

FAMILY HANDBOOK

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Schools

STAR Catholic Website: starcatholic.ab.ca



Ecole Notre Dame School **“Living and Loving and Learning”**

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WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOL

Dear Parents, Guardians and Students,

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic School's Mission is "Rejoicing in the way of Christ, we nurture a love of learning in faith-filled schools.

Ecole Notre Dame School is a community rooted in Jesus Christ. Together we are called to *believe, achieve, and serve*. Our school is committed to developing the full potential of each child and in providing an enduring education to them.

Our staff works hard at providing a positive, safe and caring environment where all are welcome and respected. We are very excited for a school year that promises new opportunities for learning and growing in our Faith.

Included in our journey and school community is our parish, St. Michael. Under the guidance of our parish priest, Fr. Silvichan, staff, students and parents will have many opportunities to grow and learn about our Faith.

Please take the time to explore our website, Twitter, and Facebook page to learn more about the school, our students, the staff, our parish and opportunities for parents and community members to be a part of our amazing school.

It is an honour and privilege to be able to serve the community of Ecole Notre Dame School. We look forward to working together as a faith-filled community.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Monique Tellier-Phillips
Principal

Miss Colette Chamulka
Vice Principal

GRIZZLIES ROAR:

Reach , **O**ffer , **A**chieve , **R**elationships

ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Student absenteeism should be reported by a telephone call to the school by a parent or guardian. Please phone the school by 9:00 a.m. for morning absence, or 1:15 p.m. for afternoon absence. Any absenteeism not accounted for by this time is a source of worry and presents an extra burden on the staff, who must phone parents in order that all pupils' whereabouts will be known.

CHILD CHECK

From approximately 4:00 p.m. to 8:30 a.m. and on weekends, our school sites operate a recorded phone-in absentee reporting line so you can let us know of your child's absence, at your convenience: Notre Dame: (780) 986-9300. Simply press "0", wait for the tone after the message, and tell us: your name, child's name, date and times of absence, reason for absence.

STUDENTS LEAVING SCHOOL DURING THE DAY

All students (except those who reside within the City of Leduc who regularly go home for lunch) shall NOT be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day without written parental permission for each school day that the student will be leaving. Plan ahead: If your child needs to leave early, please have a written note in the agenda. This will avoid extra calls into our office.

TELEPHONE USE

Use of the telephones at school by students is restricted to **EMERGENCY** calls only using the courtesy phone in the general office. Phone passes from a student's homeroom teacher are required before a call may be made. Students are to make arrangements for rides, lunches, etc. before school with a note included in the agenda.

SCHOOL DIVISION POLICIES

Available at: www.star catholic.ab.ca

PERSONAL ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT:

Personal electronic equipment on the school premises is to be turned off while students are in the classroom unless the classroom teacher has outlined and identified specific times and instances for its use. Personal electronic devices should also not be used at recess time.

STUDENT ENTRY TO BUILDING

In keeping with School Division Policy, all students will be permitted to enter the building at 8:35 a.m. each morning, unless registered for alternate programs in the school. A student must then report immediately to his/her classroom. Any inappropriate behaviour will result in that student being required to remain outdoors until regular bell time. Students are expected to go outside for the recess and lunchtime breaks, weather permitting. The Administration will decide "in" days at recess and lunchtime should such be required.

PARENT/VISITOR ACCESS TO BUILDING

Notre Dame School values your support and participation in school activities involving your children. For your child's safety, Notre Dame School requires visitor passes when entering the building. Please check in at the office to receive your visitor pass. In addition, if you wish to volunteer, you are required to have a current Criminal Record Check and Child Welfare Check on file with us. We can provide this service at no cost to you. Please contact the office for additional information.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

Our school provides for the educational needs of the school-age child. We develop the basic skills and learning essential in the elementary grades, and at the same time broaden the experience of the child, in academic, physical, cultural, spiritual, social and aesthetic areas. Our school provides for the diverse interest and capabilities of our students by offering;

1. Core Subjects: Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Religion
2. General Interest Courses: Art, Music, Character Education, Digital Literacy,
3. Athletic Excellence Program is a specialized, user-pay athletic program that involves hockey/soccer, golf, rock climbing, rugby, lacrosse, canoeing, curling and other fitness training.
4. French Immersion - Currently Grade K - 3, moving up by grade each year.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

It is the policy of this school to employ differential standards for grading and course requirements. The regular classroom teacher will modify the curriculum, instructional approaches and grading practices for those students identified as having disabilities. In classes where it is required, supports suitable to the student identified may include modifications and/or adaptations to materials, books or equipment, tests, quizzes, or time constraints; grading; organization, environment, behavioural management; and/or teaching strategies to provide the optimum learning opportunity for the student. Ecole Notre Dame School, like all schools in the district, runs a "Response to Intervention" program whereby when required a student could receive short daily interventions of ten to twenty minutes to fill in any gaps that might be missing in numeracy and/or literacy.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips enhance our curriculum. Students may be required to help defray the costs. A field trip is a school activity and students are

expected to exercise their best behaviour. Students are representing our school, and the school's reputation is their responsibility. In keeping with School Division Policy, a division informed consent must be completed and signed by the parent(s)/guardian(s) of each child attending the field trip. If the completed informed consent is not returned to the school, the child will NOT be permitted to attend the field trip. Please Note: It is our school policy that any student who is a consistent behaviour problem must be accompanied by his/her parent/guardian on any field trip. In addition, STAR Catholic Schools require all students to wear an approved CSA hockey helmet on all school skating trips.

ASSESSMENT

In keeping with School Division Policy, teachers assess student progress continually and assist where students have difficulty.

In elementary classes, placements are made by the administration upon the recommendation of the teacher. Special cases may involve meetings with parents, administration, teachers and the student services consultant. Students on a modified program are considered special cases and placements will be considered according to the special needs of that child.

Teachers assess students based on classroom performance and examination results, as well as effort and attitude, the components of which will be outlined for the parents by the teacher early in the school year. Student assessment for learning helps us individualize instruction.

Parents who may wish to appeal final grades for their child should contact the Principal for the Appeal Procedure.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Our school issues report cards for each student three times during the school year (November, March and June). In addition, brief interim progress reports may be issued at the discretion of the teacher. Report cards are available online.

APPEAL OF MARKS

Parents who have concerns about student marks or student placements have a right to appeal these decisions to the school board and ultimately to the Minister of Education. Please contact the Principal for information about the Appeals Process.

FAMILY INTERVIEWS

After the first and second report cards, our school will set up interview sessions with the families of the students. These are excellent opportunities for teachers and parents to get to know each other better, and also to provide an opportunity for parents and teachers to work together for the child's benefit. Dates for the Family Interviews are contained in the school calendar in the *Week at a Glance*. Should the need arise, due to a student experiencing academic or social difficulty, then the involved parents and teachers may meet at a convenient time to discuss the concerns.

DISCIPLINE

Notre Dame School has embraced the Alberta Teachers' Association Safe and Caring Schools Project. The intent is to teach students respect and a sense of responsibility and to foster their ability to resolve conflicts peacefully. This approach ties in well with our Hands-off Policy and with the Gospel values Jesus taught and which our Catholic Tradition espouses. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God." (Matthew 5:9) We believe that Christian values and behaviours must be taught and reinforced consistently by all important adults in a child's life. Our programming and discipline policy reflects the goals and objectives of a Safe and Caring learning environment where everyone has the right to feel safe and cared for.

The staff at our school is committed to providing the best teaching and learning environment possible for our students.

We believe that appropriate behaviour should be encouraged and rewarded, while inappropriate behaviour should be discouraged and corrected. We believe that all students must behave appropriately within the school, the classrooms and on the playground, so that everyone has an equal opportunity to learn in a safe environment. It is also the belief of the staff that all students should be encouraged and taught to be responsible for their own actions. Consequences for behaviour should be logical and natural. The student should be helped to understand that all actions, good or bad, have natural consequences. We feel that we are called to live the Gospel values in response to what our loving God has done for us, and therefore, students should be encouraged to live up to these expectations.

Positive behaviour will be recognized in one or more of the following ways:

Praise and specific feedback, personal interviews, positive notes home, positive phone calls to parents, self-selected activities, special activities and/or projects, the Bucket Filler Program.

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Reasonable behaviour is expected at all times. However, it is difficult to list all "reasonable behaviour". The list provides some examples:

Walking in hallways (not running), no loitering, no spitting, homework must be completed, punctuality, no throwing snowballs, making efforts to resolve conflicts peacefully, using only positive, encouraging language.

HANDS-OFF POLICY

Our school is following a "HANDS-OFF" policy on the playground and around the school, and on the way to and from school.

Each student must be in a school climate that is satisfying and productive, without disruptive behaviour by any students infringing upon the rights of others.

Fighting, intimidation, threatening, name calling, insulting, play fighting and roughhousing will absolutely NOT be tolerated. It is the philosophy of the school that we encourage and instruct each child to be responsible for his/her own behaviour. Character Education is integrated into our Program of Studies. Through this program, students are given opportunities to identify and practice resolving conflicts in a peaceful way, as Jesus did; while keeping in mind the Gospel value of forgiveness, and that the school is a learning environment. The program has an anti-bullying component.

A problem-solving strategy will be used for a student's first offence. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, parents will be informed. On all subsequent offences, parents will automatically be consulted. A problem-solving strategy will be used, and the consequence for a subsequent offence will include in-school suspension, to out-of-school suspension, to a recommendation to the Superintendent for a discipline review committee.

Less serious offences will also be dealt with using a problem-solving strategy and consequences will be pursued that are appropriate to the offence, as much as possible. Removal of privileges through detention will continue to be used. All offences referred to the school administration are recorded and kept on file at the office.

STUDENT DRESS

❖ In dressing for school, please assist your child in making clothing choices that are appropriate for a Catholic learning environment. Grooming and clothing choices should be made in good taste and err on the side of modesty. Fabric must cover all private parts, torso, and undergarments, excluding bra straps. As well, clothing should not contain images or slogans that are offensive, inappropriate, or vulgar. Clothing must be suitable for all scheduled activities including physical education.

Students are not allowed to have hats, caps, hoods or sunglasses on their heads inside the school except on designated school spirit days.

Notwithstanding the above guidelines, the administration reserves sole discretion on what constitutes appropriate dress or grooming in any give case. Students who do not come to school appropriately dressed may be sent home to change or be given an alternative outfit.

Students are to remove outside footwear upon entry to the school. A clean pair of indoor shoes must be worn inside the school for safety reasons. Running shoes that do not leave black marks are recommended for inside wear, as they are also required for physical education in the gymnasium.

SAFETY

Stands are provided for parking bicycles and scooters at school. Bicycles and scooters brought to school must be left in the stands, and must be locked. It is vital that all cyclists are as careful as possible and follow all traffic rules. Riding on school grounds is not permitted. Walk bicycles across the street in a crosswalk. Roller blades, skateboards and scooters are permitted at school; however, they must be stored securely in their backpack during the school day. If the scooter is not able to be stored, it should not come to school. Helmets must be worn when using the above. Students who walk to school must also be cautious when crossing streets. Cross at intersections or on designated crosswalks only. The area where cars are parked is off-limits to students.

FIRE DRILL REGULATIONS

- a) When the fire alarm sounds, the classroom windows must be closed. The last person leaving the classroom will close the door. Do not lock it.
- b) Homeroom teachers will designate a meeting place for the class outside the building.
- c) All students are to leave the school immediately in an orderly manner; walk quickly, but **DO NOT RUN**. The first student reaching an assigned exit door should hold the door open until all students using that exit are outside.
- d) The teacher will have a roll call outside.
- e) When a class is not in its homeroom, it should leave by the nearest exit and, when outside, students should proceed to their designated meeting place.
- f) Pre-assigned staff will check washrooms for students.
- g) Students will not return to the school until they receive permission to do so, or a bell has sounded. The usual signal will be three short bell sounds.
- h) When your exit is blocked, you will be instructed to exit by another door.
- i) Keep quiet and follow instructions.

HOMEWORK AND STUDY

Assignments are given to practice and enhance instruction given in class. From time to time it will not be possible for a student to complete all assignments during class time. This will require homework. As the student progresses through the grades, this additional study time will become more frequent and will require more lengthy sessions. Failure to complete assignments is a serious matter.

Please consider these suggestions:

- Set aside a specific time every school day, perhaps 4:30, 5:00, or 7:00 p.m. at the latest. Even if there is no assignment, spend the time in study. All subjects would benefit from review work.
- Establish the habit of putting schoolwork in a definite location each evening so that you will not forget to pick it up in the morning. Perhaps you could place it next to your

jacket or on a table by the door. Work that is not available in class for checking will be viewed as "incomplete".

- Try to find a quiet place to study, which is free from distractions. Concentration is the key to thorough studying!
- Before leaving class, be sure that you understand the assignment completely. Ask questions. Do some of the work and check with the teacher to determine whether you are doing it correctly.
- On occasion, ask another member of the family to dictate spelling words, help with flashcard drills, or listen to you read.
- Get in the habit of reading a variety of books whenever there is some spare time. Remember both the school and public libraries are great sources
- Take pride in doing your very best at all times. Everyone enjoys success. Schoolwork that you can be proud of, completed regularly, will lead to success.

ABSENCES DUE TO VACATIONS

Taking holidays during the school year will possibly compromise students' academic progress. We discourage parents from having their children miss school days due to extending holidays. However, we do understand that because of differing circumstances this may occur in various families. In this event, the parents should discuss the absence with the teacher concerned to see if some of the required work may be able to be provided prior to the absence. Although our teachers are committed to helping your child progress, please understand that it is not reasonable to request that the teacher prepare detailed lessons or homework missed during your child's absence due to a family holiday or other out-of-school event. Students are responsible for catching up on all missed assignments within a reasonable timeframe determined by the teacher through consultation with the student. With this in mind, we would encourage families to be mindful of the school year calendar.

RECESS AND LUNCHTIME

Students are dismissed by their teacher and go outside, weather permitting. Students are encouraged to use the washroom on the way in or out.

Lunch must be eaten in the assigned area. Students who normally stay for lunch are NOT permitted to leave the school grounds during the lunch break. Any exceptions must be in the form of a note from parents to their child's teacher.

At recess and lunchtime, all students are to be on the playground where they are visible to the supervisors. The following locations are out of bounds to all students: parking lot, tree area (due to tree damage), and any school exit.

BUS/SCHOOL CANCELLATIONS

In the event that school will be closed and/or buses will not be operating due to inclement weather, the Superintendent of Schools will notify the media with the message: "There will be no buses running and/or there will be no school in the CATHOLIC SCHOOLS in Leduc on (current day)." Please check your local radio and television stations and STAR Catholic School Division Website.

ATHLETICS

The Intramural Coordinators will plan a variety of activities for students to participate in during the lunch period.

Interscholar teams will be formed depending on student interest and availability of coaches or supervisors. Interested persons should watch for announcements of organizational meetings. Students, who fail to maintain academic standards, will not participate in extra-curricular activities.

SCHOOL COUNCIL AND PANDA

All parents of students attending Notre Dame can be members of the school council for their school site. We urge parents to take an active in

your association, so that it will continue as the vibrant and supportive group it has always been. The fundraising part of the school council is PANDA (Parents at Notre Dame Association).

The school council sponsors and supervises such school activities as: Hot Lunch program, Family Dance, Grade Six Farewell, various other field trips, and countless other projects that beautify the school grounds, while enhancing the programs and environment. Parents and guardians should try to attend monthly meetings.

We use the "town hall" or "assembly" model for our meetings. All members in attendance may speak to or vote on all motions. Meeting times and dates are announced in our monthly family newsletter. Parents are welcome to attend all celebrations, team games, and special events at our school. These events will be published in the newsletters as well. Please feel free to contact the school regarding our various volunteer activities.

EARLY DISMISSAL

Early Dismissal takes place the first Wednesday of each month at 2:25 p.m. FOR COUNTY STUDENTS ONLY.

OUT OF SCHOOL CARE

For after hour calls please dial 587-596-0551. Please call the office for further information about this program.

NOTRE DAME PRESCHOOL

This program operates two half days per week, mornings or afternoons. Please call the school at (780) 986-9300 for information.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

(Kindergarten)

Students must be (5) years of age by March 1st of the year in which he/she begin Kindergarten.

PICKUP AND DROP OFF STUDENTS

Motorists picking up or dropping off students should do so on the designated street so that the parking lot is clear and safe for student crossing.

The parking lot is for STAFF PARKING ONLY and is not to be used for pickup or drop off at any time.

PEANUT ALLERGIES

Many children have allergies and some allergic reactions can be life threatening. This medical condition is called anaphylaxis. Some children, for example, are severely allergic to nut products, including peanut butter. Even a tiny bit can be fatal within minutes. Father Leduc Catholic School promotes peanut-safe schools. However, we cannot guarantee a nut-free environment. We caution parents/guardians of an anaphylactic child that traces of nut products can be hidden. If you are a parent/guardian of a child with a life-threatening allergy, we need your cooperation in providing the school with current medical information and in developing a plan with school administration. We ask all parents/guardians to send foods to school without nuts or peanut products. We do, however, permit "may contain" products. Thank you for assisting us with creating a safer and more inclusive environment for all students.