*Please see the link below which details the end of the pandemic on May 11, 2023*

<https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-public-health-emergency/index.html>

### 1. General Health and Safety Guidelines

#### 1.1 Vaccination

The Frenchtown Elementary School does not require students or staff members to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Proof of vaccination is also not required, however, one may elect to submit a copy of the COVID-19 vaccination record to the school nurse to be kept as part of the student or staff member's confidential medical file.

According to the CDC, vaccination, including booster shots, remains the most critical strategy to protect students and staff and reduce interruptions in learning.

As a clarification from the CDC, for children 5 through 17 years of age, a primary COVID-19 vaccine series consists of 2 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. For persons 18 and older, a primary series consists of:

- A 2-dose series of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna), or
- A single dose COVID-19 vaccine (Johnson & Johnson's Jansen vaccine)

CDC recommends that people remain up to date with their vaccines, which includes additional doses for individuals who are immunocompromised and booster doses at regular time points. The NJDOH states that "up-to-date" with vaccination means being fully vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2 AND having received all recommended additional doses, including booster doses when eligible. "Fully vaccinated" means being at least two weeks past the completion of a primary vaccination series.

#### 1.2 Communication

The Chief School Administrator will maintain ongoing communication with the Hunterdon County Health Department, the Hunterdon County School Districts, and the NJDOE through the Hunterdon County Office.

Knowing that SARS-COV-2 may impact certain areas of the region and county differently, it is vitally important to maintain continuous communication with the Hunterdon County Health Department and the NJDOH to ascertain information regarding transmission levels at the regional and local levels. This information will be used to make informed decisions regarding FES procedures and may necessitate changes to existing protocols.

# Frenchtown Elementary School District

## 2023/24 Health and Safety Protocols

The Chief School Administrator will share information with the Board of Education and convey information to the School Community via email communication.

### 1.3 Masks

Masks remain optional both in school and while riding the bus for the 2023-2024 school year. Each student and staff member can make their own decision as to whether they want to wear a mask. Please keep in mind that some may choose to continue to wear a mask, and we will respect and support their decision to do so. Targeting of any student for their choice of whether or not to wear a mask will be taken seriously and addressed through the HIB process. The school district cannot ban the wearing of masks.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/masks.html>

The district may require temporary mask-wearing under certain circumstances, such as when staff members or students become ill at school they should wear a mask until they leave the premises, if COVID activity levels return to very high (red) activity levels, a State-confirmed local outbreak at Frenchtown School, or any other reason mandated by the State of NJ or Public Health Agencies.

### 1.4 Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- Stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol) are located and maintained in each classroom and office, at entrances and exits of buildings, and near lunchrooms and toilets.
- For classrooms and offices that have existing hand-washing stations have been prepared with soap, water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol).
- [Staff and students should wash their hands](#) for at least 20 seconds at regular intervals, including before eating, after using the bathroom, and after blowing their noses/coughing/sneezing. Staff and students should use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) if washing with soap and water is not possible. <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

To contain respiratory secretions, all persons with signs and symptoms of a respiratory infection, regardless of presumed cause, are instructed to cover the nose/mouth when coughing or sneezing; use tissues to contain respiratory secretions; dispose of tissues in the nearest waste receptacle after use, and perform hand hygiene after contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects/materials.

# Frenchtown Elementary School District

## 2023/24 Health and Safety Protocols

### 2. Cleaning, Disinfecting, and Airflow

#### 2.1 Cleaning and Disinfection

The District has developed and will maintain a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection. The District utilizes EPA-approved products for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 and follows the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method, contact time, etc.). Frequently touched areas in schools such as classroom desks and chairs, door handles and push plates, bathrooms, light switches, and shared computer keyboards are cleaned and disinfected daily.

#### 2.2 Improving Air Flow

All FES facilities have adequate ventilation, including operational heating and risk systems where appropriate. Recirculated air has a fresh air component. Additionally, FES has multiple portable air purifiers located strategically throughout the building to support clean air flow. Filter(s) for A/C units are maintained and changed according to manufacturer recommendations.

Classroom doors may remain open during the school day to increase airflow. Windows, when appropriate, will be opened. To improve airflow on school buses (student field trips), windows may be open weather permitting. The district has purchased air purifiers for larger common areas.

### 3. Screening, Exclusion, and Response to Symptomatic Staff and Students

#### 3.1 Parental Screening

Parents/caregivers are strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of illness every day as they are the front line for assessing illness in their children. Students who are sick should not attend school. The District shall strictly enforce exclusion criteria for both students and staff (section 3.3 Exclusion).

Students and employees may be asked to leave or not come into school if they test positive for COVID-19 or exhibit:

- At least **two** of the following symptoms: fever (measure or subjective), chills, rigors (shivers), myalgia (muscle aches), headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion, or runny nose; **OR**
- At least **one** of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new olfactory disorder, or new taste disorder.

# Frenchtown Elementary School District

## 2023/24 Health and Safety Protocols

### 3.2 Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff

Students and staff members who arrive at school with or develop the following COVID-19 symptoms during the school day will be safely and respectfully isolated from others in designated isolation spaces. Students shall remain in isolation with continued supervision and care until picked up by an authorized adult.

District health personnel shall follow current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting.

### 3.3 Exclusion

The District will comply with the NJDOH and NJDOE exclusion recommendations which are subject to change. All days listed are calendar days.

**Regardless of vaccination status, individuals who test positive** or have COVID-19 symptoms who have not been tested and do not have an alternative diagnosis from their healthcare provider should:

- Stay home for at least 5 full days after the onset of symptoms or if asymptomatic after the positive test.
- If they have no symptoms or symptoms resolved after 5 days, they can leave their home, but for an additional 5 days, should wear a mask around others.

**Exposed close contacts who are fully vaccinated and have no COVID-like symptoms\*:**

- Do not need to quarantine, be excluded from school, or be tested following exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
- Should still monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following exposure.

If they experience symptoms, they should isolate themselves from others, be clinically evaluated for COVID-19, including SARS-CoV-2 testing and inform their healthcare provider of their vaccination status at the time of presentation for care.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html>

### 3.4 Remote Instruction/180-Day Requirement

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9, schools must be in session for 180 days to receive state aid. The statute requires that school facilities be provided for at least 180 days during the school year. Section (b) notes that where a District is required to close the schools of the District for more than three consecutive school days, due to a declared state of emergency declared a public health emergency, or a directive and/or recommendation by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure, days of virtual or remote instruction commensurate with in-person instruction will count towards the District's 180-day requirement.

# **Frenchtown Elementary School District**

## **2023/24 Health and Safety Protocols**

If the District is required to exclude a student, group of students, a class, or multiple classes as a result of the scenarios listed above, while the school itself remains open for in-person instruction, the District shall offer virtual or remote instruction to those students in a manner commensurate with in-person instruction to the extent possible, i.e. Google Meet. Please refer to the [Emergency Virtual or Remote Instruction Program Plan](#) for further information. All students have iPads to support various learning platforms. Students and staff have access to technical support via email at [techsupport@frenchtownschool.org](mailto:techsupport@frenchtownschool.org).

### **Closure for Declared State of Emergency**

Should the entire District be required to close for more than three consecutive days due to a declared emergency declared public health emergency, or a directive and/or recommendation by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure, the District will provide remote instruction commensurate with in-person instruction that will count towards the District's 180-day requirement. All students will follow the in-person instruction model, with minor adjustments, using a virtual platform as outlined in the [Emergency Virtual or Remote Instruction Program Plan](#).

## **4. Contact Tracing**

### **4.1 Overview**

Per the updated guidance from the CDC released in August 2022, contact tracing of individual cases is no longer recommended for school settings. Our nurse will be monitoring for outbreaks or clusters, which will be reported to the NJ Department of Health. If your child tests positive, we do recommend parents conduct their own contact tracing when possible and let others know of potential COVID exposure. Per the CDC, close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of someone with suspected or known COVID-19 for 15 or more minutes during a 24-hour period. Any close contact that begins to show COVID-like symptoms should get tested.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Quarantining students who are in close contact with a positive case is no longer recommended in school settings. Please monitor your child for COVID-like symptoms and get them tested if symptoms begin. If they test positive for COVID-19, they will be excluded from school for at least five days from the onset of symptoms or positive test result as outlined above. Please contact the school nurse with any questions at 908-996-2751 x7203.