

June 5, 2020

## Use of sanitizing products within our schools

The health, safety, and wellness of all who learn and work within our schools is the Comox Valley School District's primary responsibility.

On March 17th, 2020, the Province of BC, in response to growing concerns regarding the World-Wide COVID 19 Pandemic, made the unprecedented decision to close all school to face to face instruction.

In advance of this decision, the Comox Valley School District possessed a substantive, and detailed Pandemic Emergency plan to allow for a nimble, systemic response to this Pandemic. From the onset, the Comox Valley School District responded quickly and responsibly to ensure that our decision making, our operational practices and Safety Protocols were informed by the expert advice provided the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), Health Canada and WorkSafeBC.

As with all newly emerging health threats, science and research informs our knowledge and practise. Early research into COVID 19 clearly showed that while close person-to-person and the dispersion of droplets was the primary method of transmission, multiple other factors played a role, including the inadequate cleaning of surfaces. COVID-19 can live for days on certain surfaces, making thorough and frequent cleaning with the correct sanitizing products, tools and equipment an essential part of preventing the spread of the virus with our school settings.

The Comox Valley School District responded immediately by implementing new, more stringent cleaning protocols as directed by the BCCDC and Health Canada.

Throughout Spring Break, while thoroughly cleaning school sites, our Custodial staff utilized the recommended product Virex (Quaternary Ammonium Compound), a product that is among the list of acceptable sanitizing solutions listed by Health Canada.

In accordance with Health Canada and BCCDC, COVID-19 guidelines only registered broad-spectrum disinfectants are approved for use. Virex is one of these approved products. We can not use tea tree, vinegar, or Thieves oil as replacements.

**As we are a dynamic and proactive learning organization, we are constantly, reviewing our process and the products we utilize. As Virex requires a significant "dwell time" on surfaces to be effective as a sanitizer, we are currently in the process of transitioning**

**away from the use of Virex, to an equally effective and acceptable alternative, either an alcohol-based (containing a minimum of 75% ethanol) or an accelerated hydrogen peroxide disinfectant.**

The transition will not be immediate due to supply chain demands and availability.

**In the interim, while we wait supply of alcohol-based disinfectants, the school district has implemented a protocol to ensure that sanitizing with Virex takes place after hours when schools are empty, not while staff and students are in attendance.**

In addition, we have deployed custodial to all schools during operational hours to ensure frequent cleaning during the day of high-touch surfaces using. The continuous and visible process of cleaning throughout each day instills confidence while removing invisible pathogens from our schools.

We want all students, parents, staff and the community to feel confident and assured that as your School District we are responding to this unprecedented health crisis using the best science the safest possible processes as we reopen our school this month and as we plan for September.

For more information regarding the guiding regulations for use of disinfectants in schools, please visit [BCCDC/ BC Ministry of Health Coronavirus COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings](#) and [Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers \(COVID-19\): List of disinfectants with evidence for use against COVID-19](#)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Berry', written on a light-colored background.

Paul G. Berry  
Director of Health and Safety  
Comox Valley Schools