



**SYCAMORE LANE**  
**ELEMENTARY**  
*Roots to Grow*

69 Sycamore Lane  
Lower Sackville, NS B4C 1E8  
Phone (902) 864-6730  
Fax (902) 864-6734  
Safe Arrival (902) 864-6733  
Website <https://sle.hrce.ca/>  
Email [sles@hrce.ca](mailto:sles@hrce.ca)

## **PARENT HANDBOOK**

Principal: Janice Graham ([jgraham@hrce.ca](mailto:jgraham@hrce.ca))  
Vice Principal: Mary Middleton ([mmiddleton@hrce.ca](mailto:mmiddleton@hrce.ca))  
Administrative Assistant: Sonja Moore ([sonja.moore@hrce.ca](mailto:sonja.moore@hrce.ca))  
Counsellor: Brian Welcher ([bwelcher@hrce.ca](mailto:bwelcher@hrce.ca))

# WELCOME TO SYCAMORE LANE ELEMENTARY!

We are excited to welcome you to the Sycamore Lane Elementary 2022-23 school year. We have students in Pre-Primary to Grade 5. At SLES, we believe that positive relationships between students, staff and the community create a positive and safe environment that is conducive to student learning. On behalf of SLES staff we look forward to another fun and fulfilling school year. We invite you to collaborate with us so the educational programs at school will be enhanced and rewarding for all involved.

## USING THE HANDBOOK EFFECTIVELY

The contents of this handbook are for use by students and their parents. Some of the information is subject to change throughout the year, so parents and students should be aware of this possibility and ensure they read notices and listen to announcements. We wish you a happy, exciting and successful year. Ultimately, this handbook is only as useful as you make it. Regard it as a reference tool to consult when wondering about school policies and guidelines. The handbook is also posted on our website.

## DAILY BELL SCHEDULE



<b>7:55-8:10 am</b>	Student Arrival
<b>8:15 am</b>	Morning Instruction Begins
<b>8:20 am</b>	O'Canada & Announcements
<b>9:45-10:00 am</b>	Recess A
<b>10:00-10:15 am</b>	Recess B
<b>11:45-12:15 pm</b>	Lunch A Eat / Lunch B Out
<b>12:15-12:45 pm</b>	Lunch B Eat / Lunch A Out
<b>12:45 pm</b>	Afternoon Instruction Begins
<b>2:15 pm</b>	Student Dismissal



**Late Arrival:** Students arriving after 8:15 am should enter school via main entrance to check in at the office and receive a late slip.

**Pre-Primary Program:** hours are the same as the regular school day (8:15 am - 2:15 pm)

**School Busses:** on time if they arrive five minutes prior to the start of classes (8:10 am)

## SAFE ARRIVAL


Safe Arrival is a system which is performed together with daily school attendance-taking and parent communication to account for any student's unexplained failure to arrive at school.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for:

- Their children's safety until they arrive at school during the supervised hours and once they have left school at dismissal time.
- Reinforcing with their child(ren) that it is a family responsibility for the child(ren) to report on time to school.
- Communicating all planned student absences or lateness to the school in a timely manner prior to the start of the school day.
- Providing the school with up-to-date contact information throughout the school year
- Receiving telephone calls to confirm student safety.
- Responding promptly to messages left regarding student safety.
- Notifying the school that their child(ren) will not be in attendance on inclement weather days if the school is open.

### Using SchoolMessenger to Report Student Absence

Parents and guardians can report students absent prior to the start of the school day using SchoolMessenger.

<p><b>Call</b> 1-833-582-6940 Automated phone system</p> <p>You may be prompted to enter a phone number you provided to the school.</p>	<p><b>Website</b> <a href="https://sishrsb.ednet.ns.ca/public/">https://sishrsb.ednet.ns.ca/public/</a> SchoolMessenger icon in PowerSchool</p> <p>You will need your portal username and password, or email address you provided to the school.</p>	<p><b>App</b> SchoolMessenger Download</p>  <p>You will need your portal username, or email address you provided to the school.</p>
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## PARKING AND BUS LOOP

Sycamore Lane Elementary does not have visitor parking. The parking lot is for staff parking only. Parents are not permitted to enter the staff parking lot due to child safety concerns. Please park on the surrounding streets. Watch carefully for municipal parking signs.

The loop at the front of the school is for **BUSES ONLY**. It is a fire lane and needs to be kept clear. **There is no stopping or parking in the loop at any time.**

## VISITORS

All visitors must report to the office. If the Administrative Assistant is temporarily away from the desk, please wait in the lobby outside office door.

## **SAFE AND SECURE SCHOOL**

The staff and administration support a safe and secure environment at Sycamore Lane Elementary. Exterior doors are locked during the instructional day. Access to the school is at the front door. Please follow the posted instructions. We require that ALL VISITORS to the school, including parents, proceed directly to the office and sign in with the Administrative Assistant to indicate the purpose of their visit. Parent visits during class time are disruptive and take the attention of the teacher away from instructing students. The Administrative Assistant will make the necessary contact with the teacher, classroom, or accompany and/or direct the visitor to the appropriate area of the school. We would strongly request parental cooperation in this endeavor to maintain security within the school, and to have knowledge of any visitors and their whereabouts while in the school.

## **PERMISSION TO LEAVE THE SCHOOL**

Parents are required to advise their child's teacher in advance by email or written note when taking students out of the school during the school day. Early departure of students should be avoided whenever possible.

If you are picking your child up during recess or lunch, please sign them out at the office. Administration will have your student meet you at the front door.

## **LATE ARRIVAL**

It is reasonable to expect each student to be on time for school. Repeated lateness is a sign of disrespect and is discourteous to the rest of the students in the class. Our students need to be here on time. When students arrive late for school, they are disrupting school and classroom routines, missing out on receiving classroom instruction and important information. Arriving on time allows them the opportunity to prepare for learning by removing outdoor wear and getting their materials organized. Entrance bells ring at 7:55 am and 12:45 pm. Students should be on school grounds and ready to enter the building at those times. Students must be in their classrooms by 8:15 am and 12:45 pm. We are striving to teach our students the value of time management, punctuality, respect for others, and good citizenship. In addition, being punctual is a habit to be encouraged, especially for the future world of work. Late students may go to their class after being signed in at the office. Parents will be notified of habitual lateness.

## **STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

Students are expected to attend every day that school is in operation, unless prevented from doing so by reason of illness or some other unavoidable circumstance. When students are absent, they miss opportunities and learning experiences that cannot be recovered.

Sycamore Lane Elementary takes the following position with regard to class attendance:

- Regular attendance is essential to successful progress since many learning experiences are oral, group or 'hands on' and cannot be duplicated at home.
- Any successful attendance system requires the full cooperation of teachers, school and home.
- Parents are asked to ensure that student absences are legitimate and that the school is notified.
- Parents will receive notification of attendance concerns.
- Administration will regularly review compliance with the provincial attendance policy.
- Children who are ill should be home. This helps prevent the spread of infectious diseases and allows the student to recover in a comfortable environment. When students return to school, they must be well enough to participate in a regular school day including outside recess and lunch play.
- Parents are required to inform the school of the reason for any absence of their child(ren).
- SLES has a Safe Arrival system that will contact parents if students are absent and unexcused. Please report student absences via the Safe Arrival system prior to the start of the school day.

## **EXTENDED ABSENCES**

It is the expectation of the Halifax Regional Centre for Education that instruction occurs each day of school, and since absence from school during the term may jeopardize the student's academic and social progress, the school takes the position that extended leaves are to be avoided if at all possible. Assignments cannot be provided in advance of extended absences as students miss the instruction required and teachers adjust assignments as learning progresses. Contact your child's teacher for further information. Students absent for extended periods of time are likely to miss assessment and instruction opportunities which will affect their overall progress and evaluation for report cards. Parents are asked to consider extended holidays during school time carefully as teachers are not able to compensate for lost time. In-school instruction plays a vital role in the learning process.

## COMMUNICATION

Communication between home and school is important. Calls and emails sent to staff members will be returned within two business days. We have found through experience that when all stakeholders involved in the education of your children are communicating with each other, problems or concerns are soon addressed or prevented. Please let us know if you have a question, concern, or problem.

- Parents are encouraged to communicate with their child's teacher by sending a note in their communication folder or an email to share information or request a meeting. Teacher emails can be found on our school website under the Staff Directory.
- If you have concerns of a more general nature or if you have contacted the teacher and wish to discuss the matter further, please feel free to contact the Principal, Janice Graham.
- The school will issue a newsletter once a month to keep parents and students informed of various activities and programs.
- Report Cards will be issued three times a year. Parent/Teacher conferences are scheduled after the first and second reporting period.
- Newsletters, annual reports, school links and current information will be posted on the school website.
- In order to facilitate timely communication with minimal impact on the environment, SLES communicates electronically as much as possible. One of the ways this is done is by using a system called SwiftReach Alert. This system will communicate a message via email, text or voice message. Parents will be asked to select the method(s) they prefer.
- Notices and/or memos will be sent home electronically or posted on the website as reminders of events, deadlines or information you should be aware of between newsletters.
- The Administrative Assistant is in the office between 8:00 am – 2:30 pm. This is the best time to contact us by phone. Messages may be left on our voicemail. If you leave a message regarding dismissal arrangements for your child, please do not assume it will be acted upon unless you have spoken directly with a staff member. In the performance of her duties the Administrative Assistant is frequently out of the office and may not check voicemail until after the students depart.
- PowerSchool is a secure website where you and your child will be able to see a current standing of academic achievement, marks on individual assignments and attendance. A letter will be sent home to new parents containing access directions and availability of information in September.

## **SMOKE FREE, SCENT FREE, AND NUT AWARE**

SLES has staff and students with anaphylactic allergies to peanuts and tree nuts. Lunches or snacks that contain ANY peanuts, tree nuts, peanut butter and tree nut butter are not to be brought to school. In addition, foods which cannot easily be distinguished from the above products are not appropriate to send to school.

We ask parents and visitors to refrain from wearing scents (perfume/cologne) when coming to the school as some people have scent and environmental sensitivities.

Smoking and vaping are not permitted on school property.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Parent volunteers can enrich our classrooms and school. If you are willing to volunteer, please let us know. Child Abuse Registry and Criminal Record Check forms need to be completed for all parents to volunteer in the school or chaperone class trips. Please see Sonja Moore, our Administrative Assistant, for more information. Once completed, these checks are valid for 3 years at this school and will be kept in a school database.

## **SCHOOL DRESS**

Students need to have a change of footwear for indoor use. They are expected to wear their gym sneakers each day in school. This will assist us in keeping our school as clean as possible. Indoor shoes must be worn at all times.

Outdoor play and learning can happen in all types of weather. Students spend recess and part of their lunch outdoors unless the wind chill factor is below **-15°C** or the weather is inclement. During rainy or snowy weather, clothing can become wet or muddy at recess and lunch. You may wish to send extra clean clothing including pants, socks and mittens in your child's bag daily. Otherwise, the office may need to contact you to bring a change of clothes during the school day.

## **USE OF THE TELEPHONE**

The school telephone is a business phone. Student use of school phones is reserved for urgent reasons or emergency purposes only. Students must ask a staff member for permission to use the office phone before using it, providing an explanation as to why it is needed. Students will not be allowed to use the office phone to arrange for after-school plans, so please encourage and assist your child in making these arrangements in advance, from home. Teachers generally will NOT be called out of class to answer telephone calls. Messages will be taken and forwarded to teachers at the end of instructional time.

## **SCHOOL CLOSURES AND EARLY/EMERGENCY DISMISSAL**

The Halifax Regional Centre for Education takes great care when making the decision to alter the normal operations of schools and school buses in the event of severe or inclement weather. Parents/guardians need to have a childcare plan in place in the event of a school closure. Parents/guardians always have the right to keep their child home from school if they believe that the travelling conditions are unsuitable.

### **Full Day Closures:**

For full day closures of all or some schools, the decision will be announced as close to 6:00 am as possible. Announcements will be:

- Posted on the HRCE's website ([www.hrce.ca](http://www.hrce.ca));
- Posted on the HRCE's Twitter account (@HRCE\_NS);
- Recorded on the HRCE's School Cancellation Information Line 464-INFO (4636);
- Shared with subscribers to the HRCE's email and text notification system; and
- Communicated to local media outlets.

### **Early Closures:**

If conditions deteriorate throughout the day, schools may be closed early when weather or road conditions are considered to be a threat to the safety of students. In the event of an early school closure, the announcement will be made by 11:00 am. School buses will be dispatched to schools two hours earlier than their normal regularly scheduled pick-up for the afternoon dismissal, walking students will be dismissed at the start of their regular lunch time.

### **Delayed Openings:**

On school days when weather conditions exist that it is not safe to open schools at the regularly scheduled time, but it is predicted that conditions will improve, a 2-hour delayed opening may be considered. Delayed openings would be considered when a severe weather event has concluded but snow clearing, or other operations require additional time. Delayed opening may also be considered when the physical plant is experiencing an issue (power, water) and additional time is required to prepare the facility for opening. In the event of a delayed opening the following will apply:

- School opening will be delayed 2 hours
- School bus pick up times will be delayed 2 hours
- EXCEL childcare will be cancelled for the morning only
- Pre-Primary opening will be delayed 2 hours
- Each school will alter morning schedules to best address their timetables
- Lunch times will not change
- Afternoon class schedules will not change
- Dismissal time will not change



## **ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION**

If your child is to receive oral medication of any kind, both prescription or over the counter, the school requires a medical form of instruction from the parent regarding the illness, medication, and dispensing instructions. Medications will be kept in the office for dispensing. School staff are not able to distribute aspirin, cough drops, etc. to students.

## **MEDICAL CONCERNS**

If your child has a condition which conceivably might require emergency treatment at school such as diabetes, epilepsy or severe allergies, please be sure the school has current information. For students such as these, an emergency plan will be developed by the school and parents to be posted in key areas of the school.

## **STUDENT BUSSING**

Bus eligibility and routing are based on a student's transportation address information in PowerSchool. Once your child is registered in PowerSchool, BusPlanner Parent Portal is the best way to access and review transportation information at [hrcetransportation.mybusplanner.ca](http://hrcetransportation.mybusplanner.ca) when routing is finalized. All inquiries for bus transportation must be directed to the HRCE Transportation Team via email [transportation@hrce.ca](mailto:transportation@hrce.ca) or 902-431-HRCE (4723)

## **PERSONAL BELONGINGS AND VALUABLES**

The school cannot accept any liability for personal belongings and valuables if these items become lost, stolen, or broken. As a result, we discourage students from bringing valuables to school. Students are advised to leave electronics and toys at home. If they are brought to school, they cannot interfere with the learning in the classroom. Recess and lunch breaks are intended to encourage an active, healthy lifestyle therefore there is no use of electronics during these times.

## **CUSTODY**

If you and the other parent of your child(ren) are separated/divorced and you have legal/primary residential custody of your child(ren), we need to have a copy of your custody papers on file. Without this we are obligated to assume that both parents have equal access to your child(ren) and their records.

## **SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL (SAC)**

The School Advisory Council at SLES is composed of elected parents, teachers, and community members who strive to improve the educational programs and school climate of our school. Please contact the school if you would like to become a member.

## **EMERGENCY DRILLS**

The purpose of emergency drills is to teach students the proper procedures to follow in the unlikely event of an emergency situation. Fire Drills are practiced six times during the school year. A Lockdown Drill is practiced twice a year. A Hold and Secure Drill is practiced once a year. A Relocation Drill is practiced once during the school year. During these drills, students are expected to follow the directions of staff.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Children participate in Physical Education two or three times a week. Sneakers are a must for each gym period. Velcro closures are wonderful for small children; they are independent when putting sneakers on and there is no fear of tripping over laces. Shorts and short-sleeve t-shirts, if worn, should be worn under street clothes to facilitate ease of changing at gym time. Please be sure that your child's clothing is comfortable and easy to run and jump in everyday, not just Phys Ed days. There is a large portion of school time devoted to active learning, which demands lots of movement.

## **MUSIC**

Formal music education is provided for elementary students twice a week by the music teacher. The children enjoy having many singing games, which help introduce important concepts such as beat, rhythm, slow, fast, and high and low. Musical instruments are often used to reinforce these concepts. Movement and dance are also integral to this program. Our main goal is for children to enjoy all musical experiences and have fun while learning.

## **LIBRARY**

Once a week, students go to the school library. They borrow and return books at this time. Please try to read stories brought home by your child. Sharing books with your child creates a love of literature in your child as well as a desire to learn and read. Children also need their parents' help in remembering to return the library books each week.

## **EXCEL PROGRAM**

The EXCEL program is a fee-for-service recreational program run by the Halifax Centre for Education in elementary schools and is an option for parents who are seeking before and after school care for their children. The EXCEL program runs here at Sycamore Lane Elementary. Please visit the HRCE website ([www.hrce.ca](http://www.hrce.ca)) for more information including inquiries and registration. Click on About Schools and scroll down to find the EXCEL program link.