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# Saint Mary's Elementary School

## January 2026 Newsletter

**Hello Saint Mary's Families,**

We hope you enjoyed a relaxing holiday break! We are excited about the new year and all the opportunities it brings. Term Two runs from now until the beginning of April and is a critical time for learning. With classroom routines and work habits well established, this is a time for growth and achievement!

Winter brings unpredictable weather and possible school closures or cancellations. Please make sure you have subscribed to HRCE Notifications to stay informed. If you aren't sure whether you have opted in, text **Y** to the following number: **978338**.

It is also important that we have your current contact information in case of early dismissals. If your contact information has changed, please reach out to Sushmita to provide updated details.

Finally, we go outside to play except in cases of extreme cold. It is very important that students are dressed for the weather, including boots, snow pants, coats, hats, and mittens or gloves. Please reach out if you need assistance with warm clothing for your child—we can help!

**Ms. Johnson**  
**Acting Principal**

### Important Dates

- **January 1: New Year's Day**
- **January 5: First day of school for 2026**
- **January 20: SAC Meeting @ 6pm (virtual)**
- **January 22: Dalhousie Dental Hygiene students visit Saint Mary's**
- **January 27: Family Literacy Day**

## Life at Saint Mary's

- We are excited to welcome back Ms. Cordoba, who has returned from parental leave and will be teaching Grade 6 for the remainder of the school year!
- Ms. Brown has taken over the violin program for Grades 4-6; we are grateful this program will continue this term!
- We are also happy to welcome Carl Simon to our staff; Mr. Carl is our new permanent caretaker ☺

## Learn About the Influenza Vaccine

*Please share the following with families on behalf of the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness.*

### Fast Facts about the Flu Vaccine

- Influenza (the flu) is virus that peaks in transmission in the fall and winter months
- Most people are mildly ill when they contract the flu but sometimes the flu can be serious and require admission to the hospital
- Children under 6 years are at the highest risk of serious complications from the flu
- The flu and RSV can occur at the same time making children more at risk of needing hospitalization
- The flu vaccine is recommended yearly for children 6 months and older to protect against serious complications of the flu

## Learn about the Influenza vaccine

### FLU VACCINE SAFETY

- The flu vaccine cannot cause the flu
- Serious side effects are rare, affecting less than 1 in 1000 people
- Common side effects include pain and swelling at the insertion site

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Scan to book



### HOW TO BOOK YOUR VACCINE

- In Nova Scotia, flu vaccines can be booked online and are free of cost
- You can also call to book at 1-833-797-7772. If you or your child does not have a health card, please call rather than booking online



For more information, [click here](#).

## Power Outage Information for Families

As we move into the winter months, we want to share how decisions are made when a school experiences a power outage.

Our priority is always to keep schools open safely when possible. A power outage does **not** automatically mean classes are cancelled – even if it happens during the school day. The decision depends on when power is expected to be restored.

### Here's what happens:

- When a school loses power, HRCE's Operations Team contacts Nova Scotia Power to gather available details on the cause and an estimated restoration time.
- Once we have this information, we consider:
- **Before school starts:** Have buses begun their routes? If so, we wait until students arrive before making a decision. If classes are cancelled, elementary families will be contacted before dismissal.
- **During the school day:** How close is dismissal? What is the temperature in the building? Does the school rely on power for water or septic systems? These factors, among others, help us decide whether to stay open or close. Often, power returns faster than we could safely send students home.

### If classes are cancelled:

- HRCE will notify families by email and text.
- Families of elementary students will also receive a phone call before dismissal.

Deciding to close schools during a power outage is never simple, but safety is always our top priority. We understand that cancellations can be inconvenient, and our goal is to keep students learning in class whenever possible.

More information about school cancellations for any reason can be found [here](#).



## What happens when a school loses power?

Learn more at [hrce.ca/families/cancellations](http://hrce.ca/families/cancellations) under Power Outage Information for Families

 Halifax  
Regional Centre for Education

## Planning for Inclement Weather

Did you know? HRCE takes great care when making the decision to alter the regular operations of schools and school buses in the event of severe or inclement weather. It is HRCE's goal to communicate any changes to the regular operations of schools and/or buses as close to 6:00 a.m. as possible. **A 6:00 a.m. announcement could be:**

- All schools are delayed in opening by two hours and bus pickups are delayed by two hours; or
- All schools are open, but some or all busses are not operating for the day; or
- Some schools (either individually or by family) are closed for the day; or
- All schools are closed for the day.

If weather deteriorates, or is forecasted to worsen throughout the morning, **an 11:00 a.m. announcement could be:**

- Bussed students will be picked up two hours earlier than their regular dismissal time; and
- Walking students will be dismissed at their regularly scheduled lunch hour.



### How will I find out?

- By email to the addresses in PowerSchool
- By text message, **if you have opted-in**. If you aren't sure if you have opted-in, text Y to the following number: **978338**
- [On the HRCE website](#)
- [On Instagram](#)

It's important to always have a plan in place for childcare in the event of any cancellation. Please remember: As a parent or guardian you always have the choice of whether or not to send your child to school.

For more information on how HRCE manages during inclement weather, visit [hrce.ca/families/cancellations](http://hrce.ca/families/cancellations).

## Online Platform Risks From Unplugged Canada

*Sharing on behalf of Unplugged Canada*  
Many digital platforms today, including social media, online gaming and AI chat tools, are designed to keep kids scrolling and engaged, often exposing them to addictive features, adult content, and interactions they may not be developmentally ready to handle.

Below is a resource that outlines some of the most common social media, gaming, and AI chat platforms, helping families better understand the risks, start meaningful conversations at home, and consider delaying smartphones and access to these apps until kids are more developmentally ready.

You can access the full resource [here](#).

*Unplugged Canada is a parent-led, national movement advocating for healthier childhoods by delaying smartphones and social media until kids are more developmentally ready. Join thousands of Canadian families choosing to delay by taking the Unplugged Canada Pledge at [unpluggedcanada.com/sign-pledge](https://unpluggedcanada.com/sign-pledge).*

### APPS EVERY PARENT SHOULD BE AWARE OF

**unplugged Canada**

<b>SNAPCHAT</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disappearing messages</li><li>• Snap Map location sharing</li><li>• Addictive features (streaks)</li><li>• Sexting &amp; adult contact</li></ul>	<b>INSTAGRAM</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Body-image pressure</li><li>• Hidden DM requests</li><li>• Teens use secret "Finstas"</li><li>• Exposure to adult content</li></ul>
<b>ROBLOX</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inappropriate games</li><li>• Unmoderated private servers</li><li>• Chat with strangers</li><li>• Pressure to buy Robux</li></ul>	<b>TIKTOK</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Highly addictive feed</li><li>• Harmful viral trends</li><li>• Attention fragmentation</li><li>• Frequent adult content</li></ul>
<b>DISCORD</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High grooming risk</li><li>• Adult/NSFW content</li><li>• Harassment &amp; cyberbullying</li><li>• Unmoderated servers</li></ul>	<b>YOUTUBE</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inappropriate content</li><li>• High risk of grooming</li><li>• Addictive short form content</li><li>• Attention fragmentation</li></ul>
<b>CHARACTER AI</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sexualized roleplay bots</li><li>• High grooming-style risk</li><li>• Fake "AI relationships" with kids</li><li>• Encourages secrecy from parents</li></ul>	<b>TELEGRAM</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encrypted hidden content</li><li>• Large, risky group chats</li><li>• Minimal moderation</li><li>• Hard for parents to monitor</li></ul>
<b>REDDIT</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unfiltered communities</li><li>• Adult/disturbing content</li><li>• Harmful topics easily found</li><li>• Anonymous users &amp; predators</li></ul>	<b>CHATGPT</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kids may overshare personal info</li><li>• Mature themes can appear</li><li>• Emotional dependence on AI</li><li>• Hard for parents to monitor use</li></ul>

**Before you let your child use a platform, create an account using their age and explore it yourself to see the content and interactions they'll be exposed to.**

[unpluggedcanada.com/sign-pledge](https://unpluggedcanada.com/sign-pledge).