



Phebe Anna Thorne COVID Mitigation Strategies

School Year 2021-22

Winter

(updated October 17, 2021)

The Thorne staff is continuing to work hard to provide a safe, healthy and happy experience for your children. While we have come a long way in the world of COVID, the pandemic is not yet over. Our children are not yet able to be vaccinated, so we will continue to be vigilant with mitigation strategies in place to keep everyone safe. All decisions are made in consultation with Bryn Mawr College and are grounded in the guidelines issued by the Montgomery Department of Health, CHOP Policy Lab and the CDC. We appreciate your partnership and flexibility as the year progresses. One thing we know for sure is that things change quickly, and when they do we will be ready to pivot! Please know that all plans are subject to change

Vaccinations:

Bryn Mawr and Haverford College has mandated that all undergraduates, staff and faculty must be vaccinated to be on campus. Those with medical exemptions must provide written documentation. All of the Thorne staff is fully vaccinated and any undergraduates or specialists working with us must also follow the BMC/HC mandate. While this mandate does not apply to Thorne parents, we encourage all parents to be vaccinated if medically advisable.

Masks

We are following the CDC and AAP recommendation for universal indoor masking regardless of vaccination status.

That means, children, teachers, undergrads, parents/caregivers, staff and visitors must wear masks when inside of our buildings.

- Children/siblings and parents/caregivers who are unvaccinated must wear masks outside.
- Out of an abundance of caution even vaccinated teachers must wear masks outside. Masks may be removed when distanced from children (for example during circle or when reading aloud from a distance).
- Masks will be taken off for lunch and snack, when children will be seated, and distanced from one another.
- Children will wear masks outside, but will be given many opportunities for mask breaks. During mask breaks, teachers will structure time for children to be physically distanced with their masks off.

Please send extra masks in case one gets dirty or lost. Masks must be washed daily and clearly labeled. Please practice wearing a face covering at home so the children will be comfortable when school starts.

Health Screenings

Before you come to school, we ask that parents screen their children to be sure they do not have a temperature above 100 degrees or any other symptoms. If your child is not well or exhibiting any symptoms (see Guidelines for Contagion) keep them home! Additionally, if anyone in your household is exhibiting COVID-like symptoms, please keep your child home until it is determined not to be COVID. If someone in your home is quarantining or waiting on a COVID test, please keep your child home until the situation is resolved. Children will be sent home when sick.

What will happen at drop off and pick up?

Preschool parents, please park and walk your children into the school. Be sure to hold hands in the parking lot. Anyone who is unvaccinated must wear a mask when entering the building. We ask that parents and caregivers say goodbye quickly, so as to de-densify the classroom and hallway spaces. We will not be allowing visitors to linger. Details about pick up locations will be shared by your classroom teachers. Kindergarten students will be taken out of buses and cars at arrival and dismissed from the sidewalk at the end of the day.

Separation

We know that school may be challenging for some children as many have been home with their families for long periods of time. We are structuring our phase-in in a way that will hopefully ease children into the school routines. If your child is upset we will comfort them, keep them busy and remind them that they will see their parents at the end of the school day. Our teachers have many strategies to help children when they are missing home. If we feel that your child is not able to recover, we will of course call you for an early pick up.

Communication

At the Preschool, pick up and drop off will be fast moving so as not to have adults congregating in the classrooms, there will not be opportunities for hallway conversations with teachers. The same will be true for pick up and drop off at the Kindergarten. Please feel free to email or text teachers (and Amanda, Kate or Bev) to discuss any questions or concerns. We are committed to keeping all lines of communication open even if they are digitally oriented! Jan Linowitz (our psycho educational consultant) will continue to work with children, teachers and parents and is available for conversations. Please let us know when and why your child will be out of school.

Community Events

We are planning both virtual and in person community events this year. Stay tuned for details! Back to School nights for all classes will be virtual. Kate, Amanda and Bev will send links closer to the date.

Lunch and Snack

Snack and lunch are to be provided by parents. Remember that we are a “nut free school.” No peanuts or tree nuts. Please send your child with a lunch/snack box/bag that they are comfortable using. Reusable containers may be used, but please be sure your child can manage it on their own. (Bento boxes might be a good lunch solution). Leftovers will be returned to the child’s lunch bag and sent home. If you send a fruit that needs to be peeled (ie: clementine or orange) please do that ahead of time. Snack should be packed separately from lunch. Note- there will be no warm ups. Please be sure lunch and snack bags are labeled with your child’s name.

Cleaning

Cleanliness is a high priority. The school will be cleaned daily by the Bryn Mawr College/Haverford College Housekeeping staff. All staff will have a role in continuously cleaning the classroom “high touch” surfaces including tables, chairs, manipulatives and classroom supplies. Children and staff members will be required to wash their hands upon arrival, before and after mealtimes and at other scheduled times during the day. Disinfectant wipes/spray, and soap and water will be used.

Social Distancing

Play is the cornerstone of our philosophy and we will encourage children to engage, talk and interact with each other. This coupled with the developmental realities of this age make social distancing complicated. Children will be separated and physically distant from one another when masks are off (lunch/snack). Masking will add a layer of safety when children are interacting. We will be using our outside space as much as possible weather permitting.

The preschool classes (Older Class and Younger Class) will be mixing up on the playground, at lunch and for the Afternoon Program. At times, LEPP classes will mix with the Afternoon program on the playground. The Kindergarten will not mix with the Early Intervention program, or any of the preschool classes. Staggered schedules and routines will help with social distancing in communal areas (hallways etc).

Distance Learning:

We have in place a distance learning plan and will be ready to implement it at any time during the school year if necessary. If one of the buildings is closed for COVID related reasons, the programs in that building will transition to remote learning. Details about our online learning platform Seesaw will be shared at the beginning of the school year.

Materials will not be provided to individual children who are home sick or home due to individual COVID reasons (positive test, personal exposures, sibling sickness, travel quarantine etc.)

Illness

While COVID-19 is a top priority, it's important to remember that the usual childhood illnesses will continue to be a part of our everyday lives. Please be sure to follow our Guidelines for Contagion and keep your child home if they are not feeling well. If a child becomes ill during the day, the child will remain with a teacher, Amanda, Kate or Bev in a quarantined area until the caregiver arrives for pick up. Please know we expect parents to be able to pick up their child within 30 minutes of call.

Travel

All unvaccinated air travelers including your children, domestic and international, should self-quarantine for a full 5 to 7 days following your return and should secure a PCR test between days 3 and 5. A negative test result is required to return to school. Please consider a similar protocol if you are traveling by car/train domestically and are participating in any sort of large gathering. If you are travelling domestically by car with your immediate family to a low risk destination, quarantine and testing is not necessary.

COVID Exposure

If your child has been directly exposed to COVID-19, it is our expectation that the child will quarantine for 10-14 days, or as required by current guidelines, before returning to school. If a vaccinated teacher/undergrad is exposed and is asymptomatic, they will not be asked to quarantine but will be tested on day 3-5 post exposure and will wear a mask until they receive a negative result. We will be following the protocols of the Montco Health Department and recognize that details may change.

Positive COVID Case

If a positive COVID-19 test of a student or staff member is reported to the school (or on the recommendation of the child's physician), parents of children in the identified classroom will be notified and all the children in the class will remain at home for 14 days as per the CDC guidelines. The Health Department will be contacted for additional instructions. Distance learning may be put in place during the time the class is out of school. Distance learning will not be offered for individual absences. We will work with the Health Department as different scenarios may result in different protocols. We will be in regular communication with parents. If a vaccinated teacher/undergrad is positive and symptomatic they must quarantine for 10 days and be symptom free before returning to school.

Community Responsibility

As members of the Thorne community, we ask that all families and staff do their part to ensure a collective well being. We ask that everyone in the community read our Guidelines for Contagion, General Information document and commit to doing their best to keep our community healthy and safe. If there are circumstances in which safe practices are not able to be achieved, we hope that parents will respond accordingly and keep their children home. We appreciate your partnership during these complicated times.

