

2023 - 2024

STARKVILLE OKTIBBEHA SCHOOL DISTRICT

STAYING  
SAFE  
TOGETHER



RETURN TO SCHOOL

GUIDE

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[StarkvilleSD.com](http://StarkvilleSD.com)

STARKVILLE  
OKTIBBEHA  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

*The health and safety of our students, staff and families is of utmost importance as we continue full, in-person school for the 2023-2024 school year. The **Starkville Oktibbeha School District** has responded to Covid-19 based on guidance from public health officials and state and federal agencies. District plans will continue to be updated as needed.*

**The District is focused on our identified mission, vision, beliefs and goals.**

## MISSION

The **mission** of the Starkville Oktibbeha School District is to achieve excellence by facilitating the discovery and development of each student's **passion, purpose, and potential.**

## VISION

**EXPECT EXCELLENCE EVERY DAY.**

## BELIEFS

We believe excellent public schools are the **HEART of a thriving community.**

We believe **excellent TEACHERS** are essential for student success.

We believe **DIVERSITY is a strength** and shall be embraced, recognized, and celebrated.

We believe problem solving, critical thinking and creativity cultivate **LIFE-LONG LEARNERS.**

We believe quality education fosters **LEADERSHIP and develops good citizens.**

We believe our schools must be **safe, welcoming, and RESPECTFUL to all.**

We believe **ENGAGING our families and community** is vital to ensuring each student's growth.

We believe that **health and WELLNESS** are foundational to success.

## GOALS

### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

We will maximize growth of all students through rigorous and meaningful instruction.

### HEALTH, WELLNESS & SCHOOL CULTURE

We will foster and maintain inviting, equitable, healthy learning environments that promote safety, wellness, engagement, and excellence.

### HUMAN RESOURCES

We will recruit and retain a highly qualified, diverse workforce through an equitable process to ensure student achievement.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

We will engage and partner with community stakeholders to foster greater student opportunities and build a more vibrant quality of life.

### OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

We will maximize resources to ensure operational effectiveness.

## *Equity & Access*

**The Starkville Oktibbeha School District is committed to equity and access to quality instruction for all students supported with safe and best practices during a pandemic.**

Our schools have a responsibility to be culturally and linguistically responsive and meet the needs of ALL students, including language support for English learners and support for students with disabilities. All students must have opportunities to achieve academic success that are accessible, personalized, culturally relevant, and responsive.

## *What Families Can Expect This School Year*

For the 2023-2024 school year, the Starkville Oktibbeha School District will continue with a full, in-person traditional school schedule while adhering to recommended health and safety guidelines as identified by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH), and the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE).

## *Social Emotional Learning*

The Starkville Oktibbeha School District recognizes the social emotional impact of the pandemic including fear, loss and isolation.

The District has committed to increasing mental health supports for students in the upcoming school year, including a renewed focus on social-emotional learning.

**Attending to the social emotional well-being of our students will be a top priority as they attend school.**

District and school staffs are committed to supporting students' social emotional wellness and offering resources to ensure students transition back to school smoothly. Support may include social emotional learning, building relationships, and increased access to mental health/wellness services. Families and schools will work together to check how students are feeling and assess their individual needs to provide the support our students need during these challenging times.



## Academics

The Starkville Oktibbeha School District believes excellent teachers are essential to student success. Quality instruction is a standard of excellence in the Starkville Oktibbeha School District that includes:

- ▶ Mississippi College & Career Readiness Standards
  - Essential standards
  - Prioritized content
- ▶ Rigorous and meaningful instruction
- ▶ Response to intervention through the tier process
  - Accelerated learning
  - Tutoring and intensive intervention
  - Academic support during summer sessions and after-school programs
- ▶ High quality early childhood education
- ▶ Services provided under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act)

Our teachers will support our students through engaging, learning experiences that promote and encourage reading, writing, critical thinking and communicating.



## Athletics

The Starkville Oktibbeha School District has resumed extra-curricular activities and practices. Each sport and/or activity affiliated with the Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA) will adhere to the established guidelines as defined by MHSAA, CDC, and MSDH for health and safety.



## Arts

The Starkville Oktibbeha School District recognizes the importance of arts in education. The District is committed to arts integration in the regular classroom and during specials classes including art and music in elementary school. At the middle and high school level, band, theatre and choir leaders have developed safe practices for delivery of instruction in the arts.



## *Attendance*

The Starkville Oktibbeha School District will follow the Mississippi Department of Education attendance reporting requirements.



## *Academic Calendar*

**The first day of school is Tuesday, July 25.** The full academic calendar for the 2023-2024 school year is available online at [www.starkvillesd.com](http://www.starkvillesd.com).



## *Child Nutrition*

The Starkville Oktibbeha School District Office of Child Nutrition will continue to serve our students breakfast and lunch.

Students may also choose to bring their lunch from home in a lunchbox of their choice.



## *Transportation*

The Starkville Oktibbeha School District Department of Transportation will continue to provide bus transportation for students during the 2023-2024 school year.

Buses will be disinfected before picking up students and after they return from routes.

The Starkville Oktibbeha School District is committed to ensuring the health and wellness of all students. As public health guidelines change, the District will adjust plans accordingly.

**We will work together with our students and families to keep our children safe as we transition to a new school year.**

*The Starkville Oktibbeha School District will promote behaviors that reduce the spread of infectious diseases by educating our students, faculty and staff about routine, regular hand washing, and sanitizing spaces and high touch surface areas.*

## ***General Safety Precautions Throughout the Day***

Schools will follow **disinfection and sanitization guidelines** for school campuses including classrooms, workspaces, outdoor spaces and playgrounds.

All students and staff will be encouraged to wash/clean their hands regularly. **Handwashing station** with soap and/or hand sanitizer will be available in hallways and classrooms.

Schools will **limit sharing of supplies** between students and disinfect between uses if sharing is unavoidable.

## Handwashing & Hand Sanitizing

Handwashing removes pathogens from the surface of the hands. While handwashing with soap and water is the best option, alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol) may be utilized when handwashing is not available. As has always been the case, handwashing should be used whenever hands are visibly soiled and after using the bathroom.

### Our hand hygiene requirements & related guidance are as follows:

- ▶ Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene (handwashing or sanitizing) upon arrival to school, before eating, and before dismissal.
- ▶ **Handwashing:** When handwashing, individuals should use soap and water to wash all surfaces of their hands for at least 20 seconds, wait for visible lather, rinse thoroughly, and dry with an individual disposable towel.
- ▶ **Hand sanitizing:** If handwashing is not feasible, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol content can be used. Hand sanitizer should be applied to all surfaces of the hands and in sufficient quantity that it takes 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry. Hand sanitizer should be placed at key locations (e.g., building entrances, cafeteria, classrooms).

## What is EFFECTIVE HANDWASHING?

USE  
SOAP &  
WATER!

Wait for a visible  
lather & wash for

**20**  
SECONDS

Dry with an  
individual  
**DISPOSABLE**  
TOWEL

## What is EFFECTIVE HAND SANITIZING?

1

Choose a sanitizer with at least **60% ethanol** or **70% isopropanol**

2

Apply enough that it takes **20 seconds** of rubbing hands together to dry

## *Guidance for Vaccinations*

The Starkville Oktibbeha School District urges all employees and students with parent permission to be fully vaccinated.

According to the Mississippi State Department of Health, vaccination remains the primary public health prevention strategy to end transmission and allow for safe participation of in-person classes and school sponsored extra curricular activities.

## *Guidance for Masks/Face Coverings*

For the start of the 2023-2024 school year, masks will be optional.

The District will monitor rates of transmission and adjust our mask procedures accordingly.



## *Covid Positive/Isolation Guidance*

If you test positive for Covid, regardless of vaccination status,

- Stay home for 5 days.
- If you have no symptoms or your symptoms are resolving after 5 days, you can leave your house.
- Continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.
- If you have a fever, continue to stay home until fever resolves.

## *Close Contact/Quarantine Guidance*

If you were exposed to someone with Covid and you:

- Have been boosted  
OR
- Completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months  
OR
- Completed the primary series of J&J vaccine with the last 2 months

Then you should

- Wear a mask around others 10 days.
- Test on day 5, if possible.
- If you develop symptoms, get tested and stay home.

If you were exposed to someone with Covid and you:

- ARE NOT Vaccinated  
OR
- Completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and are not boosted  
OR
- Completed the primary series of J&J over 2 months ago and are not boosted

Then you should

- Stay home for 5 days and continue to wear a mask around others for an additional 5 days.
- If you are a SOCSO employee who is an essential worker and you cannot quarantine, you must wear a mask for 10 days.
- Test on day 5 if possible.
- If you develop symptoms, get tested and stay home.

## *Suspected or Confirmed COVID Illness*

If a student is sick, please stay at home. If a student becomes ill while at school, the student will be isolated, and parents will be required to pick up the student in an immediate manner.

Parents are asked to notify the school if a student has symptoms associated with COVID-19 or has been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with, or is showing symptoms of, COVID-19. According to the Mississippi State Department of Health, close contact is defined as any individual within 6 feet of the infected person for at least 15 minutes or greater within a 24-hour period.

COVID-19 Symptoms include:	
▶ Fever or chills	▶ New loss of taste or smell
▶ Cough	▶ Sore throat
▶ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	▶ Congestion/Runny Nose
▶ Fatigue/Muscle or body aches	▶ Nausea or vomiting
▶ Headache	▶ Diarrhea
▶ Skin rash	▶ Appetite changes

By acting quickly, we can also determine if other close contacts need to be quarantined and if deep cleaning may be required for any schools or buses. If quarantined, it is imperative that students DO NOT enter ANY SOSD property/facility until they are cleared. Students returning to school must be fever free and symptom free for at least 24 hours.

## *COVID-19 Related Isolation Space*

In order to minimize transmission of COVID-19, schools must ensure they have an isolated space available for students displaying COVID-19 symptoms. Schools will designate a COVID-19 related isolation space that is separate from the nurse's office or other space where routine medical care is provided. A student who shows COVID-19 symptoms during the school day will be moved to the specific room pre-designated for medical-related isolation until they can be picked up by a family member.

## *Health Screening*

Staff, students, and visitors who are entering a SOSD building may have their temperature checked and recorded.

Parents or caregivers should check for COVID-19 symptoms each morning as the District's primary screening procedure for students.

The district may implement strategies to reduce risks to the safety and health of students and staff from COVID-19 that include conducting daily in-person or virtual health checks when there is an elevated risk (e.g., symptom and/or temperature screening, questionnaires, self-checks and self-questionnaires). Any such screening will consider ways to maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Because people infected with COVID-19 can spread the virus even if they do not have signs or symptoms of infection, temperature screening may play a part in a comprehensive program to monitor student health during the pandemic.

If a student registers as having a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher, the student will be moved to an isolated area with as much respect to the individual's privacy as possible while working to maintain the safety of others. Again, students who are sick or displaying symptoms are asked to stay home.

## *Exclusion When Sick*

**All students, teachers, and staff who have symptoms of any infectious illness, regardless of vaccination status, should stay home from school and be evaluated by their healthcare provider.**

Students, teachers, and staff must be symptom and fever free for at least 24 hours, or if COVID-19 is diagnosed, until the isolation criteria for return to school are met.

## *Reporting*

The Starkville Oktibbeha School District will provide Covid-case reports as requested by the Mississippi State Department of Health.

## *Return to School Guidance*

**AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS**

**U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL**

**MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**