

Middle School

Middle School

VIEWBOOK



St. Michaels
University School

Welcome to St. Michaels University School!

Hi, my name is Meheq, and I have attended SMUS since Grade 6. Ever since I arrived I have been growing into a better person. I have gained so much self confidence and many other qualities through different opportunities; opportunities in athletics, arts, leadership, service and academics that I didn't know existed at a school before I joined the SMUS community.

I'm Elliott and I have attended SMUS since Kindergarten. One of the main reasons that my family and I choose SMUS is the importance the school puts on the arts. Participating in jazz and honours band as well as choir and school musicals are great opportunities for me to work with other people and improve my performance skills.

We both believe that the wide variety of experiences you get as a student here will broaden your horizons and give you many chances to make friends.

Leadership and service hold great importance in the SMUS community. Throughout the year, Middle School students go out into the community in small groups and participate in service activities like helping at the Mustard Seed Food Bank, preparing meals at a soup kitchen and working with underprivileged kids. In terms of leadership options, there are things like student ambassadors and WEB leaders and the student conference committee. The school helps students to recognize their own strengths, step out of their comfort zones, and gain skills and qualities that will assist us in the future.

The school's inclusivity and diverse opportunities are what make it so special. We're so glad that we are given the chance to attend such a fantastic school. There really is something for everyone and that is why we think you will love it here!

Meheq & Elliott



St. Michaels University School

St. Michaels University School is an independent, not-for-profit day (Kindergarten to Grade 12) and boarding (Grades 8 to 12) school located in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. This viewbook provides an overview of the Middle School (Grade 6 to 8) program and experience. All information is current as of publication in August 2021.

Our Mission

Our school seeks the excellence in all of us, with passion and compassion. We are a community shaped by the pursuit of truth and goodness, providing outstanding preparation for life.

Our Vision

To learn, to lead, to serve.

Our Values

Respect | Courage | Honesty | Service

We acknowledge that our school rests in the heart of Straits Salish territory, a living culture with its own rites, ceremonies and unfolding history. We honour the Esquimalt, Songhees and WSÁNEĆ peoples, whose homelands we share and whom we recognize as our neighbours.

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Key Features of the Middle School

Middle School is an important time in the lives of children. It's the age when they start to depend on their parents less; they become more independent and friends become more influential. They gain an increasing sense of self, of strengths and weaknesses, and of their place in society.

The Middle School is designed to assist students as they go through this transition. In partnership with our parent community, SMUS recognizes the pressures on adolescents. We have created a school that nurtures our students and supports them in becoming accomplished, confident and empathetic young adults.

You will find more about the Middle School program and the life of the school in the following pages but before you get there, here are eight key features of the SMUS Middle School you should know.

“

Middle School is when you'll see some of the biggest changes in your life and we love being there to support you as you grow. It's a really exciting time for you because this is when you start becoming more independent and you'll get to start making choices around the type of person you want to be.

- Mr. Zyoji Jackson, Math & Science teacher

”

Ideal Middle School Size

Research shows that a high level of adult guidance is critical to the social and emotional development of adolescents. For this reason, we keep the Middle School population at about 215 students. This means we can provide a high ratio of teachers to students, keep class sizes small and form a close-knit and supportive community where everybody knows each other.

Values

When you visit the SMUS Middle School you will see and hear four words repeated throughout: respect, courage, honesty and service. We call these our Values and they are at the heart of everything we do. Students often reflect on the Values and assess their own progress – academically and socially – using them.

Character Development

Leading on from the Values, the Middle School years are when students become more independent and reflect on the type of person they want to be. Central to this is the idea of empathy and it's why we place great emphasis on leadership and service programs (see page 10). Students at SMUS take on responsibilities not because they have to, but because they understand the importance of giving back to their community.

Exploring and Taking Risks

Middle School is the perfect age for students to try new things and at SMUS we both encourage and support them. The program and opportunities at the Middle School are designed to allow students to jump in and expand their world, from learning a new instrument to 3D modelling. We also have Exploratory, a regularly scheduled class specifically for this type of activity, which gives students the chance to try new areas of interest (see page 7).

Experiential Education

Students learn not just from textbooks but from experience too. We call this experiential education. At the Middle School, this is made real through project-based learning, where students are encouraged to follow their own curiosity and work to answer a driving question from a real-world scenario. Projects are often cross-disciplinary and involve experts from outside our community. For example, each year Grade 6 students work with city planners to tackle a real-life urban planning problem.

Personalized Learning

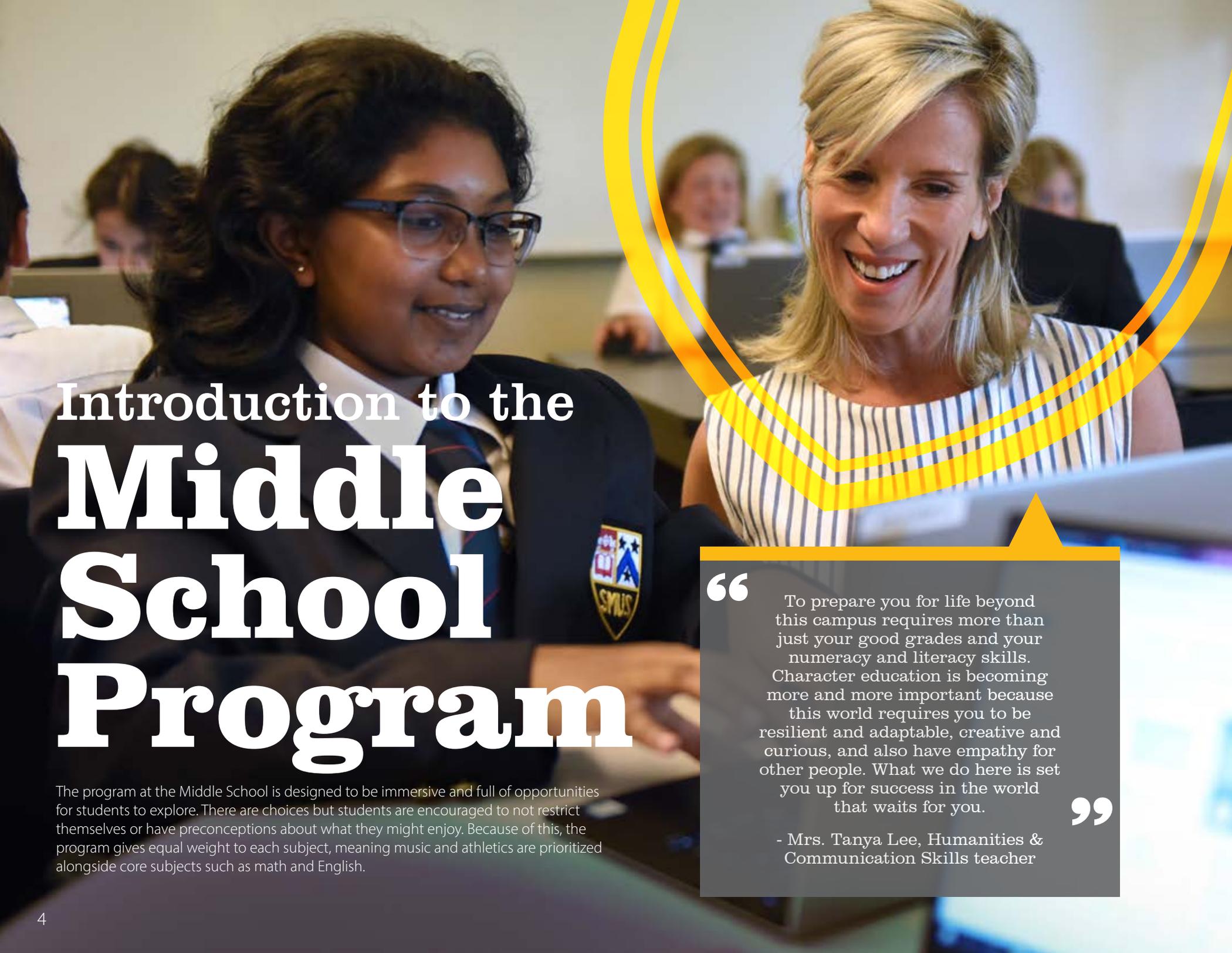
SMUS is a leader in personalization. What does this mean? It means a SMUS education is tailored to each student: their strengths, their weaknesses and their interests. In conjunction with personalization, the school focuses on developing seven important characteristics known as the Portrait of a Learner. These seven qualities (curiosity, resilience, integrity, balance, initiative, collaboration and empathy) are a framework by which students develop into lifelong learners.

No Phone Zone

SMUS is deeply invested in classroom technology but we do not allow cellphones at the Middle School. In our experience, cellphones are a distraction, especially at an age when young people are still developing the skills to use them responsibly. Without cellphones and other devices, our students spend their lunch hours kicking a ball on the field, playing chess, reading and – most importantly for development – socializing with one another.

A Love of Learning

The adolescent years can be the time when young people lose their natural curiosity and joy of learning. At SMUS, we work hard to ensure that this doesn't happen and that our supportive community continues to foster a love of learning that will serve our students well both at the Senior School and beyond.



Introduction to the Middle School Program

The program at the Middle School is designed to be immersive and full of opportunities for students to explore. There are choices but students are encouraged to not restrict themselves or have preconceptions about what they might enjoy. Because of this, the program gives equal weight to each subject, meaning music and athletics are prioritized alongside core subjects such as math and English.

“

To prepare you for life beyond this campus requires more than just your good grades and your numeracy and literacy skills. Character education is becoming more and more important because this world requires you to be resilient and adaptable, creative and curious, and also have empathy for other people. What we do here is set you up for success in the world that waits for you.

”

- Mrs. Tanya Lee, Humanities & Communication Skills teacher



Students work on projects that ask important questions and have real-life relevance



Middle School encourages students to think about the impact they can make on their community and the world



SMUS puts a high priority on the arts and all students take at least three arts courses

Academic Approach

The academic program at the Middle School is a rigorous inquiry-based learning style, where students are asked big questions. In the 21st century where content is at everyone's fingertips, the focus in a progressive school like SMUS is to go in depth and give students opportunities to be creative and use that knowledge. For example, a traditional approach might ask students to practise angles from a textbook, a SMUS approach would be for them to go outside and "build a house" using their newly acquired knowledge of geometry.

This goes hand-in-hand with project-based learning. Project-based learning means giving students a real-life problem to solve and often bringing in experts from the community to act as consultants. This type of learning gives meaning to the students' work. They can see how what they're learning is applied to help solve problems in their community.

Supporting this approach is teacher collaboration. The traditional subject barriers do not apply well to the real world, so teachers work in cross-disciplinary teams. When students are working on a project, they can do so from different perspectives and with multiple learning opportunities. For example, a project on the Yukon Gold Rush might bring together geography, history, science, drama and technology.

Communicating Student Learning

At the Middle School, there are a few important differences about how we communicate student learning that set us apart and encourage academic rigour.

Reflection

Students regularly reflect on their learning and their experiences at the Middle School. The benefits of reflection are two-fold. First, reflection allows them to better remember what they've learned. Second, reflecting on their experiences is tied directly with their identity and how they fit into the community, which is crucial at this stage of their development.

No Letter Grades

Students at the Middle School don't receive letter grades or percentages on projects, exams, work or report cards. Research shows that letter grades limit a student's potential because they fixate on the letter and ignore any feedback they receive. Instead of letter grades, report cards list learning outcomes and how well students are doing related to each outcome, along with feedback from teachers. With this information, students get into a mindset of "this is what I can do to improve." They find out exactly where they are, where they need to go and how to get there.

Student-Teacher-Parent Conferences

As we want students to use feedback from teachers to set goals, it's important that they are involved in the discussion every step of the way. Student-Teacher-Parent (STeP) Conferences put students at the centre of the conversation by having them directly involved. STeP conferences focus on how well students are developing life skills such as resilience and curiosity. Students take ownership of their learning and set goals with the support of their parents and teachers.

Supporting Learners

We use a personalized approach to support students' learning. Teachers get to know each student and their goals individually, and observe when they might need help or need to be pushed more. In addition, the Learning Resource team provides students with support that may be required to ensure their success at the school.



Middle School Courses

The following courses are required in Grades 6, 7 and 8:

- Career Education
- Choir
- Digital Learning and Literacy
- Exploratory
- French
- Humanities (English and Social Studies)
- Mandarin (Grade 6)
- Math
- Physical and Health Education
- Science
- Visual Art

For these required courses, students choose:

- One music course – Band or Strings
- One additional language (Grades 7 and 8) – Mandarin, Communication Skills or Computer Science (Programming and Robotics)

The Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies curriculum is integrated throughout various subject areas, and adds experiential and hands-on learning tailored to each grade level.



Students regularly enter academic competitions, like Concours d'arts oratoire and mathlete challenges



“ The best thing about Exploratory is you can try something you’re interested in that you’ve never done before. I chose cooking, woodworking and sewing because I thought it’d be fun to learn skills in Exploratory that can be used in your everyday life. Whatever Exploratory class seems interesting to you, you should pick that one because it’s going to be fun no matter what!

- Alyssa

Humanities (English and Social Studies)

English and social studies are taught together so students can draw connections between the two subjects. The course covers a broad range of both English and social studies topics that include poetry, book studies, the environment and current events. In Grade 8, for example, students choose a social injustice issue to research. They then create action plans, shoot videos and write presentations to help raise awareness of a cause.

Science and Math

Science and math are integrated whenever possible, often with the same teachers teaching both subjects. The learning style is highly interactive with labs and real-world application of ideas and concepts, often around a project, topic or wider question. For example, Grade 6 students learning about Newton’s laws of motion design race cars and use their knowledge of mass, force, acceleration, measurement of angles and distance travelled to better understand how these laws apply (see the cover of this viewbook for an example).

Languages and Computer Science

At SMUS, languages are important and not just for the opportunity to become multilingual. There are many benefits in cultural awareness and having a global outlook. Languages also help develop confidence, as our students are often asked to put their language skills into practice through public speaking. For many of our students, Mandarin is a new experience and its unfamiliarity is excellent for their cognitive development.

In addition to English, Middle School students take two language courses each year. All students take French. Grade 6 students take Mandarin and in Grades 7 and 8, students get a choice between Mandarin, communication skills and computer science.

Communication skills focuses on oral presentation skills, including a solid understanding of the principles of debate, discussion and performance. Topics explored may include public speaking, drama and recitation, as well as resumé preparation and job interviews.

Computer science takes a more in-depth look at information technology and includes coding. Robotics is a popular part of the computer science class.

Exploratory

Exploratory is a class within the school schedule where learning something new is mandatory! Students try new things, pursue their passions and explore something that may pique their interest. Classes are also cross-grade, which gives the older students a chance to model leadership for the younger grades. Students choose four Exploratory units each year and each unit is 10 or 12 classes.

Some Exploratory units include:

- Bike Repair
- Biography
- Broadcasting
- Calligraphy
- Cooking
- Filmmaking
- Forensic Science
- Gardening
- Grade 8 Leadership Conference Planning
- Photography
- Robotics
- Survival Skills
- Ukulele
- Woodworking



Middle School Courses

Arts

At SMUS, we believe strongly in the value of arts education and therefore as part of the school schedule all students take choir and visual art. They also get to choose between playing in the strings orchestra or concert band.

There is no shortage of creative outlets for students. They can take advantage of our music, theatre and visual arts opportunities both as part of the curriculum and as extracurricular activities.

The biennial musical production will be a highlight of their time at the Middle School. It brings together actors, singers, dancers, set-builders, musicians and more to put on a huge three-day show at a major theatre in downtown Victoria.



All students go on tech-free overnight outdoor trips

Outdoor Education

The outdoor education program makes the most of our location on Vancouver Island and provides tech-free time for students to develop outdoor skills, gain an appreciation for nature and learn about Indigenous culture. When possible, teachers use the outdoor environment as a classroom.

Middle School students also take part in overnight outdoor trips once a year. Grade 6 and 7 students go to a local camp to try many different activities. Grade 8 students go on more focused outtrips where they get to choose one activity of interest: canoeing, rock climbing, fly-fishing, surfing, kayaking or hiking.



Physical education classes incorporate team sports and non-traditional activities like water polo

Athletics

Athletics at the Middle School emphasizes participation, fair play and healthy living. Our goals – through physical education, and competitive and recreational sports – are to provide a variety of opportunities, create positive athletic experiences and prepare athletes for sports at the Senior School.

Grade 8 students take a one-of-a-kind physical education course called Experiential PE (X-PE). The goal of X-PE is to introduce students to physical activities that aren't in a traditional physical education class like water polo, martial arts, curling, golf, gymnastics and more.

Team Sports

At SMUS, students test their skills against other schools in local sports leagues and sometimes against teams from across Canada. They receive expert coaching and training to grow and improve as athletes.

Sports offered at the Middle School:

- Badminton
- Basketball
- Cross Country
- Field Hockey
- Fitness and Conditioning
- Rugby
- Sailing
- Soccer
- Squash
- Swimming
- Track and Field
- Volleyball



Learning tech skills such as coding and robotics is part of our computer science course

Digital Learning and Literacy

The Middle School years are when SMUS students develop their confidence with the digital tools that they will need for the Senior School and beyond.

The Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies curriculum is embedded in class projects so students learn to use technology and practise their skills in the context of a wider topic. For example, Grade 6 students learning about outer space will learn coding skills and how to use 3D modelling software to build digital models of the solar system.

All students take a digital learning and literacy course where they develop skills in technology use, research and online etiquette. Additionally, Grade 7 and 8 students can take computer science as a language course.



Student Life

Being a SMUS student is about more than just academics. Our school is a warm and welcoming community, and students build lasting friendships through experiences in and out of the classroom.

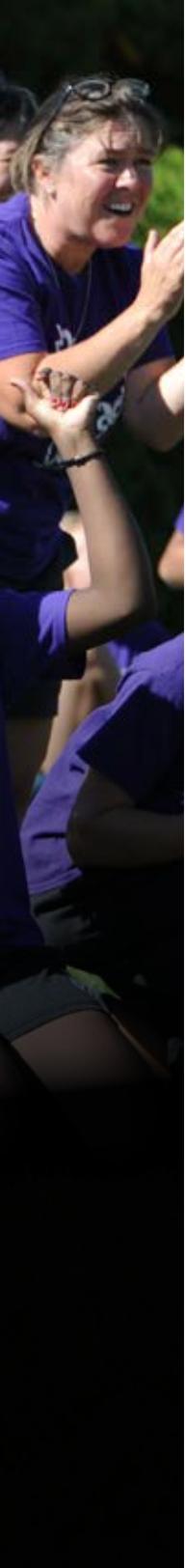
At SMUS, students are comfortable knowing they can be who they are while being surrounded by accepting and like-minded people. Our teachers know each student on a personal level, and everyone here wants to see students grow and succeed.

Clubs and Councils

Students have many opportunities to get involved in activities they're passionate (or curious) about, such as:

- Art Club
- Book Club
- Eco-Warriors
- Garden Club
- Leadership Council
- LEGO Robotics Club
- Marine Science Club
- Math Challengers
- Media Club
- Model UN
- Technology Club
- World Scholars Cup

If students have an interest that isn't a current club, they can propose their own!



Middle and Senior School students can eat their meals in the Sun Centre dining hall



Student WEB leaders provide a friendly face and support for new classmates



Grade 8 students plan an annual leadership conference and invite students from other schools

Leadership and Service

Middle School is when adolescents develop a sense of who they are and their place in the world. Alongside this, it's an important time to foster empathy and learn where they can make things better and help people who are less fortunate than themselves.

Leadership

Being a leader and taking responsibility are vital life skills that are actively taught at SMUS from Kindergarten through to Grade 12. We give students challenging opportunities to hone the skills that make for a good leader: teamwork, communication, encouragement and decision-making.

Examples of leadership activities include joining a school council and planning the annual Grade 8 Leadership Conference. The Middle School leadership program culminates in the chance to become a WEB leader. WEB stands for Where Everybody Belongs. WEB leaders are positive role models in the school who help guide new Middle School students to success.

Service

Service is one of the SMUS Values (see page 3) and a desire to help others is an important part of being a SMUS student. Students work to make a difference in our community throughout the year to benefit local, national and international charities, and gain an understanding of the importance of giving back. Examples of service activities include the Halloween We Scare Hunger food drive and supporting environmental initiatives such as ocean clean-ups as part of gradewide service days.

Recess and Meals

The Middle School is a cellphone-free zone, so students spend their recess and lunch times playing, socializing and getting fresh air outside. Middle and Senior School students eat in our Sun Centre dining hall. Students have access to healthy and hot options at every meal, alongside a full salad bar, fruits, cereals and more. The kitchen staff will also work with students if they have allergies or dietary restrictions.

Health and Wellness

SMUS has a well-equipped, on-campus Health Centre, where nurses are on duty to provide medical assistance and a doctor comes to campus for appointments. Our students' mental health is as important as their physical health, and staff at SMUS are committed to providing the individual support each student needs. Students have confidential support from our school counselling team, and every morning and afternoon they meet with their Teacher Advisor Group (TAG), which is similar to homeroom. TAG teachers know their students academically and personally, so they stay on top of their academic progress and their engagement outside of the classroom on an individual basis.

Chapel

As a non-denominational school, SMUS welcomes all faiths and beliefs. Students come together in a weekly gathering in the school Chapel to reflect, listen and learn from other cultures, and build community. Chapel is highly participatory so that students don't just learn in theory but have opportunities to reflect on what good habits and practices might be in action supported by the school Values and other character education initiatives.

Journey to Senior School

“

I was a bit nervous moving from Grade 8 to Grade 9, but I actually found it to be a pretty good transition. You really don't need to worry. The Middle School prepares you so much for the Senior School that it's not hard to make the change. Know that everyone wants you to do your best, and that the teachers and your peers are there to support you the whole time.

”

- Firinne

A SMUS education prepares students for what comes after graduation. We believe the more time students spend at SMUS, the more able they are to tackle what comes after Grade 12. Our program – from grade to grade – is designed as a journey where students build upon the learning and skills they gained in years prior.

Preparation for Senior School

While the Middle School years are about challenge, independence and character, they also help prepare students for the Senior School. The academic rigour, leadership opportunities and skill development that students focus on in Grades 6-8 serve them well at the Senior School and beyond.

Students leave the Middle School knowing who they are as learners and how to take ownership of their learning. They know where they excel, where they need support, how to set learning goals and – most importantly – how to communicate that to their teachers. These skills, along with a deep love of learning, are crucial as post-secondary goals become clearer at the Senior School.

The Middle and Senior Schools are on the same campus and share many of the same facilities, so the physical transition to Grade 9 is easy. To help with the academic transition, students start meeting with their Grade 9 advisor in the middle of their Grade 8 year to discuss course selections and to ask questions about the coming school year.

Grade 12 student leaders also provide a friendly face to new Grade 9s. Like the WEB leaders (*see page 10*), Link Leaders help students new to the Senior School get the inside scoop on being a Grade 9 student.

You can find out more about Senior School and Grade 9 on our website and from our Senior School viewbook, available from the Admissions team.



Alexis, Kevin, Michael and Linda

Thank you for considering St. Michaels University School.

Choosing a school is an important decision and we hope this viewbook has answered your biggest questions. The Admissions team is here to guide you through the application process. Please contact us at any time if we can assist you.

We look forward to connecting soon.

The SMUS Admissions office

Phone: 1-250-592-2411
Toll-free in North America: 1-800-661-5199
Email: admissions@smus.ca
Web: smus.ca/admissions

Annual Giving

We can offer many of the opportunities in this viewbook because of the generous donations to our Annual Appeal by parents, alumni, staff and friends. Our students benefit every day from this community giving. If you join our school, you will be asked to contribute at a level that's meaningful to you and your family. As a not-for-profit organization, we thank you for your support.



Student success is at the heart of everything we do. Learn more about our approach through Floreat, the school's 2020-2030 strategic plan, at floreat2030.ca.

How to Apply to St. Michaels University School

In order to benefit most from a SMUS education, we recommend applying to Middle School for Grade 6.

At Middle School, we have a rolling admissions process, which means there is no deadline to apply. However, demand for places at our school is high. Students are only able to start at SMUS at the beginning of the school year in September. We strongly recommend you apply at least 10 months in advance.

Step 1: Complete an online application

You apply to St. Michaels University School on our website using the Online Application Centre. Start at smus.ca/apply and follow the instructions.

You will be asked to provide documentation that includes report cards, teacher references, transcripts and a verification of citizenship. There is an application fee of \$250.

Step 2: Interview and testing

Your application is reviewed by the Admissions team, who invite select candidates to visit the school for standardized testing and interviews. For international families who are unable to travel to SMUS, Admissions can sometimes make alternative arrangements for testing and interviewing, however we recommend you visit the campus as a family.

Step 3: Admissions notifies you of the decision

If you receive an offer of admission, you will need to accept the offer by the deadline provided by the Admissions office. To accept the offer and hold your place, you will also pay a non-refundable registration fee.

Boarding for Grade 8 Students

SMUS offers Grade 8 boarding. Grade 8 boarders live on campus alongside their older housemates from Grades 9 to 12 and are fully integrated into the boarding program. Contact the Admissions team for more information and read more about boarding at SMUS on our website.

Financial Aid and Scholarships

SMUS offers both financial aid and scholarships. More information including conditions and deadlines to apply is available on the website.

Financial aid is confidential, needs-based and open to all students. Last year, approximately \$2.8 million was awarded annually in financial aid and scholarships to assist more than 20% of the student body. If you feel the cost of a SMUS education is prohibitive, you should ask about financial aid.

Scholarships are merit-based. SMUS offers a limited number of entrance scholarships for boarding students. To learn more visit our website.

Fees

Fees at St. Michaels University School include tuition, textbooks and transportation costs for our clubs and teams, and for boarding students, it also includes accommodation and care in residence, meals, laundry and access to 24-hour nursing. We also advise budgeting for additional expenses (e.g., uniform, optional trips, and technology). You can find more information on our website or ask the Admissions team.

The cost of a SMUS education varies by the location of the primary residence, as do the options for paying your fees. Please see the website for further information.

2021-22 Fees

Below are the Middle School fees for the 2021-22 year. Fees for the 2022-23 year will be available in January 2022. Historically, Annual fee increases have been of 5%.

Location of Primary Residence	Program	
	Day	Boarding
British Columbia	\$24,080	\$57,595
North America	\$29,925	\$63,460
International	\$43,995	\$75,360



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St. Michael's
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2021-22