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St. Margaret’s School offers entrance scholarships for deserving students in grades 5–8. Up to three scholarships, $5,000/year for the Middle Years. www.stmarg.ca/admissions

The Importance of Environment
Our small-scale learning environment provides teachers with the flexibility to personalize learning for each student. Regular teacher collaboration time enhances student learning and informs us of individual interests and needs.

We recognize that learning occurs at different times and in different ways. Our learning environment respects and responds to the diversity that exists amongst our students and supports the development of each girl. If a student is struggling, she will receive added support; if she is excelling, she will be provided with opportunities to stretch herself further. Our teachers consider the best approach for each student and address her learning needs together, through personalized learning plans. We challenge each girl to improve her own performance, exceed her own expectations, and realize her own potential.

Learning at SMS extends beyond the classroom. Experiential programs provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge, take on positions of responsibility and leadership, and develop a desire and a passion for making a difference.

The Benefits of an All-Girls School for the Middle Years
Research has shown that the preteen years are pivotal in a girl’s life. A significant drop in self-esteem often happens between ages 10 and 15 as girls hit puberty, affecting their self-image, confidence, happiness, and level of achievement. An all-girls environment is uniquely positioned to focus on the needs of girls at this period of change in their young lives. The advantages of choosing St. Margaret’s School for the Middle Years are multi-fold:

• Challenges & Support: SMS teachers can tailor their teaching to match the way girls learn, resulting in an environment where girls become powerful learners.

• Building Courage: Studies show anxiety is felt much more keenly among girls, but we know that developing grit and perseverance is key to long-term success. Girls’ schools provide extra opportunities for girls to take risks, succeed, and also fail in a supportive environment where mistakes are not a hindrance and girls are encouraged to try again. By focusing attention on this common area of weakness, girls develop the courage needed to meet the challenges of learning and work towards ambitious goals.

• Confidence: Girls are less self-critical and less self-conscious in an all-girl environment. They are more likely to take a guess or offer an answer, and less worried about being wrong. Girls develop strong voices by practising self-advocacy in our student-drive culture.

• Girls will be Girls: Girls here say what they mean, mean what they say, and have the freedom to truly be themselves – which allows for more meaningful learning to take place. At a girls’ school, time in the classroom is time spent learning.

• Not just equal opportunity, but every opportunity: Girls’ schools are ‘can do’ environments where girls have the freedom to be daring, experiment, test their skills, and explore non-traditional roles.

• Girls know their worth and their potential: Girls’ schools give girls more options about what a young woman can be and aspire to. Girls are surrounded by a community that reinforces their abilities and fosters a strong sense of confidence.

“I could not think of a better school environment for my daughter if I dreamed it up myself.”
- PARENT OF A GRADE 7 STUDENT

• STEM Learning happens naturally on our 22-acre campus
• Outdoor Education challenges girls to step outside their comfort zone, build confidence, and connect with nature and their peers
• Big Sister/Little Sister program provides mentorship to younger students and instills a sense of leadership and responsibility in older girls. All benefit from inter-age connections.

• Service & Leadership opportunities by partnering with local organizations
• Extracurricular Activities include cross country, volleyball, swimming, basketball, badminton, soccer, cycling, track & field, triathlon, intramurals, green club, outreach club, art club, math competition/Challengers, rock band, song writing, robotics, and more!
Our Middle Years Program
Grades 5–8 at SMS

“*We love that every day she sees that girls can do everything.*” - PARENT OF A GRADE 6 STUDENT

The Middle Years Program at St. Margaret’s School (SMS) engages students in Grades 5 – 8 in a unique set of learning opportunities while maintaining the benefit of connections in a JK–Grade 12 environment. We provide our girls with the foundations for success: challenges to excel, experiences that inspire, and preparation for the future.

Our Middle Years teachers are a dedicated group of educators who bring a wide range of expertise and interests to the group, and who thrive in guiding and mentoring students in these grades. This is a cohesive program that builds upon the foundations of early years learning and develops incrementally towards the greater independence and flexibility of choices in Grades 9 through 12. Teachers and other Middle Years staff work together daily to plan out cross curricular, leadership and service opportunities for our girls, whose needs in timetabling, course offerings, teacher contact, and social and emotional development are uniquely different from their younger and older peers.

Students have embraced the program, noting that the highlights for them include making connections between subject areas, the exposure to a diverse range of learning activities and teachers, the opportunity to work alongside students at different grade levels, and the creativity and ingenuity that they are able to demonstrate in the Innovation block*.

Innovation is a regularly scheduled block in the timetable. This period of “structured independence” allows students to pursue individual passions, practise skills for lifelong learning and focus on improvement in personal areas of challenge.
The Importance of Environment

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**FAQ: Why start at Grade 5?**

Inclusion of Grade 5 students in a Middle Years Program benefits both students and teachers:

**Physical:** young adolescents are maturing at an earlier age and as such benefit from early inclusion in the middle school grouping.

**Social:** addresses need for socialization and interaction with peers.

**Individualized Learning:** teams of teachers are able to offer differentiation and a variety of grouping patterns for learners.

**Guidance:** assisting students on a personal level, both as individuals and small groups.

**Developmental Nature of Programming:** flexible scheduling and varied instructional methods benefit this age group.

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"The school is a wonderfully tight knit community where all the families know each other and all look out for one another. With small class sizes and wonderful teachers, the girls flourish into self-confident, articulate, self-reliant individuals. My daughter loves this school and is thriving here."  
- PARENT OF A GRADE 5 STUDENT

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**Girl-centred; Future-focused**

All aspects of the Middle Years program draw on techniques to engage pre-adolescent and early adolescent girls to develop skills and encourage connections between subjects for deeper learning. This influences how curriculum is taught, but also determines how the teaching team approaches their work together, placing emphasis on collaboration to achieve best outcomes. Connections between subjects are enhanced by:

- Leveraging the unique ways in which girls learn best
- Supporting the students as they mature physically, psychologically, socially, intellectually and morally
- Addressing individual learning needs
- Scheduling is flexible and dynamic
- Engaging in inquiry, critical thinking and reflection
- Sparking creativity and curiosity
- Learning to lead
- Pursuing technological literacy
- Promoting cross-cultural understanding

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"There is a greater variety of people and personalities. I have friends from all over the world and I’m learning about different cultures and languages."  
- GRADE 8 BOARDING STUDENT
Program Enrichment

For Grades 5 & 6 students the Middle Years Program adds value:

- Increased interaction with specialized faculty
- A diverse range of curricular programming

This approach offers Grades 7 & 8 students:

- Focused attention on the development of study habits and time management skills
- Preparation and readiness for the Senior Years (our high school program), while incrementally giving students greater independence and choice.

For all students:

- Personalized learning including our “Innovation” block
- Regular access to technology as a learning tool
- Access to high school facilities and programs
- Required participation in extra-curricular activities
- Leadership and service learning
- Extending the learning experience beyond the classroom and into the community

Specialist Instruction

Students benefit from specialist instruction in all major subject areas starting in Grade 5:

- Humanities: English/Social Studies
- STEM: Science/Technology/Engineering/Mathematics
- French, Spanish and Japanese
- Physical Education
- Choral and Instrumental Music
- Art
- Life Skills: Culinary Arts, Textiles, Woodworking, Study Habits, Peer Relations and Wellness
- Choice Block (Students choose an elective, including Innovation, Robotics, Musical Theatre, or Discussion & Debate)
- Learning Support & Guidance Counsellor

“I know with confidence that [my daughter] is safe, happy and being nurtured like she is one of the family. The teachers and staff at SMS are exceptional and I have never had more respect for teachers since knowing those at St. Margaret’s. The SMS community of girls, staff and families is unparalleled.”  - PARENT OF A GRADE 6 STUDENT
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