
OUR LADY OF SORROWS CATHOLIC SCHOOL SEPTEMBER 2007 PARENT INFORMATION HANDBOOK

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Superintendent Ms. C. Tovey-Shackleton
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this *Parent information Handbook* is to provide all parents with a brief overview of many of the common areas of parental inquiry regarding school practices and procedures here at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic School. While it is to be hoped that the majority of questions have been addressed within the framework of this handbook, parents are reminded that the provision of an effective educational experience for all students is only accomplished through a positive and informed home-school relationship. To that end, if any questions have not been addressed, parents are always welcome to bring those concerns to the attention of the administration of the school.

May we, in partnership as home, school and parish, provide a meaningful educational and faith based journey for each and every child entrusted to us as gifts by a loving God. It is our fundamental goal to provide a warm and welcoming environment in our school, an environment founded on the fundamental principles of compassion, care, and kindness, as exemplified through the life of Jesus.

J. Cassidy
Principal

HOME/SCHOOL/ PARISH CONNECTION

Parents, be mindful of the importance of the connection between the home, the school, and the parish. As a Catholic school



community, our commitment to our lives in the church is very important. We are very fortunate at Our Lady of Sorrows School to have a wonderful parish team at Our Lady of Sorrows Church. With the support of Father Cavoto, the students will experience several church

celebrations throughout the year. Parents, grandparents, and other community members are always invited to join us in those celebrations.

Parents are the first teachers of their children in the faith, and the task of teaching the faith is ongoing. School staff and Father Cavoto can assist in the teaching of the faith but the true faith lessons must continue to be founded in the home. The best teaching style for the parent is in the daily and weekly practice of the faith and in regular attendance at mass on Sundays/Saturday evenings: leadership by example.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

It is our firm belief that students who are actively involved in their school will benefit more so than students who simply attend a building. We encourage the students to be proud of their school and of their accomplishments. There are many opportunities for the students to become involved in activities which occur beyond the classroom. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the many activities available to them.

However, there is a definite understanding that extra activities are a *privilege* to be enjoyed by those students who do their best in classroom settings and who will represent the school properly in the activity. Students who cannot live up to that expectation will be denied participation in any such activities. This policy applies to both school excursions and to participation in extra curricular activities such as athletic teams which represent the school in various competitions.

SAFETY

Fundamental to our entire approach at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic School is our commitment to the safety of all of our students. As we proceed through the school year, we frequently include safety reminders to our students both during daily announcements in school and through monthly newsletters to parents. We treat all safety topics extremely seriously; as a school community, we promote the policy that proper education and information are critical elements in the practice of good safety habits. Please note that, throughout the year, staff and students will participate in general safety exercises such as fire drills, evacuation procedures, emergency lockdown drills, bus safety procedures, and many others. The entire staff is very appreciative of the support of parents with respect to all matters pertaining to safety issues.

STUDENT ATTIRE

While it is not our intention to assume the parent's responsibility for determining appropriate grooming and dress for your child, it must be stated clearly that there is an expectation that all students arrive at school clean and appropriately attired. All students are expected to dress in a manner which will encourage good behaviour and which will create a solid educational atmosphere in the school.

We very much appreciate your support of a dress standard which reflects our school as a place for serious work. As well, student dress should be an indication of the standards of sensitivity, appropriateness, and decorum which we expect in our Catholic school. More specific details about dress code can be reviewed in our "*Standards of Behaviour*" outline which is in the *student agenda/planners*.



STUDENT BEHAVIOUR/LANGUAGE

Students will be advised and will be reminded of an expectation for appropriate language and behaviour in all situations but especially in unstructured situations such as recess times. Behaviour and language should reflect the atmosphere of a Catholic school community. Consequences for inappropriate language and behaviour will be increasingly strictly enforced. Parent support and positive role modelling will assist the school significantly.

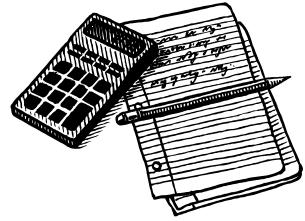
STUDENT POSSESSIONS: ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS, ELECTRONIC GAMES, COLLECTIBLE CARDS, CELL PHONES

Personal items such as I-pods, Walkmans, electronic games, cell phones, and collector cards are discouraged at the school. These personal items should be kept at home. The school cannot assume responsibility for these items if they are brought to school. Students who have these items in the school will have them collected by the teachers if they are interfering with the learning environment in the classrooms. Such items will be returned to the student at the end of the school day for a first violation. If these items are collected a second time, parents will be asked to pick them up from the school. Parental support in this area is required and greatly appreciated.



STUDENT LITERACY/NUMERACY SKILLS

An ongoing goal at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic School is to enhance student facility in literacy/numeracy. Parent involvement at home will greatly support the development of those skills for the students. Parents are encouraged to set a schedule even once or twice each week with their daughters or sons which would allow for family time to manipulate the literacy/numeracy skills without the distractions of television, radio, internet. This does apply equally for students and parents at all grade levels.



STUDENT AGENDAS

Students from Grade One – Grade Eight will be asked to purchase Student Agendas (also called Planners). While the agendas are not compulsory, we strongly encourage students to purchase the school agendas rather than other commercially available planners. Not only are they a wonderful organizational tool, they are also a teaching tool. There are, in fact, several educational inserts that have been carefully selected for the various grade levels in the agendas. There will be occasions when the classroom teachers will be utilizing the agendas in full class lessons for specific activities contained in the planners. In addition, the agendas include pages which could offer the parents a source for quick drills and reviews with a son or daughter on rainy Saturdays or long drives to the cottage! The cost of the agenda is \$11.00. Agendas will be available to all students from Grade 1 – Grade 8, beginning on September 10.

ENTRANCE/EXIT TIMES

Please make note of the school schedule outlined below. Parents are requested to assist the school in developing good *punctuality and preparation skills* in the students by ensuring that they arrive at school on time and prepared for the school day.

8:30a.m.	Assembly/School Day Begins
10:00a.m.	Morning Recess
11:30a.m.	Lunch
12:30p.m.	Afternoon Classes Begin
1:45p.m.	Afternoon Recess
3:00p.m.	Dismissal of Students

At assembly times, all students from Grades One – Grade Eight are expected to line up in their designated areas in the school yard. Upon entry into the building, students are expected to proceed to their classes in a quiet, orderly manner.

Kindergarten students assemble in their own play area on the east side (Montgomery Road) of the building.

Note: All students are expected to enter and exit the building through their designated doors. Students should not use the front doors of the school for assembly purposes or for exit purposes at the conclusion of the school day.

After morning assembly times, the custom of the school is to begin the day with the playing of the National Anthem, a reading of prayers (on Mondays), and announcements for the day. The opening exercises will begin punctually at 8:35a.m. every day. *Once the students are invited to stand for the anthem, it is expected that there is no movement at all in the school. Parents/visitors who may be arriving during that time will be expected to honour this custom as well as the students.*

SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS

Yard duty supervision by teachers occurs every day. Supervision is in place in the mornings from 8:00a.m. – 8:30a.m., during all recesses, and at lunch hours. Students should not be dropped off at the school before 8:00a.m. in the mornings as the school cannot assume responsibility for the safety of the children before that time.

At the end of the school day, students should be picked up by 3:15p.m. There is no teacher supervision after dismissal at 3:00p.m.

BEFORE/AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMME

We are fortunate to have a *'before and after school programme'* which is provided to assist those parents who require supervision of their daughters and sons in the time before and after the school day. The programme is run by the YMCA. Our site coordinator is Mrs. Victoria Cruz.

The programme before school runs from 7:00a.m. until 8:15a.m (at which time students in that programme must join their classmates in the schoolyard for a few minutes of socialization prior to the beginning of the day). Students in the before school programme are expected to arrive for the programme any time up to 8:05a.m. If a student arrives after 8:05a.m., the student is expected to remain in the yard because supervision is available. The programme after school runs from 3:00p.m. until the parent arrives to pick up the student. However, the latest that a student can remain in the programme is 6:00p.m. Expectations with respect to behaviour in that programme are consistent with the expectations for behaviour during the school day.

The programme is essentially full but if any parent would like further information, please arrange to meet directly with Mrs. Cruz in the atrium area of our school building.

SAFE ARRIVAL POLICY

Please contact the school at 416-393-5246 if your child will be late or absent from school. Your assistance and thoughtfulness in this regard can save significant time each day by reducing the number of telephone calls which must be made to check on attendance. It is both school and school board policy to ensure the safe arrival of students by checking on any student who may be absent.

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

All students are required to have an accurate up-to-date telephone number on the student data card for someone other than the parent. These numbers are extremely important in the event that a parent cannot be reached. All data cards will be checked carefully at the end of September and any child without an accurate emergency number will be required to provide one. Parents are asked to identify the relationship of the emergency contact person (e.g. grandparent, uncle, neighbour, friend).

BUS INFORMATION/TRANSPORTATION

Bus transportation is provided for students in our school, dependent on the location of the home address in relation to the school. Each situation is considered individually. Specific information regarding bus eligibility can be obtained at the school office. Students who do use the buses **must** adhere to strictly enforced bus safety rules. Failure to do so does result in the immediate removal of the student from the bus due to the considerable potential safety implications for the other students and for the bus drivers.

STUDENTS COMING TO SCHOOL WHEN ILL/STAYING IN AT RECESSES

As a general guideline, if a child is not well enough to go outside at recess, she/he is not well enough to be at school. Although it may be an inconvenience, a child in this condition should be kept at home. Children should not be put in the position of seeking permission to remain indoors during recesses. Such permission cannot normally be granted. All other members of our school community (classmates, teachers, other adults) appreciate not being put at risk by students who may be carrying contagious viruses.

LUNCH HOUR PROCEDURES

There are basically two options for lunch:

a. Staying for Lunch: All students who indicate that they will be staying for lunch are expected to be in the designated lunchrooms every day for lunch. Any student who stays for lunch must follow the basic expectations in the lunch room. *Any student who repeatedly cannot follow those expectations will forfeit the privilege of staying for lunch.* **Note:** Students who stay for lunch do not have permission to leave school grounds to purchase lunch and then return to the school to eat.

b. Going Home For Lunch: Students who go home for lunch are expected to do so all year. Students who go home for lunch should not return to school before 11:50 a.m. since there is no yard supervision until that time.

Please make a decision regarding lunch options and adhere to that decision for the year. If there are extenuating circumstances, it is the responsibility of the parent to speak directly with appropriate school personnel. Your cooperation in this regard is greatly appreciated.

Note: Grade Seven and Eight students *may* leave the school at lunch to purchase food at local restaurants. However, this is not an encouraged practice. Any Intermediate student who may take advantage of this privilege must bring a signed permission note *each time she/he may be leaving the building*. In addition, the student must sign out in the Sign Out book at the office and sign back in upon returning to the school. This privilege is granted only to the students in the Intermediate Division and even then it is only with the full awareness of the parents of those students (as proved by the accompanying signed note). Note as well that no Intermediate student can leave the school property alone (even with a signed note from a parent).

MILK PROGRAMME

We do have an optional milk programme available for those students who wish to participate. The cost of tickets is 0.70 each. This programme will begin the third week of September. Further details regarding the milk programme can be obtained from Mrs. Capizzo in the school office.



FOOD ALLERGIES

Although the school does promote safe food/allergy awareness practices, the entire school is not an allergy-free school. However, in those classrooms where there is a known severe allergy to specific foods (e.g. peanuts, etc.) we do anticipate the cooperation of the families associated with that room to eliminate the food types which could cause very severe problems for the allergic student. Individual classroom teachers will make those concerns known to the families of that class. Your understanding and support in these situations is greatly appreciated. As much as possible, all peanut products are discouraged at the school.

PARKING/PICK UP AND DROP OFF

Parents are asked to properly utilize the parking lot which we share with the Community Centre to both drop off and to pick up students if the intention is for the adult to come into the school. If it is necessary for the driver to leave the vehicle, the car should be *in an appropriately designated parking spot*. The drive-through areas and the 'ring road' of the parking lot cannot be used as parking areas. Cars must not stop along Montgomery Road for the purposes of either picking up or dropping off students. When students are dropped off in the parking lot, they are asked to proceed down the steps on the east or west side of the building to get to the back of the school. Students should not use the front doors of the school. The front doors should be used by parents, staff, and visitors to the school.

The bus loop on the south side of the building is accessible to all drivers but this must be used specifically as a drop-off route. Drivers should not exit the vehicle in the bus loop. The student should be ready and exit the vehicle on the sidewalk side of the car as quickly as possible.

Car drivers in the bus loop are urged to drive all the way to the south end of the loop before stopping to allow the student to leave the vehicle (even in cooler and inclement weather!).

EXCURSIONS

There are basically two types of excursions for all students: local community excursions, which are usually accessible by walking and further afield excursions which require some form of transportation.

For local excursions, there is a standard permission form which will be filled out by all students at the beginning of the year. That single permission form grants the teacher permission to take the class off the school grounds and into the local community (e.g. to the church, to the fire station, to the public library, to local businesses, etc.). *If that local permission form is not signed, the student cannot be given permission to go with the class.*

For further afield excursions, a permission form must be signed by the parent every time an excursion is planned. No student will be granted permission to attend an excursion if the permission form is not signed. Verbal permission is not sufficient.

Teachers are encouraged to plan some excursions each year. Parents do need to be aware that there generally are costs involved for each excursion. While every effort to select reasonably priced excursions will be made, please support the school as much as possible when excursion information is sent home. If there are any financial concerns about a particular excursion, you are asked to contact us directly at the school. ***Please be aware that planned excursions are an important part of the curriculum. Therefore, student attendance and participation for excursions is compulsory.***

HOMWORK POLICY

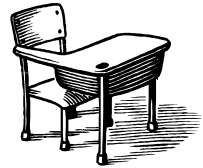
Students will be provided with homework throughout the school year. The general guideline for homework is that the student should experience approximately 5 – 7 minutes of homework per day for each year of school attendance. For example, a Grade Four student could anticipate approximately 20 – 25 minutes of homework (5 – 7 minutes x 4 years = 20 – 28 minutes). This is a suggested average amount of homework; on occasion, there will be slightly more (if a project is assigned) or slightly less homework. On nights when students have no ‘assigned’ homework, students might be encouraged to use homework time for uninterrupted reading or review.



CURRICULUM NIGHT

Please visit the school for our annual **Curriculum Night** in September. Teachers will be in their classrooms to meet the parents, display the classroom, discuss basic expectations for the year, and respond to any questions parents may have about curriculum. Parents are encouraged to attend this evening to visibly demonstrate an understanding that the effective education of a child is the result of the combined cooperative efforts of home and school.

The purpose of this evening is to meet the teachers and discuss general classroom expectations for the year. This is most definitely not a parent interview evening, nor is it an occasion for complaints. The evening is intended to be an enjoyable information sharing opportunity for parents to meet the teacher and to get a sense of the environment in which the child will work and participate for the year.



PIZZA LUNCH PROGRAMME

Once again this year, we will be offering a monthly Pizza Lunch programme for families who wish to participate. This programme is run superbly under the direction of our parents. A list of the Pizza Day dates and any additional information regarding pizza will be provided during the first week of the school year. In the interim, parents can begin to prepare for the Pizza days by being aware that the programme is designed to be pre-ordered in two sections: one payment for September – January, and another payment to be collected at the end of January for February – June.

MANDATORY IMMUNIZATION

The Public Health unit requires all schools to gather immunization records when registering new students. Children who are not appropriately immunized may be suspended from school by the “*Office of the Medical Health Officer*”.

GRADE SEVEN HEPATITIS B/MENINGITIS C IMMUNIZATION

Every year, the Department of Public Health administers Hepatitis B/Meningitis C immunization to all Grade Seven students. This immunization programme involves shots which are administered at various times throughout the year. The date for the first vaccination for our Grade Seven students will be announced as soon as confirmation of a date is provided to the school.

INSURANCE FORMS

Parents may wish to consider additional insurance coverage for your sons or daughters. Occasionally accidents do occur where students may suffer serious injury. There are Insurance Application forms available for all students. *This programme is strictly optional.* These forms are for your consideration and use. ***Do not return these forms to the school if you choose to purchase the additional insurance. Send all completed forms directly to the insurance company at the address indicated on the return envelope.***

OLS CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

We are very proud of the commitment we make to a variety of charitable events and organizations. Once again this year the students will participate in two national charitable activities which have become an important part of our school culture: the Terry Fox Run/Walk for Cancer Research (Gr. 5 – Gr. 8) and the Jump Rope For Heart Activity for Heart Disease Research. (Gr. 1 – Gr. 4).

The school also participates in local charitable events: students will be invited to participate again this year in the archdiocesan ShareLife campaign, and will also have the opportunity to support the Meagan's Walk Foundation. Further details about these two events will be shared through monthly parent newsletters.

In addition, we will participate in an international charitable event to be identified during the school year. Charities are chosen annually by a parent-run committee that reviews, with the school administration, potential charitable activities. The Principal may then approve charitable events in addition to the committee choices, if such a circumstance arises. Further information regarding charitable activities is available at Catholic School Advisory Council meetings.

CATHOLIC SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Monthly Parent Council meetings are held throughout the school year. During these meetings, parents are encouraged to discuss events which occur in the school and to present ideas for consideration. All parents are invited to attend any or all of these meetings. We especially extend a warm welcome to any parents who are new to our school and we encourage them to consider attending these very enjoyable and not unduly long meetings!

The primary purpose of all of our council meetings is to discuss and to reflect on opportunities for the school year which will enhance the learning opportunities for all students in the school.

PARENTS IN THE SCHOOL YARD

During the times indicated when teachers are on supervision duty in the school yard, parents are requested to refrain from being in the school yard. Teachers will deal with any issues that may occur. The intention of this request is not to suggest that parents are not welcome at the school. Rather, this request is to protect all parents and students. Any correction of inappropriate behaviour should come from a teacher, not from a parent. If, of course, a parent observes inappropriate behaviour, please discuss your concern with the teacher who was on supervision duty or with school administration at an appropriate time.

PARENTS/VISITORS IN THE SCHOOL

Please start any visit to the school at the school office. This policy not only promotes courtesy and good manners but it also provides safety for all students and protects the efficient running of academic programmes in the school. Cooperation with respect to this policy is greatly appreciated. Visitors and volunteers in our school will be expected to sign in and out at the office and to wear a designated badge during the time in the school.

Please note that, unless a meeting has been arranged with a teacher, neither students nor parents should return to the classrooms at the end of the school day after the classroom teacher has gone for the day. Students who forget books or homework should be prepared to deal with the consequences the following school day. School caretaking staff should not be placed in the compromising position of being asked to open classroom doors after hours.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Parent volunteers are always welcome at Our Lady of Sorrows School. Parent support in this area is greatly appreciated. If any parent is interested in becoming a parent volunteer, please contact either your child's classroom teacher or speak with us in the office. Approval of all volunteers must be obtained through the Principal.

Frequently, the greatest area of parental volunteer involvement occurs when classes go on excursions outside the school. These are definitely situations which require additional supervision. Parents who are interested in participating in these types of events must be aware of certain considerations. Parent volunteers will be rotated, depending on the trip and the number of supervisors required. Basically, a different set of parent supervisors may be selected for each excursion, if there are enough volunteers. That ensures that all parents have the opportunity of being a volunteer. Parents who do volunteer for an excursion must be willing to assume the responsibility of supervision given to them by the classroom teachers. Parents attending an excursion must be dressed appropriately as an adult supervisor.

When volunteering at the school *in classroom situations in an ongoing situation, it is expected that a parent will not work in the classroom of her/his own child.* Such direct involvement places unnecessary pressure on both the parent and the child. For 'out of classroom excursions' the same expectation does not apply. Parents are definitely welcome to assist on those individual excursion days in the classroom of their own child.

All parents who serve as volunteers are expected to recognize the importance of confidentiality with respect to events and incidents which occur in the school. Events and incidents should not be discussed by the volunteers in the community at large.

Any parent who is serving as a volunteer in the school is required to sign in and out at the office and to wear the appropriate identification badge throughout the duration of the volunteer work for the day.

If there are any questions regarding volunteers, please do not hesitate to contact us at the school.

SCHOOL WEBSITE

Visit our great school website regularly throughout the school year. It is our intention to keep the website up to date and informative.

The address is www.tcdsb.org/ourladyofsorrows



INVITATION TO PARENTS

Interaction/partnership with the parent community is always welcomed. If you have any questions or concerns, or if you would simply like to visit for a few moments, please remember that you are always welcome to drop in to see us. We are very interested in discussing any issues in a dignified and professional manner. Please call ahead to arrange an appointment if it is critical that you see us at that time. Otherwise, if it is a random chance that you have taken to just 'drop in', sometimes it might be impossible to meet with us because of previous commitments we may have. We very much look forward to an exciting and rewarding year, a year in which we will be privileged to witness and to be a part of the growth of our students.

