



# Matthews Hall

Established 1918

## **RETURNING TO SCHOOL SAFELY – SEPTEMBER 2021** (updated 09/08/21)

The health, safety and well-being of our students and staff is our top priority as Matthews Hall prepares to reopen for the 2021-22 school year. Guided by our experiences during the last school year and the provincial document, [COVID-19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools \(2021-2022\)](#), we have developed planning criteria for a safe return to school.

Matthews Hall will be open for **in-person learning for all students** with all of the health and safety measures described in this document in place throughout the school year as required.

Matthews Hall is prepared for any potential full or partial closures due to COVID-19 and has plans in place to move to full remote learning, if necessary, to ensure the continuity of learning for students.

The School will continue to monitor the local and provincial data and update our health and safety measures under the advice of the province and/or the local health unit. We appreciate your patience and cooperation as our plan evolves as necessary.

Our teaching faculty are excited to welcome all students back to in-person learning and are committed to assessing the strength and areas of need of each student as they return to the classroom and enter a period of learning recovery.

Matthews Hall will employ multiple strategies and a layering of controls to support a healthy and safe environment for students and staff as detailed below. We recognize there is not one specific measure that will prevent transmission from occurring in schools, but rather there are multiple structural and individual elements that contribute to making schools healthier spaces and reduce the risk of infection to in-person attendees. Matthews Hall is committed to the consistent

application of these layered controls to reduce the spread of disease in our school.

## **COHORTS**

All students will attend in-person learning five days per week. Students will remain in one cohort for the full day with one teacher, where possible. To allow the full breadth of programming for students, specialized teachers will work with multiple cohorts. Students may be placed into small groups for specific purposes such as learning support with students from other cohorts. Students will be permitted to use common spaces such as the library, gym, and lounge. Members of different cohorts can interact outside with distancing encouraged or inside with distancing and masking.

## **SCREENING**

All staff and students must self-screen every day before attending school using the provincial [screening tool](#) which will be updated by the province as required. All staff and students who are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 as identified in the screening tool, must NOT attend school and should follow up the guidance provided in the screening tool, which may include seeking appropriate medical attention as required, and/or getting tested for COVID-19.

The ministry may direct schools to perform daily on-site confirmation of self-screening during a period of potential higher transmission or an outbreak. In this case students, staff and visitors will need to provide daily confirmation or proof that they have self-screened.

Active Screening is required for the first two weeks of school. Results should be sent by email to [covidscreen@matthewshall.ca](mailto:covidscreen@matthewshall.ca)

Any staff, student or visitor that does not pass the screening procedures should not attend school.

## **STUDENT MASKS**

ALL students are required to wear properly fitted non-medical or cloth masks indoors in school, including in hallways and during classes, as well as on school

vehicles. Masks may be temporarily removed indoors for the following activities, with a minimum distance of two metres maintained between cohorts and as much distancing as possible within a cohort:

- To engage in physical activity
- To consume food or drink

Students are required to wear masks outdoors when distancing cannot be maintained.

Students are expected to bring their own masks to wear at school. Parents are encouraged to send a spare mask and to ensure that masks are regularly cleaned or replaced. Non-medical 3-ply masks will also be made available for students if needed.

Reasonable exceptions to the requirement to wear a mask will be reviewed, and exemptions will be approved by the Head of School. All members of our school community are expected to respect these required exemptions.

### **STAFF MASKS**

All faculty, school staff and visitors will be required to wear a medical mask indoors in all areas of the school. Staff are not required to wear medical masks outdoors. Staff must maintain at least two metres distance when consuming food/drinks. Face shields are available for staff when deemed necessary.

### **HAND HYGIENE AND RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE**

Appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette are among the most important protective strategies. Matthews Hall will teach students and reinforce proper procedures. Each classroom at our school has a sink equipped with hand soap and paper towel. Alcohol based hand rub (ABHR) will also be available in every classroom and throughout the school. Kleenex and lined garbage pails will be placed in every classroom. Teachers will schedule breaks to allow students to wash their hands at appropriate times throughout the day. Hand hygiene will be conducted by anyone entering the school.

## **DISTANCING AND CONGREGATING**

As much distancing as possible between students, between students and staff, and between staff members will be promoted. The school recognizes that distancing is very challenging for young children and adolescents, and as such will layer physical distancing measures with other public health measures such as screening, hand hygiene, cohorting, masking, and enhanced cleaning. Periods of student movement will be staggered to limit congregation in the hallways. All possible entrances and exits will be used to spread out the movement of students. Designated routes will be used in the hallway with visual and physical cues in place.

## **RECESS**

Students do not need to stay within their cohort during recess. Distancing will be encouraged as much as possible. Mask are not required outdoors when distancing can be maintained. Shared materials outdoors, such as sports equipment, are permitted, with appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. All students will use ABHR or wash their ends when they re-enter the school.

## **CLEANING STANDARDS**

Matthews Hall is thoroughly cleaned every evening after the students have gone home. Throughout the day, all high touch surfaces are disinfected twice daily. Each classroom is provided with approved cleaning supplies to disinfect desks, tables and other learning materials throughout the day.

## **SHARED MATERIALS AND SPACES**

Shared materials (toys for imaginative play, manipulatives for math, computers, art supplies, physical education equipment etc.) are important for learning. The use of shared materials will be permitted. Items will be cleaned frequently where feasible but the focus will be on hand hygiene. Shared spaces and the use of lockers and cubbies will be permitted. Shared indoor spaces should only be used by one cohort at a time whenever possible. When different cohorts interact in shared indoor spaces, masking and as much distancing as possible will be maintained.

## **LUNCH PROTOCOLS**

Students may eat together:

- Outdoors, without distancing
- Indoors, with a minimum distance of two metres maintained between cohorts and as much distancing as possible within a cohort

Each student is encouraged to bring their own water bottle that is labeled and not shared. Water fountains may only be used to fill water bottles.

The Lunch Lady program will continue and non-instructional food events (such as pizza or ice cream days) are permitted to run provided proper food handling and safety practices are in place.

## **ASSEMBLIES**

Indoor school assemblies are not permitted at this time. When gatherings are permitted they will follow the relevant provincial requirements under the [Reopening Ontario Act](#).

## **VISITORS**

Any visitors to Matthews Hall must self-screen upon arrival and wear a medical mask while on school premises. Matthews Hall will confirm the self-screen result for all visitors and maintain a record for contact tracing. Parents must have an appointment to enter the school and will be required to check in at the main office, register, self-screen and wear a provided medical mask.

## **STUDENT TRANSPORTATION**

School vehicles may operate at full capacity. The seat directly behind the driver will remain empty if space permits. Where possible, student seating should maximize physical distancing. Masks for drivers, teachers and students in Grades 1 to 8 are required. Students will be assigned a seat and seating plan records will be kept. Students from the same household or the same classroom will be seated together where possible.

## **VENTILATION**

Matthews Hall will optimize air quality in all classrooms and learning environments. The majority of our classrooms have full mechanical ventilation. The School will ensure all ventilation systems are inspected and in good working order and will use high grade filters which will be changed frequently. Our ventilation systems will run at least two hours before or after school and will be calibrated to maximize air flow.

A standalone high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter unit will be placed in any classroom or learning space that does not have mechanical ventilation. These units will ensure particle filtration of air and improve air exchange.

## **VACCINATION**

Vaccination is an important tool to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and to allow our community to safely resume normal activities. Matthew Hall has vaccination policies in place for [STAFF](#) and for [STUDENTS](#) to strongly encourage all staff and all eligible students to be vaccinated and to disclose proof of vaccination. Our most up to date policies regarding vaccination are linked here and posted on our school website under Policies.

Families may send their proof of vaccination for eligible students to the Assistant Head of School, Jen McKay, by email [mckay.j@matthewshall.ca](mailto:mckay.j@matthewshall.ca). This information will be stored confidentially in student records.

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

Student mental health and well-being are a top priority. Matthews Hall recognizes good mental health is fundamental to a student's ability to learn and to succeed at school and in life. The School is committed to collaborate with families and community partners to address any concerns.

## **MUSIC**

Music programs, including singing and wind instruments, will be permitted and will be held in areas with adequate ventilation. As much distancing as possible and the use of barrier screens will be in place. Masks may be removed for singing outdoors if a minimum of two metres can be. Masks will be worn when singing

indoors, and singing is only permitted within a cohort. Instruments will not be shared.

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

The use of the gymnasium and changerooms, and the use of shared equipment is permitted with distancing and hand hygiene encouraged. High (outdoors only) and low contact activities are permitted. Masking is required in the changerooms. Masks are not required when playing high or low contact activities outdoors. Masking will be required for indoor sports where they can be worn safely based on the activity and where distancing cannot be maintained.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

Day trips and overnight stays will be permitted and must follow all relevant provincial requirements under the [Reopening Ontario Act](#). Anyone attending a field trip will be required to self-screen prior to attending and all precautions including masking, distancing and hand hygiene will be in place. As much as possible field trips will be operated with cohorts and assigned staff supervision.

### **CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Clubs, activities, sport teams, house events, bands and choirs are permitted. Cohorts may interact outdoors with physical distancing encouraged, and indoors with masking and appropriate physical distancing. The mixing of cohorts will be limited.

All participants, if eligible, in inter-school sports must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

### **EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM**

Our before and after school program will operate with masking, distancing encouraged, regular hand hygiene and increased cleaning of high touch surfaces.

### **INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

Matthews Hall has a plan approved by the Ministry of Education to provide in-person teaching to international students with a study permit.

## **TRAVEL**

Any family considering International travel must be fully aware of the most update restrictions for returning to school under the Federal Quarantine Act and the requirements listed on the Ontario School Screening Tool. Currently unvaccinated children may not attend school for 14 days after travel.

## **MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19**

Matthews Hall will follow the provincial [Operational Guidance: COVID-19 management in schools](#) if a positive case of COVID-19 is reported in our school community.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT**

All members of the Matthews Hall community are expected to carefully review this document and sign the accompanying acknowledgement and agreement form.