

Alens animos et mentes ~ Nurturing spirits and minds

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## **Our Parent Handbook**

Revised September 2021

## Table of Contents

<i>Philosophy and Objectives of Our School</i> .....	3
<i>Application Procedure</i> .....	3
<i>Acceptance Criteria</i> .....	3
<i>School Funding</i> .....	4
<i>Tuition and Notebook Fees</i> .....	4
<i>Educational Program</i> .....	4
<i>Extra-Curricular Programs</i> .....	4
<i>Sacramental Preparation</i> .....	4
<i>Communication</i> .....	5
<i>General School Regulations</i> .....	5
Attendance, Participation, Discipline .....	5
Leaving School Premises, Dress Requirements .....	6
<i>Expectations of Students</i> .....	6
<i>Bell Schedule</i> .....	7
<i>Supervision Schedule</i> .....	7
<i>Emergency and Medical Procedures</i> .....	7
<i>Bussing</i> .....	7
<i>School Calendar</i> .....	7
<i>Reporting Periods</i> .....	8
<i>Homework Policy</i> .....	8
<i>Library Policy</i> .....	8
<i>Lost and Found</i> .....	9
<i>Field Trip Policy</i> .....	9
<i>Major Fundraising</i> .....	9
<i>Hot Lunch Program</i> .....	9
<i>Parent Support Group</i> .....	9
<i>Volunteer Policy</i> .....	10
<i>Parental Input to the School</i> .....	10
<i>Problem Solving Policy</i> .....	10
<i>Parents' Rights</i> .....	11
<i>Parents' Responsibilities</i> .....	11

## **Philosophy and Objectives of Our School**

St. Joseph's School is committed to an educational program which strives to provide academic excellence and to foster the total formation of the person. We aim to integrate the different aspects of knowledge in the light of the teachings of Jesus Christ as taught and lived in the Roman Catholic Church. We work to build an awareness of self within the community. We encourage and develop the growth of each person as a Christian.

We live out this commitment in striving to:

- foster a family spirit within the school and share that spirit with the local community.
- have the staff of the school serve as role models of Christian values.
- enlighten the students in the teaching of Christ, through knowledge and by example.
- develop within each child a sense of self-worth through his/her achievements in schoolwork and acceptance within our school family.
- develop our students' skills in oral and written language to enable them to communicate ideas and feelings effectively.
- develop our students' skills in computation and in the understanding of math concepts to enable them to be effective problem solvers.
- develop within our students the ability to think critically and to use their reasoning powers to help them function effectively in society.
- instill within our students a love of learning and an appreciation of knowledge that will continue throughout their lives.
- instill within our students the motivation to attain their fullest spiritual, intellectual, and physical potential.
- foster within our students a sense of responsibility as members of the global community.
- develop our school into an educational institution dedicated to meeting the needs of our students and families.

### **Application Procedure**

- The parent(s)/guardians(s) of each applicant will meet with the principal or Admissions Committee to discuss the school's philosophy, programs and policies. The child's previous school and/or other appropriate professionals will also be contacted with parental permission.

### **Acceptance Criteria**

- the child's ability to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered by the school.
- the school's ability to meet the child's particular needs.
- the enrollment priorities outlined above.

## **School Funding and Attendance**

The Provincial Government grants our school 50% of the cost per public school student for operating costs. No government monies are provided for buildings, maintenance, or equipment/furniture. The funding we do receive per child is based on the student's attendance. Notes are required for absenteeism for the government audit. Additional funding to help cover the operating costs of the school comes primarily from the tuition you pay, although special grants and donations from the parish, groups and individuals also help the school financially. Fundraising is used to finance special projects and is also important to the running of the school.

## **Tuition and Homework Book Fees**

Tuition fees may be paid by cash in one (September) or two (September + February) installments, or by 10 or 12 post-dated cheques to be dated by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. Pre-authorized automatic debit is also available through the office. E-transfers are also now available: [stjetransfers@cispg.ca](mailto:stjetransfers@cispg.ca) Homework Book fees are payable by the end of September. Bus fees may be paid in two installments; first bus fees are due in September and the second in January.

## **Educational Program**

St. Joseph's School is dedicated in providing a quality educational program for its students. We aim to create an environment where every student experiences success in doing his/her best and where Christian values are lived. Our school is mandated by the government to meet the learning outcomes of all areas of the B.C. curriculum. In addition to these core curricular areas, St. Joseph's School provides instruction in Catholic Religious Education as well as French as a second language for all students in grades K to 7. A resource learning assistance teacher and classroom aides are available to provide extra support to students experiencing difficulties in core subjects.

## **Extra-Curricular Programs**

Each year a variety of extra-curricular activities are offered to students. Some of the extra-curricular activities normally offered are choir, basketball, cross-country running, soccer, volleyball, track and field, skipping club, puzzle & games club, and office monitoring.

## **Sacramental Preparation**

Sacramental preparation for Catholic students is done in the classroom religion program, at home and through the church. Registration for the Sacraments is done through the Parish Office. The Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion are received in grade two and the Sacrament of Confirmation is received in grade six. Non-Catholic students in the class are involved in most of the in-class preparation program and are invited and encouraged to come and help celebrate with those receiving the Sacrament.

## Communication

Effective communication between the home and school is essential for the well-being of our students. In addition to this handbook, which provides information to our families, the school website provides important information and links. On Tuesday each week, a newsletter is sent home via email with a school calendar attached as the last page. In addition to its being sent out to our parents, it is also posted to our website: [stjosephsschool.ca](http://stjosephsschool.ca) We have an information-based Facebook page as well. Parents are encouraged to attend Parent Support Group meetings and are welcome to observe at School Council Meetings. Parents are also encouraged to bring any queries or concerns that arise throughout the year to their child's teacher. If the concern does not relate to a child's learning, and/or the classroom learning environment or social environment, it may be appropriate to bring a concern to the principal. Appropriate, constructive communication between home and school does not include social media postings critical of programs, staff, students, or parents of the school and such incidents will be addressed.

## General School Regulations

### ➤ Attendance

In the case of illness, parents/guardians are asked to phone the school before classes begin or as soon as possible. For school government funding purposes, a note must be sent from home stating the date(s) and reason for absence or tardiness. A standard form is available at the office to use. Every effort should be made to have students attend regularly; absenteeism has an adverse effect on student progress.

### ➤ Participation

It is expected that students participate in the entire educational program of the school. A note is required if there is a valid reason for a student to be excused from scheduled classes and activities. The school has the right to decide validity.

### ➤ Discipline

Discipline at St. Joseph's School is based on Christian values and the premise of mutual respect. Discipline is seen to be a joint home/school responsibility with parents and staff being supportive of each other in requiring respectful conduct. Positive support and good communication between home and school is essential to the effectiveness of our school. Students are to be polite, cooperative and respectful in their dealings with both staff and other students. We believe that children need and want fair and firm guidelines. A school code of conduct is used in dealing with all problems. A copy of the classroom rules will be posted in each class. The classroom conduct code will be available to parents by the end of the third week of school. Parents are welcome to examine their child's discipline record at any time by making an appointment to do so.

### ➤ **Leaving School Premises**

Students are required to have parental permission to leave the school grounds between 8:43 a.m. and 3:07 p.m. The school office or classroom teacher must be informed in advance by email, phone, or by letter. Unless students regularly go home for lunch, they are not allowed to leave school grounds until the school office receives parental confirmation. Students leaving the school and/or returning to the school during school hours must check in at the office.

### ➤ **Dress Requirements**

Students are to dress neatly and appropriately. For example, tops should cover one's middle when one raises hands above one's head, sleeveless tops should be fitted around the arms and straps no less than "two finger" widths. Shorts and skirts are to be at least mid-thigh in length. Any slogans or pictures on clothing should be in keeping with Christian values. If students are dressed inappropriately, they may be asked to change into their gym strip, cover up with a sweatshirt, or call home for a change of clothes. In order to keep the mud and dirt outside, we ask that all students have an extra pair of non-marking, gym-appropriate shoes for indoor wear. Gym running shoes may be worn as indoor shoes. As students spend recess and lunch break outside, except in very inclement weather, they are asked to always dress accordingly. Very inclement weather means very wet conditions or colder than -15 degrees C.

## **Expectations of Students**

St. Joseph's School operates on these basic assumptions:

- Philosophical - that all of our students have a desire to develop as whole persons - spiritually, physically, intellectually, and socially - within the school environment.
- Behavioral - that all students will be respectful towards other students and staff. Disciplined behavior is viewed as integral to the provision of a quality Christian education at St. Joseph's.
- Academic - that all students will demonstrate a reasonable and co-operative effort in the learning process. Students will be supported and encouraged to work to the best of their ability in all program areas. Students will come prepared to work with all the necessary supplies. It is expected that students are responsible for completing their homework and making up missed assignments. The daily use of the homework book is required for students in grades three to seven. (Primary students, as a rule, do not receive homework, except for reading and math facts practice. Intermediate students can expect approximately 30 minutes of homework a night.)

## **Bell Schedule**

8:43 a.m. – Welcome bell  
10:20 a.m. - Recess begins  
10:35 a.m. - Classes begin  
12:05 p.m. - Noon Recess  
12:35 p.m. - Eating in class  
1:00 p.m. - Classes begin  
3:07 p.m. - \*Dismissal

\* Except on Thursday when the dismissal bell rings at 2:05 p.m.

## **Supervision Schedule**

Students are supervised on the playground from 8:15 a.m. to 8:43 a.m., at recess, noon break, and after school until 3:22 p.m. or, in the case of bus students, until boarding their bus. Parents are asked to pick up their children for 3:22 or to be at the playground to supervise them after duty is over. This is especially important for children in primary grades. Students may not stay in the school after school hours.

## **Emergency and Medical Procedures**

Parents of students with medical alerts will note this on the registration form and for those students requiring a written medical plan, parents will update the office at the beginning of each year. In the event of an emergency that requires the school to close, parents will be asked to come to the school and SIGN OUT their child from a designated staff member, normally stationed at the parking lot gate way which is near the field muster area.

## **Bussing**

Students at St. Joseph's have access to public school bussing for a fee which is charged by the School District. Full payment is due in September, or two payments may be made—one at the beginning of September and in January. Fees will be set by the first week of September in each school year. Students are dropped off and picked up at the library entrance to the school. Because each child is "checked off" the bus list as he/she boards the bus, it is important that the school be informed if a child will not be taking the bus. Older children can let their teacher know, while for younger children a note from the parents may be more appropriate. Discipline problems arising on the bus are dealt with by the driver and /or the bussing authority. *Please ensure your child knows the plan for the bus each day and use something like a yes or no card system in the backpack if your child is forgetful.*

## **School Calendar**

Each family will receive a calendar for the school year. Before the beginning of each month your child will be given, or you will be emailed, a calendar of all the planned monthly events with the newsletter. This calendar will also be posted to the school website. If you do not receive your copy, please contact the office and we will send you another one. During the year there will be a number of professional development or administrative days. These dates will be given to you as soon as they are available.

## **Reporting Periods**

Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled for the first term. If you would like a meeting with the teacher, please call and set up an appointment for a mutually convenient time. There will be three formal reports sent home during the year. If you have concerns or questions about your child's progress or about something he/she is studying, please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher. Teachers will also keep parents informed on an informal basis as required.

## **Homework Policy**

At the intermediate level, homework is seen as an important part of the educational program as it helps to develop good study habits and a sense of responsibility towards schoolwork. Homework assigned at these grade levels should require about 30 minutes to complete. In grades one to three, homework, aside from reading and math facts practice, will not normally be assigned unless it is "catch up" work. Parents need to check and sign their children's homework book each day as the regular use of the homework book is required and important to effective work habits. Good study habits also require a quiet place to work and the establishment of a routine homework time.

Parents can be an audience for oral reading, spelling practice, and math drills. If, on occasion, your child is unable to complete his/her homework assignment, a note from a parent/guardian is required to be sent to the teacher stating the circumstances. The student will be expected to complete the assigned work in the near future. Students who do not have a valid reason for incomplete homework will be supervised outside class time in study hall at 12:05 p.m. so they can complete their homework. Study hall is also available for any student wanting to complete homework at school or wanting assistance with their homework. We encourage students to avail themselves of this opportunity.

## **Library Policy**

- Students are responsible to care for their books and see that they are returned weekly.
- Books are due back by your child's next library period.
- If a book is late, your child will be given a note reminding them to return the overdue book.
- If a book is more than two weeks overdue, a note will be sent home, asking your help in finding the book and your child will not be able to check out another book until the late book is returned
- If you cannot find it, you must pay the replacement cost of the lost book as indicated on the request note. Once this is done your child will be allowed to sign out books again.
- If the lost book is found after it has been paid for, you may return it and have your money refunded.
- Your child is also responsible for replacing any books which he/she has borrowed but returned in a damaged condition.



## **Lost and Found**

Please ensure that all your child's belongings; including shoes, boots, coats, and lunch kits, are clearly marked with your child's name. Every year we accumulate clothing, shoes, boots and some unbelievable items in our lost and found. Please encourage your child to check if they have lost anything.

All unclaimed belongings will be donated to charity.

## **Field Trip Policy**

When you register your child, you will be asked to give your permission for your child to take part in low-risk, walking field trips which are part of the regular school program. These include such things as walking trips to the library, skating rink, and fire hall. If the field trip requires transportation, the parent's written permission for the specific event will be required. Parent chaperones are required on field trips for supervision.

## **Major Fundraising**

Each year we hold several fund-raising events involving all the students in the school. The money raised is used for school equipment and educational resources/activities directly used by the students. Participation in any fundraising event is voluntary. Fundraising is also done by the Parent Support Group, School Council, and some classes throughout the year. All fundraising events must be approved by School Council.

## **Hot Lunch Program**

The Parent Support Group (PSG) runs a Friday hot lunch program from October to May. Monies raised go towards resources and equipment for the school. The grade seven parents run a pizza lunch throughout the year, alongside the Hot Lunch Program, as a fundraiser for the annual Grade 7 year-end field trip. Students place their orders Wednesday each week for the Friday lunch. If you would like to help out with the hot lunch program - please contact the coordinator. Each team is only scheduled to help with three or four hot lunches a year.

## **Parent Support Group (PSG)**

St. Joseph's PSG is an integral part of the school, fostering a sense of community and trust through the active involvement of parents and teachers. The PSG allows parents to be informed and involved in issues, events and programs concerning our school. The PSG is involved in a variety of activities (e.g., the Hot Lunch Program, Fun Day, Thanksgiving dinner, etc.) and in activities that help build strong, supportive communication between and among teachers and parents. The PSG allows parents and teachers to work together towards enhancing the school and meeting the teachers' needs in their programs. For more information on the PSG, please contact the school office or the PSG chairperson. Parent involvement in the PSG is essential in ensuring the continued success of our school for our students and their families.

## **Volunteer Policy**

Volunteers are really valued and make significant contributions to our school in a variety of ways such as:

- providing adult supervision in situations such as field trips where adult/children supervision ratios must be met
- providing early morning supervision on the playground
- providing assistance to the teacher in the classroom with instructional materials or activities
- providing assistance to the teacher by marking objective assignments
- assisting in the instruction of children by reading to or listening to children read
- providing transportation for field trips and off-site activities

The Catholic Independent School Board of Directors has implemented a policy that requires all volunteers who are **in** a 'working with children situation' to complete an application form which will give consent for the completion of a criminal record search. This policy aims to ensure that children learn in a safe environment. If you feel you have time to volunteer in any of the above ways, you **MUST** complete a criminal record search application form which can be picked up at the school office. We also require any parents who will be driving students to give the office a Driver's Abstract and a copy of their vehicle's insurance. The Driver's Abstract can be obtained online or at the Access Centre.

## **Parental Input to the School**

We are dedicated to growing and improving our school. Parents are encouraged to attend our PSG meetings, which are listed on the monthly calendar. Monthly School Council meetings are also open to all parents. Elected School Council members must be Catholic, but non-Catholic parents can be on committees of School Council. In keeping with the family nature of our school, we feel a special need to consider our parents' concerns and ideas.

## **Problem Solving Policy**

Communication is essential for providing an effective and nurturing school for your child. If a problem arises at school involving your child, it is policy to first contact your child's teacher(s) during school hours. Please call ahead to set up an appointment at a mutually convenient time. If the problem cannot be solved satisfactorily at this level, contact the principal. If you feel you have not received satisfaction from the above parties, an appeal in writing can be made to the Board of Directors of Catholic Independent Schools of Prince George. The decision of the Board of Directors on the matter shall be final and binding on everyone involved.

## **Parents' Rights**

- to be recognized as the first educators of their children.
- to participate in the religious, social and academic education of their children.
- to elect School Council members from members of the parish.
- to be a member of the Parent Support Group (PSG) and to elect PSG executives.
- to require excellence in religious and academic education.
- to be informed regarding the progress and/or problems of their children.
- to have their views on any aspect of the curriculum and activities taken into serious account.
- to visit the school.
- to have the school reinforce the Catholic moral and religious guidance and discipline given in the home.
- to appeal to the Board of Directors of Catholic Independent Schools of Prince George when problems cannot be solved at the local level.

## **Parents' Responsibilities**

- to take the initiative and leadership in the religious education of their children and to be supportive of the religious program in the school.
  - to set a good example for their children by practicing the Catholic faith.
  - to take an active role in the guidance of their children's education.
  - to familiarize themselves with the CISPG and school's policies and to abide by them.
  - to co-operate with teachers for the welfare of their children.
  - to attend meetings called by the school.
  - to participate in school activities and events whenever possible.
  - to attend parent/teacher interviews as scheduled or to make alternate arrangements.
  - to ensure that the child has all the supplies needed for proper participation in school.
  - to ensure that children are given enough time and suitable working space to complete homework assignments.
- to support the school financially