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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Housatonic Valley Health District Provides Additional Air Quality Update for Quaker Farms School

The Housatonic Valley Health District (HVHD) is providing another update regarding air quality monitoring conducted at Quaker Farms School in Oxford, including findings from testing observed by representatives from HVHD on March 4, 2026 and March 5, 2026, and detailed in the EnviroMed Services Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Report (Project # IH-26-1069) and the Professional Cleaning and Restoration Systems CO_2 Snapshot Monitoring Log.

HVHD staff were onsite again on March 4th and 5th to observe air quality testing conducted by two independent environmental companies and to continue oversight of environmental conditions within the building. For ease of review, all findings to date have been compiled here.

March 4th Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) Monitoring Results

On March 4th a total of 47 CO_2 readings were collected by Professional Cleaning and Restoration Systems. Of these readings:

- **41 readings** were below 1,100 parts per million (ppm)
- **6 readings** were above 1,100 ppm, including:
  - 3 readings between 1,100–1,200 ppm
  - 1 reading between 1,200–1,300 ppm
  - 1 reading between 1,300–1,400 ppm
  - 1 reading (the highest recorded) was 1613

Per ASHRAE Standard 62-2001, *Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality*, the difference between indoor and outdoor CO_2 concentrations should be less than 700-707 ppm. Based on the March 4th data, **three readings surpassed this threshold**.

March 5th Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) Monitoring Results

On March 5th a total of 130 combined CO_2 readings were collected by EnviroMed and Professional Cleaning and Restoration Systems. Of these readings:

- **106 readings** were below 1,100 parts per million (ppm)
- **24 readings** were above 1,100 ppm, including:
  - 7 readings between 1,100–1,200 ppm
  - 5 readings between 1,200–1,300 ppm
  - 4 readings between 1,300–1,400 ppm

- 8 readings over 1,400 ppm

Per ASHRAE Standard 62-2001, *Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality*, the difference between indoor and outdoor CO_2 concentrations should be less than 700-707 ppm. Based on the March 4th data, **eighteen readings surpassed this threshold**.

Regulatory and Guidance Context

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH) do not set mandatory, legally binding CO_2 limits for classrooms. Instead, the EPA recommends following ASHRAE standards, which are industry-accepted guidelines for HVAC system design, energy efficiency, and indoor air quality.

The EPA's *Reference Guide for Indoor Air Quality in Schools* notes that ASHRAE Standard 62-2001 recommends maintaining CO_2 concentrations at no more than **700-707 ppm above outdoor levels** in occupied classrooms. Importantly, this recommendation is intended to maintain ventilation sufficient "to prevent body odor levels from being offensive" and is **not a health effects threshold**.

This 700-707 differential often translates to around 1,000 ppm, however, as it is based on outdoor CO_2 concentration, it may at times be higher. This is due to the fact that outdoor CO_2 levels fluctuate based on various factors, with levels generally higher in the winter. The outdoor baseline recorded on March 4th by Professional Cleaning and Restoration Systems was 478 (average of three readings taken), the outdoor baseline recorded on March 5th by Professional Cleaning and Restoration Systems was 464 (average of three readings), and 446 as recorded by EnviroMed.

For additional perspective:

- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) permissible exposure limit for CO_2 is **5,000 ppm (0.5%)** as an 8-hour time-weighted average
- CO_2 levels above 2,000 ppm in office buildings and classrooms are not uncommon in certain conditions, though higher levels may indicate reduced ventilation effectiveness
- Although CO_2 concentrations of 400–3000 ppm typically seen in indoor environments does not pose a health hazard, there is some evidence with respect to office workers and school children that at ventilation levels leading to CO_2 concentrations above ~2000ppm for extended periods occupants may feel slightly drowsy and their cognitive performance may be decreased (https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S295036202500030X)

School Absence Trends Observed Across District Schools

A review of recent attendance data across the district's four schools, Quaker Farms School (QFS), Great Oak Elementary School (GOES), Oxford Middle School (OMS), and Oxford High School (OHS), between January 5, 2026 and March 4, 2026 shows generally consistent attendance patterns with some variation by grade level.

During the period reviewed, OHS experienced the highest average number of daily absences, with approximately 29 students absent per day, representing about 6.6% of enrolled students. In comparison, QFS averaged 21.7 absences per day (about 5.3% of enrollment), while GOES and OMS reported the lowest average daily absences, at 18.4 (4.8%) and 17.8 (4.9%) students, respectively.

School	Average Daily Absences	% of Enrollment
QFS	21.7	5.3%
GOES	18.4	4.8%
OMS	17.8	4.9%
OHS	29.1	6.6%

Overall, the data indicate that attendance patterns were largely stable across the elementary and middle school levels, with somewhat higher absence rates observed among high school students.

Illness-related Dismissal Trends Observed Across District Schools

A review of illness-related dismissal data between January 5, 2026 and March 4, 2026 showed that illness-related dismissal remained relatively low across all four schools during the monitoring period. On average, Quaker Farms School recorded about 1.7 dismissals per day, Oxford High School about 1.5, Great Oak Elementary School about 1.2, and Oxford Middle School fewer than one dismissal per day. While occasional single-day increases occurred, including a peak of six dismissals at the high school, the overall pattern across schools remained stable and low, typically ranging from zero to three dismissals per day, with no sustained upward trend observed.

School	Average Daily Illness-Related Dismissals	Highest Single-Day Dismissals	Typical Daily Range
QFS	1.7	4	0–3
GOES	1.2	3	0–2
OMS	0.8	5	0–2
OHS	1.5	6	0–3

HVHD remains committed to ongoing oversight, transparent communication, and collaboration with school officials to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for students and staff.

Please reach out to us with any questions: inbox@hvhdct.gov

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