

Q. With the Government of Ontario's recent return to school announcement, how will schools at the elementary and secondary levels operate?

Elementary school students will attend school five (5) days per week, with students grouped together in a designated cohort for the full day, including recess and lunch. Enhanced health and safety protocols will be in place and the full range of elementary curriculum will be provided.

Secondary schools in Thames Valley will open with an adapted model that combines in-person and remote learning. Students will be placed in groups of approximately 15 students, attending on alternate schedules.

Secondary students enrolled in TVDSB Special Education Developmental Education classes will have the option to attend school in-person every day.

Specific details about secondary schedules and assigned cohorts will be provided as soon as possible.

Q. Will child care centres be open?

Child care centres are permitted to be open. Please check with your child care provider for more information about their re-opening details.

Q. I'm not comfortable sending my children back to school. Do child(ren) have to attend school in the fall, or can they continue learning from home?

As outlined by the Ministry of Education, in-person school attendance is optional for the 2020/21 school year. Therefore, families are required to decide if their child(ren) will return to in-person learning at a school site or if they will be opting-out of in-person learning.

Direction from the Ministry of Education indicates that students may not necessarily be able to move between full remote learning and in-person learning on-demand, and families should anticipate specific dates for giving the Board advanced notice to re-enter school for face-to-face learning. Families should also anticipate the possibility to be waitlisted if they request a change from full remote online learning to in-person.

Students engaging in full remote learning may not be participating with students and teachers from their own school. We may be required to create virtual classrooms where students from across the district in similar grades are attached to a teacher who will deliver online instruction.

It is important to understand that full remote learning will be far more structured than the end of the last school year. The expectation of students engaging in remote learning will be that they are online, engaged and present.

Families will be receiving an email on Wednesday, August 5 asking if they will opt-out of in-person learning (for each child). **If families do not opt-out by the deadline of Friday, August 14, it is assumed that their child(ren) will be attending school in-person on the first day of school Tuesday, September 8, 2020.**

Q. What measures are being put in place to support safety in common areas?

TVDSB has developed strategies that support safety in common areas. Here are some examples:

- Directional arrows, posters, and other signage will be present throughout the schools to provide guidance for appropriate distances in a variety of situations such as hallway lineups
- Pick-up and drop-off of students will happen outside the school; parents/guardians are not be able to come into schools to drop off or pick up their child(ren)
- Weather permitting, schools will use outdoor space whenever possible for various activities, such as breaks and regular classroom activities
- Assemblies and other large gatherings will be postponed for the foreseeable future

Q. What is TVDSB doing to clean schools?

Enhanced cleaning and disinfection practices by TVDSB custodial staff have been reviewed with the Middlesex London Health Unit and Southwestern Public Health Unit. Here's some of what we're doing:

- Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected during the day throughout the school building
- Schools will undergo enhanced cleaning at the end of each school day
- Soft surfaces that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected will be removed from classrooms (e.g. plush/absorbent items, rugs, upholstered furnishings)

Q. How will students and staff maintain clean hands throughout the school day?

- Hand hygiene supplies will be available and easily accessible in schools
- Soap and paper towels will be provided in every classroom with a sink
- Classrooms without a handwashing sink will be provided with alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- A schedule to regularly clean hands will be incorporated into daily routines (e.g. upon entering the school, before and after lunch and recess breaks, after using bathroom, returning from playing outside and after sneezing/coughing)
- Students will be educated on proper cough and sneeze etiquette and to avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth

Q. Will students be required to wear a mask in school?

Students in Grade 4 to 12 will be required to wear non-medical or cloth masks while in school and on school transportation. Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 will be encouraged but not required to wear masks in common spaces and on school transportation.

Q. My child(ren) take the bus to school. How will busing work with the new enhanced safety protocols?

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services (www.mybigyellowbus.ca) is developing protocols for cleaning school transportation vehicles to meet public health guidelines.

An online student sign-up for transportation will be required this year. Families who qualify for school transportation will be required to complete the online registration for each of their children by August 14, 2020.

Q. What if I need to drop something off for my child during the school day or talk to my child's teacher? How do I do those things with the new safety provisions?

Visits to the school and child care centres will be by appointment only. Wherever possible, telephone meetings with parents/guardians will be held. If you need to get in touch with someone at the school, please call or email your child's school. Unscheduled visitors and family members of child(ren) may not be able to enter the location. Any approved visitors to schools will be required to self-screen and to wear a mask while on the school premises.

Q. Will staff, students, and visitors be screened before entering a school? How will that work?

Staff, students, and visitors must not come to school if they have symptoms/feel sick, or if they have come in close contact with someone with a suspected or positive case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days, including within their household.

Student Screening: Parents/ guardians will be provided with a checklist to perform daily screenings of their children before arriving at school and will be provided with information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

Staff Screening: Staff will complete a self-assessment tool and will be provided with information to ensure they are aware of possible symptoms of COVID-19 in order to self-monitor.

Signs will be posted at entrances to the school to remind students, staff, parents/guardians, and essential visitors with information on health and safety policies. Teachers and other staff members will be provided with information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 in children so that appropriate action can be taken if children develop symptoms during the day.

Q. Where can I find information and help for mental health and well-being?

Our TVDSB staff are providing supports for students this summer through our Wellness Support Teams. For more information please visit our website at www.tvdsb.ca/mentalhealth.

Supports will continue during the course of the school year.

Q. How will Thames Valley be accommodating students with special needs?

TVDSB is committed to supporting our students with special education needs. The TVDSB Special Education department is reviewing all aspects of COVID-19 that may impact the safety of staff and students. This includes but is not limited to: supporting students with special needs and their individualized programs, TVDSB Special Education Self-Contained classes, specialized equipment, additional personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff that need to work in close proximity with students, and transportation considerations.

More information will follow with respect to transition planning for students prior to the return to school.

Q. How will schools conduct contact tracing?

Daily records of attendance of all persons within the school building will be kept up-to-date and available to our local public health units to facilitate contact tracing in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case or outbreak.

Q. What happens if a student gets sick during the school day?

A protocol has been established if students become ill during the school day. Here's how it will work:

- Students or staff who develop COVID-19 symptoms will immediately be separated from others
- Parents/guardians will be required to immediately pick up their child(ren) from school
- Staff and parents will be directed to consult their health provider and should be provided with information about COVID-19 testing locations
- Staff and/or students who test positive may not return to school until they are cleared by local health units

- Staff and/or students who test negative can return to school once they are symptom- free for 24-hours
- Thames Valley schools will immediately report any suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 to our local public health units
- Thames Valley schools will participate in contact tracing through comprehensive record-keeping

Q. What happens if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a school?

If a COVID-19 positive case is identified in a school, our local health units will provide further instructions on next steps.