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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 12, 2025

Covington Middle School Reopens for In-Person Instruction March 18

LOW MOOR, VA (March 12, 2025) – Following extensive safety evaluations and inspections, Alleghany Highlands Public Schools (AHPS) announces the reopening of Covington Middle School (CMS) to in-person instruction.

Reopening Schedule:

- Monday, March 17: Teacher Work Day - Teachers and staff will return to the building for classroom preparations and a staff meeting; there will be no school for CMS students on Monday
- Tuesday, March 18: Students will return to classrooms on a regular schedule

Note: Thursday March 13th and Friday, March 14th, will remain virtual for all CMS students

"The last few weeks have been challenging as we navigated an extremely complex situation and many multi-faceted unknowns, but we are very excited to bring our students, teachers, and staff back into the building," Karen Staunton, Covington Middle School Principal, said. "I am thankful to the administration and our School Board for prioritizing the methodical safety checks required to get us to this point. I am confident that the well-being of our community has been everyone's top priority throughout this process, and while we all wish these disruptions hadn't occurred, we are now very excited for everyone's return."

Since a January 31 evacuation, caused by an unidentified odor in the building, which closed the school, CMS has undergone:

- Comprehensive state and local safety inspections
- Professional Air Quality Testing
- Professional Building Systems Testing
- A comprehensive deep cleaning

Throughout this process, AHPS has benefitted from the advice of several highly specialized subject matter experts and used this recent school closure to implement all of their recommendations, including:

- Removing an older oven from the cafeteria that was not burning efficiently
- Tightening a belt on an exhaust fan above the oven that was not moving air at optimum levels
- Adding carbon monoxide detectors throughout the building
- Repaired an older air handling unit on the third floor to more efficiently ventilate that part of the building
- Cleaned the boiler room to remove excess moisture
- Repainting the boys' locker room to more completely repair previous water damage
- Clean out radiators throughout the building to help keep the building air clean

"While this situation has been incredibly challenging for everyone involved, it has also been an opportunity for growth for our school system," AHPS Superintendent Kim Halterman said. "We're extremely thankful for the community's patience and the extensive support of so many valued state, local, and regional partners as we navigated through a complex and sensitive situation. I'm also very pleased that we were able to do so without ever taking our eyes off of our responsibility to provide our students with the high-quality education they deserve."

To help the community further explore what happened, how AHPS and its various partners handled the response, and what to expect during next week's return to in-person instruction, AHPS has also produced a temporary incident-specific micro-site publicly available at www.cmsincident.com.

Parents with additional questions can use a form on the website FAQ page or the ahpsinfo@ahps.k12.va.us email address to contact the administration.

Alleghany Highlands Public Schools

AHPS was created through the July 2022 merger of Alleghany County Public Schools, Covington City Public Schools, and Jackson River Technical Center. Alleghany County and the City of Covington jointly fund the school division. AHPS serves approximately 2,700 students.

AHPS news and events are regularly updated on Facebook at AHPublicSchools and the division website www.ahps.k12.va.us. School starts for students on Aug. 13 for the school year 2025-2026.

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