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Thursday, September 17, 2020

Dear parents, guardians, and caregivers:

It is hard to believe that we nearly have our first week of school under our belt in these new and unusual times. Getting back in to the regular routines of getting up early, getting dressed and coming to school, ready to listen every morning after such a prolonged time away from school has, I have no doubt, been difficult for all of us, me included.

I'd like to commend the staff and students on how well they are all adapting to the new routines and protocols put in place to satisfy the requirements put forth by the SD73 Maintaining Healthy Schools Guideline – COVID-19. There have been many changes to what school looks like: one-way hallways, no lockers or changerooms, limited number of students in the washrooms, students grouped in cohorts, seating arrangements which are fixed for longer periods of time, two different recess times, two different lunch times, staggered drop off of students in the morning and staggered pick-up of students in the afternoon, just to mention a few. Primary classes have had to change the way they do centers and we have all had to change the way we use our learning materials, as sharing a box of pencil crayons or markers is no longer considered safe. It's impossible to list all of the changes here, and it seems as though each day a new challenge presents itself requiring us to come up with a solution to keep everyone safe and healthy. A big thank-you to all of you who have been so patient as we work out all of the kinks in our new systems.

One thing you can do to help us out is to **respect your pick-up time**. If your pick-up time is 2:30, please do your best to pick up your child(ren) quickly and leave so the second wave of parents and school busses have the space to pick their child(ren) up safely. The entire purpose of staggering the drop-off and pick-up times is to minimize the congregating and mixing of students and families of different cohorts. We have gone through great pains to adhere to the guidelines to keep the groups separated during the day, only to have our efforts thwarted at 2:40 with large groups or parents coming onto the grounds to socialize. We are doing our best to keep your kids and your families safe and we need your help. If possible, please plan with your child(ren) to meet down at the parking lot so that you don't have to get out of your car to go find them. As much as we can't wait to have our entire school community back together again, on the playground and in the halls, now is not the time. These rules won't be here forever, but they need to be here for right now. I don't want to have to close the school grounds to parents, but will need to if the gathering doesn't quell.

We are still waiting to hear about if/when students will be allowed to access lockers to keep their belongings. This issue is expected to be discussed at the District level at the end of the month. In the meantime, classroom teachers have put in place their system for storing student belongings, so please connect with your child(ren)'s teacher to see what the plan is for the class. Older students who come to school with cellular phones are reminded that these are

**only to be used with teacher permission.** These cellular phones can be quite a temptation for our young people, so we ask that if they need to come to school, they need to be stored away somewhere safe. You can help as well by not texting your child(ren) during the day. If you need to get a hold of your child(ren), please call Mme Lisa at the office and she will be able to get a message to him/her/them. If your child's teacher needs to speak to your child about their phone use more than twice, the office is where the phone will need to be housed during the school day. If it's possible to keep the phone at home, that is an even better alternative, as the school is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged property.

If your child needs to get a hold of you during the day, they are to come to the office and Mme Lisa will make the call for them. They will not have access to the phone, except in special or emergency circumstances. This means that playdates and social plans need to be made outside of school time at home.

It is my hope to have our school website's calendar updated in the coming days, and this will be an excellent place to visit for current information for our school. For those of you who are new to the South Sa-Hali family, our website address is:

<https://south-sahali.sd73.bc.ca/en/index.aspx>

Because the guidelines and safety measures put in place in our District and at our school are based upon the recommendations published by the BCCDC, they are subject to change. When the BCCDC changes their regulations, so do we. In that vein, our "Acknowledgement to Complete Daily Health Check" form has been adapted by SD73. Please read this new version, as the symptoms for which your child will need to remain at home have changed. **IT IS NOT NECESSARY FOR YOU TO SIGN AND RETURN THIS NEW FORM.** *It is important that you read it, however, and follow the steps if your answer is "YES" to any of the questions.*

Our first PAC meeting will be held Thursday September 24<sup>th</sup> @ 6:30pm via Zoom. The Zoom meeting information will be sent out closer to the date. Any parent wishing to attend is welcome. If you are new to the school and wish to join their Facebook Page, search South Sa-Hali Elementary PAC. You will need to answer a couple of questions to ensure that you are indeed a parent of a child at SSES.

A big thanks to all of you who have welcomed me with "virtual" open arms. I am definitely enjoying getting to know both you and your children. I will do my best to post the current information to our website as not to flood your e-mail box, but you will continue to get fairly regular (bi-monthly or monthly) e-mails from me as the situation around us is fluid and changes frequently.

Have a wonderful evening.

Sincerely,

Susie Mabee