

September 1, 2016

Drinking water quality: update

Dear Parent / Guardian,

This past spring, we received a letter from the Ministry of Education asking us to ensure the quality of water in our schools. We were asked to work with our local health authorities to develop a plan to evaluate water quality, particularly in schools built prior to 1989 when there was a revision to the BC Plumbing Code limiting the use of lead solder in pipes. We immediately began working on a plan and initiated testing in several sites through the spring. What was clear from our initial testing was that we had a need for a long term and sustainable plan for the district. The intent of this letter is to tell you the results of our testing to date and to inform you of our plan. Our commitment is to ensure that all schools have access to clean water. Guided by advice from health authorities, over the summer we had an accredited, independent laboratory test water quality—specifically, lead content from all 63 schools in the Surrey School District that were built before 1990.

Water fountains and school lunchroom/kitchen sink taps—621 water sources in total—were tested within each school; once before flushing the water (running the tap for at least two minutes) and again after flushing. Test results for lead content varied by school and also varied at different locations within the same school.

More than half of the water sources, 325, provided good water quality without any flushing. Another 269 of the sources provided good water quality after flushing. Twenty-seven of the fountains or taps—or four per cent of all the water sources tested—did not provide water with lead content within the limits mandated by Health Canada, even after flushing.

With the information gathered through the testing, Surrey Schools has taken action at each of the tested schools to ensure the drinking water for students and staff is only available from fountains and sinks with water quality meeting health standards.

Safe drinking water is available at multiple locations in every school. Our confidence in the safety of the water is supported by the independent lab results.

Depending on the specific results, some water sources in your school will be flushed every morning before school begins, according to a daily protocol. Some water sources may be unavailable for use (covered or disconnected) until further testing or until filters/replacement parts are installed to address water quality. This temporary measure is in place until all taps have been tested or until a permanent solution is in place. In addition to the above, information will be presented to staff and students at each school as part of our education on safe water.

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LEADERSHIP IN LEARNING

Overall, we have completed phase one of a three-part plan. Phase one is to analyze all schools built prior to 1990 and to put remediation in place and to ensure safe water is available at multiple points in every school. Phase two of our plan is to replace faucets, install filters or bottling stations and to establish a permanent solution. Phase three of our plan is to review our findings district-wide and to ensure that the monitoring of our water is part of a sustainable and long-range plan.

We want to make sure that we are transparent with the results of our testing and our plan. You can find more information about water quality in our schools, including the test results report for each school on the [Surrey Schools](#) website.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jordan Tinney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Jordan Tinney
Superintendent of Schools/CEO