

# Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten

*The start of the school year can bring mixed emotions, from excitement to uneasiness. This is especially true for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten children, many of whom are going to school for the first time.*

School will look different this year, as we take measures to keep children and staff as safe as possible. Together, we can work toward a smooth transition to in-person learning.

Families are encouraged to read the [COVID-19 Division Re-entry Strategy](#) to learn more about how the Division is approaching in-person and online learning in schools across the city this year.

This Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten information is based on the Division Re-entry Strategy and outlines what families can expect before school starts, what in-person classes will look like, and what to expect throughout the year.

### Before school starts

To get children and families ready for the first few days of school, your school will reach out to you with information about:

- Safety protocols.
- Program schedule.
- Cleaning and sanitizing procedures.
- Transportation information.
- Sign-in access to SchoolZone.

In many Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs, children begin school on staggered days before the entire class attends together. Your school will reach out to you about which days your child should come to school.

You should also review the school-specific information in your school's re-entry strategy, which will be posted on your school's website.

## Keeping everyone safe

### Screening protocol

Before sending your child to school every day, please complete the provincial [COVID-19 Screening Questionnaire](#). If your child has any symptoms, they must stay home.

Young children often have runny noses, coughs or sneeze frequently. These may be part of a pre-existing condition.

Children who have symptoms like these should be tested for COVID-19 before school starts. This will help show that their symptoms are related to a pre-existing condition. If your child has a pre-existing condition, please notify your school.

If symptoms remain the same, your child can continue to attend school. If symptoms worsen, your child will need to leave the school and have another COVID-19 test. If the test is negative, your child can return to school if they are healthy.

### Hand hygiene

Children must wash or sanitize their hands when entering the school and again when entering the classroom. This is an important routine teachers will reinforce. Children will also be reminded to sneeze and cough into their elbows, put used tissues into a waste bin and wash their hands frequently.

*Keeping everyone safe (continued on next page)*

### *Keeping everyone safe (continued)*

#### **Personal protective equipment (PPE)**

Staff in the classroom will be wearing personal protective equipment such as masks and face shields. Kindergarten children who are physically, psychologically or developmentally able to wear a mask will be asked to do so. Children who are unable to wear a mask for reasons under the Alberta Human Rights Act may be excused from this protocol.

In Pre-Kindergarten, children may not be able to wear a mask for physical, psychological or developmental reasons. Families will work with their school principal to discuss their individual circumstances.

#### **Physical distancing**

Physical distancing may not be possible in all of our classrooms. In Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten, staff may need to assist children with certain tasks, provide support for their emotional well-being or help manage conflict.

When physical distancing cannot be maintained, school staff will wear personal protective equipment, including a mask, to follow Alberta Health Services' direction, Occupational Health and Safety requirements, and the Edmonton Public Schools COVID-19 Division Re-Entry Strategy.

#### **Cohort**

Cohorts, a group of children and staff who remain together for learning and activities, are a strategy to help support the safest school environment possible. Cohorting decreases the number of close contacts staff and children have in their school and helps with contact tracing, if needed. Cohort sizes depend on the classroom size and number of children assigned to the teacher.

#### **Food**

Families can send children with food from home, which will be kept with the child. Food cannot be shared with other children, as per provincial health guidelines. If the school provides snacks, they will be served in individual portions by a designated staff member.

#### **Personal belongings**

Please leave non-essential personal items at home. Provide clearly labelled backpacks, coats and indoor shoes for your child.

### **Inside the classroom**

Our youngest students are curious and eager to explore. To keep everyone as safe as possible, we are taking the following precautions in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classrooms:

- Materials that aren't easily cleaned, such as blankets and plush materials, will be removed from the classroom.
- Equipment that is shared between cohorts will be disinfected and cleaned before another group uses it.
- If children are using shared materials, such as blocks or cars, they must wash or sanitize their hands before and after use.
- Rooms and equipment will be cleaned and sanitized every day, including between cohorts of children.
- Children will not do activities that involve cooking or preparing food.
- Where possible, schools will take children outdoors to enhance learning.

## Recess and playgrounds

Students will remain in their assigned learning cohort for recess. Schools may stagger break times or assign student cohorts to specific areas of the schoolyard. If children are playing on equipment, they must follow proper hand hygiene before and after using it.

## Connecting with your school

Families are an integral part of our school communities. Although this school year looks a little different, our schools are excited to connect with you. Some of the key methods we use to communicate with families are:

- [SchoolZone](#) – You will receive sign-in information from your school. Please check SchoolZone frequently for important updates.
- Edmonton Public Schools [website](#).
- Division social media accounts – [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#).
- Your school social media accounts. Please check with your school office.
- [SchoolMessenger](#) – Sign up for the Division's urgent message system, which can call and text you if there is an incident at your child's school.

## Visiting the school

To keep everyone safe, families will only be allowed in the school with an appointment. Before entering the school, all visitors will need to complete the [COVID-19 Screening Questionnaire](#) and sign the school's visitor log.

## Getting to school

Many Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten children get to school by yellow bus. They will be assigned a regular seat and will be seated with members of the same household, where possible. The bus will be cleaned prior to each trip.

Children with symptoms of illness should not get on the bus or go to school.

Families are encouraged to consider getting their children to and from school if they are not comfortable with their child riding on a yellow bus with other children.

## Family choice – online learning

We understand that returning to in-person classes is not the right decision for every family. Families will be able to decide, at four key times throughout the school year, whether their child will attend in-person classes at school, or learn at home through online instruction.

If you choose online learning, your child will be part of an online learning group with an assigned teacher. This learning format will include live online teacher instruction and developmentally appropriate activities to be completed by your child and supported by a parent or caregiver. Children in an online learning group may be from more than one Division school.

If you are interested in this option, please contact your school.

## Resources for families

If you have questions about Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten programming, please contact your school.

Here are additional resources to help you get ready for the school year.

- [Alberta Education: Parents' Guide to 2020–21 School Year](#) will help you understand your role in reducing the risk of COVID-19 in schools
- [Mental Health Help Line](#) is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Additional supports for families are available through [Alberta Health Services](#).
- View the Alberta Education video, [Returning to School Safely](#)