

Monsignor Michael O'Leary Catholic School

Name: _____

Teacher: _____



**Monsignor Michael O'Leary
Catholic School**

Student Handbook

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mmo.schools.smcdsb.on.ca



Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to the 2019-2020 school year.

Monsignor Michael O’Leary Catholic School extends a warm welcome to every student and family as we begin the 2019- 2020 school year.

Our school motto is “We Journey Together”, and so we begin our journey in learning and faith with great hope and excitement. We encourage all families to engage as much as possible in all facets of your child’s learning and faith development. When we work together we help to provide students with the best opportunity for success in learning. Welcome back everyone!

God Bless,
Laura Pokocky
Principal
smcdsb.on.ca/mmo

FAITH IN OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

School Mission Statement

“We Journey Together”

Our Parish Partners

We believe in fostering a strong relationship between your home, our school and our parishes in Gravenhurst, Bracebridge, and Muskoka Lakes. Our parishes work 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. You will often see the pastoral team from St. Joseph’s Church, Father Raymond Rick and Father Roy Villa’s visiting classes within our school and celebrating special events with our community.



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 Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion. Parents will work with our staff and parish partners to prepare for these sacraments. Our school supports and complements what children are learning at the

parish through classroom teaching of grade specific curriculum that has been approved by the Conference of Catholic Bishops.

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.

POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

Promoting a Positive School Climate

Maintaining a positive school climate at Monsignor Michael O’Leary Catholic School is a key priority because it helps students feel safe, welcome and secure. Using our mission and 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.

Student Behaviour

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

Students at Monsignor Michael O’Leary 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 their academic goals.
- Will be familiar with and practise the school procedures as outlined in this school agenda in addition to any policies outlined by administration 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. Defiance will not be accepted.
- 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.

Dress For Success

Students will be participating 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.

Our school is first and foremost a place of learning. We instruct students to dress within the expectations of our community standards. Learning the fundamentals of our appropriate dress expectations at an early age will provide students with the assurance that they are prepared for learning each and every day. Dressing appropriately for a variety of situations also shows that a student has a high degree of self-respect for their body, created in God's image, and respect for others.

Appropriate Dress Guidelines:

Our dress code is a model of modesty with specific guidelines in an effort to respect the business of education.

At all times, on site and when representing our school on field trips, our students will:

- not wear hats inside
- not wear see-through materials for bottom or tops
- not allow undergarments to be seen
- conceal cleavage
- not wear inappropriate logos, slogans, rips and tears in their clothing
- cover midriff area, hips, and back – no tank tops or racer back tops for boys or girls
- ensure that shoulder straps are a minimum of 3 cm wide (2-3 adult fingers) for students beyond Grade three
- ensure mid thigh length for shorts and skirts
- ensure that no outdoor clothing worn in the classroom
- sport clean indoor shoes for the classrooms as well as proper athletic footwear for Phys. Ed.

The principal, in consultation with a child's classroom teacher will make final decisions regarding appropriate dress. Students who come to school with clothing that does not conform with school expectations may

- change, if they have extra clothing at school.
- call home to have a change of clothes brought to the school.

- wear a school provided article of clothing if one is available.

Thank you for your support of our appropriate dress expectations.

Footwear

For safety reasons and to maintain cleanliness in the classrooms, students should have shoes to wear inside their class. Outdoor footwear is not to be worn in teaching areas.



Students must have running shoes for gym classes.

SAFE SCHOOLS

Compulsory School Attendance

Did you know that Ontario law states that children between the ages of 6 and 17 must attend school? We appreciate that sometimes there are circumstances beyond your control, such as illness, that might prevent attendance at school. However, these situations should be rare and the school principal will address prolonged absences.

If your child is away for more than 15 days consecutively due to illness, a medical note will be needed to maintain your child on the school register. There are many supports in place to encourage regular school attendance, including school counsellors, social workers, community agencies and an attendance counsellor. Please contact the school if you have questions or concerns.

Safe Arrival and Attendance

It is important that your child arrives at school safely and on time. Not only does it make things easier for our office administrator and classroom teachers, it also teaches your child the value of being punctual. Our Safe Arrival Program, which includes communicating with our office when your child is late or absent, helps ensure student safety. Please follow the procedures below.

Reporting Your Child Late or Absent

Please follow this simple, but critical process when reporting your child as late or absent.

Step 1 – phone our school at 645-8759 at any time, to inform us when your child will be absent or late. There is a voicemail 24 hours per day.

Step 2 – leave your child's full name, teacher's name and the reason for the absence on the school voicemail.

Step 3 – when your child returns to class, provide the teacher with a note explaining the reason for your child's absence.

Step 4 – if your child is late, please direct them to the office where they will check-in and be provided a late slip for admittance to class.

Important Note: If your child regularly walks to school, it is assumed that he/she will attend class when buses are cancelled due to inclement weather. If you decide to keep your child home during an inclement weather day, you must use the process listed to report your child's absence.



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.

Leaving Early

Students who are leaving school early must bring a note to their teacher or have parents call the office stating the need for the early dismissal. Please avoid any last minute early dismissals. We do not want to interrupt the learning in the classroom. At the time of dismissal, your child will proceed to the office to be signed out by a parent/guardian.

Balanced Day Schedule

School begins at 8:45 a.m. and supervision in the schoolyard begins at 8:20 a.m. Please do not drop your child off prior to 8:20 a.m.

Students will remain outside until the 8:45 a.m. bell, unless there is inclement weather. On wet mornings or when the temperatures are extremely cold (-25°C or -28°C with the wind chill) students will be called inside.

All students are to enter and exit the building through their designated door (the same door they use for recess). Students should only use the main doors (adjacent to the office) when they are being signed in due to lateness or signed out by a

parent/guardian prior to the end of the school day.

Students will engage in their studies from 8:45 until 10:45 a.m. at which time they will have their first nutrition break. This consists of 20 minutes to eat and 25 minutes to play outside.

Students will then re-enter the school and proceed through lessons until 1:10 p.m., at which time they will enjoy their second nutrition break. Once again, they will be supervised for 20 minutes of eating and 25 minutes of playing outside.

From 1:55 - 3:15 p.m. students will complete their studies for the school day.

Afternoon Pick-up

Our school day ends at 3:15 p.m.

Bicycles

Students may ride their bicycles to school, but it is important that they are left and locked in the designated bicycle racks by the Chapel. 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, In-line Skates and Scooters

Skateboards, in-line skates, scooters and hee-lies (shoes with wheels in the heels) are not to be used on school property. Scooters must be able to be locked to the bike rack during the day.

Riding the Bus

We are committed to providing safe and reliable bus transportation for those students whose distance from home to school one way is greater than 1.6 km. Riding the bus should be an enjoyable and positive experience for our students.

In order to ensure the safety of children riding the bus we ask the following:

- Students must take their bus home in the evening unless they have a note from a parent or guardian indicating that they can remain at school or walk home.
- A note from a parent/guardian must be provided to the office if students plan to get off their own bus at a different stop. This note will be approved by the office and then provided to the bus driver.
- Occasionally, we receive requests from parents to allow their child to ride a different bus in order to visit a friend's house.

Unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate these requests.

Ensuring Safety on the Bus

It is helpful to periodically remind your child about the rules and regulations of riding a school bus. Although it is very rare, school bus privileges can be suspended temporarily or permanently if a child doesn't respect the rules and regulations that are in place for the safety of everyone. Here are some basic guidelines to follow:



- Your child must always enter the bus in an orderly manner and immediately find a seat. Once on the bus, he or she must always follow the instructions of the school bus driver and bus patroller.
- All students must remain in their seats while the bus is in motion. With children sitting quietly, the bus driver is free from distractions and able to focus on road safety.
- Parents are financially responsible for any willful damage to the bus caused by their children.
- Keeping in mind the safety of all riders, we ask that your child not bring any objects onto the bus that may hinder safe operation.
- Students must also refrain from eating or drinking on the bus.
- Heads and arms must stay inside the bus at all times and aisles should be kept clear.

Bus Cancellations Due to Inclement Weather

On inclement weather days we urge you to visit mybustoschool.ca or listen to a local radio station to find out if buses are cancelled. When buses are cancelled in the morning, they are automatically cancelled in the afternoon. Please keep in mind that our school is open for student learning even when buses are cancelled.

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 parents and copies of current legal documents are on file in the office.

Emergency Situations

At Monsignor Michael O’Leary Catholic School, 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 St. Joseph’s Church or St. Dominic Catholic Secondary 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, e-Blasts 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 authorizes a designate to pick-up a student, the teacher would appreciate a signed and dated note.

Major Incidents

We know that being proactive and preparing for the potential of a major incident is a key way to keep our students and staff safe. As part of our safe schools initiative, Monsignor Michael O’Leary Catholic School has worked with the local police service to develop a response plan should a violent incident occur.

This involves immediate contact with the police and a lockdown of the premises. Although it is highly unlikely that something like this would occur, our staff regularly reviews and practises procedures with the students. Your child may mention to you that they were involved in a “Lock Down” drill because that is what our response plan is referred to within the school.

GETTING INVOLVED

Communicating With You

Establishing a positive and open relationship between parents, teachers and students is a critical part of achieving excellence in education.

We regularly send home newsletters, which outline programs, activities and opportunities within our school community.

We always welcome opportunities for parents to have meetings with teachers and other school staff as necessary throughout the school year. The student agenda is also an excellent way to communicate with your child’s classroom teacher. You can share questions or concerns via this agenda on a daily or weekly basis.

Online Payment Using School Day

Our school is excited to offer 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 hot 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 through this agenda will help maintain a harmonious and smooth day at school.

- **Dropping off items** – parents are not permitted to go directly 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** – students will not be permitted to use the office telephone unless they have permission from a staff member. If a phone call is necessary, it will be made by the teacher or another adult (this includes calls regarding illness or injury).

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. Dates will be sent out in our school newsletter and are available on our website. Please join us! Contact us at mmoparents@gmail.com and follow us on Facebook.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

We know that parents want us to promote a healthy environment at school. This includes promoting healthy food options, opportunities for physical activity as well as minimizing exposure to illness – all of these contribute to better learning.

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. Unfortunately we do not have the space or staff supervision for 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.
- **Pink-eye** - 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 antibiotic 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.

Visit the simcoemuskokahealth.org for more information.

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.

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

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.

HEALTHY EATING

Nutrition Breaks: Students will eat at two main times – 10:45 a.m. and 1:10 p.m. at their desk and will remain on school property. Students who walk to school may go home for lunch if they have written permission from a parent. Students are not permitted to go out to local restaurants unless they are signed out and accompanied by an adult. For the safety of your child, we ask that a consistent routine be established with regards to staying at school or walking home during lunch.

Snacks

Students will be provided with time in the classroom to have snacks and drinks as needed. All food and beverage must be eaten in the classroom and are not to be consumed in the hallway, gym, washrooms or outside at recess. We discourage students from using glass bottles and containers for their drinks and snacks.



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, unless it is a prescribed need for a student.

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. 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 nut free zone. Please ensure that all food sent to school with your child is peanut and nut free. Do not send peanut butter substitutes such as “pea butter,” “WOW butter,” and sunflower butter products. These are easily confused with products that contain nuts and are difficult to monitor (even with labeling). On request, we would be happy to provide you with a list of nut-free snacks and lunch ideas.
- 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. We ask that you use stickers, pencils, bookmarks, etc. instead of food for celebrations as to control the safety of our students. Home made treats will not be permitted.

Selling Food and Beverage

We know that making healthy food choices while in school supports learning. The Government of Ontario has a school food and beverage policy, which has impacted the kinds of food and beverages we can sell at our school. The policy encourages selling lunches, snacks and drinks that follow the principles of healthy eating in *Canada’s Food Guide*.

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.

Yard Safety

While outside at recess, we expect students to play safely and respect the rules of the schoolyard at all times (All staff wear high visibility yellow vests to facilitate students finding help when needed.) During the winter months, it is essential to leave all snow on the ground. Throwing snowballs or kicking snow is not acceptable.

Bringing Personal Property to School

We request students not bring valued personal property to school including mobile devices, trading cards, etc. These items can easily be lost or damaged. Please note that the school is not responsible for lost, stolen or damaged items.

Students should not bring large amounts of money to school. If your child is required to bring money for school events or activities, i.e., pizza day or field trips, please ensure it remains in your child's school bag until the teacher collects it first thing in the morning.

Lost and Found

We encourage our students to check the lost and found 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). Unclaimed items will eventually be donated to a 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 www.smcdsb.on.ca.

The classroom teacher will inform parent volunteers of responsibilities and expectations as well as appropriate strategies for dealing with misbehaviour. Prior to the field trip, the teacher will discuss the purpose of the field trip and learning outcomes for students.

Co-curricular Activities

There are various clubs and sport teams offered at the school. Many take place during lunch hour, 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. 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.

Notebooks

Our school often provides students with notebooks for certain subject areas or projects to support them in their learning. The notebooks provided to our students for school use are to be kept neat and organized. Only items pertaining to your child's learning should be written in the books. Drawing or marking of notebooks is not acceptable.



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, your child's teacher may send home a list of items that your child should be bringing to school for their own use. Teachers appreciate your support by providing these items to your child.

Learning Commons

Our library is now home to a learning commons area where a teacher will be available to help students develop, refine and master research, computer and reading skills. Students not only sign out books, but also engage in learning inquiries using robotics, iPads, LEGO, photography, and other activities meant to motivate and challenge all of our learners.

Students will also have the opportunity to sign out books or resources. These items must be returned the next time they visit the library. Students will not be able to sign out new material until their previous items have been returned. If a book is lost or damaged, it is expected that the student or parent will replace it.

Once your child has signed an Internet agreement, they will be able to access the Internet. All time spent on the Internet will be closely supervised.

Can You Serve Your School?

We need your input! Many studies point to enhanced student success in school when parents are engaged in the school environment. If you provide the office with a current Criminal Background Check complete with Vulnerable Sector screening, you can bless our school with your help. You can volunteer in classes, on field trips , breakfast club, extracurricular events, Catholic School Community Council, or even as a Lunch Hour Supervisor which is a paid position for one hour per day. Let the office know if you are willing to share your talents and gift us with your time.

Wishing You a Successful Year

We hope you found the information in this agenda 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 look forward to working with you to provide your child with a fulfilling year.