



Dear Parents/Guardians,

**We are excited to welcome students and staff back to Pickering High School on Thursday, September 9, 2021.**

Students can start arriving at the school 9:45 am.

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic is still at the top of your mind. Our schools will continue to experience modifications, adaptations and changes (many similar to 2020-21) and we want to help make the transition back to school as safe and smooth as possible. For more information on the DDSB's updated Return to School plans, please visit the [DDSB website](#).

**Please take a few minutes to review the plans we have been working on to ensure the safe return of our students and staff to Pickering High School.**

### **Vaccines**

Vaccination is one of the best tools we have to reduce COVID-19 in our communities. All residents of Ontario born in 2009 or earlier are eligible to receive a vaccine. This includes anyone who is 11 years old and turning 12 by the end of 2021.

To book an appointment, visit <https://www.durhamvaccinebooking.ca/>

Pop-up vaccine clinics also continue to take place, with some even taking place in our schools. More details will be communicated with you as they become available.

### **Daily COVID-19 Screenings**

Before sending your child(ren) to school or to child care, every parent/guardian is required to screen for COVID-19. This must be done everyday. If your child(ren) exhibit any of the symptoms on the list, you are required to follow the instructions given and your child(ren) will not be allowed to come to school.

We encourage you to use the Ministry of Health's online self-assessment tool (updated August 2021) by visiting: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/>

### **Wearing a Mask**

In accordance with [direction from the Ministry of Education](#), wearing non-medical or cloth masks are mandatory for students in Grade 1 to 12. Everyone riding student transportation is required to wear a mask. If everyone wears a mask, it will help keep everyone in the school safe.

We have compiled some resources about wearing masks at the bottom of this [virtual information poster](#).



## **Ventilation & Air Quality**

An important part of health and safety in schools is air quality. Between 2015 and 2020, more than 180 projects have been completed across the DDSB to upgrade the air quality in DDSB schools and buildings. Since the start of the pandemic, we have invested in upgraded filters for all ventilation systems. These upgraded filters are highly effective at removing a broad range of particles and we employ a variety of strategies such as duct cleaning and fully replenishing the air in buildings every day.

In addition, ventilation checks have been completed in every building. DDSB has purchased 1,870 portable HEPA air filtration units and the Ministry of Education has supplied a further 311 units. All of these individual units have HEPA-level filtration and filter the air within spaces that are not fully mechanically ventilated. For more information on ventilation in DDSB schools, please visit the [ventilation section](#) on our website.

## **COVID-19 Protocols**

The DDSB will be following the Ministry of Education's [COVID-19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools \(2021-2022\)](#) as part of our school operations. This includes the Ministry of Health's [COVID-19 Guidance for School Case, Contact and Outbreak Management](#) when COVID-19 is suspected or confirmed in a student or staff member. We will also be following any additional directions from the Durham Region Health Department, who have the responsibility of managing confirmed cases of COVID-19, including what happens if there is an outbreak.

Our school and the DDSB are committed to informing you as parents/guardians of child(ren) in our school, along with school staff if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the school. We will be doing this in a message to families and to staff. We also have a COVID-19 Advisory page on both the school website and DDSB website that will include information on any confirmed COVID-19 cases in schools, along with information on closures of classes, cohorts or schools. While we hope that we will never have to update this page and/or send a letter home, we are committed to being transparent with families and working to be prepared for any event.

## **COVID-19 Immunization Disclosure for DDSB Employees**

All DDSB staff are required to comply with the Ministry of Education's COVID-19 immunization disclosure policy. This means that all DDSB employees are required to submit proof of being "fully vaccinated" against COVID-19 by September 7. Any staff who are not fully vaccinated will be required to undergo regular COVID-19 testing in order to enter a workplace. In addition, those who do not intend to be vaccinated, without a documented medical reason, will be required to participate in an education session about the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination.

In mid-September, the DDSB will also be publicly posting aggregated, depersonalized statistical information on the main DDSB website to inform you about the overall vaccination status of all staff and this will continue to be updated monthly. Please note that due to privacy reasons, we are unable to disclose the vaccination status of individual staff members but will be vigilant in ensuring that all staff and any regular visitors to our building will be following the immunization disclosure and testing requirements to help keep our school community safe.

## **COVID-19 Guide for Schools**

The DDSB has developed a [COVID-19 Guide for Schools](#) that includes information on what schools will be doing to prioritize the health and safety of students and staff for the 2021-22 school year. This includes enhanced



cleaning and disinfection protocols, information on masks, hand washing and sanitizing, self-assessments, physical distancing strategies and other measures.

### **School Testing Pilot Program**

**The Ministry of Education has selected Pickering High School to participate in the School Testing Pilot Program from September 7 – October 29.** Students and staff who are vaccinated and asymptomatic will receive a take-home self-collection kit if they have been identified as a high-risk contact of a COVID-19 case, as directed by the Durham Region Health Department. Further information will be communicated to anyone identified as a high-risk contact of a COVID-19 case.

### **Visitors to Schools**

Similar to last year, we are trying to limit contacts by reducing visitors in our school. If possible, please make an appointment. Telephone meetings are preferred where appropriate. If you need to get in touch with someone at the school, please call or email the school.

### **Secondary Lunch Protocols**

Secondary students are encouraged to eat lunch at home (if possible) or whenever possible, and weather permitting, to eat their lunch outdoors. Secondary cafeterias will also be open, and schools will be divided into lunch zones with students being asked to eat their lunch with a consistent cohort (students in the same class) within their chosen zone daily in order to limit contacts and support contact tracing. Other common areas outside of the cafeteria may also be designated as lunch spaces in order to accommodate students and support physical distancing. Students are encouraged to continue proper hand hygiene, distancing from others as much as possible, and removing of masks only when eating and drinking.

**This year the lunch break at Pickering High School will be 55 minutes (12:30 – 1:25 pm) in length.** We will have designated lunch zones for students to ensure that they are socially distanced. Students will be made aware of their designated zone on the first day of school. The cafeteria will NOT be serving lunch until further notice.

### **Lockers**

There will be NO lockers assigned to students at this time.

### **Timetable for Quadmester 1**

**Parents/Guardians will receive their student's Period 1 classroom on Tuesday September 7, 2021.** This information will be communicated to parents via SchoolMessenger. Please ensure you check your email and tell your student their classroom number. **The timetable for quadmester 1 will be given out in their Period 1 class on the first day.**

Timetable changes will be available from September 9 at 12:00 pm until September 13 at 11:59 PM. Timetable changes will be completed virtually this year, using a Microsoft Form located on the Guidance Google Classroom.



## Bell Times and Quadmester Schedules

School will be taking place from 10:00 am to 3:55 pm for all secondary students at Pickering High School. Quadmesters will be continuing for the start of this school year. It is our hope that we can return to a semestered schedule halfway through the school year, pending Ministry of Education approval. Our school's schedule is listed below with Course 1 taking place in the two morning periods and Course 2 taking place in the two afternoon periods.

At Pickering High School, classes start at 10:00 am and students are dismissed at the end of the day at 3:55 pm. Students are expected to arrive at 9:45 am (doors open to enter the building at this time).

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Period 1</b> <b>10:00 – 11:15 am</b>	<b>Course 1</b>	<b>Course 1</b>	<b>Course 1</b>	<b>Course 1</b>	<b>Course 1</b>
<b>Period 2</b> <b>11:15 am – 12:30 pm</b>	<b>Course 1</b>	<b>Course 1</b>	<b>Course 1</b>	<b>Course 1</b>	<b>Course 1</b>
<b>Lunch</b> <b>12:30 – 1:25 pm</b>					
<b>Period 3</b> <b>1:25 – 2:40 pm</b>	<b>Course 2</b>	<b>Course 2</b>	<b>Course 2</b>	<b>Course 2</b>	<b>Course 2</b>
<b>Period 4</b> <b>2:40 – 3:55 pm</b>	<b>Course 2</b>	<b>Course 2</b>	<b>Course 2</b>	<b>Course 2</b>	<b>Course 2</b>
<b>Students are dismissed for the day at 3:55 pm</b>					

## Entry/Exit Point

Students are required to enter the school based on the location of their morning class. **Please review the attached map to determine your child's entrance.** Students will exit the school from the closest exit/door. After lunch, students are required to re-enter the school (if leaving for lunch) based on the location of their afternoon class.

Attached is a map of the school with the corresponding doors labelled to assist in knowing which to use for entry into the building.

## Busing

Busing services are provided by [Durham Student Transportation Service](#) (DSTS). They are responsible for routes and COVID-19 safety protocols. Similar to last year, masks will be mandatory on buses. You can find out more information on busing, including routes by visiting [their website](#).

### **Mental Health and Well-Being**

Mental health, well-being, equity and student learning is important to our school and there has never been a time when uniting these priorities has been more essential. School and classroom environments have an important impact on a student's sense of belonging and overall mental health. Educators will be given resources and everyday strategies to foster strong, positive, and inclusive classroom practises to support mentally healthy classrooms. They will first focus on [The First 20 Days \(and Beyond\) of Creating Connection and Well-Being](#) with students. Be sure to look out for additional supports for families that will be shared on DDSB's website and through social media.

### **Return of Loaned Technology**

If a home internet device was loaned to your household, please ensure that it is returned directly to our school on the first day of class.

### **Human Rights and Equity**

Our school is committed to providing learning and working environments that centre human rights and equity and that are welcoming, safe, respectful, equitable, inclusive, accessible and free from discrimination, oppression and harm. Our school team looks forward to engaging and collaborating with our diverse school community to support this commitment and to promote and protect human rights for all students and staff.

### **Staying Safe**

All of us have a responsibility to stay safe and to follow the guidance of public health officials to ensure that your child(ren) will be in an environment that supports their learning. That includes employing strategies such as physical distancing when possible. We have created a [physical distancing poster](#) to help you speak with your child(ren) about this. We hope that you have found the information in this message helpful. We encourage you to visit our school website, the main [DDSB website](#), our social media channels, and the [Durham Region Health Department](#) for further information and to stay up to date with any changes.

On behalf of our entire school team, we are looking forward to welcoming you back next week. Be well and stay safe.

Warm regards,



Mr. Hoi Leung  
Principal  
Pickering High School