

ST. CATHERINE SCHOOL



STUDENT HANDBOOK

Principal: Mr. Daniel Vanden Dungen
Associate Principal: Mr. Josh Gatner
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Email: scpboffice@holyspirit.ab.ca
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Deputy Superintendent: Mrs. Anthea Boras
Holy Spirit Catholic Schools
St. Basil Education Centre
620-12 St. 'B' North Lethbridge AB T1H 2L7
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*WE RISE TO MEET
CHRIST'S CHALLENGE*

2026-2027

ABOUT OUR SCHOOL

Our History

The roots of St. Catherine's School trace back to the establishment of St. Catherine's Parish in 1941, where the growing need for Catholic education led to the construction of a school in Picture Butte. Before then, summer programs led by the Sisters of St. Martha provided religious instruction.

With strong community support and under the leadership of Fr. Bill McCallum, the school was officially opened on September 1, 1959, with 129 students in Grades 1 through 11 and a dedicated team of six teachers. In 1960, three teaching sisters from the Sisters of St. Martha joined the staff. The school offered Grade 12 for a few years, with the last class graduating in 1965. Since then, the school has provided education from Kindergarten through Grade 9, eventually expanding to include a vibrant Early Learning program.

The Picture Butte Roman Catholic Separate School District #79 grew through the amalgamation of surrounding rural areas in 1977, ensuring long-term viability. Facility expansions and renovations have kept pace with educational and technological demands while maintaining strong ties with the Picture Butte community. The school continues to welcome students of all faiths and serves as a hub for both education and community engagement.

In 1995, the school joined Holy Spirit Catholic School Division, ensuring its Catholic identity remained strong and sustainable. Today, St. Catherine's School remains a vibrant, faith-filled learning environment for nearly 200 students, proud of its heritage and committed to its mission of Catholic education in Picture Butte.



From L to R: Robert Cartier, John Andron, Ted Sobzak, Carl Renner, Joe Juris, Dan Clifford, Earl Gibbons, Father William McCallum.



ST. CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA

Feast Day: November 25th

Our Patron Saint

Our school is named after St. Catherine of Alexandria. She was from a place called Alexandria. Catherine was born hundreds of years ago. The exact date is not known. Catherine devoted all of her life to studying. In the course of studying, she learned about Christ and Christianity. As a result, Catherine decided to devote her time and service to helping others learn about Jesus. She wanted to share her love.

Catherine was only 18 when all of this happened. The emperor at the time, Maxentius, didn't like Catherine talking and learning about Christ. He called 50 philosophers to prove her beliefs wrong but instead, Catherine convinced them all to follow the teachings of Christ. Catherine even converted the emperor's wife to Christianity. All of these events didn't make the emperor very happy. In fact, he was outraged and ordered Catherine killed on a spike wheel (therefore, our Catherine wheel). The wheel broke however, but Catherine was later beheaded with a sword.

Catherine died a Saint because of her love and devotion to Jesus. Catherine was buried in a place called Mount Sinai where a church and monastery were later built in her honour. Catherine, who displayed incredible courage, commitment and strength, is the patron saint of women students, Christian philosophers, and students of philosophy. That is why if you look carefully at the statue of St. Catherine in the gathering space, you will see her with a book representing the pursuit of knowledge.

St. Catherine's Prayer

Gracious and loving God, we give you thanks for the tradition and example of Saint Catherine of Alexandria.

Give us grace to pursue her love of purity, to strive for her strength and courage, to adhere to her abhorrence of the world's temptations and sinful desires, and to follow her faithfulness.

Empower us to break the wheel of worldly suffering and allow your wisdom to radiate through our lives, so that your glory may shine ever more brightly.

Bring those who seek your presence to share in the ministry and worship of this parish, and help us to welcome those who come in your name.

All this we pray through Jesus Christ, our servant leader, who is one with you and the Holy Spirit.

Amen+



STAFF DIRECTORY

Administration

Dan Vanden Dungen - Principal
Josh Gatner - Associate Principal
Daniel Scott-Perry - Administrative Assistant
Sarah De Coste - Administrative Support

vandendungend@holyspirit.ab.ca
gatnerj@holyspirit.ab.ca
scottperryd@holyspirit.ab.ca
decostes@holyspirit.ab.ca

Certified Teaching Staff

Darcie Serfas - Kindergarten
Jackie Price - Grade 1 Homeroom
Lisa Constant - Grade 2/3 Homeroom
Pia Virginillo* - Grade 4 Homeroom
Avin Gokarn - Grade 5 Homeroom
Jessica Nelson - Grade 6 Homeroom
Brian Dawydiuk - Grade 7 Homeroom
Nicola Alvarez - Grade 8 Homeroom
Josh Gatner - Grade 9 Homeroom
Heather Harling - IEL Teacher

serfasd@holyspirit.ab.ca
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alvarezn@holyspirit.ab.ca
gatnerj@holyspirit.ab.ca
harlingh@holyspirit.ab.ca

*Cheryl Ortynski is currently on maternity leave

Support Staff

Jordan Hoffos - School Liaison Counselor
Melanie Vanden Dool - Library Support Staff

hoffosj@holyspirit.ab.ca
vandendoolm@holyspirit.ab.ca

Shannon Bezooyen - Educational Assistant
Isabel Delgadillo - Early Learning Program Leader
Jackie Elaschuk - Educational Assistant
Vanesa Pena - Educational Assistant
Melisa Ramos - Early Learning Educational Assistant
Christie Sander - Educational Assistant
Gloria Soucie - Educational Assistant
Danica Sutfin - English as an Additional Language Support

Chris Snow - Head Caretaker
Rita Ordez - Caretaking Support



SCHOOL HOURS AND BELL TIMES

School Opens at 8:20am.

School Closes at 4:00 pm Monday - Thursday and at 1:00 pm on Fridays.

Monday - Thursday

1	8:32 - 9:25 (53 min)
2	9:25 - 10:10 (45 min)
Recess	10:10 - 10:25 (15 min)
3	10:25 - 11:10 (45 min)
4	11:10 - 11:55 (45 min)
Lunch & Recess	11:55 - 12:33 (38 min)
5	12:33 - 1:12 (39 min)
6	1:12 - 1:51 (39 min)
Recess	1:51 - 2:05 (14 min)
7	2:05 - 2:45 (40 min)
8	2:45 - 3:26 (41 min)

Friday

1	8:32 - 9:25 (53 min)
2	9:25 - 10:10 (45 min)
Gospel	10:10 - 10:30 (20 min)
Recess	10:30 - 10:45 (15 min)
3	10:45 - 11:30 (45 min)
4	11:30 - 12:15 (45 min)



Bus students will be dismissed from the classroom at 3:26pm.

All other students will be dismissed from the gathering space at 3:30pm, once all the busses have left.



IMPORTANT CALENDAR DATES

Key School Events

- September 1 - First Day of School
- September 2 - Opening Mass
- September 8 - First Day of Kindergarten and ELP
- September 16 - Back to School BBQ
- October 1 - Picture Day
- October 19 through 23 - Scholastic Book Fair
- October 21 and 22 - Fall Parent-Teacher Conferences
- December 10 - Christmas Concert
- December 16 - Elementary Student Retreat
- December 19 through January 3 - Christmas Break
- February 2 - Junior High Retreat
- February 13 through 21 - Reading Week
- March 17 and 18 - Spring Parent-Teacher Conferences
- March 26 through April 4 - Easter Break
- June 10 - Grade 9 Farewell
- June 10 - Last day for ELP and Kindergarten Students
- June 16 - Closing Mass
- June 2 - Grade 6 and 9 PATs Begin
- June 24 - Last Day of School for Students



IMPORTANT CALENDAR DATES

Reporting Periods and Parent-Teacher Conferences

JUNIOR HIGH

Quarter 1

Sept 1 2026 – November 6 2026

P/T Conferences: Wed, Oct 21 (3:30-6:30) and Thurs, Oct 22 (5:00-8:00)

Report Card Issued – Nov 20 2026

Quarter 2

November 9, 2026 – Jan 28, 2027

New Junior High Term and Options Begin on November 9, 2026

Report Cards Issued – Feb 5 2027

Quarter 3

February 1, 2027 – April 16, 2027

New Junior High Term and Options Begin on February 1, 2027

P/T Conferences: Wed, March 17 (3:30-6:30) and Thurs, March 18 (5:00-8:00)

Report Cards Issued – April 23 2027

Quarter 4

April 19, 2027 (Monday) – June 24, 2027 (Thursday)

New Junior High Term and Options Begin on April 19, 2027

Report Cards – Mailed

ELEMENTARY

Students will use SPACES to periodically post reflections on their learning.

Interviews: Wednesday, Oct 21 (3:30-6:30) and Thursday, Oct 22 (5:00-8:00)

Reporting Period 1: September 1 - November 21

Report Cards issued on November 23

Interviews: Wednesday, March 17 (3:30-6:30) and Thursday, March 18 (5:00-8:00)

Reporting Period 2: November 24 - March 22

Report Cards issued on March 22

Reporting Period 3: March 23 - June 24

Report Cards issued on June 24



FAITH FORMATION

Students, under the guidance of their teachers, will participate in leading liturgies and celebrations throughout the year. Advent, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Easter, the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and St. Catherine's Feast Day are all important times of the year where we gather in faith to celebrate our liturgical season.

In addition, we attend mass together as a school once a month, typically on the second Wednesday of each month.

Once a week, on Fridays, we preview the coming Sunday's Gospel message, often with Father Iqbal invited to lead our community. On the first Friday of the month, we also recognize students for their contributions in the school. Teachers present three students with certificates that honour a quality that is possessed by our monthly saint.

Parents are welcome to attend any and all events!

Faith At Home

For Kindergarten through Grade 9, we use the "Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ" series of resources that are published through Pearson Canada.

Parents and Guardians are welcome to review these resources by visiting the Log In page on their website.

Student-Home Website

<http://www.pearsoncanada.ca/school/growinginfaith/student-home/>

Username: holyspirit99 / password: Student99



STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

At St. Catherine School, we are called to live as disciples of Jesus by showing Respect, Responsibility, and Reverence in all that we do. These values guide our behaviour at school, at home, and in the community.

Respect

We show respect by:

- *Treating others with kindness, dignity, and fairness.*
- *Listening actively and speaking politely.*
- *Valuing the differences and gifts of every person.*
- *Caring for school property, the environment, and the belongings of others.*

Responsibility

We show responsibility by:

- *Being prepared for class and giving our best effort in learning.*
- *Owning our choices and accepting consequences.*
- *Using technology and materials appropriately and safely.*
- *Following school rules and making safe decisions for ourselves and others.*

Reverence

We show reverence by:

- *Honouring God in our words, actions, and attitudes.*
- *Participating respectfully in prayer, Mass, and religious celebrations.*
- *Speaking and acting in ways that reflect our Catholic faith.*
- *Caring for ourselves, others, and all of God's creation.*

These expectations help ensure that our school is a safe, welcoming, and faith-filled community where everyone can grow in wisdom, faith, and love.



DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

At St. Catherine School, we aim to guide students in making respectful and responsible choices rooted in our Catholic faith. When behaviour disrupts learning, safety, or relationships, we respond in ways that support accountability, restoration, and growth.

Discipline at our school:

- Fair: consistent with expectations for all students.
- Firm: clear boundaries and consequences.
- Faith-based: rooted in dignity, compassion, and reconciliation.

Minor Incidents

Major Incidents

Handled by the supervising teacher or staff member. Examples include: • Disrupting class • Inappropriate language or tone • Off-task behaviour • Disrespect toward peers or staff • Minor defiance or rudeness	Referred to administration. Examples include: • Bullying, threats, or harassment • Physical aggression or fighting • Chronic defiance or non-compliance • Vandalism or theft • Possession of prohibited items • Safety concerns or severe disruption
Responses may include: • Verbal reminder or redirection • Time-out or temporary removal from activity • Restorative conversation or apology • Logical consequence (e.g., cleaning up, staying in for part of recess) • Parent/guardian contact if behaviour is repeated	Response may include: • Investigation and documentation • Parent/guardian contact • In-school or out-of-school suspension (depending on severity) • Behaviour support plan or re-entry meeting • Possible involvement of school counsellor or outside support services • status communicated to all staff

Where possible, we use restorative practices to help students understand the impact of their actions and to repair their relationships. This may involve guided reflection, student conferences, restitution, or facilitated conversations. Repeated or escalating behaviours are addressed with increasing interventions.

Note: All disciplinary actions align with Holy Spirit Catholic School Division policies, the Alberta Education Act, and our commitment to a safe and caring learning environment.



BULLYING PREVENTION

At St. Catherine School, we believe that every student is a beloved child of God and has the right to feel safe, valued, and respected. As a Catholic community, we are committed to fostering a school environment where Christ-like relationships flourish and bullying is not tolerated in any form.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is repeated, intentional harm. This can take many forms, but they are all directed at a person who feels powerless to respond. It can include:

- **Physical:** Hitting, pushing, or damaging property.
- **Verbal:** Name-calling, teasing, threats, or discriminatory remarks.
- **Social/Relational:** Exclusion, spreading rumors, humiliation.
- **Cyberbullying:** Harassment or intimidation using technology or social media.

Bullying is different from occasional conflict or rude behaviour. While all unkind behaviour is addressed, bullying is characterized by imbalance of power, intent to harm, and repetition.

Our Commitment

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.” — Luke 6:31

We teach and model empathy, conflict resolution, and forgiveness. Staff supervise actively, respond promptly, and work to prevent bullying. Even with these measures, directly witnessing bullying can be difficult and we encourage students and families to support our learning environment by reporting.

Students are encouraged to report bullying to:

- A teacher or staff member
- The principal or school counsellor
- A trusted adult at home

When bullying is reported:

- The situation will be investigated thoroughly.
- Parents/guardians of those involved may be contacted.
- Restorative approaches, consequences, and supports are used as appropriate.
- Follow-up is provided to ensure the issue is resolved and behaviour is changed.

Support may be offered to both the student being bullied and the student displaying bullying behaviour.



DRESS CODE

At St. Catherine School, we believe that how students dress reflects their respect for themselves, their peers, their school, and their faith. Our dress code encourages modesty, cleanliness, and a focus on learning, while allowing for individuality and comfort.

Students are expected to:

- Dress in a clean, neat, and modest manner.
- Choose clothing appropriate for the school environment and prevalent outside weather.
- Avoid attire that distracts from learning or contradicts Catholic values.

Acceptable Clothing

- Wear shirts and tops with a modest neckline. No revealing muscle shirts, tank tops or tops with spaghetti straps (2 fingers-wide as a guideline).
- Shirts should be long enough to come within three fingers of the waistband of pants, skirts, or shorts.
- Clothing is free of depictions of violence of any type or inappropriate or suggestive slogans or graphics.
- All items designated as underwear **MUST** be kept under cover and not seen.
- Wear shorts, skirts, skorts, and dresses that are reasonable in length (at least mid-thigh)
- Footwear is required at all times with gym shoes required for playing in the gym - no sandals or boots!
- No hats or head coverings for girls or boys, unless it is a special day. Remove them before entering the building. Head covers may be worn for medical or religious reasons



CELLPHONE POLICY

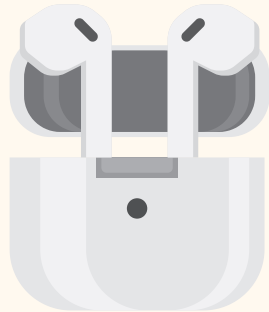


In alignment with the Alberta-wide policy, Cellphones and other personal electronic devices (anything not designed to support the classroom learning environment) are prohibited from bell-to-bell. Once the first bell rings, cellphones are to be turned off and kept in lockers or left in the office. They are not to be accessed at any point during class or breaks. Once the final bell rings at 3:26 pm, students may once again access these devices.

Which Devices Are Included?



Cellphones



Earbuds



Smart Watches



Bluetooth
Devices

We ask parents not to send such devices to school with children unless absolutely necessary. Students will still be allowed to bring their own Chromebooks or laptops into class, but these devices must be used only for learning activities directed by the teacher. Staff are asked to send any prohibited devices to the office until the end of the day if seen at any point. If additional violations occur past the first, parents will be contracted and have the consequences communicated.

We understand that some students may require use of personal mobile devices in class for health/medical reasons or to support specialized learning needs. In these cases, exemptions can be made to the rules as needed. Please contact the school office so we can work with you and discuss the necessary arrangements.

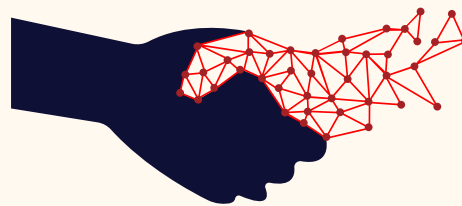


ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The use of AI programs can enhance our educational experience when used appropriately and with prior teacher approval. However, if used incorrectly, the use of ChatGPT and other tools can severely limit the potential learning goals for students.

Usage Guidelines

- All usage of AI programs in classes requires prior approval from the teacher. Before incorporating any AI tool into an assignment or activity, you must discuss your intent with the teacher.
- All work generated with the assistance of AI programs must be original. Plagiarism, even if AI-generated, is not acceptable.
- Properly attribute AI-generated content if it is used in your assignments. Any violation of academic honesty will be subject to appropriate consequences.
- Respect the privacy and data security of yourself and others when using AI programs. Do not share sensitive information or engage in any unethical activities.
- Any assessment and/or assignment is subject to a verbal review with the teacher. Be prepared to explain and discuss the content of your work, without the contributions or assistance of AI. If you can not adequately represent your work, it will be assumed AI was utilized as a replacement for your learning, and the consequences will be subject to the teacher's and administrator's discretion.



EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Safety at St. Catherine School is of utmost importance. We regularly engage in practice that will help ensure that all students are safe and accounted for.

Fire and Fire Drills

- A Fire Exit Map is posted on the wall in every classroom that clearly shows a primary and secondary route that students will take in the event of a fire.
- If an alarm sounds, staff will ask students to calmly line up at the door and to then follow the route in a calm but expedient manner.
- Lights shall be turn off as the room is exited, ensuring that the door is unlocked and closed.
- Students will proceed to the soccer field where attendance will be taken.

Emergency Lockdown

If an intruder enters the building, is sighted near, or a report is received of a potential threat to the school the following action will be taken:

- An announcement will be made stating that the school is in LOCKDOWN.
- After checking hallways for students, staff will lock their door and turn out their light.
- Students will be directed to gather away from windows and doors to quietly wait until the lockdown is over.

Weather

Inclement weather can pose a hazard and may interrupt the routine of our day.

- If the temperature, after windchill, is measured at -20 degrees celcius or colder, students will be kept in at recess.
- An indoor recess will be called if precipitation would cause impediment to regular playground activities.
- If the Air Quality Health Index is measured at 7 or higher, students may be asked to spend their recess indoors. This decision is made in conjunction with input from the Holy Spirit School Division Superintendent.



SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAMS

Canteen and Milk Program

- Canteen is open to Junior High Students, Monday through Thursday
- Families can buy 20 cartons of chocolate or white milk (250 mL) for \$25 through SchoolCashOnline.
- Subway can be ordered through the Lunch Box program, delivered every Monday.
- Home and School volunteers serve hot lunches to students once a month.



SchoolCashOnline

POWERED BY KEV GROUP

Online Reporting - PowerSchool and SPACES

Student assessment can be accessed through two online platforms; Powerschool for Grades 7-9 and SPACES for Grades 1-6. Parents will be able to monitor student progress by downloading the related apps for iOS, Android, and through the associated web-portals that can be found on the school webpage.

District Code

RHZW

Athletics

St. Catherine students have the option of participating in a variety of team and individual sports, including:

- Volleyball
- Basketball
- Cross Country
- Track and Field
- Badminton



A separate athletics handbook is available.

