



# **PARENT HANDBOOK**

**Updated September 2023**

**P** articipants

**E** nthusiastic

**A** ccepting

**C** hrist-like

**E** ncouraging

**M** entors

**A** spiring

**K** ind

**E** xcellent

**R** esponsible

**S** ervants

# Table of Contents

<b>Statement of Mission</b>	6
<b>History</b>	6
<b>Parent Involvement and Support</b>	8
<b>Parent Code of Conduct</b>	8
<b>School Programs</b>	8
Our Commitment to Students	8
Instructional Staff & Class Size	9
Core Curriculum & Program	9
Early Childhood Services	9
Divisions One and Two (Grades One to Six)	10
Division Three (Grades Seven to Nine)	10
All Inclusive Sports Program	10
Field Trips	10
Junior High Open Campus	11
<b>Student Evaluation</b>	11
Student Progress Report	11
Parent-Teacher Meetings	11
<b>Extra-Curricular Activities</b>	11
<b>Relational Discipline</b>	12
<b>Student Attendance and Late Arrival</b>	12
<b>Student Medical Conditions and Illness at School</b>	13
Medical Alerts	13

Nut Aware School Environment	13
Accidents	14
<b>School Uniform</b>	14
Uniform Infractions	14
Casual Dress Days	14
Used Uniform Sale	14
<b>Technology</b>	15
Technology: Expectations of the Student	15
Cell Phone Policy	16
Cell Phone Use by Students	16
<b>Lost and Found</b>	16
<b>Lunch Program</b>	16
<b>School Supplies</b>	17
<b>General Information</b>	17
<b>School Times - subject to change</b>	17
<b>Use of Office Phone</b>	17
<b>Parking</b>	18
<b>School Council</b>	18
<b>ACTS Prayer Group</b>	19
<b>Chapels</b>	19
<b>Communication</b>	19
<b>Volunteer Commitment</b>	19
Parent Volunteers	19
Police Information Clearance (PIC)	20

<b>Annual Events</b>	20
JR High Leadership Retreat	20
Penny Carnival	20
Peace Festival	21
Christmas Concert	21
Spring Musical or Theatrical Production	21
Service Opportunities	21
SALTS	21
Grade 9 Roast and Graduation Banquet	22
Awards Ceremony	22
Year End Breakfast	22
Other Community Events	22

## **Statement of Mission**

Menno Simons Christian School strives to assist students to integrate Christian faith with their experience and with their living. Our school provides a sound academic curriculum taught and modeled by Christian professionals, in a setting where students are nurtured as they learn, question and form life values. Together with the family and the church, Menno Simons Christian School offers an education for life, preparing students for effective participation in the community through Christian discipleship, service and peacemaking.

Integrating faith with sound academics and life experience, guiding moral and spiritual development through the modeling of Christian teachers, nurturing life values together with the family and the church, educating for lives of Christian service and discipleship in our communities. These are the foundations for the Christian education alternative program which exists at Menno Simons Christian School.

## **History**

Education has historically been a high priority for Mennonite people: they have consistently sought ways to link literacy and faith. Since the days of Menno Simons, a Reformation leader to whom they trace their name, Mennonites have believed it essential to have a literate community whose members could read and understand the teachings of Scripture. Through almost five centuries of Mennonite history, education has been an integral part of the life of the family, the church, and the community at large.

Scripture study and learning, faith and literacy, have flourished when the family, the church and the school were closely bound. In the years following the upheaval of World War II, the public school system in Alberta — as the rest of Canada — came under increasing pressure to be neutral with respect to faith and to certain moral teachings of the home and church. Restricting the teaching of faith and morals to the home and to the church, thus excluding it from the school, undermined the Mennonite understanding of Christian community.

In 1980, when the Friesen Family Foundation from Winnipeg proposed that a Mennonite elementary school be established in Calgary, interested parties from several Mennonite churches responded to the challenge. The Foundation offered funds on condition that matching funds be raised within the Calgary Mennonite community. The Mennonite Educational Society of Calgary was formed in 1981 for the purpose of operating a private day school providing instruction from Kindergarten to Grade Nine.

Menno Simons Christian School opened its doors in September 1983, with fifty-six students and five teachers. Since then, our school has moved several times, grown in student numbers and significantly expanded its program. In the summer of 1997, we purchased our own land and building in northwest Calgary. Our school quickly outgrew the building and once again plans were made to move — this time permanently. We purchased land in Springbank Hill and built a 38,000 square foot facility. Classes began on September 4, 2001, following 128 days of construction. We are thankful to God for providing for us in the past and trust Him to guide us into the future.

In January 2006 our school approached Palliser Regional schools to begin exploring a partnership whereby Menno Simons Christian School would become an Alternative Program within their jurisdiction. We were seeking an arrangement whereby our core values and philosophy could remain unchanged, while at the same time enjoying the benefits of being an alternative school. In the spring of 2006, the Mennonite Educational Society of Calgary voted unanimously to make this partnership official.

This educational venture has depended on the continued support of a community committed to passing to the next generation a living tradition of literacy imbued with faith. The volunteer efforts of many, their wisdom and experience, their interest and joyful involvement, have brought together the family, the church, and the school to provide excellent comprehensive educational experiences for many students.

We believe that our school is providing a needed educational alternative for young people in our city and we look forward to the future with confidence.

## **Parent Involvement and Support**

At Menno Simons Christian School (MSCS), parent involvement is considered important and essential. Parents are considered to be the student’s strongest advocate and the most knowledgeable about their child’s growth, development, and educational history. We believe that regular, ongoing communication between the home and school is key to student success. Parents are welcome contributors to the school community, as there are many ways to be involved at MSCS.

## **Parent Code of Conduct**

At MSCS, we require families to adhere to our School-Partnership Commitment. Parents are expected to endorse the school’s Statement of Faith, and the school’s Educational Philosophy. Parents will support the implementation of the school program, including the curriculum and the enforcement of regulations.

Parents are also expected to practice the principles in Matthew 18 and resolve any difficulties with school personnel directly. If the conflict is unresolved, parents may discuss the matter with the next person in authority (i.e. typically teacher, then administration).

A parent may from time to time have disagreements with another parent. We expect that resolution of a disagreement would also follow the principles and practices found in Matthew 18. Patience, graciousness, appreciative inquiry and respect should characterize all parent to parent conduct.

## **School Programs**

### **Our Commitment to Students**

Students at Menno Simons Christian School may expect that:

- They will receive effective instruction and evaluation, in orderly classes.



- Teachers will make every effort to teach in a manner that is helpful and stimulating for students.
- Teachers will provide extra help whenever necessary.
- They will be given many opportunities to participate in the life of our school in ways that develop their ability to lead, cooperate with others, and be responsible participants.
- Teachers will show a genuine interest in them as people, recognizing their individual differences and worth.
- They will have modeled for them the Christian walk and be nurtured in their search for and formation of life values.
- They will be invited to lives of faithful Christian obedience expressed in discipleship, service and peace.

### **Instructional Staff & Class Size**

All MSCS teachers are certificated by Alberta Education, and bring diverse specializations in educational training, including but not limited to, second languages, music, and Christian education. They are united in their commitment to integrate their faith with sound academic teaching.

Our aim is to maintain class sizes at a level which allows teachers to provide ample attention to each student in the class. Our academic program affirms that student potential is best realized in a setting where each individual student can be nurtured, cared for, and challenged.

### **Core Curriculum & Program**

Our school is approved by Alberta Education and offers the mandated program of studies. The core academic program for all students and all requirements from Kindergarten to Grade Nine are offered.

### **Early Childhood Services**

Young children benefit from programs that help them to explore the world around them and guide them through the transition from home to school. The purpose of kindergarten is to provide learning experiences that meet the diverse needs of children and prepare them for entry into Grade One. Particular emphasis is placed on reading

readiness and numerical concepts. The Christian focus gives special consideration to values and activities, which help to develop spiritual awareness.

### **Divisions One and Two (Grades One to Six)**

Our school offers the full mandatory elementary curriculum: Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, Health, Technology, Physical Education, Music, and Fine Arts. French is compulsory for all students in Grades 4-7. Music is mandatory for students from Grades 1-5, and Grades 6 and 7 students will participate in Band.

In addition, Christian Studies is mandatory in all grades. This program seeks to lead our students to a thorough understanding of the Christian faith through Bible stories and lessons. Values that emphasize love, peace, justice, and respect for family, church, and community are emphasized.

### **Division Three (Grades Seven to Nine)**

The Junior High core program consists of Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Mathematics, Christian Studies, Physical Education and Health. The remaining assigned time is allocated to Fine Arts and Career and Leadership through Service.

### **All Inclusive Sports Program**

All Junior High students are invited to participate on school teams in Volleyball, Basketball, Badminton, and Track and Field. Involvement on teams is an excellent way to develop self-discipline, teamwork skills, and to create and nurture friendships.

### **Field Trips**

At various times during the year field trips may be scheduled for students. Attendance at field trips is expected, to support curricular learning and community building. Permission slips are sent home to parents to be returned with applicable fees paid through School Cash Online and occasionally parents are given the opportunity to attend the field trip as a chaperone.

## **Junior High Open Campus**

What is Jr High Open Campus? Jr High open campus is the privilege given to Jr High students to leave campus during lunch recess times. In order to maintain this privilege, the expectation is that students will be responsible citizens when they leave school property. Students are also expected to manage their time well and ensure that they return to school for classes at the scheduled times.

Parents, if you do not want your child to participate in Jr High Open Campus, we ask that you email the administration to revoke the privilege given to your child.

## **Student Evaluation**

### **Student Progress Report**

At the end of each of the two semesters (February and June), parents receive reports which provide a summary of academic progress and achievement, attendance, and general student involvement and performance at the school.

### **Parent-Teacher Meetings**

Parent-Teacher Conferences take place in November and March. We encourage teachers and parents to be in close communication with each other throughout the year and informal meetings may be arranged at any time.

## **Extra-Curricular Activities**

We encourage students to be involved in the many activities offered in our school. All students participate in chapels, concerts, intramural activities and appropriate social events.

In addition to formal Physical Education classes, which focus on fitness and skill development in a variety of individual and team sports, students may participate in a variety of seasonal activities and games such as swimming, skiing, and Sports Day.

## **Relational Discipline**

At Menno Simons Christian School, we believe in coming alongside our students whenever a disciplinary infraction occurs. We come to the children with a “How can I help you?” approach. We believe that every action is the result of a need not being met, and we want our kids to know that we will help them meet that need.

This does not mean there are no consequences for behaviours. Instead, we review the behaviours and institute the consequences according to each individual student and action, trying to always understand the why. We work as a team to offer a group of supportive people, involving parents when there is a desire and if there is a need, and we give the children options in who they might feel safest with. When there are students who have repetitive negative behaviours, a team member with a strong connection to the child will take the student in and mentor them. The team member offers a safe space to talk, and help the student figure out ways to resolve issues in a healthy, positive, Christ-like way.

The team member also looks for ways to fill all of that student’s needs. At Menno Simons Christian School, we inform parents of behaviours and consequences that are pertinent to their child, and try to work with the families to support their children. We want to work together with the home to create the best version of their children. Detailed procedures and examples can be found on our website: [School Discipline & Suspension](#)

## **Student Attendance and Late Arrival**

Regular school attendance and punctuality is required of all students. Parents need to inform the school office by telephone or email of any absences or late arrivals. If a child is absent and we have not been notified, you will be contacted. Parents can utilize the Edsby Portal to inform the school of pre-planned absences.

If a student arrives late or needs to leave early they are required to report into the office and sign in/out.

The school calendar has 6 weeks of vacation time scheduled. We strongly encourage families to plan their vacation times around these pre-scheduled times. Teachers are expected to inform parents of work that will be missed but are not required to prepare work in advance. Teachers will be able to provide any missing material upon the students return if parents want to ensure that students are caught up. Parents may submit an extended absence through Edsby to inform the office and the teachers to help identify material that the student will be missing and need to catch up on.

## **Student Medical Conditions and Illness at School**

From time to time students become ill at school. When a student is too ill to return to class, parents will be expected to make arrangements to come to the school for their child immediately.

If your child becomes ill, for the protection of your child and their classmates, please keep your child at home until treated and/or recovered.

Please follow all AHS regulations regarding response to COVID.

### **Medical Alerts**

The school should be aware of any medical concerns or diagnoses so that we are best able to assist a student in the event of an emergency.

***Please ensure that the school has an updated medical profile by contacting the front office.***

### **Nut Aware School Environment**

There are students at Menno with **life threatening** peanut and tree nut allergies. In order to provide a safe environment for all our students we strive to be a nut aware school. Please ensure that items packed in school lunches and provided as snacks for students are peanut and nut free.

## **Accidents**

Should your child be involved in an accident during school hours or at school functions, staff will do their best to assess the situation. Minor injuries will be treated appropriately. In the case of more serious injuries, parents will be notified immediately.

## **School Uniform**

MSCS is a uniform school. This ensures that students are neatly and sensibly dressed for school and prevents competition and extremes of fashion. Families appreciate the value and convenience the uniform program offers.

Staff attempt to monitor students for general neatness and uniform compliance. Parents will be contacted if the uniform worn by the student is incomplete or inappropriate.

Detailed information on our uniform requirements and our uniform provider can be found on our school website: [School Uniforms](#)

## **Uniform Infractions**

Administrators and teachers will deal with uniform infractions on an individual basis. Parents will be contacted regarding multiple infractions.

## **Casual Dress Days**

Occasionally the school has Spirit Days where students are encouraged to dress up with the theme. If students choose not to dress up they can wear dress casually. We ask that parents ensure that students are dressed modestly and that they refrain from wearing camouflage in keeping with our Mennonite traditions.

## **Used Uniform Sale**

If your child has outgrown their school uniform it can be donated to the school. Used uniforms are sold to the school community during

Used Uniform Sales with all proceeds going to the Uniform Bursary to help families in need at our school. Used Uniforms sell for \$5 - \$30 depending on the item.

## **Technology**

MSCS is committed to technology as a valuable tool for all our students. The school, in partnership with families, emphasizes the development of a healthy and safe approach to technology. We currently have a Chromebook program in place for Junior High that allows for 1:1 computing accessibility. The Junior High students pay for a Chromebook over their three years of Junior High and then take the computer with them after full payment/Grade Nine. Grades 1-6 students have an assigned Chromebooks that remains at the school and have periodic access to iPads. Any families who would like their child to be able to bring their Chromebooks home to complete homework sign off on the Chromebooks at Home Policy. We recommend the purchase of a Chromebook sleeve for protection, and a charger so they can start the day fully charged. Details on models will appear on the form.

### **Technology: Expectations of the Student**

Chromebooks and iPad are instructional aids to learning at Menno Simons Christian School. Students are not to use Chromebooks or iPads for online games or for any non-curricular activities, particularly during instructional time. Palliser School Division has a clear [Technology Use Agreement](#) that students and parents sign during registration and students are required to comply with the acceptable use policies set forth. Palliser School Division monitors all school devices and alerts administration of unsafe activity. Students who are not following the agreement will have their technology privileges revoked.

## **Cell Phone Policy**

While we understand that, at times, these devices can be used for authentic educational purposes (taking photos on a field trip, looking up quick facts on the internet, helping students focus by listening to music, etc.) we also know that they are at times a distraction to student learning and the interactions between students using the various forms of social media are not always positive.

## **Cell Phone Use by Students**

Students who have cell phones at the school are required to keep them in their lockers during the day. We understand that many parents provide their children cell phones so that they can reach them while traveling to and from school and after school. We wish to remind parents that if you need to reach your child during the day, you can contact the main office at **403-531-0745** and we will be happy to pass the message on to your child.

## **Lost and Found**

We strongly encourage families to label all clothing and personal items so they can be returned directly to students. Unmarked articles of clothing, lunch boxes and other student belongings found in the school or around school property will be placed in the Lost and Found bin. Valuables, jewelry and smaller items will be turned in to the school office. Parents are encouraged to routinely check the Lost and Found bin to claim their child's possessions. Unclaimed belongings are donated twice a year to the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Thrift Store.

## **Lunch Program**

Menno Simons Christian School is pleased to partner with Healthy Hunger to offer a FUN LUNCH! on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays throughout the school year. Healthy Hunger is an online ordering system that links directly with restaurants to provide a convenient lunch option for families. To obtain more information



and sign-up your child, go to our website: [Lunch Program](#)

## **School Supplies**

School Supply lists are available by grade on our school website: [School Supplies](#). Ensure that you purchase items from the School Supply List as well as the Individual Teachers Additional School Supply Requests. Families also have the option to purchase school supplies through School Start which is a convenient alternative. Orders are placed by families online and then the school supplies are packaged and delivered directly to the school in August before your child arrives, with his/her name on the School Start Package.

## **General Information**

### **School Times - subject to change**

**Classes begin at 8:25am and finish at 3:30pm.** School doors open at **8:15am**. Teachers need their early mornings to prepare for their day. Students should be **picked up by 3:45pm**. Supervision of students ends at 3:30pm, as teachers and staff need this time to attend meetings and end of day matters. We do offer a before or after school program - please contact the office if you are interested in more details. If you are unable to drop off and pick up at school times please make arrangements for others to drop off and/or pick up your child at the designated times.

### **Use of Office Phone**

Students may use the office phone when an unexpected situation arises, if they have the approval of their teacher or office staff.

## **Parking**

To ensure a safe environment for our students we ask that parents be familiar with our parking lot rules:

1. Please respect the one-way traffic that we have in our parking lot. Upon entry turn right to keep traffic flowing in a circular motion. Please **DO NOT** drive the **WRONG** way into the middle of the parking lot.
2. Please keep the inside lane moving through. No stopping at the top of the curve in the inside lane. Just keep on driving.
3. During Morning Drop Off
  - Please use the curb lane near the school up to the yellow fire hydrant for drop off.
  - Do not stop to drop off your children in the crosswalk or along the curve next to the handicap parking/gymnasium doors. Students are trying to navigate through those areas and vehicles cannot pass or have clear sight of students walking when you stop in those areas.
4. Please stay on the sidewalk and use the crosswalks when walking to and from your vehicle.
5. Please don't use your cell phones while driving in our parking lot.
6. Please do **NOT** park in any of the areas marked with yellow lines or No Parking signs.
7. Please respect the handicap parking spots.

## **School Council**

School Council is a structured group of parents who partner with the school trustee, principal and Society in certain matters relating to the school. The School Council also plays an important role in building community within MSCS. The School Council meetings are open to all parents that are interested in attending. Dates for the meetings can be found on the school website.

## **ACTS Prayer Group**

ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication) is a parent-led prayer group convening on scheduled Wednesday mornings of each month to pray. All parents are invited to attend to pray for God's guidance for our community.

## **Chapels**

Chapels are typically held from 8:30am – 9:15am every Friday morning. Each year, a purposeful theme is chosen and speakers and classes explore this theme in chapels. Chapel usually begins with worship time and ends with a school sharing of events. Throughout the year there are also special chapels to commemorate Christmas, Easter and the end of the school year. Chapel schedules are posted on the school website calendar and parents are always encouraged to attend.

## **Communication**

"Memos from Menno" is sent via e-mail every two weeks to families. The memos communicate important dates as well as upcoming events or activities that are occurring at the school. The school website is also a helpful resource for up to date information and school happenings. Our website address is: <https://mennosimonschristianschool.ca/>

## **Volunteer Commitment**

### **Parent Volunteers**

Partnership with parents is what builds and fosters community at MSCS and it is this community that makes the school a safe and caring environment.

MSCS recognizes the countless hours many families have volunteered to build the MSCS community to what it is today. Through this partnership with students and their families, MSCS has been able to offer a variety of programs and services that would otherwise be

impossible. As a parent, your commitment to volunteer at MSCS will be remembered by your children for years to come, and volunteering in your child's school adds a richness to their education that will be a part of your legacy. Your commitment to volunteer also positively impacts our community at large and will continue to pay dividends in years to come.

MSCS recognizes each family has different gifts, talents and abilities. Accordingly, MSCS has a variety of volunteer opportunities that range in responsibility and time commitment. During the registration process you will be asked what areas you would like to volunteer in and will be assigned accordingly in the fall.

### **Police Information Clearance (PIC)**

Menno Simons Christian School prides itself on being a Safe and Caring Environment and we are privileged to be able to have high parent involvement in our school. We maintain current PICs for all parents and volunteers involved in our school. All new families are required to submit current PICs and existing families are routinely asked to submit updated PICs.

## **Annual Events**

### **JR High Leadership Retreat**

This retreat is held at the beginning of each school year for all Junior High Students (Gr 7 – 9). The retreat is an opportunity for students and teachers to get to know each other in a relaxed setting and foster positive relationships and team building.

### **Penny Carnival**

The Penny Carnival is a school wide event that takes place at the end of October. Students purchase tickets to play a variety of carnival games in our school gymnasium. It's a fun afternoon for students with proceeds donated to one of the school's designated charities.

## **Peace Festival**

The Peace Festival occurs in early November and is an opportunity for teachers, students, families and staff to share with each other, in purposeful ways, what we value together in our Christian Community. We gather together to pay respect to those who served our country and also learn about the efforts of members of our community and others around the world to work for peace.

## **Christmas Concert**

The MSCS Christmas Concert celebrates the message of Christmas and showcases the talents of our Division 1 and 2 students.

## **Spring Musical or Theatrical Production**

Each year, MSCS showcases a full musical or theatrical production creatively characterized with sets, costumes and props. The students rehearse hours on end to perform songs and spoken dialogue with acting and dancing. Shows typically run three nights in a row (a Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening) in the spring.

## **Service Opportunities**

Various opportunities to serve within our Calgary community and the world at large are available to students at MSCS. One example is the Christmas Serve Day for Jr High students who go to The Mustard Seed, MCC, and Samaritan's Purse in December.

## **SALTS**

Each year, our Grade 9 graduating class travels to Victoria for a week-long sailing experience in the waters off Vancouver Island. SALTS (Sail and Life Training Society) is a Christian organization that provides a wonderful opportunity for students to learn about sailing, and about themselves and each other. This trip is an amazing way to start off the Grade 9 year at MSCS and is a cherished memory for each participant. The SALTS fees are collected each year from Grade 5 to 9 and can be completely offset through individual fundraising.

### **Grade 9 Roast and Graduation Banquet**

The Grade 9 Roast is a special chapel time prior to Grade 9 Grad (often the day of or day before grad). The Grade 8 students poke a bit of good natured fun at the Grade 9 students and the Grade 9 students respond with their bequeaths to the Grade 8's. The Grade 9 students are given the afternoon off on the day of grad to prepare for the evening festivities. The Grad ceremony is open to all guests who would like to share in this momentous day. This is followed by a Graduation Banquet for invited guests. If a Grade 9 party follows, it is organized and supervised by parents.

### **Awards Ceremony**

This is a special assembly in June in which Grades 6-9 students with high academic and Christian community achievement are recognized by their teachers and peers.

Grades K-5 host their own celebrations within their classroom to recognize the unique talents and skills of each member within their class.

### **Year End Breakfast**

Students and their families are invited to enjoy a stampede style breakfast on the last day of the school year. This is a great opportunity for the community to come together as we celebrate the end of the school year and the beginning of summer.

### **Other Community Events**

MSCS hosts various community events during each school year. Check out the school calendar or the "Memos from Menno" for other exciting community events.