SIMCOE MUSKOKA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

2023 - 2024
Student Handbook

Build Anew with
Grace, Mercy, & Peace

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 kindess. 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

Build Anew with
Grace, Mercy, & Peace

“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 re-build 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.

CPIC
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

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 GABRIEL THE ARCHANGEL CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Student Handbook

130 Prince William Way
Barrie, ON L4M 7G4

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SAINT GABRIEL THE ARCHANGEL SCHOOL PRAYER

God, thank you for the night,
and for the morning light.
As we start another day,
be with us at SGA.
Be with us as we work.
Be with us as we play.
Help us do our very best, now
and every day.
Amen

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to Saint Gabriel the Archangel Catholic School where we cherish the opportunity to educate the students that enter our doors each day. At Saint Gabriel the Archangel we aim to give every student in our care the very best possible education in order to be prepared for life beyond school. We encourage staff, students, and parents to be fully involved in all aspects of school while bringing the Gospel values to life.

At Saint Gabriel the Archangel we have high standards in all that we do. We encourage our students to aim high in their studies, to always do their best and to be sensitive to the rights and needs of others. Our vision of education extends far beyond the classroom. We believe it is important to fully develop students in mind, body, and spirit. We encourage our students to involve themselves in the broad co-curricular program available. Our students have the opportunity to participate fully in athletics, the arts, special interest clubs and in leadership activities designed to teach social justice.



We look forward to a wonderful year filled with learning and spiritual growth. We are committed to working with families to support all students in developing their God given potential.

The Staff of Saint Gabriel the Archangel Catholic School
smcdsb.on.ca/sga
Follow us on Twitter: @SMCDSB_SGA

FAITH IN OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Our School's Mission Statement

"With Jesus as our guide, we see the value and potential of each person."

Our Parish Partner

We believe in fostering a strong relationship between your home, our school, and St. John Vianney 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. Our pastor, Fr. Biju, is a tremendous resource to our students and staff.



Sacramental Preparation

We work closely with our parish community to support students as they get ready to receive their sacraments.

Each year, students in Grade 2 have the opportunity to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion. Parents will work with St. John Vianney Church to prepare for these sacraments. Our school supports and complements what children are learning at the parish through classroom teaching.

Students in Grade 7 have the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Again, arrangements for this sacrament are made through the parish. The preparation and celebration of the sacrament is an important part of the students' year.

POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

Promoting a Positive School Climate

Maintaining a positive school climate at Saint Gabriel the Archangel 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.

Student Behaviour

Our school has established some key statements to outline expectations around student behaviour.

Students at Saint Gabriel the Archangel Catholic School:

- Will be active, positive and enthusiastic participants within our Catholic community as we strive towards living the Gospel message.
- Will come to school on time and prepared to work with an enthusiastic and positive attitude, while striving to achieve their academic goals.
- Will be familiar with and practise the school procedures as outlined in this school handbook in addition to any policies outlined by administration during the school year.
- Will respect and obey those in authority within our school community. Students will address staff and visitors to our school community in a polite and courteous manner.
- Will respect fellow students as they listen actively, speak honestly and respond positively in the classroom, on the schoolyard and as ambassadors of our school in the community.

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.

Footwear

For safety reasons and to maintain cleanliness in the classrooms, students must have shoes to wear inside their class. Outdoor footwear is not to be worn in teaching areas. Students must have running shoes for gym classes.

SAFE SCHOOLS

Safe Arrival and Attendance

Punctuality is an essential life skill. Late arriving students disrupt the learning of others as they enter the class once lessons have begun. 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 absent 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, 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) 722-0293 or use the absence reporting tool in our parent portal, Home2School Connect any time to inform us when your child will be absent or late. These options are available 24 hours per day.
Step 2 – leave your child's full name, teacher's name and the reason for the absence.
Step 3 – if your child is late, please have them go to the office where they will check in and be provided a late slip for admittance to class.

Important Note: If your child regularly walks to school, it is assumed that he/she will attend class when buses are cancelled due to inclement weather. If you decide to keep your child home during an inclement weather day, you must use the process listed above to report your child's absence.

Safe Welcome Program

All of our elementary schools have front door intercom and video technology installed as part of the Ministry of Education's Safe Welcome Program.

All elementary schools in Ontario have the doors locked throughout the school day. Students, who are late for school or return to school after an appointment, need to ring the doorbell at the main entrance. This enhanced security measure provides us with one more way to monitor who is visiting our schools and help us ensure that all visitors sign in at the office.

Leaving Early

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

Morning Drop-off

School begins at 8:35 a.m. and supervision in the schoolyard begins at 8:20 a.m. Please do not drop your child off prior to 8:20 a.m.



Students will remain outside until the 8:35 a.m. bell, unless there is inclement weather. On wet mornings or when the temperatures are extremely cold (-25°C or -28°C with the wind chill) students will be directed to come inside.

All students are to enter and exit the building through their designated door (the same door they use for recess). Students should use the main doors (adjacent to the office) only when they are late or signed out by a parent/guardian

Afternoon Pick-up

Our school day ends at 2:55 p.m.

Bicycles

Students must walk their bikes when on school property and bicycles must be locked in the designated racks. Wearing a bicycle helmet is mandatory. Please note the school cannot accept responsibility for damaged or stolen bicycles.

Skateboards, In-line Skates and Scooters

Skateboards, in-line skates, scooters, and shoes with wheels in the heels are not to be used on school property. Scooters must be able to be locked to the bike rack during the day.

Riding the Bus

We are committed to providing safe and reliable bus transportation for those students whose distance from home to school one way is greater than 1.6 km. Riding the bus should be an enjoyable and positive experience for students.

To ensure the safety of children riding the bus we require the following:

- Students must take their bus home in the evening unless they have a note from a parent or guardian indicating that they can remain at school or walk home.

- A note from a parent/guardian must be provided to the office if a student plans to get off the bus at a different stop. This note will be approved by the office and then provided to the bus driver.
- Occasionally, we receive requests from parents to allow their child to ride the bus in order to visit a friend's house. Unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate these requests.

Ensuring Safety on the Bus

It is helpful to periodically remind your child about the rules and regulations of riding a school bus. Although it is very rare, school bus privileges can be suspended temporarily or permanently if a child doesn't respect the rules and regulations that are in place for the safety of everyone.



Here are some basic guidelines to follow:

- Your child must always enter the bus in an orderly manner and immediately find a seat. Once on the bus, he or she must always follow the instructions of the school bus driver and bus patroller.
- All students must remain in their seats while the bus is in motion. With children sitting quietly, the bus driver is free from distractions and able to focus on road safety.
- Parents are financially responsible for any willful damage to the bus caused by their children.
- Keeping in mind the safety of all riders, we ask that your child not bring any objects onto the bus that may hinder safe operation.
- Eating and drinking is not permitted.
- Heads and arms must stay inside the bus at all times, and aisles must be kept clear.

Bus Cancellations Due to Inclement Weather

On inclement weather days, we urge you to visit simcoecountyschoolbus.ca, or listen to a local radio station to find out if buses are cancelled. When buses are cancelled in the morning, they are automatically cancelled in the afternoon. Please keep in mind that our school is open for student learning even when buses are cancelled.

Know Your Weather Zone

Weather zones are used to allow for partial bus cancellations. Saint Gabriel the Archangel Catholic School is in the **CENTRAL weather zone**. There are four weather zones, and it is possible that buses will run in our zone, but be cancelled in another zone and so it is important for you to know your zone.

Custody

We are always concerned about the safety of your child. Please ensure that the office staff and the classroom teacher are aware of legal agreements between separated or divorced parents and copies of current legal documents are on file in the office.

Emergency Situations

At Saint Gabriel the Archangel Catholic School, procedures are in place so that we are fully prepared for an emergency situation. Staff and students routinely practice these procedures. If it is necessary to evacuate the school, our students will be relocated to Hyde Park Elementary School, Maple Ridge Secondary School or St. Peter's Catholic Secondary School depending on the emergency situation. In the case of an emergency, transporting students to these locations 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 very rare circumstances, for example, a power outage or loss of heat in the winter, we may be required to close the school early. 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, a signed and dated note is required.

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 Gabriel the Archangel 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 practises these procedures with the students. Your child may mention to you that they were involved in a "Lock Down" drill, one of our response plans.

GETTING INVOLVED

Communicating With You

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/sga.

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 a cash-less school with all payments made online 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. It is important that the school have at least one Emergency Contact Number on file in addition to parent phone numbers.

Making the Most of the School Day

In order to promote the best learning environment possible, we ask parents to keep school day interruptions to a minimum. Planning in advance and maintaining regular communication will help maintain a harmonious and smooth day at school.



- **Dropping off items** – parents are not permitted to go to their child's classroom 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, we will call them to meet you at the front of the school. .
- **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 your child, unless it is an emergency.
- **Using the telephone** – students will not be permitted to use the office telephone unless they have permission from their teacher. If a phone call is necessary, it will be made by the teacher or another adult (this includes calls regarding illness or injury). Students are not permitted to phone or text home during the school day. Any needed calls will be made on the school landline with staff support.

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. Everyone is welcome to attend the meetings. Dates will be communicated on School Messenger. Please join us!

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

We know that parents want us to promote a healthy environment at school. This includes promoting healthy food options, opportunities for physical activity as well as minimizing exposure to illness. All of these contribute to better learning.

Scent-Safe Schools

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

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.

Accident or Illness

If your child becomes sick or gets injured while at school, we will contact you as soon as possible. If you are not available or unable to be contacted, we will call the emergency contacts that you have listed in your child's record. It is essential that parents and guardians notify the school of changes to phone numbers or contacts.

Communicable Diseases

The *Health Promotion and Protection Act* requires that children with certain communicable diseases must remain at home. Unfortunately, we do not have the space or staff supervision for children who are not well enough to go outside at recess.

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

Any situation related to head lice will be dealt with in a discreet manner, which protects the dignity of the children and privacy of families. Our school will educate students about preventative measures and we will also send current information from the Health Unit home to parents. We ask parents and guardians to help us prevent the spread of head lice by doing the following:

- Examine your child's head for possible infestations at regular intervals.
- Notify the school of any infestations.
- 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 or by visiting the Health Unit's website at simcoemuskokahealth.org.

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.

Administering Medication

There are some students who require regular or special medication. We all want to be sure that your child receives any medication he or she needs. Our board has a medication administration policy, which states that no medication can be administered by staff without written permission from parents. Students may not carry medication with them at any time, with the exception of an EpiPen and/or inhaler. Informed consent must be provided from parents should a child be required to carry it with them. If a child requires medication we will gladly administer it, but only by assigned staff.

For medication to be administered, a consent and instruction form must be filled out. These forms and our board's policy are available at our office or on the board's website at smcdsb.on.ca.

HEALTHY EATING

First Nutrition Break
10:35 - 10:55 a.m.
Kindergarten to Gr. 4 – Eat
Gr. 5 to Gr. 8 - Play

10:55 - 11:15 a.m.
Kindergarten to Gr. 4 – Play
Gr. 5 to Gr. 8 – Eat

Second Nutrition Break
12:55 - 1:15 p.m.
Kindergarten to Gr. 4 - Eat
Gr. 5 to Gr. 8 - Play

1:15 - 1:35 p.m.
Kindergarten to Gr. 4 - Play
Gr. 5 to Gr. 8 - Eat

Students will eat their lunch at their desk and will remain on school property, unless special permission has been granted. Students who walk to school may go home for lunch if they have written permission from a parent. For the safety of your child, we ask that a consistent routine be

established with regards to staying at school or walking home during lunch. If your child is going to a friend's house for lunch, written permission is required from the parents of both children.

Snacks

Students will be provided with time in the classroom to have snacks and drinks. All food and beverages must be eaten in the classroom and are not to be consumed in the hallway, gym, washrooms or outside at recess. We discourage students from using glass bottles and glass containers for their drinks and snacks.

Chewing Gum

Our school also has a no gum policy, which means that absolutely no gum will be allowed inside the school or outside on school property.

Allergies

Many children have allergies, but for some students an allergy can be life-threatening. For example, even minimal exposure to peanuts can prove fatal within minutes. Some other common allergens include tree nuts, shellfish, eggs, milk and latex – all of these can cause severe reactions.

If your child has a severe allergy, it is absolutely critical that you let us know. With your help, we will do our best to reduce risk and make sure all our students are safe, healthy, and able to concentrate on learning.
Our staff is instructed on how to deal with anaphylactic shock. However, our best course of action is to prevent exposure to potentially life-threatening allergies. As a school community, we must work together to ensure the safety of our students.

Here is what we are doing to reduce the risk of allergic exposure**:**

- All food and beverage must be consumed inside the classroom – under no circumstances are students allowed to have snacks in the schoolyard.
- Our school endeavours to be a peanut and tree nut free zone. Please ensure that all food sent to school with your child meets the nut-free standard. This includes "pea butter" products. On request, we would be happy to provide you with a list of nut-free snacks and lunch ideas.
- Your child's teacher will inform you if there are other allergies in your child's classroom. We ask that you please understand and appreciate the health and safety of every student by not sending food and beverage items that may be a cause for concern.
- The school does not permit the sharing of cupcakes and other treats to celebrate birthdays. There are many students with a variety of food allergies and so we err on the side of caution to make sure all of our students are safe.

Selling Food and Beverage

We know that making healthy food choices while in school supports learning. The Government of Ontario has a school food and beverage policy, which has impacted the kinds of food and beverages we can sell at our school. The policy encourages selling lunches, snacks and drinks that follow the principles of healthy eating in *Canada's Food Guide.*

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 classroom and so they must go out to the yard where supervision is provided. Therefore, if your child is too sick to go outside for recess, we ask that he or she remain home to recover before attending school.

Dressing for the Weather

Students need to dress in clothing suitable for the weather. This is especially important during the winter months. Durable and warm clothing will help ensure that your child's outdoor experiences are enjoyable. It is also advisable to label clothing, (mitts, hats and indoor shoes) with your child's first and last name.

Yard Safety

While outside at recess, we expect students to play safely and respect the rules of the schoolyard at all times. Throwing snowballs or kicking snow is not acceptable.

Bringing Personal Property to School

We request that students not bring valued personal property to school. These items can easily be lost or damaged. The school is not responsible for lost, stolen or damaged items. Students should not bring money to school.

Use of Mobile Devices

With special permission, a student may be allowed to use a cellphone for instructional purposes. It is understood that all devices will be operated according to the agreement between the teacher and the student. Cell phones must be turned off and secured in the knapsack at all times. Theft, loss, or damage to a device is the sole responsibility of the owner. These rules also apply to the school bus. Should a student use a device at school, on the bus or at a school-related event without permission, the device will be held in the office and returned at the end of the day. This is meant to ensure the privacy and comfort of all and helps focus on learning.

Lost and Found

We encourage our students and parents to check the lost and found for any misplaced items. 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.

Co-Curricular Activities

There are various clubs and sport teams offered at the school. Many take place during the lunch hour, as well as before or after school. These co-curricular activities provide opportunities for students to learn new skills and form friendships. They help to teach teamwork, co-operation and demonstrate school spirit. In order to participate in co-curricular activities, students must make a sincere effort in their academic endeavours, and demonstrate acceptable levels of trustworthiness. Students must conduct themselves in an appropriate manner both in and out of the school. It is important for students to represent our school community by showing good sportsmanlike qualities and by dressing appropriately for the event.

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.

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.

Notebooks

Our school often provides students with notebooks for certain subject areas or projects to support them in their learning. The notebooks provided to our students for school use are to be kept neat and organized. Only items pertaining to your child's learning should be written in the books. Drawing or marking of notebooks is not acceptable.

Learning Commons Resources

Our school is fortunate to have a learning common and a teacher-librarian to help students develop, refine and master research, and reading skills and explore STEM activities. Students will have the opportunity to sign out books or resources. These items must be returned the next time they visit the learning commons. 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.



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 our 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.