



ÉCOLE ST. MARY

STUDENT / PARENT HANDBOOK

2026-2027

Welcome to École St. Mary!

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LOVE IS SPOKEN HERE!

École St. Mary

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Welcome to École St. Mary! Bienvenue À L'École St. Mary!

This parent/student handbook includes information to help you better understand our school policies and procedures. It includes information that will be helpful during your time in our school community. Please take some time to read it over and refer to it when necessary.

Welcome to the 2026/2027 school year at École St. Mary.

It is our goal to provide the children who attend our school with the best possible Catholic Education. With the Gospel values permeated into the daily life of our school, we will make every effort to support our students in achieving academic and social success.

We encourage our students to take full advantage of their time at École St. Mary. Get to know the staff, try your best, participate in co-curricular activities, and forge great friendships. Actively participating in the school community will make your time here successful and memorable.

We recognize our parents/guardians as the first educators of their children. Our students will benefit from a direct and open line of communication between the school and the home. Please do not hesitate to contact us directly with questions or concerns. We promise to do the same for you.

As we enter the 2026/2027 school year together, may the light of Christ guide you in all that you do.

VISION STATEMENT:

École St. Mary is a Christ-centered learning community dedicated to the growth of each child in a caring and respectful Catholic environment.

WHAT WE VALUE:

At École St. Mary we value all God's children.

At École St. Mary we value continual improvement for all.

At École St. Mary we value the Gospel message.

At École St. Mary we value excellence in teaching.
At École St. Mary we value our collaborative community.
At École St. Mary we value basic human needs.
At École St. Mary we value a safe and caring environment.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Kindergarten:

Kindergarten Classes have their own entrances via their outdoor classroom door that the kindergarten students will use to enter and exit.

Recess Plan, Groups

From a school perspective, we have also adopted the attitude that we are going to start conservatively: we will still have students entering and exiting from a zone-specific door, we have changed the recess and lunch times to lessen the amount of interaction, and have decided that we will still designate a specific playing area for each of the grades when they are outside. Teachers will remain in the classroom while their students eat, and we have designated times for nutrition breaks and clean-up.

Recess 1– 20 minutes

Lunch (eat)- 30 minutes supervised by their teacher

Recess 2 (play)- 30 minutes

Each class is welcome to have a Nutrition Break or Daily Physical Activity at any time throughout the day if the current schedule does not meet all nutrition and movement needs.

Division 1: 1KI, 1RE, 1DI, 2HI, 2MI, 2GE, 3ME, 3DI, 3AI

Recess 1: 9:40 - 10:00

Lunch: 12:00-12:30

Recess 2: 12:30 –1:00

Division 2: 4NE, 4/5ME, 4CI, 5GI, 5SE, 6MI, 6RE, 6UKI

Recess 1: 10:10 -10:30

Recess 2: 12:00 -12:30

Lunch: 12:30 -1:00

GENERAL PROGRAMS

École St. Mary provides a sound academic education in both English and French Immersion in accordance with the requirements of Alberta Education and the Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Separate School Division. This includes a comprehensive religious education program. In addition, there exists a multitude of other programs to benefit the students.

The Religion Program

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. As we are a Catholic School, we provide daily religious studies classes for our students and we assist local parishes in preparing students for the sacraments of First Eucharist, First Reconciliation and Confirmation. Prayer is an important part of our school life and we have many liturgical celebrations throughout the year. All students who attend our school are expected to participate in all faith-based activities. Parents are a vital part of our school community and are always welcome to attend these celebrations.

The Academic Program

English and French Immersion Program: École St. Mary offers an English program as well as a French Immersion program for Kindergarten to Grade 6 students. In both cases, the program of studies from Alberta Education, guides instruction. The French Immersion Program is essentially an alternative education program available to families from across the city. The main concept is to “immerse” the child in the French language during the school day. Formal English Language Arts skills are introduced in Grade 3. Students in Grades 1 and 2 receive 100% of their instruction in French and students in Grades 3 to 6 receive approximately 85% of their instruction in French. French Immersion permits the child to become bilingual at a time in life when language is assimilated easily. Currently, the program extends from Kindergarten to Grade 12, with Grades 7 - 9 at St. Francis Junior High and Grades 10 - 12 at Catholic Central High School.

Homework: We also encourage students to read a minimum of 15 minutes per evening. This helps to reinforce the concepts taught at school. Please check your child’s AGENDA (Grade 1 to 6- if they received one. Not every class will get an agenda.) daily for additional work that may be assigned at the teacher’s discretion.

Agenda: Agenda’s will go home with Students whose teachers request it. Only some classes. Agendas can be used on a daily basis as a communication tool between home and school. This can include messages from the home to the teacher as well as messages from the teacher to home. If your child doesn’t not have an agenda, Email to the teacher and the office is best for communication. Ensure that you read through the school pages in the front with your child and that both of you sign the “École St. Mary Code of Ethics” and the “Elementary School Student Technology Responsible Use Agreement” within the first week of the school year.

The Social Program

Sports and Clubs: École St. Mary offers a variety of intramural sports and co-curricular clubs throughout the year which students are encouraged to participate. Refer to monthly newsletters for activities that are being offered.

Volunteers at École St. Mary

Parents and guardians are warmly welcomed and encouraged to volunteer at École St. Mary for a variety of school activities. We are blessed with strong support and participation from our families and community members. Volunteers are a vital part of our school community, and we greatly appreciate the time and care they give to our students.

To help ensure the safety and security of all students and staff, all volunteers must sign in at the school office upon arrival. This is an important part of maintaining a safe learning environment for our children.

If you are interested in volunteering in classrooms, assisting on field trips, or helping with school activities, Holy Spirit Catholic Schools now requires all non-staff adults to complete a **Volunteer/Chaperone Form** annually. In order to ensure the security and safety of our staff and students, all volunteers, chaperones, and drivers must be approved prior to participating in school activities. All information collected will be held in strict confidence.

Volunteer: A parent or adult community member who provides support in the classroom or on a field trip but does not have direct authority over students. Volunteers must never be left alone with students.

Volunteer Driver: Volunteers may transport students only when a teacher is present in the vehicle at all times.

Chaperone: A parent or adult community member who accompanies staff members on field trips to assist with student supervision. Chaperones may also drive students to and from activities in accordance with Administrative Procedure 352.

Chaperone Driver: Chaperones may transport students to and from activities in accordance with Administrative Procedure 352.

Please complete the required annual form by visiting:

<https://permission.click/x6YAK/ca/2Lzz/signee-info>

[Volunteer/Chaperone Form](#)

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Because it is important for all students to achieve success, we offer support services in a number of different areas.

Inclusive Education Liaison: The Inclusive Education Liaison works with parents and the classroom teacher to provide necessary support for students, as needed. Support is also provided in Language Arts, Early Literacy and English Language Learning (ELL/ESL).

Educational Assistants: These staff members support teachers to meet individual student needs and create an inclusive classroom environment. Some educational assistants work with small groups of students in specially designed programs such as Early Literacy and English as a Second Language.

School Counselor: The school has a Counselor who is at the school at various times throughout the week to provide support to students on a referral basis. Consent must be given from the parent/guardian prior to the counselor seeing a student. The Counselor can work with individuals and small groups of students. She works primarily with social, emotional and behavior concerns.

Family First Facilitator: Hired by the School Division the position is designed to use a preventive/early intervention model to enable children, youth and families to acquire the skills and knowledge required for individuals to build on their strengths, address challenges, cope with adversity and increase their capacity to care for themselves and others. By building universal supports that proactively provide families access to

support systems, knowledge of child development, trusting relationships and problem-solving skills families are more likely to be healthy and thrive. Families involved with this project will develop advocacy skills to access supports in times of need

First Nations, Metis & Inuit Support Worker: The First Nations, Métis and Inuit Support Workers are critical members of the learning teams in many of our schools. Their main duties are:

Responding to Student Needs.

Supporting teachers' integration of First Nations, Metis and Inuit context and content in all classroom learning.

Supporting Blackfoot Language.

Contributes their knowledge and expertise to provide school programming.

Facilitating Relationships.

Helps link families to community supports.

Facilitates opportunities for families to be involved with school.

Networks with community agencies, including First Nations, Metis and Inuit community.

Facilitates opportunities for Elders to work with staff, students, and families.

Youth Engagement Officer – YEO

As the name implies, the Youth Engagement Unit (YEU) will take an analytical, directed, and proactive approach to identify, engage, and intervene with youths who either are, or who may engage, in criminal and/or harmful behaviors and help them develop into successful and law-abiding citizens.

The YEO will focus on providing outreach in the forms of early intervention, positive mentorship, recommending support services, building positive relationships, and keeping young offenders out of the criminal justice system through diversionary programs where appropriate and where legislated. Circumstances at times may dictate that criminal charges are warranted but the overall focus of the YEO is diversion as per the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

SCHOOL SERVICES

FEES

The School District charges an annual fee for the necessary textbooks and some other resource materials needed for classroom instruction. Should a student lose or damage a text, parents will be requested to reimburse the school. We ask that you pay these fees at the office on or before September 30th. Payments are now to be made via SCHOOLCASH ONLINE (See office for instructions on how to use our School's CASH ONLINE system of receiving payments) . We will also be offering in office payments to be made via debit/credit machine for the 2026/2027 school year!

LIBRARY/MEDIA CENTER

Our school is proud to offer a 21st Century Library/Media Centre to our school community. You can now access our school library's collections online through our school website. Students access the Library/Media Centre during regularly scheduled visits as well as various times throughout the week. The development of literacy skills is supported through print material (both fiction and non-fiction) , online content, iPads, notebook computers and other tools that engage today's learner. Our philosophy is that 21st century literacy must be developed through important competencies such as collaboration, inquiry, self-direction, communication, creativity, and cultural and global awareness. Parents are welcome to visit our Library/Media Centre at any time throughout the year.

LOCKERS

All students are issued lockers at the beginning of the school year. Combination locks are optional for all students in Grades 4 to 6. Students are required to provide their own locks.

LOST AND FOUND

All items of clothing, footwear, lunch boxes, etc., must be clearly marked with your child's name so they can be easily identified. Electronic games, iPods, phones and any other expensive items should not be brought to school. The Lost and Found Box is located in the gym foyer. Other lost and found items such as jewelry, watches, locks, etc. are brought to the office. Clothing and other items that are unclaimed at the end of each year are given to charities, so please check the lost and found boxes often.

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL SUPERVISION

Children are supervised during the school day beginning at 7:45a.m. and after dismissal till 3:00p.m. Monday to Thursday and on Friday until 12:30p.m. If your children are at the school outside of these times, parents are required to supervise them.

NUTRITION PROGRAM

École Saint Mary has been lucky to enter into a relationship with Mindful Munchies who will provide pre-made sandwiches and a variety of snacks to the school all week long. We also have a breakfast program to provide food when the students first arrive at school.

SCHOOL PICTURES

Individual and class photos are taken in the early part of the school year. Parents are under no obligation to purchase the photos. The date for picture day and retake day will be listed on the online calendar and in the monthly newsletter. Two photo proofs of your child will be taken and sent home within a week. The new order form will be done directly through the company.

SCHOOL BUS UPDATES FOR 2026/2027

Our School buses are provided by Southland Transportation. Transportation registration forms must be filled out before your child can ride the bus. These were due on June 30th 2026 to ensure your child's spot. Late submissions will be put on a wait list and are added if space is available. This year, with the Alberta Government, transportation is free for English students who reside 1.6 kms or farther from the school, within the boundaries of our school, and for any French Immersion student living farther than 1.6 km away. No monthly payments are necessary.

COMMUNICATION

Changes at Home: Keeping our files updated is essential for continued communication between school and home. If either parent changes place of employment, address, telephone number, or if there has been a change in the emergency contact person and his/her phone numbers, please let us know as soon as possible so we can update our files. It is important that contact numbers and emergency numbers are up to date. In the event of an emergency with your child, the school cannot act on any medical attention without your consent. Please contact your child's classroom teacher if anything arises which may affect your child's learning.

Messages for Students: We ask that you make any alternate after school arrangements prior to your child's arrival at school. Please call the school BEFORE 2:00 p.m. if you must leave a message.

Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting of Student Achievement: Evaluation of student progress is continuous throughout the year. Progress summary can be found on SPACES. Our first goal setting with a

student/parent/teacher will be in November. There will also be another evening set aside to revisit the goals, sometime in February or March. If parents are unable to attend the scheduled parent-teacher conferences, they are encouraged to contact their child's teacher to make other arrangements. Communication between the home and school is vital to the child's success.

Final Reports are found online on SPACES.

Monthly Newsletter/Calendar: Our monthly Newsletter is now published on our website: esm.holyspirit.ab.ca under the School Tab. You may read the newsletter online; it is sent out at the end of the month to your email address.

École St. Mary Council: The École St. Mary School Council is an advisory body, committed to supporting, financially and otherwise, decisions and activities which benefit all of our students. The School Council welcomes all parents and guardians in our school community as members. All are encouraged to attend the monthly meetings. Your input and suggestions are important. Some of the fundraising activities that School Council has spearheaded have included a Major Fundraiser, Labor of Love Lunches, and School Carnival. School Council has generously donated money to the classroom field trips, Sports Day lunch and refreshments, and the purchase of items for the school.

Visitors: Visitors must check in at the office to sign in and sign out.

EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS

Classroom Expectations: The teacher is the instructional leader in the classroom. He or she is responsible for establishing, in conjunction with the students, a set of classroom rules and procedures that promote responsibility and self-direction.

Kindergarten – Grade 6 Personal Electronic Device Policy Update ~ 2025–2026

Last year, as part of a province-wide initiative, the government gathered feedback from parents, educators, and other stakeholders about the use of personal electronic devices in schools. Based on this feedback, new provincial guidelines, supported by a Ministerial Order, have been introduced to further regulate student use of cell phones and other personal electronic devices.

In accordance with these updated provincial directives, our school has revised its Personal Electronic Device Policy. We are implementing a few changes this year and ask for your continued cooperation.

PERSONAL USE DEVICES (cell phone, tablets, smart watches, etc.) are not permitted by students in elementary school. We are asking students to refrain from bringing them into the school. They are not permitted throughout the entirety of the school day. If a student must bring a phone, or a smart watch for safe communication before and after school with parents, it will have to be brought to the office where it will be locked in a lock box for safety.

General Behavior:

Students will: a) Show consideration and courtesy towards others at all times. b) Treat all school and personal property with care and respect. c) Use appropriate language and gestures when communicating to others. d) Observe all classroom rules as laid down by the teacher and students of that particular classroom. e) Walk in an orderly and safe manner while in school and at all school related activities. f) Dress in accordance with the school code. g) Abstain from the use of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco while on school property.

The School Act outlines student responsibilities as follows: *The student shall conduct himself so as to reasonably comply with the following code of conduct:* a) Be diligent in pursuing his/her studies; b) Attend school regularly and punctually; c) Cooperate fully with everyone authorized by the board to provide education programs and other services; d) Comply with the rules of the school; e) Account to his teachers for his conduct; f) Respect the rights of others."

Attendance: Our school's attendance policy states that "Good attendance is one way to ensure your children have the chance at success they deserve." The curriculum, as set out by Alberta Education, works on the idea that each grade adds the necessary foundations that ensure success at the next level. If attendance is poor, the student's chances of success are not as great. **Give your child the opportunity to become the best they can be by making sure he/she is at school every day on time.** This policy details that success in school requires consistent attendance. Chronic absences and tardiness place children at risk! These children fall behind in their work, feel overwhelmed, lose contact with teachers and peers, suffer low self-esteem due to repeated failure, and are at high risk of dropping out. We cannot stress the importance of having your child

here on a regular basis and at the beginning of the school day. If your child is absent from school, please contact the office that morning (403-327-3098) so that he/she may be excused. If we do not hear from you, the office staff will attempt to contact the parent, guardian or emergency contact to confirm that the student is accounted for. The Administration of the school is informed when there is no contact made with the parent, guardian or emergency contact. **Students who arrive late** at the school must report to the office in order to be marked as present. Parents who are picking up their child at any time throughout the day are asked to first sign them out at the office.

Bus Safety and Behavior: *Students are to comply with the standards for behavior as set out by Lethbridge Transit and Holy Spirit Catholic School Division.* a) Students are to respect the rules as set by the bus driver. b) Students are to remain seated while the bus is in motion. c) Students are to keep all objects, and their head and arms, inside the bus. d) Open beverage containers and eating are not permitted on regular bus runs.

A student's failure to comply with the set standards for behavior may result in suspension of bus service ranging from one day to a complete loss of privileges to ride school buses.

Dress Code: Student apparel must meet the following guidelines:

- a) No tops with spaghetti straps.
- b) No bare midriffs.
- c) Shorts must be at least mid-thigh in length. No short shorts.
- d) No clothing with obscene images, language, gestures or bullying.
- e) Shirts and shoes are required at all times.

Bicycles: Students using their bicycles for transportation to and from school should supply a lock and use the provided bike racks to store their bicycles during school hours. Students are not allowed to ride their bikes at any time on the school grounds. École St. Mary is not responsible for damaged or stolen bicycles.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

When Students Become ill at School: The office staff will attempt to contact the parents, guardians and/or emergency contacts to relay information and coordinate a pick-up time for students who have become ill during the course of the school day.

Medication: As per school board policy, staff is not allowed to administer any form of medication without proper documentation. If parents cannot arrange to administer medication at home, they are asked to come to the office to obtain the appropriate forms which need to be filled out and signed by a physician and parent. Medication cannot be administered until these completed forms have been returned to the school office. Each time the dosage or medication is changed, and also at the beginning of each school year a new set of forms must be completed by the parent/guardian.

School Nurse: The School nurse is a Public Health Nurse employed by the Chinook Health Region. They provide École St. Mary with immunizations, addresses student's health concerns, and provides health resources to the staff. The health nurse is an important part of our school community. Contact with the school nurse can be made at the Lethbridge Health Unit, 403-382-6666.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Emergency School Closures

Should an emergency closure of school occur; the Superintendent of Schools will contact radio and television broadcasters to announce to the community the decision and the reason for the closure. This will also be posted on the Holy Spirit School Division Website.

Emergency Telephone Number

In an emergency, the school always tries to reach parents/guardians first. However, there are times when this is not possible. Therefore, the school must have the names and current phone numbers for two individuals (other than the parent/guardian) who can be reached by phone. Please keep the school office updated with changes.

Fire Drills

Fire drills are held periodically throughout the year. For this reason, students must wear footwear during school hours. All visitors to the school must participate in fire drills.

Lockdown

Lockdown drills take place at least once every school year. Teachers review these procedures with their students and the reasons why it is necessary to practice them.