



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

ST. BERNARD'S



CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Student Handbook

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St. Bernard's Catholic School

*Education and Community, Working Together,
Centered in Faith*

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Welcome to the 2023–2024 school year.

The staff at St. Bernard's Catholic School would like to welcome you and your child to the new school year. We are looking forward to another successful year – filled with many opportunities for learning and growth both academically and spiritually.

We hope you will find this student handbook helpful. There is information related to how our school operates on a day-to-day basis. We have established guidelines, in consultation with our parents, to ensure the health and safety of your child. By taking the time to familiarize yourself with our expectations, you can help us maintain a positive learning experience for all students and staff. Also, be sure to read our weekly emails. You will receive timely updates about all the wonderful things happening here at St. Bernard's Catholic School. You can also follow us on our Instagram account @smcdsb_sbe.

We hope you have a fantastic school year!

The Staff of St. Bernard's Catholic School
smcdsb.on.ca/sbe

FAITH IN OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Our Parish Partner

We believe in fostering a strong relationship between your home, our school, and the parishes of Guardian Angels and St. Columbkille. 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.

For additional information about our parishes and to register for Sacramental preparation, visit the website <https://guardianangelsor.archtoronto.org/>



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 Sacrament of Reconciliation and First Communion. Parents will work with the parishes to prepare for these sacraments. Our school supports and complements what children are learning at the parish through classroom teachings.



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

ST. BERNARD'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL COMMUNITY – INFORMATION, PROCEDURES, AND GUIDELINES

Balanced Day Schedule

St. Bernard's Catholic School follows the Balanced Day schedule. This schedule is organized into three large blocks of instructional time broken up with two nutritional and recess breaks. The length of the school day is the same, but the instructional time within the day is more efficient and effective for student learning. An improvement in academic performance, balanced nutrition throughout the day, healthy physical activity, longer blocks of uninterrupted learning time, are only some of the ways students will benefit.

The following is the time schedule for the balanced day:

Yard Supervision	9:00 a.m.
Classes Begin	9:15 a.m.
First Nutrition Break	10:55 a.m. - 11:35 a.m.
Second Nutrition Break	1:15 - 1:55 p.m.
Last Bell	3:35 p.m.

This year at St. Bernard's Catholic School, some classes will have a reverse lunch. They will be going outside for recess prior to eating their lunch. Other classes will continue with the traditional order of eating first then going outside for recess. This will help alleviate some overcrowding in the yard and give students a greater opportunity to use our beautiful backyard space and sports equipment.

Student Conduct

The St. Bernard's Catholic School Code of Conduct, emphasizes that each person is a unique creation of God and as such must be treated in a manner which reflects the respect and dignity of each individual. As a Catholic School system, we are proactive to ensure that our Catholic values are preserved and promoted.

All students, parents (guardians), teachers and staff have the right to be safe and feel safe in our school community. With this right comes the responsibility to be law-abiding citizens and to be accountable for their choices and actions. The intent of the Code of Conduct is to encourage students to live and grow in a safe Catholic school community that fosters courtesy, co-operation and respect. This can be realized when our St. Bernard's Catholic School staff, students, families and our parish team work together.

Mutual support and teamwork between home, school and parish are fundamental to the education and development of our students.

Athletic Conduct

We encourage and support student participation

on school teams. In this role, students will experience and learn many new things from their teammates and coaches. With this opportunity comes responsibility for academic performance, personal conduct, attitude, attendance, punctuality, and most importantly, team spirit.

Students must respect and work with the coach. Often, coaches will keep additional students on the team for added practice. These students will be notified in advance if they can expect to have reduced playing time during a game. If there are any concerns during a game, parents are asked to speak with the coach privately after the game. The 24-hour rule used on community teams is also an expectation for sports teams at St. Bernard's.

Promoting a Positive School Climate

Maintaining a positive school climate is a key priority because it helps students feel safe, welcome and secure. Using the 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. Our goal is to provide a firm, fair and caring atmosphere. We are all expected to treat others with respect.

At St. Bernard's Catholic School we strive to:

- act as Jesus would
- take pride in our school
- set high academic standards
- set a positive example for others
- take responsibility for our choices
- remember to use good manners
- show good sportsmanship
- take care of everyone's property

Student Behaviour

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

Students at St. Bernard's Catholic School:

- will be active, positive and enthusiastic participants within our Catholic

community as we strive towards living the Gospel message.

- come to school on time and prepared to work with an enthusiastic and positive attitude, while striving to achieve academic goals.
- will be familiar with and practise the school procedures as outlined in this school handbook in addition to any policies outlined by staff 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.

The Ontario Safe Schools Act: Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour

Progressive discipline is a whole-school approach that uses prevention, intervention, supports and consequences to address inappropriate behaviour and builds upon strategies that promote positive behaviours. When inappropriate behaviour occurs, disciplinary measures (corrective, supportive and punitive) shall be applied.

Progressively more serious consequences may be considered for inappropriate behaviour that is repeated or if behaviour escalates throughout the year.

Basic Rules

- Follow the instructions of adults.
- Hands-off policy: keep hands, feet and objects to yourself.
- Speak and act with respect: kind words and actions are expected.

Consequences

Here at St. Bernard's Catholic School we will strive to recognize the positive contributions of our students. We will reward appropriate behaviour with praise, positive notes and phone calls home.

Failure to follow any of the rules or policies outlined in this handbook, however, may result in warnings, working outside the classroom in an alternative setting (resource room/office), loss of privileges, phone calls home, principal involvement (including out-of school suspensions). All disciplinary measures will have a restorative component (healing relationships). Students will always be expected to "make it right" by apologizing and/or fixing what they've done. They will then be welcomed back into the class/school for another chance to succeed.

In the case of a severe disruption, the principal will become involved immediately. In situations where student safety or the moral tone of the school is at risk, parents will be asked to come and pick up the child early.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

The St. Bernard's Catholic School dress code has been developed in consultation with parents, staff and administration. Students participate 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. (Beach flip-flops are not appropriate footwear and are not permitted at school.)



SAFE SCHOOLS

Safe Arrival Program

The Safe Arrival Program is designed to ensure the safety of your child. If your child is going to be absent or late, please follow this simple, but critical process :

Step 1 – phone our school at **705-326-2331 prior to 8:50 a.m.** The earlier, the better! Parents are encouraged to call the night before and leave a voice mail about an absence. The absence reporting tool in our parent portal, [Home2School Connect](#) is also available 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.

Your ongoing cooperation will help make this program successful for all.

Attendance

Regular and punctual attendance is expected of all students, and is critical in the learning process. When you are absent, you are expected to catch up on the work missed. Students can access homework and assignments through teacher virtual classrooms, from the teacher via a hard copy, or from a friend in the class.

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.

The intention of the program is for all elementary schools in Ontario to have doors locked throughout the school day. This means that students who are late for school or return to school after an appointment, will need to be buzzed in through 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.

Arriving on Time

Punctuality is an important life skill. Students are welcome to arrive at school beginning at 8:40 a.m., and our school program begins promptly at 8:55a.m. As soon as students are settled in their classrooms they will participate in prayer and listen to announcements followed by the teacher taking attendance. This part of the day is important, and so we urge students to be on time and ready to learn. In addition to enabling us to begin our day together as a school community, this routine also helps ensure the safe arrival of your child.

If late, students are to pick up a late slip at the office and wait quietly until prayers and announcements are finished.

Leaving Early

Students who are leaving school early must bring a note to their teacher stating the need for the early dismissal. At the time of dismissal, your child will proceed to the office to be signed out by a parent/guardian.

Appointments

Every effort should be made to schedule appointments outside of school hours. Parents/guardians must notify the school if a student is required to leave during the school day. Parents must come directly to the office to sign your child out. We will call your child down to the office to meet you, where you can sign them out. Please do not go to your child's classroom to meet them. Please bring your child to the office and sign them in upon returning from an appointment.

Kiss and Ride

Our Kiss and Ride will **only** be available for student drop-off in the morning.

For the safety and security of our students and staff, the Kiss and Ride will be closed at the end of the school day. Cars will not be permitted to enter the Kiss and Ride area to pick up students. We have limited parking spots available at the school. If you arrive early, and a spot is available, you may use the lot. Otherwise, the parking lot is closed from 3:10pm - 3:25pm daily (or when the lot is full) - some days this is as early as 2:00pm. If you are driving to pick up your child after school, it is best to park your car on a side street and walk onto school property. Please note that the street directly in front of the school is a NO STOPPING ZONE. To further ensure the safety of all, please use the sidewalks when escorting your child to and from school.

Bicycles

Students may ride their bicycles to school, but it is important that they are left and locked in the designated bicycle area. 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, Rollerblades, Scooters and Heelies

Skateboards, rollerblades, scooters and Heelies (shoes with wheels in the heels) are not to be used on school property.

Travelling Safely

To help ensure your child's safety, we would recommend the following procedures:

- Students are reminded to never approach an adult they do not know. Parents are reminded to speak to their children about 'stranger danger' and about safe street decisions.
- We recommend that children travel to and from school in pairs. Please review street safety with your children. Children under the age of 10 years should not walk to and from school without an older child or adult. Children under the age of 12 years should not be left alone to care for other children, including walking to and from school.
- Remind children to follow proper safety procedures at any traffic lights and/or crosswalks.

Bus Transportation

Riding a bus to and from school is a privilege and not a right. If a child doesn't respect the rules and regulations on the bus, privileges can be suspended temporarily or permanently. Students travelling on the bus must adhere to the following rules that have been established for student safety.



Students must:

- Remain seated while the bus is in motion.
- Use inside voices when speaking to your seatmate.
- Keep arms, head and feet inside the bus and out of the aisle.
- Obey the instructions of the bus driver.
- Keep school bags on lap or on the floor at your feet.
- Refrain from eating or drinking, or from any activity that may be injurious to other pupils.

- Ride your assigned bus to the designated stop unless special written permission has been provided by the parent, and approved by the principal.

Know Your Weather Zone

St. Bernard's Catholic School is in the **North Weather Zone**. Weather zones are used to allow for partial bus cancellations. Visit simcoecountyschoolbus.ca to check for cancellations.

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.

On days when the buses are cancelled, the school is typically open for learning. If you drop your child off on a bus cancellation day, you must also pick them up before the end of the school day, at the front doors of the school.

Custody

We are always concerned about the safety of your child. 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 situation. 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 St. Bernard's, 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 Regent Park School. 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 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/guardian authorizes a designate to pick-up a teacher would appreciate a signed and dated note.

Major Incidents – Lockdown

We know that being proactive and preparing for the potential of a major incident is the key to keeping our students and staff safe. As part of our Safe School Initiative, in cooperation with the OPP, we have developed a response plan should a violent incident occur. This involves immediate contact with the police and a lockdown of the premises. The staff regularly reviews and practises these procedures with our students. Your child may mention to you that they were involved in a "Lockdown" drill.

Our students have also learned how to respond if an individual without proper identification is in our school community. Therefore, it is critical that all parents, guardians, and community partners sign in at the office and follow appropriate protocols.

Fire Drill

In partnership with the Orillia Fire Department, schools are mandated to complete fire drills. Teachers review the procedures with their classes to ensure students understand that a quiet, orderly exit is required. Information is posted in each classroom to identify the exit route in the event of a fire drill. Please speak with your children about the importance of cooperation during all drills.

Extreme Weather

In case of extreme weather conditions, legislation mandates that students are moved to the 'safest possible location' in our school.

They are kept calm and quiet in this location

until safe conditions prevail. If such an emergency occurs, students will be kept in school until picked up and signed out by a parent or guardian, or it is safe for students to travel home.

HEALTH CONCERNS

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.

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.

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. Students who are generally not feeling well or who are symptomatic should remain at home.

Unfortunately, we do not have the space or staff to supervise 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.
- **Pinkeye** - 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 antibiotics

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.

For more information we encourage you to contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit or visit their website at simcoemuskokahealth.org.

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. Students will be sent home if they have lice or nits present. They will not be able to re-enter the classroom until they have been checked by staff and are lice and nit-free.

We are asking parents and guardians to help us prevent incidents and 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.

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. Continue to check the ingredient listing for nut products or traces of nut products.

We continue to strive to be a nut free community. Parents of students who have nut allergies thank you for your cooperation in eliminating peanut products from lunches, snacks and any donations for sharing.

If a product containing nuts or traces of nuts is brought into our school community, it is brought immediately to the office. The issue is reviewed with the student, so they too have an understanding of the dangers of anaphylaxis. The item is replaced by a 'healthy and safe' snack from our snack bin.

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 is 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.
- 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.

Please check with your child’s classroom teacher before providing treats for the classroom for special occasions. 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.

Breakfast and Snack Clubs

St. Bernard’s Catholic School offers a daily breakfast program. (8:40 – 8:55 a.m. daily) and healthy snacks for all our students. All of our children are invited to participate in both programs.

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.

GETTING INVOLVED

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

The Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board uses the SchoolMessenger

Communication 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.

Online Payment Using School Day

Our school offers 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 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.

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 will help maintain a harmonious and smooth day at school.

- **Droppings 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, 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 your child, unless it is an emergency.
- **Using the telephone** – Please do not ask your child to use their cell phones during the school day to contact you. Students will be able to contact you by using the office phone, with permission from staff. You can call the school and leave a message for your child if necessary.

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. Please join us!

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.

Dressing for the Weather

We ask that students dress in clothing that is 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, i.e., mitts, hats and indoor shoes with your child's first and last name.

Bringing Personal Property to School

We request students not bring valuable personal property to school including mobile devices, trading cards, etc. These items can easily be lost, damaged or stolen, and the school is not responsible if any of these unfortunate events occur.

Lost and Found

We encourage our students to check the lost and found (the box is on the stage – across from the library) 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). We strongly urge parents to label items so that we can assist in returning them to the right child. 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.

Parents often volunteer to assist us with the supervision of students on field trips. In order to volunteer, a parent must have a valid Criminal Background Check with a Vulnerable Sector Screening. Forms and information are available from the school office administrator.

Co-curricular Activities

There are various clubs and sport teams offered at the school. Many take place during the nutrition breaks, 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 trust-worthiness. Students

must conduct themselves in an appropriate manner both in and out of the school. We also expect students to be courteous, respectful and show appreciation to the people organizing the events and activities. 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. 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.

Your Child's 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 conjunction to the grade's curriculum requirements, and we greatly appreciate your support by providing these items for your child.

Library Commons

Our school is fortunate to have a learning centre called a Library Commons. Materials available to the students include picture books, magazines, novels, and easy to read chapter books. The Library Commons resource teacher provides students with a wonderful opportunity to develop skills, values, and attitudes on any particular topic. They also complement the work of your child's classroom teacher on current subjects, units, or themes.

Once your child signs out a book, they must return the book on their next weekly visit. Students will not be able to sign out a book unless their previous one has been returned.



If a book is lost or damaged, it is expected that the student or parent will replace it. It is the

student's responsibility to take care of books after

they have signed them out.

Once your child has signed an Internet agreement, they will be able to access the Internet during their day at St. Bernard's Catholic School. All time spent on the Internet will be closely supervised.

The students will also have the opportunity to learn about software provided by the Ministry of Education during the school year.

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.



The Staff at St. Bernard's Catholic School.