

STATEMENT BY THE DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD

In light of Governor Baker's announcement and updated Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) guidance, the Diocese of Springfield is eliminating all school masking mandates on behalf of all Diocesan and parish schools.

This applies to children of any age in our schools.

We will continue to adhere to any local health board mandates. Similarly, we will follow the existing federal order for mask wearing on school buses and our local protocols on mask wearing for students returning after a positive COVID case.

Individual teachers and staff members will be allowed to wear masks at their own discretion. All parents can decide for their own children whether a mask for their children is advisable. These personal decisions will be respected.

This will be effective for all schools on Monday, February 28th, or prior to that date in conjunction with the local Department of Public Health.

In a limited number of instances where there is a parent consensus and compelling data to continue mask wearing, a school may request to continue their local mask wearing protocols as long as they continue to provide the exemptions per previous guidance from the Catholic Schools Office.

This decision was made after consultation with Bishop William D. Byrne and the Diocesan Catholic School Board.

We are grateful for our school communities who have worked diligently to keep our schools open throughout this pandemic. We will continue to provide the safe and high-quality Catholic education expected from our schools.