



Holy Spirit

CATHOLIC SCHOOL DIVISION

Handbook for Parents Kindergarten Education Program

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

Handbook Contents

Mission Statement	4
Land Acknowledgment	4
Principles of Practice	5
Welcome	6
Kindergarten Program Information	7
Spiritual Development	8
Religious Education	9
Suggestions for Supporting Your Child	10
Routines to Practice	11
Preparing for the First Day of Kindergarten	12
Parental Involvement	13
Information and Services	14
School Division Resources	15



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,

in partnership with home,

parish and society,

our schools 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.

Our Holy Spirit Catholic Schools are located on traditional Blackfoot territory. As we walk together on this land, we share the common vision that learning is a gift.

Land Acknowledgement

Holy Spirit Catholic Schools acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Nations and the people of the Treaty 7 region in southern Alberta. Our recognition of this land is an act of reconciliation and an expression of our gratitude to those whose territory we reside on, or are visiting.

Principles of Practice

The Holy Spirit Catholic School Division 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 online. It is important to have your child's birth certificate, and any other pertinent documentation, ready to upload during the registration process. Please check with your local school for program days within the week, as well as 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 and caregivers 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. 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 Catholic School Division, the primary resource for our religious education program is “Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ.” This resource is the Religious Education program of the Catholic Bishops of Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the Northwest Territories. The program provides children with the foundational knowledge of the faith and classroom experiences that will help them grow in their relationship with God.

The “Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ” resource facilitates the opportunity to build strong links between the home, the school, and the parish community. It is organized to follow the sequence of the liturgical year of the Catholic church and highlights some of the major celebrations of the Church.

The units that will be covered during the year include:

1. Who is God?
2. Why Do We Celebrate Advent and Christmas?
3. How Can We Live Like Jesus?
4. What Can We Learn from Jesus during Lent?
5. How is Easter a Season of Awe and Wonder?
6. How Do We Celebrate Together?

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 your 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 playdough, cutting and coloring.
- Practice tying shoes, zippering 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 feelings 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).
- 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.
- *Note: Children 4-6 years should get 11 hours of sleep per night*



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.

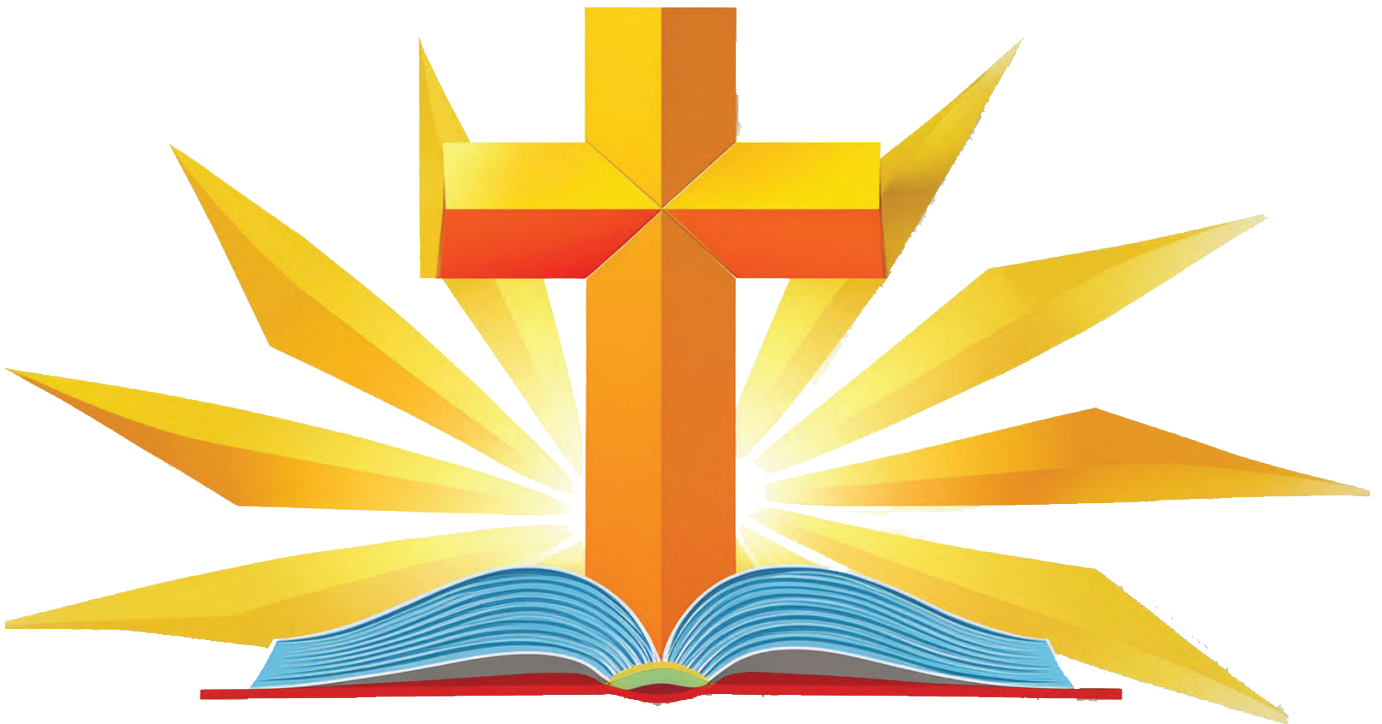
Separation from Parent/Caregiver

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

- Attend parent/family 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.

Counseling Services

Children and families have access to counseling services that provide one-on-one and small group counseling. Counselors 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. For more information, please connect with your child’s teacher or a representative from the School Division Early Learning Team.

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

<u>Alberta Health Services Health Link Alberta</u>	811
<u>Children’s Allied Health</u>	403-388-6575
<u>Children’s Mental Health</u>	403-381-5278
<u>Government of Alberta Day Care Subsidy</u>	1-877-644-9992
<u>Family Center</u>	403-320-4232
<u>Lethbridge Family Services</u>	403-327-5724
<u>Lethbridge Public Library-Children’s Services</u>	403-380-7320
<u>Opokaa’Sin Early Intervention Society</u>	403-380-2569
<u>Southwest Alberta Child & Family Services</u>	403-381-5500

School Division Resources

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

Lethbridge Schools

Children of St. Martha School	403-381-8110
Ecole St. Mary School	403-327-3098
Father Leonard Van Tighem School	403-381-0953
Our Lady of Assumption School	403-327-5028
St. Patrick Fine Arts Elementary School	403-327-4386
St. Paul's Elementary School	403-328-0611
St. Teresa of Calcutta School	587-787-1490

Rural Schools

St. Catherine School (Picture Butte)	403-732-4359
St. Joseph School (Coaldale)	403-345-3373
St. Michael School (Pincher Creek)	403-627-3488
St. Michael School (Bow Island)	403-545-2131
St. Patrick School (Taber)	403-223-3352

Division Office

Director Support Services	403-327-9555
Early Learning Supervisor	403-381-8495
Early Learning Lead Teachers	403-381-8495
Division Speech Language Pathologists	403-381-8495
Family & Program Enhancement Facilitators	403-381-8495