

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We would like to welcome your family to our Catholic school community. This *Come Grow With Us* package has many items we hope you will find useful, including:

- Tip sheets outlining how our school year works, your role as a parent, as well as information about academics and school life. All of this information is available on our board website at [www.smcdsb.on.ca/ESL](http://www.smcdsb.on.ca/ESL). You can also use the “Google Translate” feature to read the information in your first language.
- The booklet covers a wide range of topics explaining routines, procedures and activities in our elementary and secondary schools. If English is not your first language, we encourage you to find someone in your community to help you review the material in the booklet.
- The DVD will give you a visual sense of what life is like in our elementary and high schools.

There are employees at your school ready to answer your questions at any time. We look forward to getting to know you and your family.

Student	Grade	Classroom Teacher	Classroom Number

## School Information

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
✉ School Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
☎ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Fax Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal: \_\_\_\_\_  
Vice-Principal: \_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary/Office Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_

Progress report sent home: \_\_\_\_\_  
Report cards sent home: \_\_\_\_\_

This school is:       scent-free                       nut free                       shellfish free

Your child's classroom is:     scent-free                       nut free                       shellfish free                       latex free

## School Hours

Morning drop off starts at: \_\_\_\_\_  
Classes start at: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dismissal bell: \_\_\_\_\_  
Breaks: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lunch: \_\_\_\_\_

## Transportation

### Your child will:

- Walk to school
  
- Take a bus to school
- ☞ Your child's bus number will be: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☞ Bus stop pick up time: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☞ Bus stop drop off time: \_\_\_\_\_

☺ All student's are encouraged to bring healthy snacks, lunches and drinks to school each day.

## **Elementary Academics**

### **Welcome to Elementary School**

We are happy that you have chosen a Catholic education for your child and we are looking forward to helping your family make an easy transition to school life in Canada.

### **What Your Child Will Learn**

Ontario's Ministry of Education outlines what your child will learn from Kindergarten to Grade 8. Subject areas are: religion, English, mathematics, science, social studies, geography, history, physical education, arts, and French (beginning in Grade 1).

Visit the Ministry of Education's website to view the curriculum documents:  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca)

### **Report Cards**

The Ministry of Education has guidelines for teachers about how to report your child's progress. Your child will receive a progress report in November and then two report cards – one at the beginning of February and another at the end of June. Teachers evaluate your child's progress in all subjects throughout the entire year and summarize what they have learned on the report cards.

There are formal parent/teacher/student interviews once a year, usually in November. You can meet your child's teacher and discuss his/her progress.

Parent involvement is an important part of learning in an Ontario school. You may contact your child's teacher any time during the school year if you have questions or concerns.

### **Behaviour Expectations**

Our schools promote responsibility, respect, and Catholic values. We emphasize peaceful schools and a safe learning and teaching environment.

Students are expected to arrive at class on time, with school supplies and textbooks. The relationship between teachers and students may be more informal than other cultures, but the teacher is considered an authority figure in the classroom.

Students should always be respectful of their teacher and their peers. All students are considered equal and created in the image of God, regardless of race, gender, religion, culture, sexual orientation and ability.

All of our schools have codes of conduct, developed with the help of parent councils. Codes of conduct outline the behaviour that we expect everyone in the school to follow (parents, volunteers, teachers and other staff members). These standards of behaviour apply on school property, on school buses and at school events or activities. You can find your school's code of conduct in your child's agenda or on the school's website.

### **Clubs and Sports**

All of our elementary schools offer many extra activities for students. A few examples of the activities your school might have are: basketball, soccer, football, volleyball, choir, and social justice clubs. Please contact your child's school to find out more information about clubs and sports in your child's school.

## Elementary School Year

### Elementary School Calendar

The school year in Ontario is likely different from what you are used to. We have outlined some important dates so that you can become more familiar with our school year calendar.

In Ontario, the school year begins in September and ends in June. There are two terms – the first term goes from September until the end of January and the second term goes from February until the end of June.

Your child will receive a calendar at the beginning of the school year. This calendar can also be found on the school's website or the board's website at [www.smcdsb.on.ca](http://www.smcdsb.on.ca). The calendar will let you know about holidays, professional development days and other important dates.

### What is a Professional Development (PD) day?

You will notice PD Days marked on your school year calendar. These are days set aside by the school board for the training and development of our school staff. Students will not be required to attend school on PD Days

### Some Important Dates

#### September

Labour Day is the first Monday in September and is a holiday for all government offices; some businesses and schools are closed. School usually begins the day after Labour Day.

#### October

Thanksgiving is the second Monday in October. This is a holiday for all government offices; some businesses and schools are closed.

#### November

Remembrance Day is November 11th. Schools are not closed on Remembrance Day. In school, students will celebrate this day by remembering those who sacrificed their lives in military service.

**December/January**

Schools are closed for a total of two weeks at the end of December and beginning of January for Christmas holidays and New Year's Day. Please check your school's calendar to find out when Christmas holidays begin and when students are expected back at school.

**February**

The third Monday in February is Family Day. This is a holiday for all government offices; some businesses and schools are closed.

**March/April**

In mid-March, schools are closed for one week for March Break. Schools are also closed on Good Friday and Easter Monday to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**May**

Victoria Day is a Monday near the end of May. This is a holiday for all government offices; some businesses and schools are closed.

**June**

The last day of school is at the end of June, following final exams. Students will then be on summer holidays for the months of July and August.

## Elementary School Procedures

### **Welcome to Elementary School**

To help you adjust to school life in Ontario, we have outlined some tips about attendance, daily routine, clothing, food, safety and transportation. You can find more details about each of these items in your child's agenda or on your school's website.

**Safe Arrival and Attendance** In Ontario, students between the ages of 6 and 18 are required to go to school. However, we also offer a Kindergarten program for children who are four years of age by December 31<sup>st</sup> of the year they start school.

Our schools take attendance every day to ensure your child has arrived safely. If your child is going to be late or absent, it is important that you call the school immediately. If you don't get through to someone at the office, be sure to leave a message. For example, if your child is sick you need to call the school and let them know.

If you know your child is going to be away for a longer period of time, write a note or call the school to notify them. As part of our safe arrival program, if the school isn't notified about a late or absent child, you will receive a phone call.

A note explaining your child's absence, and signed by a parent or guardian, should be sent with your child when he/she returns to school.

### **Your Child's Safety**

In order to ensure the safety of our students, parents/guardians and other visitors are not permitted to enter the school or playground areas, for any reason, without notifying the office. All visitors to the school must sign in at the front office.

As part of our commitment to providing your child with a safe learning environment, our schools will periodically practice safety drills.

Fire Drills are practiced occasionally throughout the year to ensure students and staff can safely and quickly exit the building in an orderly fashion in the event of a fire.

Lock Down Drills are practiced periodically throughout the year to ensure students and staff are safe in an emergency situation.

Tornado Drills are sometimes practiced to ensure students and staff are safe in a situation with high winds.

### **Daily Routine**

Students should arrive at school a few minutes before the morning bell. Your child's teacher will establish classroom routines, which every student is expected to follow.

There will be nutrition breaks and outdoor playtime scheduled at your child's school. Please ensure that your child is dressed appropriately to go outside, for example: warm clothing in the winter.

### **What to Wear**

Schools have a dress code policy to promote a safe, positive and respectful learning environment. Students are always expected to wear modest and appropriate clothing. Your child will need a pair of indoor running shoes for gym and to wear in the classroom. You can find more information about dress codes on your school's website. In addition, due to allergies, many of our schools are scent-free and so the use of perfumes, colognes, gels and make-up products is discouraged.

### **Eating At School**

Parents of our elementary students send their children to school with a healthy lunch and two or three healthy snacks. Healthy meals and snacks during the school day, along with a good breakfast, provide children with the nutrients and energy they need to grow and learn. All foods must be nut-free due to allergies.

You can find more information about healthy eating on our board's website at:

[www.smcdsb.on.ca/parents/healthyschools](http://www.smcdsb.on.ca/parents/healthyschools)

### **School Supplies**

Elementary students will receive notebooks and textbooks. Textbooks are returned at the end of the year. Please talk to your child's teacher to get a list of other supplies that would be useful in their classroom.

### **Riding the School Bus**

Riding the school bus to and from school will be a fun and safe experience for your child. Not every student qualifies for daily bus rides – in order for an elementary school student to qualify for transportation, the distance to travel one way from home to school must be greater than 1.6 kilometres. To be safe, everyone must follow rules set out by the bus company and the school.

Students who do not qualify for school bus transportation will come to school in other ways, for example: walking or being dropped off by parents. Many of our schools have specific areas designated for drop-off and pick-up. Please check with your child's school to find out the procedures for dropping off and picking up your child.

### **Inclement Weather**

If the roads are considered unsafe for buses to transport students to and from school because of bad weather, then the buses will be cancelled. Even when buses are cancelled, schools are open for student learning. Updates about bus cancellations can be found on your school's website or through the local news reports.

## Parent Role

### **Welcoming Your Entire Family**

Families are at the centre of our Catholic school communities. We want you to become involved in your child's education. A positive relationship between parents, teachers and students is an important part of achieving success at school.

We know that your entire family is adapting to life in Canada and that attending school is only one of the major changes that your child is experiencing.

### **Adapting To Life in Canada**

The transition to life in Canada may take longer than initially expected. Your child and family may go through many stages before feeling completely at home.

#### **Stage 1**

Arrival in Canada - Your family may feel excited about beginning a new life in Canada.

#### **Stage 2**

Culture Shock - Members of your family may begin to feel depressed or overwhelmed with all of the change they are experiencing.

#### **Stage 3**

Recovery - As your family becomes more familiar with life in Canada, you will all begin to feel more confident about your new lives.

#### **Stage 4**

Acceptance - Your family will become fully comfortable with life in Canada. Some members of your family may take longer to reach this stage than others.

*Many Roots, Many Voices – Supporting English Language Learners in Every Classroom.* A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators, 2005. p. 39

Regardless of what stage you and your child are at, we hope that you will become involved with life at school.

### **How To Get Involved**

Participating in School Events – attending special events such as plays, assemblies, and barbecues to meet teachers, school staff, other children and parents. This also shows children that you are interested in their school experience.

Volunteering – our schools are always looking for parent volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, contact your school.

Communicating with Your Child's Teacher – you will have opportunities to meet with your child's teacher through parent/teacher/student interviews. You can also contact your child's teacher directly if you have any questions or concerns.

Parent Council – every school has a parent council, called the Catholic School Community Council. This group of parents and staff help make decisions, improvements, and changes in the school. You are welcome to become a member of this team. Please contact your school's principal to find out how to join the Parent Council.

### **Tips For Parents**

- Continue to use your first language (reading, writing, speaking) with your child. Research confirms that the stronger you are in your first language the easier it is to learn a new language
- Become familiar with the school before your child's first day of classes. Ask for a tour of the school when you first arrive.
- Encourage your child to ask questions if he/she is having a difficult time or if he/she is unsure of school-work or social situations.
- Proficiency in English may take up to seven years. Be patient with yourself and your children.
- Contact the school for help if you have any questions..

### **Who to Contact at Your Child's School**

If you have questions or concerns, we encourage you to contact your child's school. There is professional staff at our schools ready to provide you with answers and support.

Principal - the person responsible for the entire school; students and staff.

Vice-Principal - the person who is second in charge, and helps the Principal with discipline and the general organization of the school. Only elementary schools with a significant number of students have Vice-Principals.

Teacher - the person responsible for planning, teaching, evaluating, and reporting on your child's education. This is the person you should talk to if you have questions about your child's academic progress.

Office Assistants - the people who will answer the phones, verify attendance, and contact you in the event of an illness or emergency.