

**HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS
KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION PROGRAM**

***HOLY SPIRIT ROMAN CATHOLIC
SEPARATE SCHOOL DIVISION***

**620 12th Street B North
Lethbridge, Alberta T1H 2L7**
Phone: (403) 327-9555 Fax: (403) 327-9595
www.holyspirit.ab.ca

All
God's
Children

Excellence
in
Learning

Sacramentality

Our
Collaborative
Community

Ministry

Stewardship

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HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

MISSION STATEMENT



*We are a Catholic Faith Community
Dedicated to providing each student*

Entrusted to our care,

With an education

*Rooted in the Good News of
Jesus Christ.*

Guided by the Holy Spirit,

Our schools in partnership

With home, parish and society,

Foster the growth of responsible citizens

Who will live, celebrate and

Proclaim their faith.

Our Catholic faith is the foundation

Of all that we do.

PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE

The Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 4 is building a Catholic Christian Community using the gospel values of faith, hope and love.

We honor our children.

Our schools are child-centered communities. We celebrate each student as a unique child of Christ through our love, care and respect.

We value our staff.

Our staff members are an integral part of our community and we affirm their ministry and life long journey.

We provide a safe and secure environment.

Children feel safe and secure in our schools. We provide an environment of belonging for all children through gospel-centered communities of hope.

We live and proudly proclaim our Catholic Christian faith.

Our faith permeates our thoughts, words and deeds as we model Jesus, serving children first.

We provide quality education in a Catholic environment.

Our schools maintain high standards of academic achievement while fostering life long faith development.

We are a prayerful education community.

Our Catholic Christian education system reflects the communion of home, school, and church, providing daily opportunities for prayer and celebration of our faith.

Our staff practices servant-leadership.

Our staffs are committed members of our faith community who serve the family, school, and church.

Clarity of purpose focuses us on our mission.

Our Catholic Christian faith is clearly and consistently communicated and supports our unique and distinct ministry.

“Catholic Education: Making a Difference”

WELCOME



Dear Parents and Caregivers:

Welcome to Holy Spirit Catholic Schools! Thank you for joining us for your child's new journey – the beginning of his or her formal education. This is an important event for your child and also for you as parents.

This handbook provides general information about the kindergarten program, which has been designed to help your child grow academically, socially and spiritually. We encourage you to use this resource to help you and your child make a smooth transition from home to school.

Parents are the most important teachers of their children, and also provide support in dealing with new situations. When teachers and parents work together, children thrive in school and amazing progress can be made.

You are a very important part of your child's educational team!

KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM INFORMATION

Starting Age

Any child who is five years of age on or before December 31st may enter kindergarten in September of that year. Parents are asked to register their child at the school office and to have available the child's birth certificate for the registration process. Kindergarten programs are offered Monday through Thursday. Please check with your local school for program start and end times. All Holy Spirit Catholic School Division Kindergarten Programs exceed the 475 required programming hours.

Program Curriculum

Holy Spirit Catholic Schools offer kindergarten programs following the curriculum developed by Alberta Education. It is based on the following beliefs:

- Children develop at different rates, and kindergarten provides learning experiences that meet individual needs.
- Young children are naturally curious and eager to learn, and they benefit from developing positive relationships with others, including children of their own age.
- Parents are the first and most important teachers of their children.

Purposeful play is an important mode of learning for children. Children at play are highly motivated and capable of intense concentration. Through organized activities and purposeful play, children explore & experiment with their environment. They clarify and integrate information and concepts encountered in their previous experiences.

Your child will develop skills in the following areas:

Environment and Community Awareness

Early Literacy

Citizenship and Identity

Personal and Social Responsibility

Early Numeracy

Creative Expression

Physical Skills and Well-being

- Each of these areas has specific learning objectives.
- Children are unique in their development in these areas.
- These domains of growth are interconnected.
- Learning in kindergarten complements and continues the work that is done at home.
- Children can be in different stages of development in each of these areas.
- Delays in these areas are identified and receive early intervention.



SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

In Catholic schools, children are affirmed and encouraged as they make their journey toward God and greater participation in the Church.

A young child's way of being religious is to play, to be creative, to be curious, and to express wonderment. Through these natural childhood activities, children explore traces of God; the "marks" of God that are present all around them as they grow, learn and experience life. The essence of children's spirituality is their response to life.

In the uninhibited excitement that kindergarten children feel toward nature, they are drawn toward a loving Creator. Their experiences of God are gained through the senses rather than through intellectual explanations.

Young children come to know Jesus through their experiences of seeing people valued and celebrated. They recognize themselves first, and then their families, friends and classmates, as made in God's image. Later, they are able to experience Jesus as the perfect image and likeness of God.

In a Catholic school, the spiritual development of a child in kindergarten occurs through activities that are affective, to support positive feelings toward themselves and others; and sensory, to relate directly to the good things that God has created. All children are valued as unique members of God's family.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In our Kindergarten classrooms in Holy Spirit School Division, the primary resource for our religious education program in recent years has been the “In God’s Image” program from the Born of the Spirit series. This program was produced by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. It continues to be excellent for meeting the affective needs of our Kindergarten children through its emphasis on the five senses.

Kindergarten teachers may also use the Nelson Catholic Seasons Kit as their main resource for religious instruction. This program is based on the liturgical calendar of our Church and uses natural seasons to portray concepts.

Our aim, with both programs, is to ensure our Kindergarten children are involved in the festive celebration of the Christian story as it unfolds throughout the year. As we permeate our faith in all that we do, we continue to celebrate the wonder of childhood as a trace of God.



SUGGESTIONS FOR SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

- Take a few minutes to watch the video, The Core Story. It shares with you group of scientific facts establishing the link between early brain and biological development and the later development of lifelong health outcomes including mental health problems and addiction. The core story covers numerous topics, touching on early experiences, brain plasticity, children's mental health and the concepts of toxic stress. <http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/videos>
- Take an active role in your child's play. Get down on the floor and join in building with blocks, be a guest at a tea party or a superhero saving the dinosaurs from extinction.
- The Canadian Pediatric Society's Position Statement on screen time (t.v., iPad, phones, etc.) states that children from 2-5 years should have less than 1 hour of screen time per day.
- Praise your child's endeavors.
- Talk to your child, giving explanations and descriptions and using rich vocabulary and basic concepts such as in, on, under, etc.
- Have your child follow simple directions.
- Take time to really listen to your child. Maintain good eye contact and try not to interrupt your child's thoughts.
- Read to your child daily and expose our child to all kinds of children's books. Allow your child to comment and ask questions about the story and characters.
- Involve your child in routine activities such as baking, cleaning, picking up toys, folding towels etc. to gain practical life skills.
- Build gross motor skills – play outside, hike in nature, garden, skate, swim and be active.
- Build fine motor skills by sorting small objects, beading, playing with play dough, cutting and coloring. Practice tying shoes, zipping and buttoning.
- Ensure that your child can attend to toilet needs without assistance and is aware of bathroom hygiene (flushing toilets and washing hands).
- Encourage your child to use words to describe his/her feeling and emotions.
- Encourage respect for property of others.

ROUTINES TO PRACTICE

- Occasionally practice getting your child's backpack ready.
- Plan the day with your child (what to wear, activities, timelines).
- Make bedtime a time for quiet activities (read a story to your child, enjoy snuggles and hugs, have bath time). Note: Children 4-6 years should get 11 hours of sleep per night.
- Avoid having your child watch TV or be on an electronic device just before bedtime.
- Try to reduce stress in the morning by leaving plenty of time for your child to get ready for the day.
- Ensure that your child has healthy meals and snacks at regular times.
- Say bedtime prayers.



PREPARING FOR THE FIRST DAY OF KINDERGARTEN

There are a number of things that you, as a parents and caregivers, can do to help your child succeed. Here are some helpful hints:

- Check with your Health Unit or doctor regarding immunization and hearing testing.
- See an optometrist for a vision test.
- Practice walking to school or to the bus stop, and make sure your child follows safety rules.
- If your child will be taking the bus, make sure you spend some time talking about bus safety.
- Practice a bedtime and wake-up schedule a few weeks before school starts.
- Talk about what he/she may do in kindergarten.

Clothing

Your child will be very active in the kindergarten classroom. It is wise for your child to wear comfortable clothes and shoes.

- Choose clothes that are easy for your child to button and fasten.
- Choose clothes that are easy to wash.
- Choose shoes that are appropriate for daily physical activity.
- Make sure that your child has clothing appropriate for active play and the weather conditions.

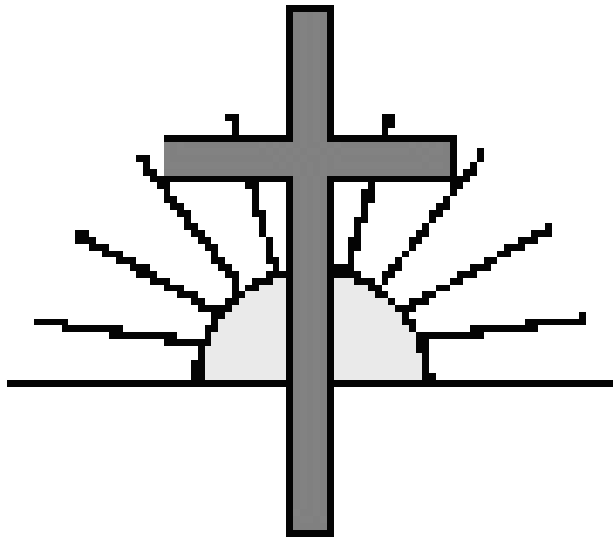
Separation from Parent/Caregiver

Some children find it difficult to leave their parents during the first days of kindergarten. To prepare your child to make the transition, periodically allow him or her to stay with family members or friends, and reassure your child that you will be back for him/her. Your child will feel more confident if you demonstrate a relaxed and positive attitude about starting kindergarten.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to become involved in the school program and can do so in a variety of ways:

- Attend parent meetings
- Serve on committees
- Being a classroom helper and participating in classroom activities
- Assist on field trips
- Share expertise and skills
- Give ideas or input to the program
- Help organize activities or school/family functions



“Christ-centered learning communities where students are cherished and achieve their potential”.

INFORMATION AND SERVICES

Administering Medicine

Parents are encouraged to give necessary medication at home if at all possible. If medication must be taken during kindergarten hours, you must obtain and complete a "Request to Administer Medication" form that is available at the school office. Medication must be sent to the school in the original bottle with the doctor's directions and the student's name included on the bottle.

Psychologist Services

A school division psychologist provides services to help identify and assess needs of students. The division psychologist consults with teachers and parents to assist in providing effective and appropriate programs. The division psychologist also assists parents to access other specialized services for their children.

Counselling Services

Children and families have access to counseling services that provide one-on-one and small group counselling. Counsellors can assist families to access community services.

Children's Allied Health

In partnership with Children's Allied Health, children can access the services of speech and language pathology, occupational therapy and physiotherapy.

RESOURCES

The following is a list of school and community resources that you may wish to contact for information and services:

Lethbridge Schools

Children of St. Martha School	381-8110
St. Teresa of Calcutta School	587-787-1490
Ecole St. Mary School	327-3098
Father Leonard Van Tighem School	381-0953
Our Lady of Assumption School	327-5028
St. Patrick Fine Arts Elementary School	327-4386
St. Paul's Elementary School	328-0611

Rural Schools

St. Catherine School (Picture Butte)	732-4359
St. Joseph School (Coaldale)	345-3373
St. Michael School (Pincher Creek)	627-3488
St. Patrick School (Taber)	223-3352
St. Michael School (Bow Island)	545-2131

Division Office

Director Support Services - Michelle MacKinnon	327-9555
Coordinator of Early Learning – Lynn Saler	381-8495
Division Psychologist	381-8495
Early Learning Lead Teachers	381-8495
Division Speech Language Pathologist	381-8495
Early Learning Home Visitation Facilitators	381-8495

Other Agencies

Alberta Health Services Health Link Alberta	811
Children's Allied Health	388-6575
Children's Mental Health	381-5278
Government of Alberta Day Care Subsidy	1-877-644-9992
Family Center	320-4232
Lethbridge Family Services	327-5724
Lethbridge Public Library-Children's Services	380-7320
Opokaa'Sin Early Intervention Society	380-2569
Southwest Alberta Child & Family Services	381-5500

