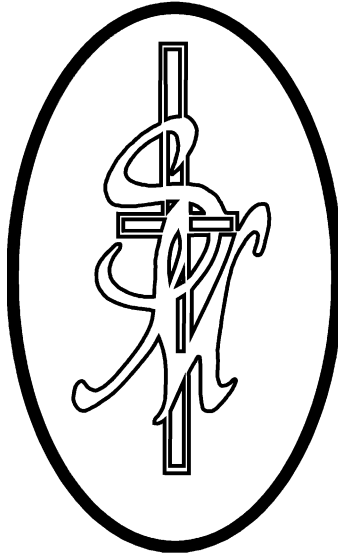


# *St. Mary's School*

## *Parent's Handbook*



### *Children Learn What They Live*

- If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.
- If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.
- If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.
- If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty.
- If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.
- If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence.
- If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.
- If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice.
- If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.
- If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.
- If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love in the world.

## **St. Mary's School Philosophy**

St. Mary's Catholic School is a faith community of dedicated educators, students and families who work together to develop a sense of respect, responsibility, spirituality and service.

### **PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK**

This handbook is intended to give you some basic information about our school. Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you have questions about any aspects of school life.

Parents are the first educators of their children. As Catholic educators our goal is to work with you in the Christian formation of your children and strive for Excellence in Education by helping each student develop to their fullest potential.

## School History

When Bishop Fergus O'Grady, OMI, first became bishop of the Vicariate of Prince Rupert in March of 1956, he realized the great need for Catholic Education in Northern British Columbia. At that time a plan was put in place to build a new parish and school because Sacred Heart was bursting at the seams.

It was as a part of this plan that St. Mary's School was built in 1960. Construction was to begin in 1959, but the newly completed school in Burns Lake burned to the ground and Father Bogues (pastor of St. Mary's) had to return there to supervise its rebuilding. When he returned to Prince George in April 1960 work immediately commenced on St. Mary's School. The foundations of both the school and gymnasium were laid on May 2, 1960.

Construction on the school continued to completion by the Jarvis Construction Company and St. Mary's School was ready for students the following September. At the same time, however, demands for space by the high school (currently housed at Sacred Heart) necessitated St. Mary's giving up seven classrooms for grades 9-13. The elementary grades (1-6) used the industrial arts building, currently the chapel, and one classroom, while grades 7 and 8 remained at Sacred Heart.

Prince George College's new buildings (the former O'Grady High School) were opened in 1962 and the high school students moved out of St. Mary's. The elementary students moved into the main part of the school and the 4 elementary classrooms were dismantled. In 1962 a grade 8 class was temporarily added to the school but was removed in 1969.

The Kindergarten classroom and the library was added to the school in 1970. For three years, 1975-1979, preschool was offered instead of afternoon Kindergarten. The library, which was set up and operated by the Catholic Woman's League until 1978, has been a tremendous asset to the school. It was computerized in 1989 – the first school in the Prince George area to have its collection and circulation fully automated. In 1989 a computer room, a large storage area and a spacious boot room were constructed.

The Sisters of Mercy formed and guided the direction of St. Mary's School for 36 years from 1960 to 1996. Their tradition and commitment to excellence in education, the integration of Christian values, outreach to others, and care of the earth is the foundation on which the school is built. Mrs. Yvonne Johns was the first lay principal of St. Mary's School from 1996 to 1999 followed by Mr. Greg Miller from 1999-2004. Mr. Brent Arsenault was principal from 2004-2017. Our current principal Mrs. Jenny Schroeder began in 2017.

From 1960 until 1977 the school was staffed by Sisters of Mercy and Frontier Apostles from several countries and supported by a parish subsidy, bingo gaming funds and tuition fees. The first staff consisted of two Sisters of Mercy, Sister Stanislaus (Principal and gr. 3 & 4), Sister Margaret Quinn (gr. 1 & 2) and one Frontier Apostle, Kay Calligan (gr. 5 & 6).

It was not until 1978 when the British Columbia government began to provide some funding that some partially funded staff could be hired. From that point on specialists such as learning assistance, physical education, french, library, music, and computer have been gradually added to the staff. In January of 2023 an after school care program began and in November of 2023 the school opened a daycare for 3-5 year old children.

## **SCHOOL COUNCIL**

St. Mary's School Council, along with all the school councils in the Prince George Diocese is constituted by the authority of the Catholic Independent Schools of the Diocese of Prince George and is an advisory body, directly responsible to the Society and the Bishop.

The Council consists of at least six members and the pastor or Bishop's delegate. Council members are elected for a two year term and must be practicing Catholics. Elections take place at the Annual General Meeting which is held in October. The School Council is responsible for all areas of the management and operation of the school in accordance with the Constitution, bylaws, guidelines, directives, policies and regulations of Catholic Independent Schools (C.I.S.).

Parents are an integral part of the school community and are invited and encouraged to become involved in the activities and endeavors of the school. The School Council is the primary avenue for involvement of parents in the school. It is the responsibility of the School Council to approve and direct any parent group working or acting on behalf of the school. Regular monthly meetings are held and are open to parents except those portions dealing with confidential matters around personnel and finances.

If you wish to make a presentation as an individual or group to Council, you must make your request, in writing, at least one week before in order to be included on the agenda.

The officers of the Council are Chairperson, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. Subcommittees may include Finance, Maintenance, Retention and Recruitment, as well as various ad hoc committees. You need not be an elected member to work on the subcommittees and if you are interested in them, please contact the Council Chairperson. Please check the Council bulletin board for names and telephone numbers of members.

## **PARENT SUPPORT GROUP**

St. Mary's School is proud to have a strong and supportive parent organization. A big part of our success is the involvement of our Parents. Parents are encouraged to be active members of the Parent Support Group. The Parent Support Group is greatly involved in many of the fund-raising activities and these funds allow us to provide materials and opportunities that our students would otherwise be unable to experience. The Parent Support Group is not in place solely to raise funds. Many of the activities sponsored by the PSG help foster a sense of community and spirit building in improving our school Christian community. All parents are invited to attend these meetings.

## Statement of the School's Objectives

St. Mary's School endeavors:

- 1) to provide each student with the opportunity to experience a specifically Christian education in the Roman Catholic tradition. This is a twofold task:
  - (a) The creation of an atmosphere permeated by the spirit of our Catholic faith, where a child can experience love, respect and acceptance.
  - (b) Instruction is the essential content of the faith - in doctrine, moral teaching, liturgy and the sacraments.
- 2) to develop in each student an appreciation of his/her self-worth, abilities, potential and limitations and to recognize these in others.
- 3) to provide for each student the opportunity to understand and enjoy the processes of learning and the acquiring of skills necessary for continuous learning and adaptation, and the importance of order and method in their work and in all the routines of the school day which contribute to a good learning environment.
- 4) to strive for excellence in all areas of the curriculum.
- 5) to help students to develop the moral qualities of self-discipline, perseverance, determination, patience, fair play and consideration for others.
- 6) to instill in students appreciation, respect and acceptance of differences in culture, race and creed.
- 7) to help students to appreciate their personal and material gifts, to recognize the lack of those gifts in others, and to be willing to share to those who are less fortunate.
- 8) to cultivate close co-operation between school, family and parish community, so that our students may be helped to make personal integration of faith and life.

## **Discipline**

St. Mary's School believes that discipline is a part of education and must be approached with a manner consistent with the spirit and philosophy of the school. Discipline is a part of all student's growing process and must always be fair and consistent in its application.

St. Mary's School believes that all students must learn to accept responsibility for their own behavior and be given the opportunity to learn from their mistakes.

Expectations for behavior should be consistent with the student's maturity and ability.

## **Expectations**

Consideration and respect for others is the key to generating a responsible and safe school community. Teachers should always stress these qualities at school. Students are expected to respect all staff, support staff, visitors and each other in the school and on the playground.

At the beginning of each school year students and their parents are expected to sign and return a sheet indicating that they have read and will support the school discipline policy.

## **St. Mary's School Discipline Policy**

In order to guarantee each student in the school the safe and secure learning environment they deserve, the following discipline policy must be consistently enforced. All students have the ability to behave appropriately in school. Staff should not tolerate a student stopping a teacher from teaching, or a student from learning, nor any behavior that violates the best interest of any individual in the school community.

## **General Rules**

1. Respect all persons and address and treat them politely - no objectionable language or gestures, nor hurtful or insulting remarks.
2. Students are expected to follow the directions of teachers, supervisors, teacher assistants, substitute teachers, parent helpers, etc.
3. Students must remain on the school property at all times. When walking home after school students must leave the school property immediately.
4. No fighting, play fighting, rough or dangerous behavior of any kind, nor use of sharp or dangerous objects.
5. Walk quietly in the school at all times, no running.
6. Use all school property appropriately. Damage to any school property is considered to be vandalism.
7. Gum chewing is not allowed on the school property. Cell phones or gaming devices are to be kept home or in backpacks at all times.
8. The school uniform and indoor footwear must be worn every day.

## **Classroom Behavior Rules**

1. Follow directions the first time.
2. Remain at your seat unless given permission to leave.
3. Raise your hand for permission to speak.
4. Keep hands, feet and objects to yourself.
5. Each teacher should develop their own classroom set of rules. Consequences should be clear and enforced fairly and consistently.

## **Lunchtime Behavior Rules**

1. Remain at your own desk unless otherwise decided by the teacher.
2. Ipods, phones, game boys, etc. can not be used.
3. Do not throw food or other objects.
4. No shouting.
5. It is each student's responsibility to clean their desk and the area around their desk when they finish eating.
6. When the outside recess buzzer sounds students must line up quietly and walk to the boot area before going outside.

## **Playground Behavior Rules**

1. Do not ride bicycles, roller blades, skate boards, etc. on the playground at any time.
2. HANDS OFF IS IN EFFECT AT ALL TIMES!!
3. Use playground equipment appropriately.
4. Answer the buzzer promptly and line up quietly at the school entrance.

## **Personal Device Rules**

1. Personal devices refer to cell phones, ipods, or any other communication devices brought to school.
2. All devices must be kept in student backpacks during the school day.
3. If not properly stored devices will be confiscated by the teacher and returned to students at the end of the day.
4. All communication with home should be done through the school office.
5. St. Mary's School assumes no responsibility for loss or damage of student devices.



## **Physical Education Behavior Rules**

1. All students must wear a P.E. strip (shorts, t-shirt, runners) in order to participate.
2. Change quietly and quickly in the changing rooms.
3. Stay away from the stage area and the P.E. equipment storage rooms.
4. Remain in the gym unless otherwise directed.
5. Respond to the P.E. teacher immediately.
6. Demonstrate sportsmanship at all times.

## **After School Activities Behavior Rules**

1. Only students with a signed permission slip and transportation arrangements may attend after school activities.
2. Remain in the designated area until dismissed by the teacher.
3. Leave the school premises immediately if walking home or when parents arrive.
4. All school rules must be followed when representing St. Mary's School at home or at another venue .

## Discipline Consequences for Breaking a Rule

- A. Each teacher should develop their own in-class set of rules and consequences.
- B. Noon recess detentions will start at 11:45 a.m. and end at 12:10 p.m.
- C. When a student is sent to the principal for disciplinary reasons the principal will:
  - 1. Discuss the problem with the students concerned
  - 2. Talk to the teacher where necessary
  - 3. Document the problem
  - 4. Decide on an appropriate consequence, which can be:
    - (i) a warning
    - (ii) a noon recess detention
    - (iii) an in school suspension
    - (iv) a suspension from school

(iii and iv are in the case of a continued behavior problem or a severe rule infraction)

### Criteria for a Severe Rule Infraction

- 1. A student willfully disrespects or disobeys a teacher/supervisor or severely disrupts a class.
  - 2. A student willfully inflicts physical harm or severely insults another person.
  - 3. A student willfully defaces, damages or destroys property.
- D. If a student receives three detentions in one month, they will automatically receive a one day suspension from school.

It is important that all teachers and the principal maintain a direct and open line of communication with the parents of St. Mary's School. Any and all behavioral concerns should be communicated to the parents of the particular student.

## DAILY TIME SCHEDULE

### Grades K to 7

8:00am	Outside supervision begins
8:20 am	Morning bell – school starts
10:00 – 10:15	Recess Outside
11:30 – 11:45	Lunch
11:45 – 12:10	Lunch Recess Outside
2:20pm	Dismissal
2:40pm	Outside supervision ends

## ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

- A) Co-operation of parents in punctual arrival of students is appreciated:  
8:20 am School Starts  
12:10 pm Children return from lunch
- B) When students are going to be away from school or late to school parents are asked to contact the office before 9:00 am.** If students are not accounted for the school undertakes to contact the parents as to their whereabouts.
- C) A child who is absent MUST bring a note upon his/her return explaining his/her absence. These notes are needed for the AUDIT OF ATTENDANCE IN MAY.
- D) Supervision in the morning begins with the arrival of the first bus at **8:00 am.** Children will NOT be supervised before this time.
- E) We discourage the taking of holidays during regular school time because students usually fall behind in their studies when they miss school and lengthy absences may result in the loss of government funding.
- F) If you choose to take your child/ren out of school to accompany you on vacation during the school year, please contact the teacher two or three weeks before leaving so that suitable arrangements for catching up on work may be made.
- G) The school telephone is for emergencies only. All arrangements for after school activities must be made before coming to school.

## STUDENT ADMISSION

Priority is given to children from practicing Catholic families in the parishes. Non-Catholic children are admitted to the school on a limited basis. The final decision to admit a child lies with the Principal and is conditional upon receipt of records from previous schools, interviews with the parents and guarantee of support of our Catholic school philosophy.

## REGISTRATION

At registration time, please bring the following certificates or photocopies:

1. Birth certificate
2. Baptism certificate
3. Proof of citizenship or legal residence if not born in Canada.
4. Certificate, or date and place, of Confirmation, 1<sup>st</sup> Communion and Reconciliation.

## TUITION

Tuition may be paid in full at the beginning of the year or in ten monthly installments. Tuition can be paid by cheque, debit, credit, cash or e-transfer. **Send transfers to [smsaccounting@cispg.ca](mailto:smsaccounting@cispg.ca)**. Receipts for tuition fees received will be sent out in February for Income Tax purposes.

## SUPPLY FEE

The supply fee is assessed for each student every year to help cover the costs of art materials and duplicating paper used by the students throughout the year as well as for student agendas.

## PROGRAM OF STUDIES

St. Mary's School follows the curriculum as prescribed by the Ministry of Education of the Province of British Columbia. In addition, the school:

- 1) uses the religious education program prescribed by the Diocese of Prince George "Alive in Christ". Each student is expected to participate in the religious education program and activities. We make every effort to incorporate Gospel values in all aspects of the curriculum.
- 2) Offers French as a second language to all children from grade 1 to grade 7.
- 3) Provides learning assistance where needed.
- 4) Offers Music to grades K-4 and band to students in grade 5 to grade 7.

Every effort is made to adapt learning activities to individual needs.

## CURRICULUM

St. Mary's School is a Group 1 Independent School. We follow all Ministry guidelines pertaining to the Independent Schools Act. We teach the B.C. Curriculum as mandated by the Ministry of Education. Every 6 years we have a Ministry evaluation.

### Winter Weather

Pupil safety is the primary concern determining actions taken as a result of cold or inclement winter weather.

1. Schools shall not be closed due to cold or inclement winter weather.
2. In case of school bus delay or cancellation, announcements shall be made via the local radio stations on the affected day.
3. School bus service shall be cancelled for the day on a route considered to be too dangerous due to snow or ice conditions. Announcements shall be made via the local radio stations.
4. The decision to keep a pupil at home for the day due to winter weather conditions shall be made by the parent.
5. Pupils shall not be expected to wait for a school bus more than fifteen (15) minutes past the scheduled pick up time. If the bus has not arrived by that time, pupils should return to their homes or another prearranged place of shelter.
6. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that students are appropriately dressed for the winter conditions.

## ADDRESSING A PARENTAL CONCERN

### Parent-Teacher Communication

As it is easier to handle a concern before it becomes a problem, parents and teachers are expected to contact one another over any behavior, academic progress or policy concern they may have. When parents have a concern it is imperative that they confer with the teacher first. If the concern cannot be resolved here, the principal should be informed so the best solution can be reached for the sake of the child. To facilitate positive communication between school and home, teachers are encouraged to make contact with all parents as early in the school year as possible. The following policy mandated by the Catholic Independent Schools, Diocese of Prince George, (CISDPG) outlines the formal procedure we use to address parental complaints against school personnel:

### Guidelines

Step 1 A parent or guardian having a complaint about a teacher or other personnel should contact the person in question as the first step to resolution. If the complaint cannot be resolved satisfactorily proceed to Step 2.

Step 2 The parent or guardian should contact the principal. If still unsatisfied, the parent or guardian should proceed to Step 3.

Step 3 If the parent or guardian is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint after contacting the principal, the parent or guardian can request the matter be dealt with by the CIS office. The parent or guardian shall address the complaint, in writing, to the CIS office. Individual members of the School Council shall not entertain complaints.

Step 4 If the parent or guardian does not receive satisfaction from the CIS Office, an appeal, in writing, can be made to the CIS Board of Directors.

Step 5 The Board of Directors will arrange for an investigation of the appeal.

### EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The school offers a comprehensive extra-curricular program. Extra-curricular activities provide the opportunity for student-teacher interaction outside of the classroom situation. All extra-curricular activities, whether they are music, computer, kids for kindness, library or athletics, try to fill the needs of the individual. They all help to balance our school program.

These activities give the students the opportunity to interact with students from various grades with varying abilities. The students learn to co-operate in group situations, learn sportsmanship and develop a sense of tolerance for the betterment of the group. This develops a better school atmosphere especially with regard to student behaviour and school spirit.

The main objective of these programs is to maximize student participation in order to promote student enjoyment, sportsmanship, confidence and the pursuit of excellence.

Parent help and co-operation is needed in all of the above.

### TIME ALLOTMENTS

The amount of time per week allotted to each subject is laid down by the Ministry of Education and must be strictly adhered to.

### STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Students are evaluated and assessed on an ongoing basis by:

- 1) weekly, monthly and end of term tests
- 2) Unit tests in Reading
- 3) Unit tests in Math
- 4) Standardized Achievement tests in Grades 4&7
- 5) Dibels in grade K/1
- 6) CTBS in grades 3-7
- 7) Gaites McGintee in grade 2
- 8) Oral reading probes in grades 2-7
- 9) Special diagnostic assessment when deemed necessary
- 10) Further in-depth assessments are referred to other agencies

## REPORT CARDS

Report cards are issued 3 times per year. Parent/Teacher interviews are scheduled for all parents during October for the first term.

Report cards are not the only communications we should have about our students/children. The report card should only confirm what the student/parents already know. With constant communications the report card will have no surprises. Parents are encouraged to communicate with their child's teacher whenever they have a concern.

## INTERVIEWS

The teaching staff encourages ongoing communication through the student's agenda, emails, phone calls or personal meetings. If an interview is requested please call the school to establish a mutually convenient time.

## SUPPLIES

A Supply list will be posted on our website at the end of June. Parents will be required to purchase the supplies needed for school.

## TEXTBOOKS

All textbooks are on loan to the students so we ask your cooperation in seeing that they are properly taken care of. Textbooks should be covered and carried in a school bag when taken home.

## HOMEWORK

Homework is the responsibility of the student. It helps the students to reinforce material that has been taught to them at school during the day. It is a means of preparing the students for tests. If students are so fortunate as not to have any homework it enables them to work on subject areas wherever they are experiencing difficulty or to prepare material for next day's class. Below are some helpful hints for both students and parents.

## HOW TO DO HOMEWORK

- 1) SET UP A SCHEDULE- Try to do homework at the same time everyday.
- 2) THE LOCATION – Try to do your homework at the same place.
- 3) FIND A QUIET PLACE – It is easier for the students to concentrate.
- 4) COMPLETE HOMEWORK NEATLY – Do your best the first time.
- 5) ASK FOR HELP – Ask your parents or siblings.
- 6) KEEP YOUR BOOKS ORGANIZED –There will be less of a chance of forgetting your homework.

## PARENTAL GUIDANCE

It is essential that parents work in close contact with their student(s) in helping them stay on task as well as seeing if they need any extra help. If you know what your student is doing in class, then you are taking an active role in your child's education. With your support as the primary guardian the close connection between the parent and the teacher will only help your children succeed.

## PARENT VOLUNTEER HELP

Many parents are actively involved in the school. We would like to involve as many as possible. If you can help in any of the following areas, please call the school:

- 1- in the Library
- 2- with computers
- 3- with the hot lunch program
- 4- coaching/refereeing sports
- 5- a driver for field trips
- 6- as a class parent
- 7- a playground supervisor
- 8- as a teacher helper

## UNIFORM

All students in grades 1 to 7 must wear the school uniform, which is:

Girls: Light blue school logo golf shirt (purchased through Cambridge Uniforms)  
Light blue blouse, Royal/Navy blue school logo sweatshirt, vest or fleece  
Grey tunic, pants (cords or dress), skirt, walking shorts or skirt.  
Solid grey, white or navy socks or tights.

Boys: Light blue school logo golf shirt (purchased through Cambridge Uniforms)  
Light blue dress shirt, Royal/navy blue school logo sweatshirt, vest or fleece  
Grey dress pants or cords or walking shorts

You can purchase uniforms from Cambridge Uniforms. See the office or school website for more information.

THE FOLLOWING WILL NOT BE PERMITTED AS PART OF THE SCHOOL UNIFORM:  
Jogging pants, cargo pants, jeans, t shirts, large noticeable jewelry, i.e. rings, necklaces, earrings, make-up, nail polish (except clear), patterned pantyhose, or leggings (only dark grey under a skirt or tunic).



If, for some reason, the complete uniform cannot be worn a written note of explanation must be sent to school by the parent.

#### GYM STRIP

Each student must have a gym strip- shorts, T-shirt, white or non-marking runners and a gym strip bag for P.E. classes. Each student is expected to participate in the P.E. program unless parents indicate in writing reasons for their child not participating.

#### PUBLIC HEATH NURSE

A public health nurse from the Northern Interior Health Unit is assigned to St. Mary's School. She visits the school on a regular basis. She administers shots for the grade 6 class and immunizations of Kindergarten and any referrals thereafter.

#### SICKNESS OR ACCIDENT

Parents will be called if your child is sick or has an accident. If you cannot be reached and immediate care is necessary, we will take your child to the hospital.

#### DOCTER'S /DENTISTS etc. APPOINTMENTS

The Principal's office must be informed of all children leaving the school for any reason during school hours.