

Important Information for New & Returning OLMC Parents

Welcome to a new school year! We look forward to a cooperative relationship between school and home and welcome all parents to visit our school often. Here are a few reminders to ensure a smooth school year for everyone:

Parent Handbook

A revised version of the Parent Handbook is will be available shortly on-line only. Please take the opportunity to review what has changed, while also continuing to reinforce with your children all of the school, Board and Ministry of Education rules and guidelines.

Actively talking with your child about his/her day and helping them realize that they have power over aspects of their life can promote a feeling of calm for your child.

Back to School Tips

This is a very busy time of year. Routines are being reinstated after the summer when routines are often loosened. Children must adjust to a new grade level, new teacher, homework, and a busy schedule all of which can cause them to feel hectic and overwhelmed.

To help everyone through this, you could try a —15 Minute Chat Time with your child. Set aside fifteen minutes every day and simply sit with your child and ask about his/her day. If at first the child doesn't talk a lot, try asking specific questions such as —whom did you play with at recess today? , —what kind of activities do you do in gym class? , —how are you finding the work in your new grade?

Targeted questions may help to improve the flow of communication. Setting aside fifteen minutes or even five minutes of focused interaction time with your child can help him/her feel more connected to you and calmer at the end of the day.

Every child needs to feel cherished and special. Even though your child may feel this at home, it may be different at school because they don't have power over many areas of their lives such as other children being unkind or being challenged by difficult schoolwork. Because of this, it is important to help a child recognize the power that they do have in their life.

For example give them a choice about:

- which uniform top or bottom that they will wear
- how they will style their hair
- how they can arrange their bedroom
- which artwork they post on the fridge
- what T.V. show they can watch
- what time of day they can be on the computer
- which board game you play together

These simple ideas can empower your child to feel more competent at home and school.

Emergency Contact Information and Student Verification Form

A step in our plan for Emergency Preparedness is the need to contact parents in the case of an early school closure. The need to close schools early most often occurs due to weather conditions. However, schools may also close as a result of the need to evacuate in the case of emergency.

In the case of a school evacuation, the children may be temporarily relocated to Balaclava School (site within 1 km) and Carlisle Community Centre (site within 5 kms). These are both part of our Emergency Preparedness Plan. In both instances, the need may arise for us to contact a parent to pick up your child either at the school or at one of the latter named sites.

This is accomplished through the help of a core group of parent volunteers who will serve as an "emergency phone tree." The Early School Closure Plan is a system that will allow someone to contact parents/guardians in the event of an unplanned school closure. If you can volunteer your time, please contact Mrs. Tobin or Mr. Pin.

It is important to note that The STUDENT REGISTRATION VERIFICATION form which is sent home in early September be returned to the school ASAP. This form will help the school keep records up-to-date. Please inform the school of any changes in address, telephone number, email address or emergency contacts. An "Emergency Information Update" form is also be available on the website in case this information changes throughout the year.

Parent and Visitor Access

All parents and/or visitors are reminded once again to report **directly** to the office when coming in the school. The office staff will be pleased to call your child to the office for you. If you have business in the school, please remember to sign in and wear a visitor tag.

Please also remember that access to the classrooms will not be allowed after 4:00 p.m. This is in the interest of safety for our night staff. As well, it allows them to ensure the school is cleaned properly for the next day. Any questions, please speak with Mr. Pin.

Parent Concerns

If you have any concerns regarding your child(ren), please contact your child's teacher to make an appointment in order that these concerns may be discussed. If we have concerns, we will not hesitate to call you and trust that you will discuss them with us. Open communication is essential for the wellbeing of your child. If you have any messages or deliveries for your child, please come to the office rather than interrupt the class. In addition, we ask you to please refrain from calling the school to speak with your child on the phone unless it is a case of extreme emergency.

If your concern is with regard to a matter outside of the classroom (i.e. recess, bus issues), please contact Mr. Pin directly. While it is your prerogative to communicate with Board staff, ultimately resolution to any issue is best reached through initial dialogue with the school. Please refer to the parent handbook for more information pertaining to this.

Publishing Information about Students

Parents are reminded that during the normal course of events in a school year, the school staff takes pleasure in highlighting the accomplishments of their students and seeing these achievements mentioned by the posting or publishing of names (first name and first initial of the last name only) either in school corridors, school newsletters, school website, taping or taking pictures at school events or through the news media or other public related events.

On rare occasions, parents have questioned the posting or publishing of information about their son or daughter and whether the protection of privacy provisions within the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act were being compromised.

You are asked whether or not you would object to the posting or publishing of your child's name in any of the above outlined scenarios to address this situation. If you do not wish to have any information posted or published with your child's name in any of the above situations, please contact Mr. Pin in writing at the beginning of the school year.

Students traveling on the bus

As per School Board policy, students who travel to and from school on the bus are expected to board and get off the bus at their assigned stops. In the interest of the students' safety, we **cannot** make exceptions to this rule. Notes sent requesting permission for your child to do otherwise cannot be considered. When buses are delayed, updates will be posted on the school website (home page).

Should you have questions about this and/or other transportation issues please contact the Board directly at 1-800-691-6402.

Bus Safety

This is to remind you that bus safety is everyone's responsibility. The bus driver has the authority on the bus by right of the Highway Traffic Act. Please remind your children to follow the bus rules.

The following rules will be reviewed with your child(ren):

- enter and exit the bus one at a time without pushing
- remain seated especially when the bus is in motion
- keep hands, feet and comments to yourself
- use a quiet voice
- follow the instructions of the bus monitors.

Parents are to refrain from entering the bus at any time. It is against Board policy for children to travel on another bus other than their own or get off the bus at a different stop. Your cooperation is appreciated in keeping Our Lady of Mount Carmel School a safe community.

KISS AND DROP

Keeping safety in mind, we are asking that all children arriving or leaving by car are dropped off and picked up in the main parking lot. The front driveway of the school is only for school buses. However, school entrance is still from behind the school or through the front doors. The daycare entrance is to be used for daycare purposes only. We also ask you to be mindful of the one-way traffic. Parents are reminded that when picking up their children at any time during the day they are to report to the office and sign their child out. The office staff will call the student down. Also, if your child is late in the morning they are to report directly to the office to obtain a late slip before going to class.

Student Absences and School Emergency Contact Information

If your child is going to be absent, kindly let us know at 905-523-2339. The answering machine will be on to receive any messages.

In the case that our phones are not working (and this does happen periodically), please refer to our website at olmc.hwcdsb.ca for up to date information. In the cases of an extreme emergency, please call the emergency number (fax line) at (905) 689-9813 or contact the Children's Centre at (905) 689-7277.

School Excursions and Board Permission Forms

Class trips are an extension of the curriculum expectations as planned by the classroom teacher. When planning these trips, past practice is that volunteers are selected (sometimes by way of a draw). These volunteers will then be asked to accompany the students on the bus. All volunteers must have a valid police check in order to volunteer on a class trip. Please also remember that when your child attends a class excursion on a bus, the expectation is that they return to school on the bus with the class.

Only the **official Board trip form** sent home will be accepted as permission for your child to accompany the class. Please do not ask us to make exceptions (i.e. verbal permission, hand-written notes). The Board now asks parents to complete an Informed Consent Form in addition to the regular Parent Consent Form. The purpose of this additional form is so that parents acknowledge the risks that may be associated with each out-of-school learning experience. We will attempt to list as many of the potential risks that may be associated with each experience. Parents are reminded that trip forms are always posted on our website.

Hands-off Policy

We have endeavoured to make our school as safe a place as possible for your son/daughter. One of the simplest methods is the hands-off rule! This includes no unwanted touching and no rough play. Students are reminded about this daily and it includes all students from JK to Grade 8. In response to issues involving bullying, our School Success Team will continue to enforce our school policy. We trust that with your support and vigilance, bullying will not be an issue at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic School. We encourage all children to "Think and Act with their heart!"

Allergy and Asthma Reminder

Please reminder that we are attempting to make this school a peanut and nut sensitive environment to ensure the safety of our students. We also have children with latex allergies. We are reminding you to refrain from sending these products to school with your child. Your assistance in this urgent matter is greatly appreciated. For more information, please refer to our website.

Parents of students with Epi-pens are reminded to send in the two Epi-pens to be kept at the school for their children (one of which should be in a carrying pouch). If your child suffers from Asthma and must carry a puffer with them at school, please send this in as well in a carrying pouch. If your child is new to our school and they have a peanut or other allergy, please notify Mr. Pin or Mr. McEntee. A letter to this effect will be coming home soon with your child and is also available on our website.

Medications Update

According to our Board's School Health Procedures Handbook, any student requiring medication during school must submit to the Principal two forms: one from the family physician and one from the parents/guardians each school year. These forms must be in place before the medication arrives at school.

Under no circumstances is a student to have medication of any kind on them or in their lunches, desks or school bags. This is a safety issue for them and for others. Thank you for your vigilance in following these important procedures. We are confident that you will continue to keep our children's safety a priority again this year.

Head Lice

Our Public Health Nurse has asked us to make the community aware that during this time of year, with students returning to school, that head lice may become a concern. Lice are spread by coming into close contact with someone who has lice or by sharing personal items such as combs, brushes, hats and/or towels of an infected person. Parents/Guardians are asked to check their child's(ren's) hair on a weekly basis to ensure they are nit and louse free. Please encourage your children to refrain from sharing hats, combs and brushes.

Appropriate Footwear

We require that our students wear shoes in the school at all times. In wet weather and during winter months, 2 pair of shoes are required: outdoor footwear must be left in the hallway and other shoes worn in the school. Slippers or sandals with toe straps or barely adhered to the feet by minimal straps or high-heeled shoes are inappropriate as they are a safety risk. Crocs are also not permitted.

Homework while on holidays or in activities during School Hours

Periodically, parents will ask teachers for work that will be missed when families decide to take vacation time during the academic year or enroll their children in activities during school hours. While attempts may be made to provide supplementary activities (i.e. suggested reading, journals, etc.), it cannot be expected that programming can be provided for students while they are away from the class for these reasons.

Parent Volunteers

We are always in need of volunteers to assist staff with a variety of classroom group activities and/or school excursions. At times, the staff or the principal may send home a written request for volunteers. If you are interested, please respond to the appropriate person. Be aware that all volunteers are required to obtain a Volunteer Vulnerable Sector Screening through the Hamilton Police Services. Please [click here for a letter](#) you require when applying for a Volunteer Vulnerable Sector Screening (NOTE: you will need to have it signed by Mr. Pin). You are required to take this letter into the Hamilton Police Services in downtown Hamilton on King William St. There is a \$15.00 charge for this, however please submit the receipt to the Catholic School Council and you will be reimbursed. In order to avoid disappointment (i.e. for year-end trips) please obtain this check early on in the year. Once a criminal reference check has been obtained, volunteers are only required to sign an Offence Declaration Form for each subsequent year. For more information, please visit the "Volunteering" section of our website.

Council 101

What is Catholic School Council? What do they do? How can I learn more?

Catholic School Council is comprised of parents and members of the school administration and teaching staff. The council meets once per month during the school year for approximately 2 hours. The primary objective of School Council is to improve the accountability of Ontario's education system and to ensure our children have a positive learning environment.

We encourage parents to participate in our monthly meetings or to get directly involved with the School Council either as a member or as part of a committee. To learn more about Catholic School Council, please visit the school website.

In keeping with the Ministry regulations 612 and 613, an election of the Catholic School Council shall be held during the first 30 days of each school year. Further dates and information regarding elections can be found on our website.