



**Don Christian Elementary School**  
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<http://www.surreyschools.ca/donchristian>

**Newsletter #1**

September 1, 2021

Message from the principal, Mr. Morrison ...

### **Welcome!**

Whether you travelled afar or stayed closer to home like most, we hope you had a safe summer. On behalf of the staff, we look forward to working and learning with you to provide a safe, positive, learning environment for your child(ren). And this year, we continue to emphasize safety. We know you have questions; hopefully this newsletter will provide some answers.

While we wish the pandemic will go away... it's not. As an administrator I am very proud and humbled to work with a staff who has diligently followed safety protocols throughout the pandemic; and I know we will continue to do so. We recently received district updates and now we're ready to share that information with you. Thank you for your patience.

### **What happens Tuesday, September 7?**

Kindergarten students will be required to sign-in and leave. Please ensure you attend between 10 – 11 am.! You will meet in the northwest Kindergarten playground; look for the tent outside in the northwest Kindergarten playground. There you'll find two excited teachers happy to greet you! Other info about gradual entry is in the package we mailed to registered parents.

Students in grades 1-7 attend from 10:00 am to 11:00 am only.

Students line up by grade in various areas around the school. We will have signs and maps up to indicate where your child needs to line up like last year. You can pick them up from the same location at 11:00 am. Look for staff wearing orange vests; they will help direct you.

### **Grade Group Meeting Places Outdoors**

Grade 7 – Outside Room 606 (Mr. Taylor)

Grade 6 – Outside Room 605 (Ms. Vermeulen)

Grade 5 – Outside Room 602 (Mr. Penner)

Grade 4 – Outside the portable (Ms. Smythies)

Grade 3 – Room 505. (Ms. Reddy)

Grade 2 – Room 404 (Mrs. Stansfield/Baykey)

Grade 1 – Room 403 (Ms. Houdayer/Kelly)

### **New or unregistered students**

Go to the gym and someone will be there to greet you. Use outside, south entries please.

### **Starting Wednesday, September 8**

It's a full day; the welcome bell rings at 8:25 a.m. Meet teachers at the same place on Wednesday. Students will be greeted and assigned temporary grade-group classes until further notice. Our goal is to make students feel a part of our Don Christian community through a variety of collaborative team building and learning activities. We're building culture, expectations and reminding everyone about safety protocols. We hope to have students placed into permanent classes by early next week. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work to build classes for the year.

## **School Website and School Newsletters for 2021-2022**

Please bookmark the address and visit our website often. For environmental reasons, newsletters will only be published online. Please sign up on our website to receive newsletters and notices via email. The address is: <http://www.surreyschools.ca/donchristian>

### **Will there be a Blended Learning option this year?**

At this time, no. All Surrey District students are expected to be in school. Home-schooling is an option.

### **What are some of the COVID protocols that have changed?**

- Students will no longer be in cohorts. Thus, they can interact with students from other classes.
- Extracurricular activities (teams, clubs, etc.) can occur.
- 2-metre spacing is no longer required, though it is still encouraged when possible.

### **What are some of the COVID protocols that continue from last school year?**

- Daily Health checks. [K to 12 Health Check website](#) , will continue this year.
- If your child shows any symptoms of COVID, please keep them home.
- If your child shows any symptoms of COVID while attending school, we will isolate them until you are able to pick them up.
- Masks are mandatory for all students in Grades 4-7.
- If a student cannot wear a mask for medical reasons, they are exempt. (Let us know!)
- Masks are recommended for all students in Grades K-3.
- Students wash their hands often and always before leaving for and after returning from breaks.
- Recess and lunch break times are not staggered.
- No sharing of individual recess or lunch food.
- Visitors are asked to not enter the school without an appointment or a pre-scheduled event.
- All adults must sign in when they come into the school for any scheduled reason.
- High touch areas of the school continue to be disinfected at least once a day.
- Gatherings outside are discouraged. Family members coming for pickup are asked to minimize contact and maximize space between each other. Students get confused and others upset when people gather closely in groups. We appreciate the modelling; this supports our school and children.
- Vaccinations are strongly encouraged for all adults in our community and for all students born in 2009 and earlier (as per PHO protocols).

REMEMBER – things can change. We have learned that throughout this pandemic, schools must adapt as COVID protocol changes occur. Please connect your devices to our school communications.

### **Stay Connected with the FREE ‘SchoolLink’ app**

Go to the app store, find “SchoolLink”; then once downloaded add Don Christian to your school list. You will receive a newsfeed of anything posted on our website directly to your personal device. A great way to stay up to date with school and district information.

### **2021 – 2022 Bell Schedule**



Supervision of Students begins	8:15 am
Welcome Bell	8:25 am
Classes begin	8:30 am
Recess	10:10 – 10:25 am
Lunch (playtime)	11:45 – 12:10 pm
Lunch (eating)	12:10 – 12:25 pm
Afternoon Instruction	12:30 – 2:30 pm
Dismissal	2:30 pm
Supervision of Students ends	2:45 pm

### **Life Threatening Allergies**

Several Don Christian students have severe anaphylactic reactions to peanuts, nuts and their by-products. Please refrain from sending foods to school that contain peanuts, nuts and/or their by-products if there is an anaphylactic student in your child(ren)'s classroom; remind children to wash their hands after eating. Thank you for your cooperation!

### **Student Safety – We are all responsible!**

There should be NO drop-off or pick-up in the staff parking lot. It is not safe for students to be walking through this area. We thank you in advance for following the posted signs and for reinforcing this with your child(ren).

### **School Supplies**

Grade level supply lists are posted on our school website. Copies will be outside in the main courtyard by the front door every day until further notice.

### **Class Organization**

Decisions for classroom placement are made collaboratively by professional teachers. To ensure the placement is in the best interest of each individual student, many criteria is considered, including:

- District & Ministry policies for class sizes and composition
- Teacher & School Based Team recommendations
- Students with special needs
- Academic ability and performance
- Developmental level – behavioural; emotional; dependence / independence
- Learning styles
- Social compatibility / friendships
- Gender balance
- Class / group dynamics
- Parent/Guardian Input

Because of student numbers and Ministry of Education composition guidelines, it is likely necessary to organize with classes that teach two grades. For further info, please carefully read the attached notice on Combined Classes.

Once class lists are finalized, another newsletter will go home. Thank you again for your understanding as we make student-centered decisions for the school year. Continue to watch for updates...

### **Finally...**

We had a few staff changes occur over the summer since our last newsletter in June. First, Mrs. McGillivray, grade 3-4 teacher last year, has resigned and moved with her family to Saskatchewan. We will miss her and thank her for her many contributions to Don Christian.

We welcome two new teachers: Ms. Paccagnan, intermediate; and Ms. Hooper, primary/intermediate. We know they will be positive, contributing members to our community. Other staff changes will be announced in our next newsletter.

On behalf of Don Christian Elementary School staff, enjoy the final days of summer. We are happy to be back and look forward to meeting your children.

Ey' swayel,  
Mr. Morrison

## Combined-grade classes: Learning together

Combined-grade classes consist of students in two consecutive grades grouped together in one class. They are common both locally and internationally, with “one out of every five Canadian students enrolled in a multi-grade classroom” according to at least one study. There is a good chance that Surrey children will have the experience of being in a combined-grade class during their elementary school years.

Organizing classes to best meet the needs of all students is a complex process. While practical factors such as shifting enrolment, class size and composition influence the formation of classes, the Surrey School District is committed to creating balanced classes that focus on students’ learning strengths and the needs of the whole child.

There are academic as well as social benefits to combined-grade classes. Studies indicate that children in combined classes do as well academically as children in single grades.

Research has shown that combined classes:

- allow students learn from one another,
- provide models for younger students,
- help older students see what they’ve already learned,
- provide opportunities for a greater range of learning,
- encourage students to work together,
- promote social responsibility,
- help students to become independent and
- foster a positive attitude toward school.

Students in combined classes are not held back to the level of younger students, nor are they expected to handle work beyond their ability. In every classroom, there is a wide range of skills and abilities. Children mature at different rates in various aspects of development. Teachers are aware of these individual differences and structure learning activities according to the needs of each learner.

Children learn continually; their intellectual, social and personal development does not occur in discrete steps according to grade level.

Studies have found that on average, a single-grade class includes students whose development spans five years. The developmental range in a combined class is not significantly different.

Within the combined class there will be children of both grade levels with similar levels of performance. Whether a child is gifted or needs considerable assistance, each will be challenged to excel as much in a combined class as he or she would be in a single-grade class.

Researchers have reported successful learning is less dependent on how students are grouped into classes, than on the quality of instructional practices.

For more information on the research into combined-grade classes, please visit the Surrey School District website: District Departments, Research and Evaluation Department, Research Currents and click on [Learning Together: Research into Combined and Multiage Classes](#).

