St. James Catholic School

September 2016 Newsletter

**Welcome to Kindergarten!**

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Sister Christina and I are pleased to welcome you and your child to the Kindergarten Program at St. James Catholic School! We are thrilled to have your child be a part of our learning environment and we are looking forward to working with you to encourage your child’s spiritual, intellectual, physical and emotional growth at school. The Kindergarten program will focus on activities and hands-on learning experiences that will make this year quite a memorable one for your child. I trust that the following outline (although quite lengthy ), will be helpful as you prepare your child for a successful year at school.

**September Activities/Organization:**

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The first month of school will be spent on classroom routines, expectations, and assessing the students’ Language and Math Skills. The students will be engaging in activities that reinforce the importance of routines and how the classroom works. They will be exposed to many play opportunities that are designed to set them on the path to the acquisition of a wide variety of Numeracy, Literacy, Personal and Social skills throughout the year. We will work to foster an atmosphere of caring, acceptance and respect, while promoting the enjoyment of learning in a play-based learning environment.

**Arrival:**

In order to ensure your child has a successful year, we encourage regular attendance and prompt arrivals to school. Kindergarten students attend school from 8:45a.m.-3:15p.m. If your child is absent from school because of illness or emergency, please call safe arrival, so that we will know that your child is safe at home. Upon arrival at school, your child will have the opportunity to play with his/her peers in the kindergarten yard (supervision starts at 8:30a.m.). We are fortunate to have a new fenced yard for the kindergarten children. This is a very important aspect in the development of independence, self-regulation, and social skills. Independence and growing self-reliance is a key goal in and out of the classroom.

**Dismissal:**

The children will be dismissed each day through the kindergarten yard. We do it this way so that we can account for all of the children as they leave. If you normally pick up your child and there is a change in your plan you must notify the school. We need the name of the person picking up your child. If you do not call or write a note, we will not allow your child to go with ANYONE, even if your child recognizes the person (grandparent, aunt, neighbour etc.). **This is for your child’s safety**.

**Clothing**

Please help your child to become independent by encouraging them to dress themselves, as we will be asking this at school also. Parents are asked to have their children wear clothing that is comfortable and allows them to move freely during gym, sit cross legged on the carpet, and be able to manage easily during washroom visits. In Kindergarten, we have fun using paint and glue often. Therefore, we encourage you to have your child wear clothes you will not mind being stained the odd time. We will provide the children with smocks when they paint, but accidents can happen! We will go outside for outdoor play and physical education as often as the weather permits. Please dress your child according to the day’s predicted weather. We ask that you put a spare set of underwear, seasonal pants, a shirt and socks in a **labeled plastic ziplock bag** in your child’s backpack. It will be removed the first week and be placed in their cubby for emergencies.

**\*Please label all extra clothing such as backpacks, lunch bags, sweaters, hats, mitts, shoes, boots and coats. It is easy for a young child to misplace these items and labeling assists us all at recess times and at dismissal.**

**A Note about Indoor Shoes**

Your child will need a pair of non-scuff (non-black sole) **indoor running shoes.** These are to be kept in the classroom overnight and on weekends. These shoes must be a pair that your child can put on and fasten independently. Velcro or pull-on shoes work well.

When some of the older kindergarten children begin to display independence regarding tying up their own shoe laces, this is a wonderful skill to celebrate with your family. However, please have them continue to wear indoor shoes with velcro straps. It becomes a safety concern especially when we have gym. Thank you for your cooperation.



**Backpacks and Food**

Your child needs to bring a backpack to school every day. The backpack should have your child’s name clearly visible on the outside. The backpack will need to be big enough to carry letters, crafts, library books, learning pouches (i.e. Mr. Zippy) and your child’s food for the day.

Each day, the children will have 2 snack breaks and a lunch break. Your child will need two nutritious peanut-free snacks each day - please label them with a ‘1’ and ‘2’ to help them know which snack to eat during the 2 snack times. Snack time is only 15 minutes, so please send something that can be eaten in that time frame. The students are encouraged to bring in healthy snacks and **water** to drink. Good proteins, fruits, vegetables, granola/breakfast bars, and yogurt are excellent sources of energy that help the students to remain focused and productive throughout the day. Your child’s drink should come in a refillable/reusable drink container (juice boxes are discouraged because the children rarely finish them and they spill easily). We are an “eco-school” and we encourage litter-less snacks and lunches when possible. Please place your child’s snack in a re-usable container. Your assistance in this area is greatly appreciated .

**Aspects of the Kindergarten Program**

**Guided Reading Program:** An essential part of our reading instruction, Guided Reading, will be taking place with the children. Once the children’s reading levels are determined through an assessment, the children are grouped accordingly and will read leveled books that support and can improve upon the students’ reading. As the children demonstrate confidence in their reading, they then move to the next level. The children are also assessed regularly to determine their level placement. We will work together to improve your child’s reading.



**Poetry Folders:** This program consists of a short poem reading with the parents over the weekend. This is usually a poem that we have learned during the week in class. Beginning around the third week in September, a duotang will be sent home every Friday and the students are asked to return the duotang on Monday. Parents and children are asked to read the poem together as a shared reading exercise or the parent can listen to their child read it independently.

\*\*Please spend no more than 5-10 minutes at a time reading the poems. It is designed for the students to enjoy, and provide an opportunity to foster a love of reading with the parents.

**Library:** Your child will have access to the school library (once renovations are complete!) and will be able to take one book out each week. The book must be returned before another may be taken. Please take the time to read these books to/with your child when he/she brings them home. Reading aloud to your child is an important element in developing good early literacy skills. As you model good reading, your child is learning. Snuggle up and read every day!

**Communication Book:** Beginning September 6th, all of the children will receive a communication book to take home and bring back every day to school. This is our main means of connecting with each other. If you have any concerns or messages, please convey them in the spaces provided and we will respond to you. The communication book **does not** need to be written in every day; it is simply a central place to look for notes from home and school. When writing in the communication book, we will do our best to get back to you within a day or two.

**My Kindergarten Learning Pouch:** All of the above (including the Communication Book) will be placed into a vinyl zipper bag called the “Kindergarten Learning Pouch”. The children will refer to these pouches as “Mr. Zippy.” Please empty its contents each night and return learning materials, trip notes/money and their communication book in this pouch. Regardless of what is being returned, the bags will be returned to school on a **daily basis**. Once again, the pouches provide a central place for all materials to be stored. It’s a great way for all of us to stay organized! Thank you in advance for your cooperation regarding this matter.

**Super Hero of the Week**



Beginning the third week of September, we will begin our Super Hero of the Week Program. Every week a different student will have the opportunity to be the classroom leader and to guide the students through the morning exercises and routines. They will be asked to bring in a photo(s) of themselves or their family, fill an estimation jar that will be sent home, bring in homemade playdough (recipe will be provided) and bring in a few special momentums to show-and-share that week. The items will come to school for sharing on the Monday and then be returned home safely the Friday of that week (a note will go home when it is your child’s turn). **The children should not bring toys from home to school when it is not their week,** this prevents loss or damage to your child’s toys. A monthly calendar will go home soon, so you know in advance when it is your child’s special week.

**Birthdays**

We will be celebrating birthdays this year in our room. Many parents like to have their child “celebrate” his/her birthday by sending in a snack for everyone to share or send in something special (i.e. pencil). If you would like to do this, please let us know ahead of time by writing in the communication book and please remember our school is peanut free. Another option would be to donate a special book to our classroom library in honour of your child’s birthday.



If you would like to deliver birthday party invitations to some of your child’s classmates at some point this year, please send the invitations in Mr. Zippy so that we can distribute them into the children’s bags. We would rather the students not hand out invitations themselves in order to spare any hurt feelings.

**Volunteers**

Volunteers are valued members of the St. James Catholic school community. Volunteers can assist by helping prepare learning materials such as making play dough, supervising students on class trips, and helping with special activities and crafts. If you can volunteer at school or at home, please let us know; however, it is policy that you have a Criminal Reference check completed and a copy given to the office before beginning. This process can be lengthy, so if you are interested in volunteering, please complete it as soon as possible.

**Materials Needed**

If anyone is able to donate Kleenex, packages of wipes, pump hand soap, or glue sticks for our classroom it would be greatly appreciated, as we go through a lot! Thank you in advance.

**Photographs**

We plan on taking photographs of the students during class activities, field trips, and special events for classroom display. If you have any objections please inform us.

**Scholastic Book Order**

This year, we will be sending Scholastic Book orders home. If you wish to order some books for your child, please return the completed order form and correct payment amount by **cheque only**, by the date specified. This of course is not mandatory, but we hope you will take advantage of this program. Not only will it benefit your child, but each order also helps us earn coupons towards new resources for our classroom. The September order form will be coming home soon!



**Final thoughts…**

Thank you for taking the time to read through this letter. We know there is a lot of information to communicate, but this letter provides you with essential information for the entire year. You will also be receiving monthly newsletters on our class website once it is up and running through our school website, to keep you informed about upcoming events and programming. Please feel free to contact us via the Communication Book or at the school at any point if you have any questions or concerns. If you wish to speak to us the same day regarding an urgent or sensitive matter, please leave a message with the office and we will contact you by the end of the school day. We are looking forward to working with you and your child this year!

**Sincerely,**

~Mrs. Simpson & Sister Christina