

Ross Ford Elementary School

“We belong, we learn, we grow.”

Parent Handbook

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Didsbury, AB, T0M 0W0

www.rossford.ca

Principal: Mr. Brent Runnett

Vice Principal: Mrs. Tabitha Everett-Powell

Principal's Message

Dear Parents;

From the Ross Ford staff, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all the students and parents in our school community, especially those new to Didsbury. We hope this handbook will provide you with answers to many of the questions you might have about our school. Communication between us is so very important. We will continue to make a special effort to keep you well informed about what is happening and the expectations we have. We are looking forward to working with you.

We are often asked, "*What can I do at home to help my child be successful at school?*" Please consider the following:

Read at home: Research clearly tells us that reading to young children is the foundation for good reading later. It is never too late to begin reading to your child. If your child is already an avid reader, you can enhance their reading by talking to them about what they are reading and asking them questions about what they have read. I also recommend a consistent daily reading time.

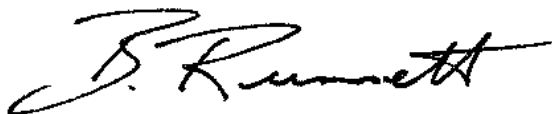
Talk about school: Children whose parents talk to them regularly about school experiences perform better academically than students whose parents rarely do so. It is easy to listen to children when things are going well, but it is also important to listen to them when things are not going well. When this is the case, it is very important to keep in mind that, for children, the fear of not doing well in school is very stressful and they will need lots of encouragement. This is often a good time to contact your child's teacher to discuss this matter. Often a source of concern for students is a problematic relationship with another student or even sometimes a teacher. When this occurs it is necessary to be a good listener and to refrain from jumping to conclusions prematurely. Please phone the school at times like this and talk with your child's teacher.

Help your child manage their time and homework: In the younger grades it is important to develop the homework habit: a little regular time for either classwork or reading. Helping children develop successful school routines is a difficult task, however, by starting now this habit will help with continued school success in the higher grades.

Give your child a good night's sleep: A great investment in your child's day at school is to send them to school with a good night's rest. Please ensure that your child has adequate rest so they can do well at school. **A minimum of nine hours of sleep is required for good school performance.** This is especially important after a long weekend when sleep routines may have been disrupted.

The challenge for both parents and teachers is to help children develop good routines to ensure their success at school. By working together, we can help all of our students achieve a measure of success during this school year. Please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher if you have any concerns or even if you just want to talk about your child's progress.

Sincerely,



Brent Runnett

Attendance and Late Procedures

Absences:

If your child cannot be at school, please call or email the office no later than 9:00 a.m. Our main phone number is 403-335-3234. The office is staffed between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., but there is also a voice messaging system that will take your calls 24 hours a day. When leaving a message, please give us your child's name, their teacher or classroom, and the reason they will be away. You may also email us those pieces of information at rossfordattendance@cesd73.ca.

If you know your child will be away in the near future, please send a note to the teacher explaining the circumstance before he or she will be absent. Also, please inform our office staff by phone or email - they will be making sure all our students have been accounted for each day.

As it is very important that we can ensure the safety of all our students each school day, all unexcused absences must be followed up on. If we have not heard from you about your child's absence, someone from the school will contact you. If we are unable to reach you, the principal will be informed and we may need to call your emergency contacts.

Late Arriving Students

Students who arrive after 8:35 a.m. and the playing of "O Canada!" will be marked late.

If you know in advance your child will be late, please contact the school office by phone or email to let us know approximately when we should expect them to arrive. These students will be marked excused late.

All students must enter through the main office doors, and check in at the office before going to their classrooms so we know they have arrived safely at school. Our office staff will be happy to greet them and send them on their way. We are glad to have them at school!

Students Leaving Early

Students leaving the school for any reason during school hours must be signed out at the office. If they will not be returning, please let the office know. If they will be back, tell us about when we should expect them. When they return, please have them sign in at the office before going to their classroom.

Students should never leave the school without the supervision of a parent or other trusted adult. Should your child return home without notification, please contact the school immediately.

Parent/Guardian and Emergency Contact Information

When you fill in a registration form for your child, you are required to provide demographic information such as physical address and mailing address, as well as names and contact information for parents or guardians.

Your contact information is extremely important. We may need to reach you if your child becomes sick while at school, or if we need to account for your child when they are unexpectedly absent. Emergencies are rare, but when they do happen, we need to be able to reach you.

Emergency Contacts

You are also required to provide at least one emergency contact, and this person should be someone other than yourself. This could be a family member, neighbour, close friend, or childcare provider - a responsible adult you trust, who would be able to come to the school and assist your child if you can't be there yourself. You can give us up to three emergency contacts.

In case of an emergency involving your child, we will contact you, the parent or guardian, first. If we are unable to reach you, we will start calling your emergency contacts.

Keeping Contact Information Current

At the beginning of each school year you are required to complete an online demographic update form that allows you to update or confirm your information, and give your consent to have your child's file updated. Please watch your email early in September for instructions on how to access and complete this form.

You will need to log in to your PowerSchool parent portal account and click the link to SchoolEngage where you will find the form waiting for you to fill in and submit. Most people find this takes only a few minutes, and our office staff are here to help if you have any difficulties.

So, what happens if you change your phone number, get a new work phone number, or move to a different address at some point during the year? What if you need to remove or add an emergency contact person, or change their phone number? Or your email address has changed?

When this happens, please contact our office staff and ask them to create a new demographic update form for you to complete online. **PLEASE NOTE - We are no longer able to make changes to student demographic information or your contact information with only verbal consent. You need to fill out the update form.**

Medical Alerts and Medical Considerations

Please be sure to inform the school about significant medical conditions and allergies. There is an area on the registration form and annual demographic update forms where you can add or change this information.

If it is necessary for your child to take medication while at school, it cannot be administered by school staff unless the parent provides written permission and instructions by completing a Medications at School form.

Nut/Peanut Aware

As we have students in the building with anaphylactic nut and peanut allergies, we ask parents for their cooperation and request you do not send products or foods that may contain nuts or peanuts in your child's lunch or snacks. The risk to our students is critical and, therefore, we ask for all students to observe this precaution. Also, **please help us coach your child how crucial it is they do not to share food at school**. If you would like clarification about the specific needs within your child's classroom, please talk to your child's classroom teacher. Parents of students with severe allergies are encouraged to make an appointment with the Vice-Principal to review their child's emergency action plan. The safety and well-being of all our students is very important to us. Thank you for your support in this serious matter.

Communicating With Parents/Guardians

Each classroom teacher will be sending regular classroom newsletters and/or using home-books to inform you of the happenings in your child's classroom.

In addition, a monthly school newsletter initiated by the administrative team will be emailed to all parents and guardians near the beginning of every month. School newsletters are also posted on our website, and you can subscribe to them there. A monthly calendar is included with the newsletter for your convenience.

Please help us keep the communication lines open. If you have a concern, please contact the school. We sincerely want to know what's going on in our students' lives. Chances are if you've noticed a problem, your child's teacher has observed it, too. By working together, we are able to come up with a solution that's right for your child.

Here are some times you should definitely call your child's teacher:

- You see a dramatic change in your child's behavior.
- A happy child becomes withdrawn.
- A friendly child wants to be alone.
- Performance drops. This may be in one subject, or all of them.
- You suspect that your child may be telling you things about school that are not the truth. He or she may say there's no homework, or he or she may say the teacher never teaches math.
- There's been a change in your family. A new marriage, a divorce or a new baby can all affect schoolwork.

Remember, we're all working together to provide the best education possible for your child. You are a vital player in helping our students achieve. The better we know you and your child, the more we can help.

Parent-Teacher Interviews

Twice a year we host Parent Teacher Interviews, in late November and again in mid March. While they have usually been in-person meetings, we have also been able to use video conferencing.

We are often asked if children are allowed to attend Parent Teacher Interviews. In most cases, your child will be welcome to join in. They might feel very proud to show you all the things they've been learning! If you expect your teacher may want to meet privately, just ask.

Parents are strongly encouraged to participate in these fifteen minute meetings. Watch newsletters and you email for details about the format we will be using, and how to reserve your time.

If you have any concerns at any time during the school year, please contact the teacher right away rather than waiting until the next Parent Teacher Interview.

Homework

Our staff is encouraged to provide homework experience for our students *at a manageable level appropriate to their age level*. Teachers monitor the amount of homework asked of the students and welcome your comments as to how much time your child spends completing at-home assignments.

Homework can mean nightly reading, project work, review of concepts and/or completion of work assigned during class. Many teachers require students to study weekly spelling tests.

There are many ways parents can help with homework. These include:

- ✓ Providing a quiet, regular place to work
- ✓ Helping their children organize their time for assignments
- ✓ Being the “audience” for reading practice, spelling and math drills
- ✓ Providing information and knowledge for projects

The support and interest of parents will have a large influence on students’ attitudes toward homework. If you have any questions about the assignments your children are bringing home, please do not hesitate to talk to their teachers.

School Fees

As of 2017, students will not be charged Basic Fees for education. Students will still be charged fees which cover any optional or extracurricular activities such as field trips or swimming lessons. Fees are payable after the invoice is sent home with your child in October and **due in full** by November 30.

Should there be a difficulty with payment, please contact Mr. Runnett before the end of November to make alternate arrangements. We accept cash, cheques (payable to “Ross Ford Elementary School”), or post-dated cheques, however, **[we encourage you to use the link on our Ross Ford website to make an online payment.](#)** Any outstanding fees will be carried forward.

Cold Weather Guidelines

Recess is a time to provide a break from regular school routines (morning, lunch hour, and afternoon), and a chance to get some fresh air and run off excess energy. Therefore, recess will be moved inside only when adverse weather conditions exist in the winter or on rainy days in the spring and fall. Whenever an “indoor” recess is announced, students are given an inside recess break with regular dismissal at the end of the school day.

Library

The school library develops and maintains a diverse collection of picture books, junior fiction, non-fiction and reference materials. As well, there is an extensive teacher resource collection. These resources support curriculum objectives and provide research and leisure reading opportunities for students.

Students have one scheduled class book exchange period each 5-day rotation. However, students are encouraged to exchange their books as often as they wish and may do so at any time between 8:25 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. each day.

Loan Limit:	Kindergarten – 1 book Grades 1 to 4 – 2 books *Exceptions to the book limit are made only for students involved in special research or science fair projects.
Loan Period:	10 school days
Overdue Books:	Overdue fines are not charged. Students are expected to return or renew their books every class book exchange period.
Lost/Damaged Books:	Respect for property and responsibility are key components of character education and good citizenship. Students are expected to take good care of the books they borrow. Parents are expected to pay for lost or damaged library books. If lost books are subsequently found, they may be returned to the library for a refund. Damaged books remain the property of the school.

Ross Ford Elementary School subscribes to the Canadian Library Association's Statement of Intellectual Freedom.

Music Program

The Grade 1-4 students at Ross Ford receive 2 half-hour music classes each five-day rotation. This means that they will have music for either 30 minutes or 60 minutes each week. The children will be learning about vocal development, rhythmic awareness, instrument technique, creative movement, ensemble playing and valuable social skills. Music is essential in helping your child have a successful and positive school experience. There is overwhelming evidence to support the fact that music enhances learning in math and language.

Art Program

Ross Ford has excellent art facilities. Grade 1-4 students receive a 1 hour art class with the art specialist each five day rotation. Your child will learn drawing, painting and sculpture skills. One of the goals of the art program is to develop visual literacy. Working with clay is a special part of the art program.

Ross Ford Discipline Procedures

To assist students in developing responsible behaviors, the following procedures are used:

Expectations:

The rules of the school are straightforward and simple:

- Students will be expected to think of the other person (in other words, show empathy). Before they say or do anything, they should ask themselves, “Is it helpful or hurtful? If it is helpful, I will say it or do it; if it is hurtful, I will not. I will always do the right thing.”

Empathy is central to the teaching of (self) discipline. This gives children a framework in which to evaluate their own behavior and then make the appropriate choices. As teachers and parents it is important to understand that “discipline” is a process (learning) and not an event. This means children will at times make mistakes, sometimes even a serious mistake, but they must be given the opportunity to learn from their mistakes in a constructive way.

In addition, the school has some other basic rules:

- No rough play or play fighting
- No throwing snowballs or other items that may injure
- No swearing
- Students will remove their caps/hats when entering the school
- Any item that could be thought of as a weapon must be left at home. This includes toy weapons as well.
- Bikes, scooters, and roller skates may not be ridden at recess
- Students must play inside the fence at the rear of the school
- Play safe games
- Play ball games away from the roof and windows of the school
- Students are to be self-propelled on the equipment and need to use the equipment in the intended manner

Consequences:

On occasion a student may need a more structured approach to discipline in order to achieve an appropriate level of self-discipline. The discipline cycle applies uniform standards, maintaining discipline records and enforces consequences for repeated inappropriate behaviours or serious behaviours during transition times, during recess and during other times within a students’ day.

Procedures:

Child safety, well-being, and dignity are of paramount concern to us all, and must be the mainstays of supervision. Supervisors are expected to assertively re-direct children to appropriate conduct, and if they comply, that is

usually the end of it. However, if the inappropriate conduct is repeated after a re-direct or the behaviour persists the following action will be taken:

SERIOUS BEHAVIOUR results in a ticket. This includes **open defiance of authority, vandalism, serious fighting, bullying, dangerous play, or repeated minor misbehaviours after a re-direct**. If the child is involved in a serious behaviour it may be necessary to isolate the child or move them to closer supervision.

STAGE ONE (routine): Teacher or supervisor re-directs or corrects the child. If the misbehaviour continues or the child is defiant, fill out a ticket. This will be recorded, but no further action is taken. Administration or staff may choose to have a follow-up discussion with the child. These tickets are 'warnings'.

STAGE TWO (minor): When students are involved in a serious behaviour, or when a pattern of behaviour presents itself, the following consequences apply: 1) Parents are notified by written notice or telephone. 2) One, two or three-day supervised detention at lunchtime or during recesses. 3) Other consequences as appropriate. Students who fail to attend a detention serve two for one. Students on detention are to sit quietly without talking or eating.

STAGE THREE (major): Repeated serious behaviour, or the student continues to behave inappropriately after being at stage two.

1. Notification and conference with parents and child.
2. Counselling.
3. Consequences may include: one-on-one playground supervision, requirement to take lunch at home, in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions.

Conflict or Bullying?

It is important to recognize that there is a difference between conflict (which happens when there is a problem between two students, such as can arise on the playing field) and bullying (where there is a power imbalance between two students). It is important for students and their parents to understand that just because someone is called a name or gets into a scuffle with another student, it is not always bullying. It may be simply just conflict, and conflict is a part of life and students must learn the skills to deal with disagreements in order to get along in the world and be successful. If a student is repeatedly harassed, it is important for the student (or the parent) to report it to the teacher or the school administration to investigate and determine if this is ongoing, unresolved conflict or a matter of bullying.