



**Parent and Student Handbook
Columbia School
2025-26**

Columbia School Student and Parent Handbook

Welcome to Columbia School! We are looking forward to another exciting year. With effort comes reward, and we hope to be able to share with you the many rewards of being here.

Our school's philosophy is the development of the whole person. We want our students to become critical thinkers who are willing to take healthy risks and, therefore, learn through both success and failure. Through a wide variety of activities, we encourage the students to reach their potential. We want our students to be people who accept the opinions, actions, and cultural differences of others. We hope that every student will be a strong, confident, and contributing citizen of the future.

To assist the students in reaching their goals, we offer a high standard of academic subjects, mobile technology, Home Economics and Industrial Arts for Grades 7 and 8, a variety of intramural sports for Grades 4-8, team sports for Grades 7 and 8, as well as other special events throughout the year for all ages. We consider individual differences of students in our instructional program and provide Student Support for those who may need extra assistance.

This Cougar Code and student handbook were written to give children and their families a sense of the **high expectations** we have for our students and to answer many of the most asked questions. Our policies and procedures are not meant to be restrictive and confining, but **protective and guiding**.

It is impossible to convey, on paper, the **sense of caring and warmth** that we wish our Columbia community members to experience. Please feel free, **at any time**, to contact the school if you have any questions or concerns. The family and the school can provide the best care for your child when working as a **team**!

Mission Statement

COUGARS strive for excellence!

Vision Statement

Inspiring Caring citizens who create positive impacts through the pursuit of their passions!

Beliefs

Our vision is achieved through our beliefs.

- ✓ Connection
- ✓ Ownership
- ✓ Understanding
- ✓ Growth
- ✓ Acceptance
- ✓ Resilience
- ✓ Spirit

Cougars use their WITS!

Walk away
Ignore
Talk it out
Seek help from an adult

1. Rationale/Philosophy

Columbia School is committed to inspiring excellence. We are proud of our “Blue and Gold” school colours and of all the Cougars that currently are and have been members of our learning community. We know that the main purpose of school is to gain academic knowledge and skills that will help us to be successful in future years. To accomplish this goal, we must work cooperatively as members of our team. We need to have expectations and routines that we all will understand and work hard to maintain.

This handbook is available to let the many people who work in our building and are part of the “Community of Cougars” know what behaviour is expected of them as they go about their daily business.

All students, parents, and staff are valuable members of the Columbia Cougar team. We know that our school is committed to excellence and that all who venture into it ought to strive to be contributing members of our “Community of Cougars.” Students at Columbia school follow our code in action, “**Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Safe, and Be Kind**”.

2. Expectations

Academic quality is an expectation for everyone. To achieve this, students must come to class with all necessary materials, listen well, follow directions, and actively participate in their own education.

Students must **complete assignments** using information and knowledge gained through active study. **Assessment** will be given throughout the course of the year.

The students at Columbia School move through the school in a **quiet, orderly manner**, always **considerate** of other classes.

Students are expected to be **courteous** and **helpful** to each other, to staff, and to visitors in the building. Should a disagreement occur, it should be settled in a **fair, non-violent manner**.

We encourage **active participation** in school activities, **good sportsmanship**, and **safe fair play**.

All students deserve to **feel safe** and **be treated with respect**. Students may express an opinion, thought, or belief and appreciate that it will be heard no matter what their race, religion, or culture.

School is a place of learning. Students are expected to **dress appropriately** for all school activities.

Columbia School is your home away from home. Students must take special care of the school building to maintain its cleanliness and physical condition. Students will **respect school property** as well as the property of others.

3. School Information

School Fees

Columbia School is committed to providing school activities and extra programming for students. This does come at a cost, but the school is committed to keeping those fees at a minimum.

Students in Kindergarten have a school fee of \$20.00 and students in grades 1 to 8 have a \$35.00 fee for the school year. These fees must be paid prior to any student participating in any extracurricular activities, such as sports teams or non-curricular activities at the school (ex. hot lunch). These fees and policy are approved yearly by Columbia SCC (School Community Council).

Pupil Progress

Report cards will be sent to parents two times a year.
- February and June

Student led conferences will be held twice a year in October and March.
Information will be sent home regarding the details of these conferences.

Band

A band program is available to Columbia students in grades 5-8. This includes Jazz Band starting in Grade 6. There is an extra cost to participate in band.

School Health Services

Our school has a Public Health Nurse. Her office number is 786-0616. She will be in the school throughout the year working with the students, teachers, and parents to help conserve and promote the optimum health and well-being of our children. Some of the services she provides include:

- Immunization against

Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Polio; Measles and Rubella (German Measles) for any student who missed them in the regular preschool schedule.

- Immunization against Hepatitis B - Grade 6
- Measles and Rubella catch-up - Grade 6
- Tetanus-Diphtheria – Grade 8
- Hearing and vision screening done by request only
- Health education and counseling for individual students can be done by request.

Consent forms will be sent home with students needing immunization.

IMMUNIZATION CANNOT BE DONE UNTIL CONSENT FORMS ARE SIGNED BY THE PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN AND RETURNED TO THE SCHOOL. PLEASE READ BEFORE SIGNING!

If you have any questions or concerns about the above services or other health issues, contact the Public Health Nurse at her office (786-0616) or through the school (786-5510).

Canteen and Milk

Canteen is open 11:55-12:10 for students.

White and chocolate milk are currently sold for \$1.00 a carton at noon hour.

Lost and Found

Lost and found box is in the kindergarten entrance. Parents are welcome to come and peruse the contents. Items are periodically displayed and then disposed of to a charity if not claimed. Valuable items (**which shouldn't be at school!**) can be claimed at the office.

Counseling

We have a school counselor who will be in our school on a regular basis. The counselor can meet with students on an individual basis or in small groups. During the school day, students may be called from a regular class to be helped with:

- confidential matters
- dealing with problems at school, at home, and with peers.
- gaining a better understanding

- of self, personal attitudes, interests, and values.
- helping to acquire good decision-making and problem-solving skills
- anger management
- social skills
- self-esteem

School Community Council

We have a very active and helpful SCC. They help promote special events and are an avenue to lend a voice and support for Columbia School. We would find it very difficult to carry on with many of our activities without them!! ***We need you!*** If you are interested in participating, please call the school.

The SCC also gives you an opportunity to have input into the future focus of the school as we further enhance our vision.

Special Events Calendar

Fall

Cross-Country Running
Volleyball
Education Week
Halloween Parade
Remembrance Day Program
Book Fair

Winter

Christmas Events
Archery
Basketball
Grade 5-8 Curling
Grade 4-8 Downhill Skiing

Spring

Jump Rope for Heart
Grade 4 Swimming Program
Grade K-3 Intro Track
Grade 4-5 Outdoor Track
Grade 6-8 Outdoor Track

<http://columbia.gssd.ca>
<https://www.facebook.com/ColumbiaSchool>

4. School Policies and Procedures

A. Duties and Responsibilities of the Student

As a student at Columbia School, you have a responsibility to yourself, your fellow students, your parents, and your school for your conduct. The image you project by your attitude and actions reflect the spirit and reputation of your school.

You, as a student, have a responsibility to make our school a place of which you are proud, and you can do this by supporting our belief statement and promoting the following:

- displaying good sportsmanship.
- being courteous, honest, and respectful always, in or out of the school.
- conducting yourself in an acceptable manner at school activities and functions.
- showing respect for the property of others as well as school property.
- being punctual for classes.
- being helpful.
- being prepared to participate in a learning environment by having ready all necessary materials and supplies.

Students who exhibit violent behavior will be subject to consequences:

- a verbal warning, detention, in-school suspension or out-of-school suspension (the period will be determined by the Administration based on the severity of the incident).
- police involvement if the degree of violence is warranted.
- fist fights, verbal and physical abuse, possessing a weapon or anything considered to be a weapon are all grounds for police involvement.

B. School Guidelines

- Students late for school or who must leave the building early are asked to report to their homeroom teacher and/or the office.
- Students are asked to use only assigned doors between 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. If students arrive late, they must use the front door as all other doors will be locked during school hours.
- During breaks, students are expected to go outdoors and so must dress appropriately.

- Peanuts and Sunflower seeds are not allowed at school.
- **Spitting** is very unsanitary. **It will not be tolerated at any time.**
- Students are requested to keep school bags, and backpacks in their lockers or homeroom.

C. Appropriate Dress

While it is recognized that choice of attire and grooming are matters of expression and subject to fashion and current fad, any article of clothing or manner of hair style or makeup that presents a health problem, safety hazard, or that interferes with the educational process is prohibited.

Head Coverings: NO hats, hoods, or bandannas. Allowances are made for religious observances and medical reasons.

D. Leaving the School Grounds

Students who must leave school grounds during the day are asked to report to their homeroom teacher and/or the office and bring a note signed by a parent or guardian, or have a parent phone, explaining the reason for leaving.

E. Attendance

Daily Schedule

Columbia operates on a six-day school cycle. Bells ring at the following times:

8:50am	- students enter school on staggered entrance time
8:55am	- classes begin
11:55am	- Lunch recess
12:45pm	- PM begin classes
3:10pm	- Bus #1 and #2 dismissal
3:15pm	- home dismissal begins on staggered dismissal times

***Supervision begins at 8:40 a.m., students should not be on the school grounds before then.**

Phone call for Absent Students

Columbia School utilizes a phone service that will notify parents if their children are not at school. The phone call will go home at approximately 10:00 AM each school day. We ask that you call school before 9:30am (786-5510) and let us know when your child is going to be absent. If your child is absent and we have not received a call, you will be contacted. We do have voice mail for the time you need to call outside of the school day.

Late Arrival

Students are expected to be on time for school. If habitual tardiness becomes a problem, the parents or guardians will be contacted. Students should be prepared to make up for missed class time at an appropriate time, which could include recess, or after-school time. **Students coming to school late must use the front doors.** The other doors are kept locked during school hours. Late students must also **check in** at the office.

Attendance Policy

The Attendance Policy at Columbia is based on the following principles:

1. Regular attendance is the responsibility of the student and parent or guardian.
2. The role of the teacher is to encourage full attendance and support this by
 - maintaining an accurate record of student attendance on Edsby for am and pm attendance, sharing this information with students and parents/guardians as required and reporting student attendance concerns to Administration.
3. The administration, with support from teachers, counsellors, and parents/guardians, is responsible for working with students to resolve chronic attendance problems.
4. A desire to see our students achieve and succeed to their potential.

Expectations for Policy

Regular attendance and punctuality are an essential part of every student's obligation and commitment to be successful in school. At Columbia School, it is our sincere desire to see ***all*** students achieve and be working to their potential. The expectation is that ***all students would attend all classes each day.*** Regular attendance and punctuality are necessary for the continuity of instruction as well as for maintaining effective, meaningful, continuous evaluation. Although students are responsible for all work which they have missed, absences from class often mean lost opportunities and experiences that cannot be made up through homework alone.

At Columbia School, we recognize that good attendance practices are achieved through the combined efforts of students, parents/guardians, teachers and administration. Students and their parents/guardians clearly have the largest role in maintaining regular attendance. The teachers and administration assume the responsibility of assisting students with consistent and regular attendance. Through a spirit of collaboration, we can promote a positive attitude toward regular school attendance. According to the ***Education Act 1995***, regular attendance is the responsibility of the parent(s) and pupil:

“Every parent, guardian, or other person having charge of a pupil who is of compulsory school age shall take the steps that are necessary to ensure regular attendance of that pupil. Every pupil shall attend school regularly and shall promptly provide the principal such information as may be required with respect to any absence from school.”

The staff of Columbia School understand that an absence from school may be completely necessary on occasion. When a parent/guardian gives a student, permission for an absence due to sickness or any other circumstance deemed necessary, the parent/guardian also assumes the responsibility for results of these absences.

Procedures for students who acquire absences:

If it is necessary for a student to be absent from school, we expect that a parent or guardian will phone the school with an explanation at 786-5510. We would appreciate it if those phone calls were made prior to 9:30 a.m. if possible. School sponsored activities do not require a phone call and will be coded as such. Unexplained absences indicate an attendance problem and will lead to follow-up from Student Services as well as the classroom teacher. To become an explained absence, an absence must be explained within **two (2) school days** following the student's return to school. An explained absence does not excuse students from completing assignments or assessments.

Excusable Absence Reasons:

- a) *Illness (written confirmation may be requested ie. Physician's note)*
- b) *Hospitalization or confinement at home under physician's orders*
- c) *Medical or Dental appointment (written confirmation may be requested)*
- d) *Compassionate Reasons (Funeral)*

e) Attendance at a Recognized Religious Observance

f) Busses not running

g) School Based Activities (school sports teams, field trips, etc.)

***** “Personal” is not an excusable reason and will not be accepted by the office.**

F. Homework/Assignments

Missing assignments are closely monitored. When a student misses school it is his/her responsibility to catch up on missed assignments by talking to a classmate or a teacher. If a student knows in advance that they will be absent, arrangements with the teacher should be made. There is a lot of material to cover each year. Staying caught up by doing homework on a regular basis is a good way of ensuring your ultimate success.

Reading daily is a positive form of homework that helps create better learners.

G. Smoking/Vaping

Our school and school grounds are designated as smoke free. Smoking/Vaping will **not** be tolerated. Tobacco and tobacco products are **not permitted at school**. Any such articles will be confiscated, and disciplinary action will follow.

H. Alcoholic Beverages and Drugs

The use, possession, or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages or drugs on school premises or at any school-sponsored activity will result in disciplinary action by the school.

I. Out of Bounds

All students are expected to remain on school grounds during the school day unless the parent or guardian notifies the homeroom teacher and/or the office.

J. Footwear

Clean footwear will be required of all students – ideally, they would have two pairs, one pair for general indoor wear and Physical Education, and the other for going to and from school and for outdoor activities. Changing your shoes at the

door is a courtesy that will keep our school clean and will also provide you with safety in the event of a fire drill. All shoes must have non-marking, scuff – free soles.

K. Injury or Illness

The student suffering from the injury or another individual aware of the incident should report any injury or illness suffered while at school to the homeroom teacher or the office.

In the case of a serious accident or illness at school, parents will be notified immediately if possible. It is important that the teacher has access to some family member or designate for assistance.

Should the emergency warrant immediate physician's attention, a school official would accompany the student to the hospital and make arrangements to meet the parents/guardians.

L. Medication

Staff members may administer any medicine to a pupil **only** if authorized by the pupil's parent or guardian. It is preferable that the home is responsible for this action.

M. Emergency Drills

Emergency drills will be held periodically. Routes and places of exit are clearly posted throughout the school. When the siren sounds, all persons in the building are to leave quickly to the nearest exit (DO NOT RUN). The first students at the door are asked to hold the door until all others have gone out. Classes will assemble east of asphalt pad where further directions will be given if necessary. A similar procedure will be followed for other necessary evacuations. An emergency action plan is in place if needed.

N. Care of Property

Students are expected to assume responsibility for the care of both school and personal property.

If necessary, students' locker can and will be searched. The lockers are the property of the school division and can be searched at the discretion of the administration.

All articles of clothing, footwear, and other belongings should be clearly marked with the owner's name.

Students are asked **not** to bring large amounts of money or valuable items to school. Money, watches, rings, and other personal valuables should not leave your person except when changing for Phys. Ed. Students are responsible for the safe keeping of their own belongings.

Any loss of or damage to property must be reported to the main office. Efforts will be made to locate property through a "lost and found" facility. Valuable belongings may be re-claimed from the main office.

Students will be required to make restitution for any willful damage to school or student property.

O. Telephone Usage

When it is necessary to contact your child's teacher, it is best to phone before 9:00 am, during the breaks or noon hour, or after 3:15 pm.

P. Noon Hour

Noon hour supervision will be provided for those students who stay for lunch. **However**, we encourage parents to have students eat at home for the following reasons:

- in our busy lives, any family time together is valuable to our children. A lunch hour together allows time for parents to "touch base" with their children.
- A quiet home meal creates a calmer, better able-to-learn student for the afternoon.

If parents send lunch with their child, it is expected that they will remain at school for all noon hours unless we have been previously notified.

All students who eat lunch at Columbia are expected to observe the following expectations:

- Remain in the classroom, seated for the entire lunch period until dismissal.
- Talk quietly. This a courtesy to those around you.
- When dismissed, please clean up your eating area and deposit all garbage in the barrel. Place your recyclables in the appropriate container. Get dressed for outdoors and go outside to enjoy some fresh air and free time.

Eating lunch at school is a privilege, which may be removed if appropriate behaviour is not shown. Parents are responsible for the supervision of their child(ren) outside of the school, should this privilege be removed.

Q. Soup Haven

The Soup Haven lunch program is available to Columbia School students who need a school lunch. It is a **privilege** to participate in this program, not a right.

R. Inclement Weather

- During most rainy weather, all students will be expected to stay in. Rain gear and rubber boots are helpful in case we are outside when it begins or go out as it is ending.
- On most winter days, students are expected to go outside, but on bitterly cold days (-30C), they will be told to stay indoors. A decision will be made just prior to the bell, based on wind chill factors and temperatures.

It is imperative that children come dressed for winter weather. They are much more productive in their schoolwork and happier when they go outside. **Even if they have a cold or a case of the sniffles, we have found that a short recess in the fresh air is much more beneficial than staying in the classroom with the germs!** It makes a very long day for students if they stay inside from 8:40 am to 3:15 pm.

5. Cell Phone Policy

Please refer to the Columbia School website for an up-to-date version of the cell phone policy.

6. Expectations

All students at Columbia School shall:

- Be punctual.
- Be responsible - prepared to learn.
- Be courteous - respectful with both language and actions.
- Be a participant - be involved in your school community.
- Be proud to be part of the Columbia family of Cougars.

These rules ensure the safety and welfare for all and help maintain a positive school atmosphere.

7. Consequences

An important part of growing up is learning how to make good choices and learning that there are consequences for poor decisions. Consequences will vary at Columbia School, depending on the misbehaviour. Consequences range in severity from **Tier 1** to **Tier 3**. Staff, along with administration, will determine the appropriate consequences for student misbehaviour. Student input is valued and will be sought as it is deemed to be appropriate.

Tier 1 – Consequences:

Tier 1 consequences are primarily corrective strategies used by the teacher in response to relatively minor infractions.

- *Warning*
- *Phone call to parents*
- *Detention with teacher*
- *Move seating within the class*
- *Temporary removal from class*
- *Restoration activity* – student does an extra chore (community service).
- *Daily report* – this must be checked by the teacher at the end of the day.
- *Peer model* – student is assigned to work with a peer who will “help” keep him/her on track.
- *Withdrawal of a privilege*
- *Lost/Gained points* – where a behaviour modification system is in effect, the student pays the required “fine” or gains bonus points.
- *Make a plan* – have the student write a set of “good intentions” for the week or month.

Tier 2 – Consequences:

All Tier 2 consequences are imposed in response to more severe or persistent infractions. They result in an office visit. A referral to the school counselor or other support personnel may occur as a logical part of a Tier 2 Consequence.

- *School conference* – set up with student, parents, and school personnel to discuss undesirable behaviours and plan a new course of action.
- *Temporary withdrawal from the classroom* – this may be for a period of up to one day.
- *Behaviour and/or work contract* – this is established by the teacher/ student and school administration and has a specific time span, set of objectives to be met, and further consequences if the objectives are not met.
- *Temporary withdrawal from school sports teams, clubs, or special activities* (assemblies, junior concerts, etc.).
- *Individual or group counseling* – provided in the school by a counselor, or staff mentors. Students having similar problems (perhaps in need of social skills training) could be grouped together.
- *Mediation* – students that are involved in an incident are asked to sit down together and work through their problem.

Tier 3 – Consequences:

These are consequences and are imposed following a period in which teachers and administration have applied other corrective measures unsuccessfully, have referred the student to support services within the school, and have attempted to work with the home.

- *In-school suspension*
- *Modification of the school day*
- *Permanent removal from a school team*
- *Out-of-school suspension*
- *Referral to an outside agency*
- *Expulsion from school*

Bullying

Bullying is the willful, conscious desire to hurt another and put him/her under stress.

It is **not a one-time incident** but is a behaviour repeated during successive encounters.

It can be a blow, an insult or offensive gesture, exclusion, social manipulation or spreading rumors. It can happen in person or on the computer. It results in, and further creates an **imbalance of power**.

A quarrel or playground fight between two people who have disagreed on some matter is probably **NOT** an example of bullying.

At Columbia School, we have a Zero Tolerance for bullying. That means that anytime we are aware of a bullying incident, we will deal with it in an appropriate way. The consequences will vary depending on the circumstances and the intensity and frequency of the misbehaviour. Please notify us as soon as possible if you become aware of a bullying situation.

Personal Growth and Development

Columbia School is committed to personal improvement and growth.

Part of our School Improvement Plan focuses on asset building. We are working towards helping our students develop personal assets that will further develop positive qualities for life.

Here is a list of the 40 Developmental Assets and the categories they fit into.

Support

1. Family Support
2. Positive Family Communication
3. Other Adult Relationships
4. Caring Neighbourhood
5. Caring School Climate
6. Parent Involvement in Schooling

Empowerment

7. Community Values Youth
8. Youth as Resources
9. Service to Others
10. Safety

Boundaries and Expectations

- 11. Family Boundaries
- 12. School Boundaries
- 13. Neighborhood Boundaries
- 14. Adult Role Models
- 15. Positive Peer Influence
- 16. High Expectations

Constructive Use of Time

- 17. Creative Activities
- 18. Youth Programs
- 19. Religious Community
- 20. Time at Home

Commitment to Learning

- 21. Achievement Motivation
- 22. School Engagement
- 23. Homework
- 24. Bonding to School
- 25. Reading for Pleasure

Positive Values

- 26. Caring
- 27. Equality and Social Justice
- 28. Integrity
- 29. Honesty
- 30. Responsibility
- 31. Restraint

Social Competencies

- 32. Planning and Decision Making
- 33. Interpersonal Competence
- 34. Cultural Competence
- 35. Resistance Skills
- 36. Peaceful Conflict Resolution

Positive Identity

- 37. Personal Power
- 38. Self-Esteem
- 39. Sense of Purpose
- 40. Positive View of Personal Future

We Value Your Input

In addition to providing an excellent education to your children, one of our goals is to guide and protect them. We can always accomplish more when we work together.

Please join our team!

