



# ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

## SECRETARIAT FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

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### SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Dear Parents and Guardians:

In the spring of 2009, a new flu strain (known as pandemic influenza A/H1N1 or swine flu) appeared and spread throughout the United States. We plan to continue many of the measures previously put in place to protect our students during the spring. We will also follow new guidelines as they are released from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In our schools, students and staff will be encouraged to wash their hands frequently. Also, surfaces that are regularly touched or handled will be disinfected often. If a child is sick, he or she will be moved to a sick room designated by the school, and a parent and/or guardian will be contacted to take the child home. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now stipulates that a student with the flu will need to stay home until he or she is fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications (Tylenol, Motrin, etc.). In most cases, a child would be fever-free in anywhere from three to five days.

If the number of flu cases becomes severe, school closure will remain an option. We will only take such an action if there is evidence that other measures are not working. The Archdiocese will work closely with local and state health departments in making closure decisions. Each situation will be evaluated individually to assure the best course of action is taken to protect our students and school staff, as well as to minimize the burden and impact on affected families.

We encourage you to speak to your children about taking the following everyday precautions to help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses such as influenza A/H1N1—wash hands often with soap and water, keep nails trimmed and cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeve when coughing or sneezing. It would also be helpful to discuss, as a family, plans for caring for your child, should he or she develop the flu.

Parents may also want to consider having children vaccinated against seasonal flu and this new flu strain. Recently, persons between ages five and 24 were identified as a priority group to receive the vaccine for the H1N1 flu strain. The Department of Health estimates the first doses of the new vaccine will be available in October and details of distribution of the vaccine will be forthcoming.

For more information on the flu, and how you can protect your family, please visit [www.health.state.pa.us](http://www.health.state.pa.us), [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov).

As always, the safety of our students remains our first priority. Please feel free to contact your school administrator with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely in the Lord,

Mary E. Rochford  
Superintendent of Schools

