



SIMCOE MUSKOKA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

2023 - 2024 Student Handbook



Welcome

Dear SMCDSB Staff and Families,

Welcome to the 2023/2024 school year! Summer months bless us with plenty of sunshine, warm temperatures, and opportunities to rest and relax. It's also easy to embrace crisp fall days, colourful autumn views, and the familiar routines of going to school each day. It's always fun to reconnect with friends, young and old.

This year's school year theme, described in more detail on the next page, speaks of grace, mercy and peace. As we explore this theme over the year, we will learn how important each of these virtues is.

Today, we can't get enough grace, mercy, and peace. Our students need it, our support staff need it, our educators need it, and certainly our communities need it. Let's make this the year that we speak and act with grace, mercy, and peace in an effort to spread love and kindness. I'm sure we can think of ways to be kinder at school, in classrooms and playgrounds. There are also many ways to be kinder to our loved ones. It is equally important to be kind to strangers too - people who might be struggling in ways that we can only imagine.

Kindness is contagious. One kind gesture rooted in grace, mercy and peace motivates others to do the same. Speak gently, even when frustrated. Be respectful, even when challenged. Be calm, especially when others cannot. Avoid judgment, criticize less, and appreciate more.

Extend your kindness to the environment too. Litter less, and lead by example so that others will do the same. Be kind to Mother Earth - recycle more, use less plastic, turn off lights not required, nurture gardens for bumblebees - the list is endless.

My prayer for the staff and students of the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board community is that we have a productive, healthy, and fun year of learning, punctuated by grace, mercy, and peace for ourselves and others. September sees us begin our school year with renewed energy and hope. Let's work our way towards June, and be able to look back at our school year with pride and happiness, knowing that we all did our very best.

Blessings for a wonderful year,



Frances Bagley
Director of Education



Faith in our Schools



“Grace, mercy and peace”: these are three of the blessings that St. Paul often wishes to other Christians in his New Testament letters. This year, they are also blessings we are wishing for everyone who is part of the life of our Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board family.

In our Christian faith, grace means showing others patience and understanding—being people of kindness and generosity, who strive to go beyond doing the mere minimum in our relationships with each other.

Mercy is a key biblical concept that reminds us of the importance of forgiveness and compassion, allowing people the chance to start over again when we make mistakes—because we know how God never stops offering us forgiveness through Jesus.

The kind of peace God offers us (called shalom in biblical Hebrew) is much more than just not fighting: it is a kind of all-embracing wholeness and reconciliation that touches our relationship with God, with other people, with Creation—and with our own deepest selves. It is a peace that transforms everything it touches.

With COVID-19 in the rearview mirror, we do not want to simply try to rebuild the ways things were in the past. Just the opposite: we are building anew, drawing upon God’s gifts to build something fresh and beautiful that has never existed before. Our eyes are eagerly focussed on the future and what it will look like, when we are gracious, merciful and peaceful toward each other, with grace, mercy and peace in our thoughts, words and actions!

Our Strategic Plan

Our Vision Statement

Our Faith. Our Students. Our Future.

Our Mission Statement

Faithfully, inclusively and equitably, we inspire every student to realize their God-given potential.

Priority One

Fostering Well-being

A culture of spiritual, physical, social-emotional, and mental wellness.

Priority Two

Strengthening Equity and Inclusion

Communities that welcome, accept and provide opportunities for everyone.

Priority Three

Nurturing Engagement and Learning

Communities who grow through partnership, innovation, and continuous improvement.

Priority Four

Developing Leaders

Individuals who will shape our future.

Guiding Principle: Guided by our faith, these priorities are achieved through the effective stewardship of resources, and by consistently reviewing, revising, and reporting our progress.

Our Virtues and Values

Faith	Hope	Love
Truth	Justice	Compassion
Forgiveness	Family	Service

Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations

The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations provide a vision of learning, which includes knowledge and skills as well as values, attitudes, and actions.

We are helping students to become:

- Discerning believers formed in the Catholic faith community;
- Effective communicators;
- Reflective, creative and holistic thinkers;
- Self-directed, responsible, lifelong learners;



- Collaborative contributors;
- Caring family members; and
- Responsible citizens.

These graduate expectations highlight what is both essential and distinctive about Catholic education. Together with the mission, vision, virtues, and values, they set the context and foundation for our strategic priorities and for decision-making in our Board.

Parents as Partners - Getting Involved

Establishing a positive and open relationship between parents, teachers, and students is a critical part of achieving excellence in education and it is something we value.

In addition to regularly communicating with your child's teacher, there may also be other volunteer opportunities at the school. You may even want to consider becoming involved in the Catholic School Community Council or Catholic Parent Involvement Committee.



When You Have Concerns

A strong relationship between home and school is an important part of helping all children reach their full potential. From time to time, we know there may be a misunderstanding, lack of communication, or situations that require attention. When this happens, all parties must work together to resolve the matter.

If you have an issue or concern that you would like to raise, we encourage you review the following documents:

- [PCGE-08 Responding to Issues and Concerns](#)
- [Guidelines and Expectations for Fostering Respectful and Safe Environments](#)

Our process requires that issues and concerns are dealt with at the local level first, prior to it being escalated. We understand that there are some circumstances where, after all reasonable efforts are made, a response or resolution cannot be achieved with the people most directly involved. In these cases, an issue may be formally escalated.

Safe Schools

In Caring Hands

An important part of our role is to provide a learning environment where all students feel safe, valued, and respected. Our Catholic schools promote responsibility, respect, Catholic moral teaching, spirituality, civility, and academic excellence in a safe learning and teaching environment. As a Catholic school system, we must be proactive to ensure that our Catholic values are preserved and promoted.

Safe Welcome Program

All of our elementary schools have front door intercom and video technology. All visitors will need to press the buzzer to gain admittance and then proceed to the main office to sign in. We ask parents and students to be patient while waiting for office staff to buzz them into the school.

Scent-Safe Schools

All of our schools and Board office locations have implemented a Scent-Safe program. This means that we are asking that students, staff, and visitors refrain from using scented products.

We know that allergies and sensitivities to scents can have health implications, which can range from mild to severe and can even result in hospitalization. As a Catholic community, we must do everything possible to nurture a sense of belonging and inclusiveness by ensuring that those who have allergies and sensitivities are safe and fully included at school and work.

Not using scented products is a simple thing to do and it will ensure a safe and comfortable environment for all of our students and staff. We thank you for your cooperation.



Responsible Use of Technology

Our Board has a policy on the Responsible Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This Board policy LE-25 is available on our website in the Policy and Procedure section at www.smcdsb.on.ca

We are excited for students and staff to embrace technology as an important part of the school's learning environment. However, it is important that everyone who accesses Board technology uses it in an appropriate and responsible way.

Our policy clearly outlines the Board's expectations related to the responsible use of ICT and its associated resources, including hardware, software, network, Internet usage, and social media. We require all individuals or groups who use Board technology to understand and comply with the expectations outlined in the policy.

At the beginning of each school year, students will be required to review age-appropriate information related to the policy, with a focus on digital citizenship, responsibilities, and consequences. Parents and students are required to read and sign a *Responsible Use of Technology Agreement* annually.

Code of Conduct

Based on guidelines from the Ministry of Education, our Board and schools have developed codes of conduct, which outline the standards of behaviour expected in our Catholic school communities. Staff, parents, students, and members of the larger community all work together to help ensure that these standards are achieved.

The spirit of Christ guides us in achieving respect, civility, and responsible citizenship through the following standards of behaviour:

- Respect and comply with all applicable federal, provincial and municipal laws;
- Demonstrate honesty and integrity;
- Respect differences in people, their ideas and opinions as each member is a unique creation of God;
- Treat one another with dignity and respect at all times, and especially when there is disagreement;
- Respect and treat others fairly, regardless of, for example, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, or disability;
- Respect the rights of others;



- Dress in a manner that complies with school dress/uniform codes and is appropriate for school activities with regard to exposure, cleanliness, and/or message;
- Show proper care and regard for school property and the property of others;
- Take appropriate measures to help those in need;
- Respect all members of the school community, especially persons in a position of authority;
- Respect the needs of others to work in an environment that is conducive to learning, including ensuring that cellphones and other personal mobile devices are only used during instructional time for education purposes (as directed by an educator) for health and medical purposes and/or to support special education needs;
- Seek assistance from a member of the school staff, if necessary, to resolve conflict peacefully;
- Not swear at a teacher or at another person in a position of authority.

In order to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone, all members of our school communities must not:

- Cause injury to any person with an object;
- Be in possession of, or under the influence of, or provide others with, alcohol, recreational cannabis, illegal and/or restricted or illegal drugs;
- Be in possession of any weapon, including firearms;
- Use any object to threaten or intimidate another person;
- Provide alcohol, recreational cannabis, illegal and/or restricted drugs to a minor;
- Inflict or encourage others to inflict bodily harm on another person;
- Engage in bullying behaviours;
- Commit sexual assault;
- Traffic weapons or illegal drugs;
- Give alcohol to a minor;
- Commit robbery;
- Engage in hate propaganda and other forms of behaviour motivated by hate or bias; and
- Commit an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property or to property located on the premises of the school.

You can find our Board's policy and procedure documents related to code of conduct at smcdsb.on.ca



Progressive Discipline

Our schools support a progressive discipline approach to addressing inappropriate behaviour in school. The aim is to combine discipline with opportunities for students to continue their education.

What is progressive discipline?

Progressive discipline is an approach that assists us in dealing with inappropriate behaviours and achieving positive outcomes at school. The approach includes interventions, supports, and consequences, which may get progressively more severe if behaviours continue to escalate. For example, discipline could range from a conversation to expulsion. However, the approach also focuses on developing strategies, preventative measures, and partnerships to proactively promote positive behaviour.

You can find our Board's policy and procedure documents related to progressive discipline at smcdsb.on.ca.

Building Communities of Respect

We know that bullying is an issue that is often discussed at school, at home, and in the community. Everyone has the right to feel safe in school and that is why we are committed to building communities of respect in each and every one of our schools. We know that bullying can manifest itself in many different ways including cyber-bullying, name-calling, fighting, and gossiping.

It is important to let students know that if they are experiencing any kind of bullying, that they must speak to a trusted adult so that the issue can be addressed. As always, our caring and professional staff is committed to working with parents to make sure that every child feels welcome and respected both inside and outside of the classroom.

Restorative Practices

One of the approaches that our Board uses to promote positive behaviour and to address issues of concern is called "Restorative Practice." This approach is based on the premise that young people can take responsibility and learn from their choices. Students are invited to participate in dialogue and are encouraged to take ownership of their behaviour. Questions such as What happened? What were you thinking at the time? and What have you been thinking since? replace accusation, blame, and recrimination.

Our principals, school counselors, and teachers are widely using this approach to help resolve conflicts and provide an opportunity to repair harm. We have had great success with Restorative Practice at our Board. It is helping us build caring communities and enhance learning opportunities for students, as well as reducing and preventing bullying and truancy.



Including Every Student

Equity and Inclusion

As a publicly-funded Catholic school board, we understand equity and inclusion to be essential characteristics of life in our school board, schools and board sites. We are committed to ensuring that students, staff and families feel welcome, safe, included and represented in our board and its educational work.

Our work in equitable and inclusive education is grounded both in relevant legislation and human rights documents, and in the social teachings of the Catholic Church, which emphasize the inherent dignity of every person, regardless of their race, age, language, colour, national or cultural background, ability, socio-economic status, gender identity or sexual orientation. In 1991, Pope St. John Paul II wrote that “Human persons are willed by God; they are imprinted with God's image” (Centesimus Annus, #11), and Vatican documents remind us of “the radical equality and brotherhood among all people, regardless of their race, nation, sex, origin, culture, or class” (Compendium of the Church’s Social Teaching, #144). Our goal is to continually build up communities where people can flourish, and in which their God-given identity and gifts can fully shine forth.

Special Education Program

We believe that God has created each child as a unique individual. We promote an atmosphere that includes and accepts everyone at our schools.

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) of the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board places a significant emphasis on special education programming and our Board makes a commitment to include all students in classroom learning experiences.

We support and encourage children with special needs so that they can participate at school in meaningful ways. There may be specific programs, services, and resources to help support your child. For students with exceptional learning needs, school staff will work with parents to develop an Individual Education Plan. For more information about special education programming at our Board, please speak to your school principal and visit our website at smcdsb.on.ca.

First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education



Making
Good
Tracks

Our Board's award-winning consultation process known as Making Good Tracks is one of many strategies intended to promote deeper understandings about our shared history and contributions of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit across Canada - with a focus on student well-being, achievement, and benefits for all within our learning community.

Making the Grade

Assessment and Evaluation

As a Catholic school Board, we recognize each student as an individual who, through God, possesses unique gifts and experiences. In addition, we always strive to maintain children's self-worth and dignity and provide opportunities for hope and success.

In our schools, assessment and evaluation are about more than measuring achievement and assigning value to your child's work. Our objective is to improve how students learn. We use information from assessments to improve teaching strategies and programs for your child.

You can find more information about student evaluation on our website smcdsb.on.ca.

Student Transportation

Riding the bus is an important part of your child's school experience. We want all our students to feel as safe and comfortable as possible. This requires the support of parents, students, and all members of our community who use the roads when school buses are in operation.

Criteria for Bus Cancellations

School bus operators, in consultation with the Simcoe County Student Transportation Consortium, are responsible for determining if buses will be canceled. For our Muskoka schools, decisions around bus cancellations will be coordinated by the Trillium Lakelands Transportation Consortium.

Early in the morning, the bus operators assess the weather and road conditions to determine if the buses will start and run safely on our roads. Student safety is always the number one priority in making decisions regarding cancellations. For more information about cancellation criteria or to find out if your child's bus is canceled, please visit:

For our Parry Sound Catholic school visit <http://en.npssts.ca>

For Simcoe County & Muskoka Catholic schools visit simcoecountyschoolbus.ca



Know Your Weather Zone (Simcoe County only)

Weather zones are used to allow for partial bus cancellations on inclement weather days. There are four zones in Simcoe County – north, south, central, and west – and it is important for you to know which zone your school resides in (our Muskoka and Parry Sound schools do not use this system). Check on your school's website or in the school section of this agenda to find out your weather zone.

Here is an example of how weather zones work – it may be that the weather in the Collingwood area is such that it is not safe for the buses to travel the roads, and so buses in the west weather zone would be canceled, while the buses in the remaining three zones would continue to run. No school belongs in more than one zone.

For up-to-date information about bus cancellations, please visit the Simcoe County Student Transportation Consortium website simcoecountyschoolbus.ca.

Resources for You

Board and School Websites

For more information on any topic, visit our Board's website at smcdsb.on.ca. In addition to finding updates about programs, events, and initiatives on our home page, you will also find information on everything from literacy tips and provincial testing to special education and healthy schools. Your school also has a website that will provide you with up-to-date information about activities, events, and learning initiatives.

Policies and Procedures

Our policies are essentially statements that guide our Board's overall direction – they state our intent, principles, and goals. We also have procedures or guidelines that help support these statements. Our trustees regularly work with staff to update and maintain these policies and procedures.

For a greater insight into how our schools are governed, we encourage you to take a look at the policies and procedures, located on our website at smcdsb.on.ca – under the Our Board menu.

Getting Ready for Kindergarten



Kindergarten is the beginning of a wonderful learning journey. To introduce parents and children to the Kindergarten experience, we developed a welcome package, entitled "Getting Ready For Kindergarten." We also have a video on our YouTube channel that will allow you to see what Kindergarten is all about at a Catholic school.

Twitter



Our Board has a Twitter account @smcdsb. In addition, many of our schools use Twitter to communicate with parents and their larger communities. It is a quick and fun way to share news and information about all of the great things that happen in our schools each and every day. Please follow @smcdsb and enjoy this easy way to stay in the loop.

Facebook



Our Board has a Facebook page! Please “Like” and “Follow” our page @smcdsb and become part of our Catholic social community.

Instagram



Be sure to follow us on Instagram @we_are_smcdsb for photos of the special activities and events that happen in our schools every day, as well as the staff and students that make it all happen.

Mobile App



Stay in the loop with our mobile app! You can download our mobile app from Google Play or the Apple Store.

Mental Health



Student mental health and well-being are a top priority for our school board. There are many resources for students and their families. Visiting the [Mental Health and Well-Being website](#) is a great place to start. The department also has a great Instagram page - @smcdsb_mhwb

Podcast



Beyond the Bell is all about providing parents and caregivers an inside look into the school system. You may find us talking about familiar topics, but our goal is to provide you with information and a new perspective that you may not have thought about. You know... those things that you didn't know that you needed to know! Past episodes of OnPoint Parenting are also available on our website.

Subscribe and listen today at beyondthebell.ca

Our Trustees

Our Board is privileged to have eight elected trustees and two student trustees who serve Catholic education in our school communities. They provide leadership and governance for the Board within the context of our faith and Gospel values.

Up-to-date information on our Board, our schools, your trustee, Board meetings and policies and procedures is available on our website smcdsb.on.ca (Note: for the Barrie area - Wards 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are predominantly in north Barrie and Wards 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 are predominantly in south Barrie).

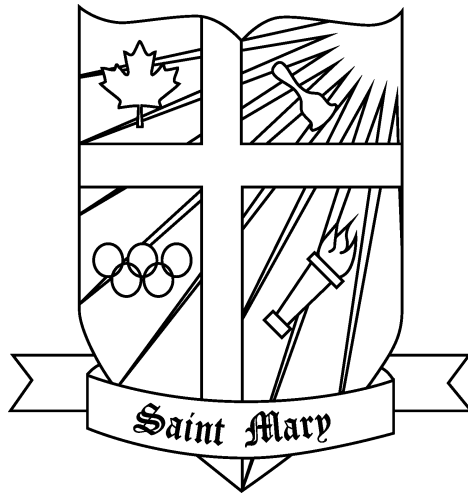
For more information about your local school board trustee, including contact information, please visit our website smcdsb.on.ca - under the Trustees menu.



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association



SIMCOE MUSKOKA CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



Saint Mary Catholic School

Student Handbook

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SAINT MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Challenged by the words of Christ to “love your neighbour as yourself” the students of Saint Mary Catholic School will strive to live Christ’s Gospel message:

- By following directions and school routines
- By treating others with courtesy and respect
- By resolving differences through non-violent and peaceful means
- By not using foul language or gestures
- By always demonstrating sportsmanship and fair play
- By caring for personal and school property, and the property of others

DO YOUR BEST TO BE YOUR BEST!

FAITH IN OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Saint Mary Catholic School mission statement Saint Mary Catholic School is a school community committed to the education of the whole child – spiritual, social, physical and intellectual. Rooted in the rich tradition of our Roman Catholic faith, we strive to instill gospel values in every aspect of student life. All students are valued. All students can learn and all students are expected to learn. With the support of home and parish the staff will work collaboratively to ensure that all students achieve their highest potential.



- We will provide an inviting classroom environment for students with clear behavioural expectations, consistent consequences, specific articulated academic goals and ongoing assessment of students’ learning.
- We will help all students achieve the intended outcomes of the curriculum by addressing their individual needs and learning styles.
- We will collaborate with one another and our students so that we can achieve our

collective goals more effectively

- We will commit to ongoing professional development, continuous improvement and reflective practice.
- We will promote a positive and safe school climate by modeling Christian qualities and characteristics.
- We will involve parents in the education of their children and keep them informed of student progress.
- We will recognize and celebrate the efforts and achievements of the members of our school community.
- We will promote well-being in spirit, body and mind.

Our Parish Partner

We believe in fostering a strong relationship between your home, our school and St. Mary of the Assumption Church. Our parish works closely with our school community to provide your child with an education rooted in the Catholic faith. Throughout the year, there will be opportunities for our students to participate in the sacraments, Mass and prayer celebrations.



Sacramental Preparation

We work closely with our parish community to support students as they get ready to receive their sacraments but sacramental arrangements are to be made by the family with the parish priest.

Each year, students in Grade 2 have the opportunity to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion. Parents will work with St. Mary of the Assumption Church to prepare for these sacraments. Our school supports and complements what children are learning at the parish through classroom instruction. Students from other grades, who missed receiving their sacraments, are welcome to get in touch with the priest to make arrangements to do so.

Students in Grades 7 and 8, have the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Arrangements for this sacrament are made through the parish. The preparation and celebration of the sacrament is an important part of our intermediate student's year.

POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

Maintaining a positive school climate at Saint Mary Catholic School is a key priority because it helps students feel safe, welcome and secure. Using our mission and Catholic values as a guide, we have developed procedures and guidelines to ensure that our students and staff learn and work in a positive and productive environment.

Progressive Discipline

Progressive discipline is an approach that assists us in dealing with inappropriate behaviours and achieving positive outcomes at school. The approach includes interventions, supports and consequences, which may get progressively more severe if behaviours continue to escalate. For example, discipline could range from a conversation to expulsion. However, the approach also focuses on developing strategies, preventative measures and partnerships to proactively promote positive behaviour.

Prevention and early intervention are important for assisting pupils to achieve their potential and for maintaining a positive school environment. A positive school environment is affected by programs and activities, which focus on building healthy relationships, character development, and civic responsibility. These encourage positive participation of the school community in the life of the school.

The school recognizes that discipline of a student is the prime responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian. Discipline begins at home and parents have responsibility for their child's behaviour and the modification of problematic behaviour.

At Saint Mary Catholic School, we endorse this belief and further believe that the responsibility for

appropriate student behaviour is a shared one (parent/guardian, teachers, school administration, and students). We will continue to do our best to keep parents/guardians informed on all discipline-related matters.

Parents/guardians and teachers must work together.

Supportive Strategies Guidelines

In cases of student discipline, strategies used by school staff to promote, foster, and safeguard student success and the school learning environment include but are not limited to:

- Intervention counseling for discouraged and underachieving students
- Oral reminders and coaching students on understanding the inappropriateness of specific behaviours, and strategies to correct these behaviours.
- Modeling acceptable behaviour.
- Contact with the pupil's parent(s)/ guardian(s) either by phone or communication book (school/home)
- Conferencing with parents/guardians
- Issue notices of restitution for repair/replacement costs or damages to school property or property located on school premises
- Conflict mediation and resolution
- Counseling by classroom teachers, school administration, school counsellor and special education psychological services staff, and outside community agencies.
- Altering the student's program, with student services department, special education department, student success and school administration approval, in order to more adequately meet the student's needs.
- Behaviour support plans clearly outlining agreed-upon conditions
- School chores/community service (on school property)
- "Time out" in or out of the classroom
- Apologies to teacher, parents, classmates, etc.
- Projects to be completed out of school

related to incident

- Temporary loss of privileges–i.e., participating in field trips, access to the school computer network, etc.
- In-school suspension
- Withdrawal of school services in the form of a formal suspension
- Involvement of local police authorities

Dress for Success

Students will be participating in a wide range of activities – both inside and outdoors – at school, and so it is important that they wear comfortable, durable clothing that is suitable for the weather.

Our school is special because we model ourselves after Jesus Christ. How we present ourselves must reflect our commitment to promoting a safe, positive and respectful learning environment.

We are working to make sure that our dress code supports equity and inclusion. We are doing this by following the Ontario Human Rights Code and by respecting difference and diversity. We invite families to review our [current dress code guidelines](#). In the fall, we will be connecting with school communities to invite input.

SAFE SCHOOLS

Safe Arrival and Attendance

It is important that your child arrives at school safely and on time. Not only does it make things easier for our office administrator and classroom teachers, it also teaches your child the value and importance of being punctual. Our Safe Arrival Program, which includes communicating with our office when your child is late or absent, helps ensure student safety.

Compulsory School Attendance

Did you know that Ontario law states that children between the ages of 6 and 17 must attend school? We appreciate that sometimes there are circumstances beyond your control, such as illness, that might prevent attendance at school. However, these situations should be rare and the school principal will address prolonged

absences.

If your child is away for more than 15 days consecutively due to illness, a medical note will be needed to maintain your child on the school register. There are many supports in place to encourage regular school attendance, including school counsellors, social workers, community agencies and an attendance counsellor. Please contact the school if you have questions or concerns.

Reporting Your Child Late or Absent

Please follow this simple, but critical process when reporting your child as late or absent.

Step 1 – phone our school at 705-789-6481 at any time, to inform us when your child will be absent or late. There is a voicemail 24 hours per day.

Step 2 – leave your child's full name, teacher's name and the reason for the absence on the school voicemail.

Step 3 – when your child returns to class, provide the teacher with a note explaining the reason for your child's absence.

Leaving Early

Students who are leaving school early must bring a note to their teacher stating the need for the early dismissal. Please avoid any last minute early dismissals. We do not want to interrupt the learning in the classroom. At the time of dismissal, your child will proceed to the office to be signed out by a parent/guardian.

Morning Drop-Off

All students should be at school by 8:45 a.m. when school begins. If you are dropping your child off after this time, you must come to the office and sign him/her in.

If you are driving your child to school, please use the parking lot area to drop your child off. A bus supervisor is on duty at 8:20 a.m. to ensure your child safely crosses the bus lane in the designated area. Please do not use the bus lane for drop offs. Please do not drop your child off prior to 8:20 a.m.

Students will remain outside until the bell, unless there is severe inclement weather. On very wet mornings or when the temperatures are extremely cold (-25°C or -28°C with the wind chill) students will be brought inside.

All students are to enter and exit the building through their designated door (the same door they use for recess). Students should only use the main doors (adjacent to the office) when they are being signed in due to lateness or signed out by a parent/guardian prior to the end of the school day.

Afternoon Pick-Up

Students who are being picked up by a parent or guardian must provide a note. Students will be brought out to the pick up area. Parents and guardians must leave their vehicle to notify the teacher on duty and then sign the student out with the bus duty staff member.

Bicycles, Skateboards, etc.,

Students may ride their bicycles to school, but it is important that they are left and locked in the designated bicycle racks. Wearing a bicycle helmet is mandatory and students must walk their bikes when on school property. Please note that the school cannot accept responsibility for damaged or stolen bicycles. Skateboards, in-line skates and scooters are not to be used on school property. Scooters must be able to be locked to the bike rack during the day.

Riding the School Bus

A parent or guardian should meet kindergarten and primary division children getting on or off the bus. Children should be at their bus stop five minutes before bus time. Each delay will affect the bus stop times that follow. In winter, this is inconvenient, as children would be waiting too long in the cold.

If a child is to go to a babysitter, be sure that the school has all the information – babysitters name, address and phone number – before school starts in September and that the babysitter is on the same bus route.

Remind your child of the importance of sitting up in

their seat while riding on the school bus. Students must not kneel or stand on the bus. Only one transportation address will be accepted. Parents must make arrangements for their child to be picked up and dropped off at their home or at the home of the babysitter or guardian.

Bus Conduct Expectations

The students must:

- Remain seated while the bus is in motion.
- Refrain from talking to the bus driver except in case of an emergency.
- Refrain from unnecessary loud or boisterous talking while on route.
- Keep arms, head and feet inside the bus.
- Never interfere with emergency doors, exits or any part of the bus equipment.
- Promptly obey directions and instructions of the bus driver.
- Refrain from the use of profane language on the bus.
- Refrain from eating on the bus.
- Obey patrollers who have been selected to aid the driver in supervision and safety on the bus.
- Refrain from any activity that may be injurious to other pupils.
- Ride their own bus to their regular stop.

Inclement Weather Procedures

If hazardous road conditions prevail before the school day begins, the bus companies providing the local bus services will contact the Moose 105.5 to announce the cancellation of bus services for that day. You may also visit mybustoschool.ca for TLDSB buses or simcoecountyschoolbus.ca for all other bus routes. If the school board closes the school due to weather, it will be announced on the local radio stations.

When buses are cancelled in the morning they are automatically cancelled in the afternoon as well. However, the school remains open for student learning.

Parents will determine whether their child attends

school when roads are bad regardless of whether or not the buses are running.

School Visitors

We are very concerned about student safety. All staff exercises ongoing vigilance in the supervision of the school and its environment. With this in mind, we ask for your cooperation when you visit the school. You must report to the office and wear a visitor's badge while on school grounds.

Parents who wish to drop something off for their child must do so at the office. Likewise, if you are picking up/dropping off your child outside of our regular start and dismissal time, please come to the office. Your child will be called to the office. Please do not go directly to your child's class to pick them up or to drop off items.

Notes

Parents and guardians are required to send a note to the teacher regarding any change in your child's routine for going home at dismissal time. If we do not have a note, your child will be expected to follow the normal routine. This way, we ensure your child's safety. If your child is being picked up, please sign him/her out at the office, and we will call them to meet you at the office. This way, we can ensure your child's safe departure.

Custody of Children

In some family situations, there may be custody issues, visiting rights and special instructions – it is critical that we be made aware of any such situations. Please ensure that the office staff and the classroom teacher are aware of legal agreements and copies of the current legal documents are on file in the office.

Emergency Situations

At Saint Mary Catholic School, procedures are in place so that we are fully prepared for an emergency situation. Staff and students routinely practise these procedures. If it is necessary to evacuate the school, our students will be relocated to Bethel Pentecostal Church just up the street on Silverwood Drive. In the case of an emergency, transporting students to this location is the responsibility of the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic

District School Board. In any emergency situation, our school would work closely with the school board and emergency personnel to provide updates via websites and the media.

In emergency situations or early school closures, your child may be picked up by you or an authorized designate. If a parent authorizes a designate to pick-up a student, the teacher would require a signed and dated note.

Major Incidents

We know that being proactive and preparing for the potential of a major incident is a key way to keep our students and staff safe. As part of our safe schools initiative, Saint Mary Catholic School has worked with the local police service to develop a response plan should a violent incident occur.

This involves immediate contact with the police and a lockdown of the premises. Although it is highly unlikely that something like this would occur, our staff regularly reviews and practices procedures with the students. Your child may mention to you that they were involved in a "Lock Down" drill because that is what our response plan is referred to within the school.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING

Homework

Homework is an integral part of a student's learning experience. In order to get the most out of school, students will be required, at times, to finish or continue their studies outside of the classroom. Research clearly shows that students who successfully complete homework achieve greater academic success in school. On occasion, parents become concerned with the amount or content of homework assigned by the classroom teacher. If this is the case, please take the time to contact your child's teacher. It is recommended that all students take the time to read each night, and if possible, be read to by a parent or older sibling.

Holidays During the School Year

Some families choose to remove their child from school to take a family vacation during the school year. This is a reminder that when you do this, you are also choosing to have them miss lessons and assessments. For 7 or more days, you must fill out a “Temporary Excusal” form.

Teachers are not expected to prepare work for your child while he/she is on holiday and cannot “catch them up” when they return, so please do not request them to do so. Learning in school has many facets and cannot be duplicated by paper and pencil tasks done in isolation from a lesson. Your child should take some books and read for pleasure to you every day, keep a written journal of activities, weather etc. You can find many opportunities to engage in math, science, history, geography and physical activity as part of your holiday.

School Supplies

During the course of the year, students will need a variety of items to ensure that they are able to complete their work and to support their learning. Some examples of these items are pencils, pens, paper and notebooks. At the beginning of the school year, we send home a list of items that your child should be bringing to school for their own use. Teachers develop this list in cooperation with our Catholic School Community Council and we greatly appreciate your support by providing these items to your child.

Library Resources

Our school is fortunate to have a learning commons and a teacher to help students develop, refine and master research, computer and reading skills.



Students will have the opportunity to sign out books or resources. These items must be returned the next time they visit the library. Students will not be able to sign out new material until their previous items have been returned. If a book is lost or damaged, it is expected that the student or parent will replace it.

Once your child has signed an Internet agreement, they will be able to access the Internet. All time spent on the Internet will be closely supervised.

Making the Most of the School Day

In order to promote the best learning environment possible, we ask that parents keep school day interruptions to a minimum.

Planning in advance and maintaining regular communication through this handbook will help maintain a harmonious and smooth day at school.

- **Dropping off items** – parents are not permitted to go to their child’s classroom or cubby area to drop off items, check-in, etc. If you need to see your child for some reason or would like to drop something off during the school day, you must check-in at the office.
- **Speaking with the teacher** – if you have questions, we encourage you to speak to your child’s teacher, but we recommend that you arrange discussion for either before or after school hours. In addition, if you are making a change to your child’s regular routine, please make these arrangements well in advance and communicate changes with your child’s teacher in writing.
- **Last minute messages** – our office is quite busy during the day and so we urge you not to rely on us to get last minute messages to staff or students unless it is an emergency.

GETTING INVOLVED

Communication

Establishing a positive and open relationship between parents, teachers and students is a critical part of achieving excellence in education. The Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board uses the SchoolMessenger Communicate Tool to send messages and updates to our staff and families. These messages can be sent via email, text message or phone. Our school will use this tool to send regular updates to families throughout the year and it will also be used by the Board or the school to communicate information during crisis or emergency situations. It is important that the school office has your most

current email address and phone number on file so that you receive the messages in a timely manner.

You will also find information posted on our website smcdsb.on.ca/smh.

We always welcome opportunities for parents to have meetings with teachers and other school staff as necessary throughout the school year.

Online Payment Using School Day

Our school is excited to offer online payment through a program called School-Day.

The system will enable parents to:

- Approve permission forms and pay online instantly
- Register your child for extracurricular activities
- Order and pay for hot lunches
- Reduce the amount of paper sent home in backpacks

If you haven't done so already, please obtain your family's secure key code from the school and visit www.school-day.com to register. Once you have registered you can pay for items and approve permission forms by clicking on the "School Day" quick link on our school website or logging in directly on the school day website www.school-day.com.

Contact Information

Please inform the school office if your address or any other pertinent information such as home or work telephone numbers change throughout the year. We need to make certain that our records are accurate.

Catholic School Community Council

Our Catholic School Community Council is composed of parents, a teaching staff representative, a non-teaching staff representative, a parish representative, a representative from the community and the principal. Members are elected each fall and serve as an advisory body to the principal on many significant school issues throughout the year.

Anyone is welcome to attend the meetings. Dates will be sent out via school messenger. Please join us!

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Scent-Safe Schools

Please be advised that a Scent-Safe Schools program is now in place for all schools and board office locations. This means that we are asking for the cooperation of students, staff and visitors in not using scented products in our working and learning environments.

We know that allergies and sensitivities to scents can have severe health implications and so we must do everything possible to make sure that all students, staff and visitors with scent allergies and sensitivities are safe and fully included.

A scent is a smell or odour from products and it can be natural such as flowers or synthetic such as perfume. Examples of products that may have scents include shampoos, deodorant, hairspray, soap, detergents, perfumes, lotions, candles and cleaning products. Not using scented products is a simple thing to do and it will help ensure a safe and comfortable environment for all of our students and staff.

Immunizations

In Ontario, under the *Immunization of School Pupils Act*, you must provide proof that your child's vaccinations are current. When you register your child for school for the first time, you will be asked for a record of your child's immunization. Students who don't have up-to-date immunization or a valid exemption on file at the Health Unit, may be suspended from school. You can find out more about immunization programs on the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's website at simcoemuskokahealth.org.

Medication Policy

Please ensure that we know of any allergies or medical conditions that your child may have. Medications are stored in the office and administered by approved staff. For medications to be administered at school, parents/guardians

must complete a consent and instructions form, which can be obtained from the office.

Our local health personnel are very helpful and may be reached at the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit 1-877-721-7520 if you have any concerns.

Communicable Diseases

The *Health Promotion and Protection Act* requires that children with certain communicable diseases must remain at home.

The following list defines some of the more common childhood diseases and how long your child should stay home if he/she becomes ill with one of these illnesses.

- **Chickenpox** - for 5 days after the rash begins or until all blisters have crusted.
- **Impetigo** - until the antibiotic prescribed by the doctor has been taken for at least one full day.
- **Pink-eye** - until the antibiotic prescribed by the doctor has been taken for at least one full day.
- **Scabies** - until treatment has been given.
- **Scarlet Fever** - until the antibiotic prescribed by the doctor has been taken for at least one full day.
- **Strep Throat** - until the antibiotic prescribed by the doctor has been taken for at least one full day.
- **Fifth Disease** - even though this is not a communicable disease, it should be reported to the office because there is a risk posed to pregnant women.

Visit simcoemuskokahealth.org for more information.

Head Lice

If a case of head lice is discovered at school, it will be necessary to immediately contact the child's home to arrange for treatment. The principal or designate will contact the parent to request that the child be picked up at the school at the earliest convenience. A letter will be sent home to the students of the class indicating that there has

been a case of head lice reported.

The parent/guardian responsibilities are:

- To examine their child/children's head for possible infestations at regular intervals
- To notify the school of any infestations
- To ensure that proper and full de-infestation takes place within a reasonable length of time

The major signs and symptoms of head lice are: intense itching, frequent and persistent head scratching with scratch marks, or an apparent rash on the neck and scalp. Further information regarding head lice is available through the school office.

Anaphylaxis

Several students at Saint Mary Catholic School have a peanut allergy. Should one of these students ingest a food item containing peanuts or peanut by-products he/she will experience a reaction that, if not managed correctly, could result in an anaphylactic reaction. Saint Mary Catholic School attempts to provide a safe learning environment for all students. We ask for your support and understanding in this matter. We ask all parents not to send food items to school that contain peanuts or peanut by-products. This also includes food items that have the warning "May contain peanuts or peanut by-products." We know and understand this may be an inconvenience, as parents will have to monitor snacks and lunches, however, it is a necessary step to provide a safe environment.

The staff will be as vigilant as possible by monitoring snacks and lunches to see if they contain peanuts/peanut by-products. In the event that the teacher or supervisor suspects that a food item may contain peanut products or by-products, the item will be removed from the classroom. A reminder will be sent home to parents requesting that this product not be sent to school.

The following classroom procedures have been Implemented:

- Children will be encouraged to wash their hands after handling food.
- Trading or sharing of food or utensils will not be allowed in classes where children have a peanut allergy.

- Desks in the classroom and gymnasium that are used by students with nut allergies are washed daily.

These steps are part of an overall attempt to avoid any unfortunate incidents. The school appreciates your continued understanding and cooperation.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Recess

Getting some fresh air and participating in physical activity at recess is important. Unless the weather is unsuitable, students are expected to be outside during recess. We cannot leave children unsupervised inside the school and so they must go out to the yard where supervision is provided. If your child is not well enough to participate in recess, perhaps you should consider keeping him/her at home.

Yard Safety

While outside at recess, we expect students to play safely and respect the rules of the schoolyard at all times. During the winter months, it is essential to leave all snow on the ground. Throwing snowballs or kicking snow is not acceptable.

Lost and Found

We encourage our students to check the lost and found for any misplaced items. If you know your child is missing something, you are welcome to check the lost and found yourself (please check-in at the office first). Unclaimed items will eventually be donated to a local charity.

Field Trips

Students enjoy going on trips outside of the school. Field trips are a fun and informative way of providing your child with a new learning experience. Our board has a field trip policy, which you can find in the policy and procedures section of the website at smcdsb.on.ca.

The classroom teacher will inform parent volunteers of responsibilities and expectations as well as appropriate strategies for dealing with misbehaviour. Prior to the field trip, the teacher will discuss the purpose of the field trip and learning outcomes for students. Should a student demonstrate that he/she is unable to abide by our Code of Conduct at school, he/she will not be permitted to participate in a trip off of school property.

Criminal Background Checks/ Vulnerable Sector Screening

All volunteers must have a clear CBC/VSS.

Information and forms are available in the main office and we will take the forms to the OPP detachment in Huntsville for you. We encourage you to have this process completed early in the year to ensure you can take part in student activities during the year.

Extra-Curricular Activities

The following is expected of students who participate in any of the extra curricular activities planned by the school (i.e. sports teams, field trips, choir, drama, etc.) Students must be making a sincere effort in their academic endeavors, and their conduct should indicate an acceptable level of trustworthiness. Students must conduct themselves in an appropriate and expected manner in and out of the school. Students must be courteous, respectful and show appreciation to the persons organizing the events and activities. As well, they must show good sportsmanlike qualities and dress appropriately for the event.

Personal Play Equipment

We encourage students NOT to bring valued personal property to school. These items can easily be damaged or destroyed. The school cannot bear any responsibility or cost of damaged items. Students should not have large quantities of money in their possession at school.

While we recognize that many students have a very long bus ride and may use iPods, hand held video games, etc. on the bus. These items are not permitted to be used during the school day. Students who use these items will have them removed and kept at the office for the day. The student will bring them home at

the end of the day. Repeat offences will require the parent to pick up the items at the school.

Cell Phones

Students are not permitted to use cell phones at Saint Mary Catholic School. Teachers will collect the phones at the beginning of the day for safe-keeping. Progressive discipline will occur for students who have their cell phone out during the school day. This is defined as from the time they get off of the bus in the morning until the time they get back on the bus at the end of the day.

Family Assistance

There are several organizations in the Huntsville area that provide support and assistance to families.

All Community and Social Services Inquiries
Dial 211

Family Youth and Child Services of Muskoka
705-789-8866

Muskoka Family Focus (after school care)
705-788-3534

Salvation Army
705-789-3398

St. Vincent de Paul
Society 705-789-0008

Table Soup Food Bank and Soup Kitchen
705-783-5827

Wishing You a Successful Year

We hope you found the information in this handbook informative and useful. If at any time throughout the school year, you have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher or office staff. We know that each child will grow tremendously – both in learning and in faith. We look forward to working with you to provide your child with a fulfilling year.