

September 25, 2020

Please find information below regarding:

1. **Clarifying school policy regarding children whose siblings present with potential COVID-19 symptoms**
2. **Traffic, parking and pedestrian safety during pick-up and drop off**

Dear SHS Families,

1. Clarifying school policy regarding what to do with children whose siblings present with potential COVID-19 symptoms

We recognize that there is some confusion related to the school policy regarding what to do with children whose siblings present with potential COVID-19 symptoms. This is understandable given constantly changing expectations during this pandemic. We thought we would write to clarify both our school policy and our practices.

According to Toronto Public Health (TPH), if children present with symptoms, they are meant to stay home, take a COVID-19 test or quarantine for 14 days. According to TPH, if siblings do not show symptoms, and they have not been in contact with someone who has a confirmed case of COVID-19, they may attend school, if they are symptom-free. This is the policy. As a precautionary practice, parents have often opted to keep asymptomatic siblings home based on their own judgement of the symptomatic child, until the family gains clarity from a COVID-19 test. To be clear, this practice is not required, but it has been adopted by many Sterling families in order to mitigate potential spread in advance of learning the testing outcome.

From many conversations, I recognize that hospitals and some workplaces may have different thresholds for risk-management and that some families may not agree with the current policy set out by TPH. Sterling Hall must follow the policy guidance from TPH and, in the best interest of our community, appeal to our families to make their best judgement in their own practices. This is the difference between policy and practice. The school can enforce TPH policy but must appeal for practices that go beyond this threshold.

That said, I believe in our community and am appreciative for the commitment I have witnessed by so many families to keep our community safe. Trust is at the foundation of all schooling and we have a remarkable community that models care for others, a cardinal aspect that we impress upon our boys at SHS each day. No family wants to be responsible for community spread of the virus and I have appreciated the thoughtful and prudent choices that are being made on a daily basis to put the health and safety of our community first. I am grateful to our many families who have been adopting what may seem as above-and-beyond best practices for safety reasons.

If advice from TPH changes, Sterling Hall will pivot quickly to adopt new policies but, in the meantime, we will follow the current policy and appeal to families for practices that keep health and safety first.

2. Traffic, parking and pedestrian safety during pick-up and drop-off

We recognize the challenges that new routines bring, and our pick-up and drop-off periods represent an unprecedented traffic volume around campus, exacerbated by the individual travel plans adopted due to COVID-19. I will admit to being impressed by the swiftness of the daily exercise, but am mindful that our theoretical plan, now in practice, needs to be assessed and refined. We are observing and trouble-shooting parking, traffic issues, congestion periods, and safety issues with the goal of ensuring our plan works most safely, effectively and efficiently for our families - and also for our wonderful neighbours.

We would like to remind everyone in our community to drive cautiously and to exercise the patience and courtesy we wish to model for all our boys when navigating drop-off and pick-up each day. Moreover, we have had a wonderful relationship with our neighbours - they were the key vocal group that pushed politicians to support our purchase of the campus property a few years ago - and I wish to continue to honour their support with kindness and respect. As we tell the boys, they are also part of our Sterling community. Please recognize this as you circumnavigate the campus and park your vehicles.

We have always flourished in our partnership as a school community. To this end, please know that we will be seeking your input through a Parent Survey that will be sent out to our community in the coming weeks. Please consider sharing your feedback to help us assess how we might improve our current systems, enhancing safety and efficiency. All feedback is good feedback.

Have a wonderful weekend!

Sincerely,

Rick Parsons
Principal