

Student Clubs and Extracurricular Activities Policy

Small School, Big Difference.

1 Purpose

St. Jude's Scholars' Hall is committed to providing a welcoming, inclusive, and respectful educational environment in which all students have opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities.

Student clubs are intended to enhance the school experience by encouraging shared interests, developing skills, building friendships, promoting leadership, and strengthening our school community.

As a non-denominational and multicultural school, St. Jude's Scholars' Hall recognizes that students and families represent a wide range of backgrounds, beliefs, values, and perspectives.

The school therefore requires that all officially recognized student clubs operate in a manner that is inclusive, respectful, non-partisan, and consistent with the school's educational philosophy.

2 Guiding Principles

All school-sponsored clubs must adhere to the following principles:

Inclusivity: Clubs must be open to all interested students within the appropriate age or grade levels, regardless of their personal beliefs, religion, cultural background, political opinions, identity, or other characteristics protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Shared Interests: Clubs should bring students together through common interests, recreational activities, academic pursuits, creative expression, skill development, or service to the community.

Viewpoint Neutrality: Clubs must not be established primarily to endorse, advocate for, recruit members to, or advance a particular political, religious, or social ideology.

Respect for Diversity: Students may express differing viewpoints respectfully. No student shall be required to affirm, reject, or participate in the promotion of a particular belief or ideology as a condition of club membership.

Educational Value: Clubs must contribute positively to student development and the wider school community.

3 Permitted Clubs and Activities

The school encourages clubs that emphasize participation, learning, recreation, creativity, leadership, and community involvement.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- **Academic and Intellectual Clubs:** Chess, mathematics, science, robotics, coding, creative writing, and general-interest debate.
- **Arts and Culture Clubs:** Music, theatre, photography, visual arts, film appreciation, languages, and multicultural activities.
- **Recreational and Social Clubs:** Board games, reading, gardening, outdoor activities, and hobby-based clubs.
- **Leadership and Service Clubs:** Student leadership, school improvement, community volunteering, fundraising for approved charitable causes, and environmental stewardship.

- **Athletic and Wellness Clubs:** Recreational sports, fitness, running, yoga, and other activities promoting physical and personal well-being.

These examples are illustrative rather than exhaustive. All proposed clubs are subject to administrative approval.

4 Clubs and Activities Not Permitted

To maintain an inclusive, non-partisan school environment, St. Jude's Scholars' Hall will not approve school-sponsored clubs whose primary purpose is to promote or advance a particular ideological, political, religious, or social position.

This includes:

- a) Political Advocacy Clubs** Clubs organized to support or oppose a particular political party, candidate, political movement, or political ideology.
- b) Religious Advocacy Clubs** Clubs established primarily for religious recruitment, proselytizing, or promoting adherence to a particular faith, doctrine, or religious worldview.
- c) Ideological or Social Advocacy Clubs** Clubs established primarily to advocate for or against a particular social ideology, philosophical movement, or contested social or political position.
- d) Exclusive or Discriminatory Clubs** Clubs that exclude students, impose ideological agreement as a membership requirement, or engage in activities that discriminate, harass, or undermine the dignity of others.
- e) External Advocacy Organizations** Student chapters or affiliates of outside organizations whose principal purpose is political campaigning, religious promotion, or advancement of a particular social or ideological agenda.

These restrictions apply consistently to organizations and viewpoints across the political, religious, and ideological spectrum.

5 Education Versus Advocacy

The school recognizes an important distinction between examining ideas and promoting them.

Clubs may explore political, religious, historical, cultural, philosophical, and social subjects when activities are educational, age-appropriate, and designed to encourage inquiry, critical thinking, and respectful consideration of different perspectives.

For example:

- A debate club may examine differing positions on public issues but may not operate as a campaign organization for one position.
- A world religions or cultures club may study different traditions but may not require religious participation or advocate conversion.
- An environmental club may organize recycling, gardening, and conservation projects but may not function primarily as a political lobbying organization.
- A student leadership club may discuss social issues and identify opportunities for community improvement without requiring students to adopt a particular ideological position.

Educational balance does not require treating demonstrably false claims or discriminatory conduct as equally valid perspectives.

The school's responsibility to uphold student dignity, safety, and human rights is not considered partisan or ideological advocacy.

6 Individual Beliefs and Freedom of Expression

Nothing in this policy is intended to prevent students from holding personal religious, political, philosophical, or social beliefs.

Students may respectfully express and discuss their beliefs, ask questions, disagree with others, and participate in appropriate educational discussions.

Students shall not be disadvantaged, excluded, or disciplined simply because their personal beliefs differ from those of other students or staff.

The school distinguishes between an individual's right to hold and appropriately express a belief and the school's decision whether to formally sponsor an organization dedicated to promoting that belief.

Requests for religious accommodation, disability-related accommodation, or other supports protected by applicable human rights legislation will be considered separately from the club approval process.

7 Approval of Student Clubs

All proposed clubs require approval from school administration before beginning activities or advertising membership.

Proposals must identify:

1. The proposed club name and purpose.
2. The intended activities and educational or recreational benefits.
3. The intended student age or grade levels.
4. The designated staff supervisor.
5. Any external organizations, affiliations, materials, or resources involved.

Administration will consider whether the club:

- Is accessible and welcoming to interested students.
- Serves a legitimate educational, recreational, creative, or service-oriented purpose.
- Encourages respectful participation without requiring ideological agreement.
- Is consistent with the school's philosophy and student code of conduct.
- Can be appropriately supervised and supported.

Approval is granted at the discretion of school administration, subject to applicable legislation and the consistent application of this policy.

8 Supervision and Ongoing Review

All recognized clubs must have a designated staff supervisor.

Staff supervisors are responsible for ensuring that club activities remain consistent with their approved purpose, the school's policies, and expectations of student conduct.

The school reserves the right to review, modify, suspend, or discontinue a club if its activities depart materially from its approved purpose or conflict with this policy.

When concerns arise, administration will normally provide an opportunity for the club to clarify or modify its activities before withdrawing approval, unless immediate action is necessary for student safety or well-being.

9 Administrative Authority

St. Jude's Scholars' Hall retains the authority to determine which extracurricular clubs and activities receive official school recognition, supervision, access to facilities, and other school resources.

Approval of a club does not constitute school endorsement of every opinion expressed by its members.

All decisions under this policy shall be made fairly and consistently, without discrimination, and in accordance with applicable legislation, including the Ontario Human Rights Code.

10 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically by school administration to ensure that extracurricular activities continue to reflect the school's commitment to inclusivity, educational excellence, respectful dialogue, and a positive school community.

Effective Date: To be determined

Approved By: School Administration