



École
St. Thomas d'Aquin

"In partnership with family, church and community, we provide Catholic Education of the highest quality to our students."

École St. Thomas d'Aquin Parent-Student Handbook 2017-2018

Student Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

École St. Thomas d'Aquin
1970 – 19th Avenue S.E.
Medicine Hat, Alberta T1A 3X1
Telephone: 403-527-7333
Fax: 403-527-7460
Find us online at www.stthomasmh.com

 Like us on
Facebook
@EcoleSTA

 Follow us on
twitter
@Ecole_STA



Welcome to École St. Thomas d'Aquin

École St. Thomas d'Aquin is dedicated to the fullest development of the spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional and physical dimensions of each student.

We are an extremely unique school in Alberta and we are very proud of this distinction. We are one of only a very few single-track French Immersion Schools in Alberta. This means that our school is dedicated to learning French as a second language and means that all students in our school are enrolled in the French Immersion program.

As a Catholic School, École St. Thomas d'Aquin endeavours to:

- Teach and reinforce the principles of the Catholic faith.
- Provide a Catholic Christian atmosphere to enable each student to gain understanding of his/her faith and learn to apply Catholic principles to everyday life situations.

In order to achieve our objectives, parents are encouraged to communicate frequently with the school and participate in school-sponsored activities whenever possible.

École St. Thomas d'Aquin provides a safe and caring environment. We will continue to work diligently with all stakeholders to ensure that we continue to provide a safe and caring school environment and welcome any suggestions or feedback from parents.

Sincerely,
M. Terry Kennedy – Principal



Table of Contents

School Expectations	3
Timetable	4
Student Fee Schedule	4
What is French Immersion?	6
Counseling Services.....	6
Extra-Curricular Activities	6
Elementary Athletic Association.....	6
Skating and Swimming.....	6
Intramurals	6
Free Throw Basketball	6
Children's Art Exhibition	6
School Policies.....	7
Student Code of Conduct (AP 351 Appendix A)	7
School Attendance and Lates	2
Early Arrival and Supervision of Students	2
Closed Campus	2
Student Evaluation	2
Report Cards	2
Parent-Teacher Conferences	2
General Information	2
School Council.....	2
Monthly Newsletter.....	2
Telephone Protocol	2
Learning Services	2
Religious Instruction	3
Before & After School Program	3
Milk Program	3
Parking (Bus Zone & Parking Lot)	3
Lunch Policy	3
Homework	4
Medication.....	4
Student Health Issues	5
Locked Doors	5
Nut-Sensitive School.....	5

School Expectations

Expectations of Parents:

- To ensure regular & punctual attendance of their children, sending them fully prepared for their days work
- To encourage and support student growth by providing a home environment conducive to learning
- To support school staff as they attempt to foster the spiritual, intellectual, physical, social, emotional, cultural and moral development of each student
- To contact school personnel and discuss student progress at regular intervals
- To attend parent-teacher conferences as requested
- To support staff in having students follow through with their responsibilities

Expectations of Students:

- To be responsible for their education and be actively involved
- To be prepared for learning and receptive to new ideas
- To exercise self-control
- To become a self-directed learner
- To possess a positive attitude
- To have respect for authority
- To treat others and their property with respect & dignity
- To work to the very best of their ability

Expectations of the Parish:

- To serve as a link between home, school and the parish
- To work toward the development of the spiritual growth of students, staff and their families
- To provide sacramental programs for students and assist in the development of their lives within the church

Timetable

Kindergarten

- 8:42a.m.....Warning Bell
- 8:45a.m.....Classes begin
- 11:30a.m.....Dismissal

Grades 1 through 6

- 8:42a.m.....Warning Bell
- 8:45a.m.....Classes begin
- 10:15-10:30a.m.Recess
- 12:00-12:42p.m.Lunch
- 12:45p.m.Classes resume
- 3:05p.m.Dismissal

Student Fee Schedule

Student fees are collected from all students during September and are due the last day of the month. A notice will be sent home with each student indicating the amount owed. If your family is unable to pay your school fees during the prescribed dates, please contact the school to make special arrangements with the secretary and/or principal.

Further information will be available pending the Alberta Government's decision on *Bill 1: An Act to Reduce School Fees*. Please refer to the MHCBE Division website at www.mhcbe.ab.ca for information as it becomes available.

What is French Immersion?

French immersion is a highly successful approach to second language learning — an effective way for students to become functionally fluent in French while achieving all of the objectives of the regular school program. French is the language of instruction for a significant part of the school day. This program is designed for students whose first language is not French. The objective is full mastery of the English language, functional fluency in French, as well as an understanding and appreciation of the French culture.

Counseling Services

Counseling services are provided at École St. Thomas d'Aquin. Parents will be contacted if the school recommends any students for counseling services. Parents may request services by contacting the school principal or your child's teacher.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Elementary Athletic Association

All elementary schools have formed an association to promote sports and inter-school activities. Many sporting activities are held throughout the year. Examples include: floor hockey, volleyball, and dodge ball afternoons.

Skating and Swimming

These recreation programs are made available via a Joint-Use Agreement with the City of Medicine Hat. École St. Thomas d'Aquin students will have the opportunity to skate at the Kinplex and swim at Crestwood Pool. The Grade 1-6 students will once again participate in the *Swim Kids* program at Crestwood Pool.

Intramurals

Students will have the opportunity to participate in intramural games during the second half of the lunch period each Tuesday and/or Thursday (on a rotating schedule) during the colder winter months (TBA).

Free Throw Basketball

Students in Grades 5 & 6 will have the opportunity to participate in the annual Knights' of Columbus basketball Free Throw competition.

Children's Art Exhibition

A selection of student artwork will be selected and subsequently exhibited at the Alberta Teachers' Convention and at the Medicine Hat Art Museum and Art Gallery Children's Art Show (at the Esplanade).

School Policies

Student Code of Conduct (AP 351 Appendix A)

1. Statement of Purpose - Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education is committed to providing welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that respect diversity and a sense of belonging for students. (School Act Sec 45.1). The treatment of all persons with respect and dignity is a core value within the division. Expectations for student conduct arise from School Act requirements and the school district's Catholic values.

In our ministry, we value and celebrate:

- Teaching and living our Catholic faith
- Our Catholic traditions
- Our ability to offer a full range of educational programs for all students
- That every child is a unique creation who possesses an intrinsic dignity which must always be respected
- Parents as primary educators. Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children

2. Definition of Bullying - Section 1.1 (b.1) Alberta School Act, defines "bullying" as "repeated and hostile or demeaning behaviour by an individual in the school community where the behaviour is intended to cause harm, fear or distress to one or more other individuals in the school community, including psychological harm or harm to an individual's reputation."

3. Communication - The Student Code of Conduct must be:

- Made publicly available
- Reviewed every year, and
- Provided to all staff, students and parents/legal guardians

4. The Alberta Human Rights Act - Our priority is to ensure that all of our students are provided with a respectful and compassionate school environment rooted in Catholic values and teachings. This includes placing a strong value on having students conduct themselves properly at all times by respecting:

- All individuals and not engaging in discriminatory actions towards others because of their age, race, colour, place of origin, ancestry, family status, religious beliefs, physical disability, mental disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation
- School authorities and School and Division property, as well as, the property of others

5. Shared Responsibility - Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education recognizes that responsibility for student conduct is a shared responsibility between the Division, students, their parents/guardians and the broader community. The students in our Division are expected to behave in a virtuous manner that is charitable, courteous, respectful of others and supportive of the school philosophy and the goals of Catholic education.

6. Acceptable and Unacceptable Behavior - As required in Section 12 and Section 45.1(3) of the School Act the following behaviors are deemed acceptable and unacceptable within the Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education.

6.1 Acceptable Behaviors

Students are expected to meet the requirements of the School Act (Section 12) which states a student shall conduct himself or herself so as to reasonably comply with the following code of conduct:

- Be diligent in pursuing the student's studies
- Attend school regularly and punctually

- Co-operate fully with everyone authorized by the board to provide education programs and other services
- Comply with the rules of the school
- Account to the student's teachers for the student's conduct
- Respect the rights of others
- Ensure that the student's conduct contributes to a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging
- Refrain from, report and not tolerate bullying or bullying behaviour directed toward others in the school, whether or not it occurs within the school building, during the school day or by electronic means
- Positively contribute to the student's school and community

6.2 Unacceptable Behaviors

The following are examples of unacceptable behaviors with regard to student conduct in schools that interfere with the establishment of welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that respect diversity and a sense of belonging for students:

- Defiance and disrespect
- Inappropriate use of language
- Behaviors that interfere with the learning of others and/or the school environment or that create unsafe conditions
- Open opposition to authority
- Bullying, including cyber-bullying
- Breaches of digital on-line safety
- Physical harm/assault; Personal and/or sexual harassment
- Possession or use of weapons
- Drug, tobacco, e-cigarette, alcohol use, possession or distribution
- Inappropriate student dress
- Inappropriate use of mobile devices
- Theft and vandalism; Threats or intimidation
- Extortion; Discrimination

- 7. Progressive Discipline Plan** - The school's discipline plan will outline the expectations, consequences and the progression of actions to be taken depending on the severity and/or frequency of the occurrences and will take into account the student's age, maturity and individual circumstances, and must ensure that support is provided for students who are impacted by inappropriate behaviour, as well as for students who engage in inappropriate behaviour. As well, parental and district involvement may be requested to support school discipline procedures. At all times, teachers and administrators will use their professional judgment in applying consequences. Each school will keep a record of any disciplinary action taken with a student or group of students.

Consequences are intended to have a positive effect on the student's journey through reconciliation, either formally or informally, with the school community and those affected by the student's behaviour.

The following consequences are progressive in their degree of intervention and will be enacted depending on the frequency and severity of occurrences. They will be applied consistently and fairly to all students, notwithstanding the individual differences of children and the uniqueness of specific circumstances and situations.

Progressive discipline is a whole school approach that utilizes a continuum of interventions, supports, and consequences, including:

Prevention measures and initiatives:

- Early and ongoing intervention strategies
- Strategies to address unacceptable behavior

Interventions and consequences increase when:

- The concerning behavior is persistent
- The concerning behavior escalates
- There is a very serious infraction of the code of conduct

Interventions and consequences may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Informal Conferences
- Restriction of Privileges
- Parent Conferences
- In School Suspensions
- Risk Assessment
- Suspension / Expulsion (AP 357)
- Student Redirection
- Behaviour Support Plan
- Learner Support Plan
- Involvement of Instructional Services and Supports
- Involvement of External Services and Supports

The Principal may involve police in disciplinary matters when criminal activity has become evident. When police are involved, the Principal will conduct a separate, parallel investigation at the school level and provide disciplinary action separate from any criminal charges that may be issued.

- 8. Student Support** - Support will be offered to students impacted by inappropriate behaviour and to those students who engage in inappropriate behaviour. This is significant because while the student code of conduct must address the consequences for inappropriate behaviour, it also ensures that support (not just consequences) is provided to those students who engage in unacceptable behaviour. Examples of how support could be provided to students who have engaged in unacceptable behaviour include mentoring, restorative processes, regular check-ins with teachers or schools counsellors, counselling, etc.
- 9. Consideration of Student Diversity** - The School Act requires that the student code of conduct address consequences for unacceptable behaviour and that these reasonable consequences take into account the student's age, maturity, and individual circumstances. The specific circumstances of the situation and of the student need to be taken into account when determining appropriate consequences. For example, any diverse needs that the student has – whether they are physical, behavioural, communicational, mental health, trauma, etc. must be considered.

School Act, Section 15, 20, 23, 39, 40, 41, 43, 60, 61, 96, 113, 123, 124

Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act

Public Health Act, Social Development Act, Vital Statistics Act

Youth Justice Act

Section 23 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Regulation 200/95

Student Record Regulation 225/2006

Student Evaluation Regulation 177/2003

Calgary Catholic Student Code of Conduct-Appendix A

Children First Act Disclosure of Information Regulation 231/2013

School Attendance and Lates

1. Parents are asked to phone the school by 8:45 a.m. when their child is going to be absent or late.
2. Students are expected to attend all their classes and must make up time for which they are absent. Repeated absences will be addressed by school administration.
3. As there is sufficient break time allowed between classes, students must arrive to class on time. Teachers may assign consequences to students who are late.

Early Arrival and Supervision of Students

Students are encouraged to arrive after 8:27 a.m. Supervision is provided: mornings between 8:27-8:42 a.m.; during the lunch break; and after school (until busses depart). Students who do not normally take the bus at the end of the day must be picked by 3:10 p.m. Students need to leave the school by this time unless they are registered in the Before & After School Program or if they are involved in extra-curricular activities hosted by the school.

Closed Campus

Students must sign in and out whenever entering or leaving the school during the day or any time after classes have started. This includes the lunch hour when students are only permitted to leave the grounds accompanied by their parents or guardians (i.e. medical, dental, etc). Parents/Guardians are asked to notify the office or administration by note or telephone in advance, whenever they plan to take their children out of school during the school day.

Student Evaluation

Report Cards

1. Report cards are sent home to parents three (3) times per school year (November, March and June).
2. Our school uses Outcome-Based Report Cards to communicate student achievement/marks in each subject, for each reporting period. Please see your child's teacher or school administration for more detail.
3. Provincial Student Learning Assessments will be administered to Grade 3 students in September.
4. Provincial Achievement Tests will be administered in May/June in the core subjects for Grade 6 students.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parents are welcome to request a conference with the classroom teacher or the Principal at any time (with reasonable notice, and at a mutually agreed upon date & time).

Formal Parent-Teacher conferences will be available and scheduled after the first reporting period and Student-Led Conferences will be scheduled following the second reporting period.

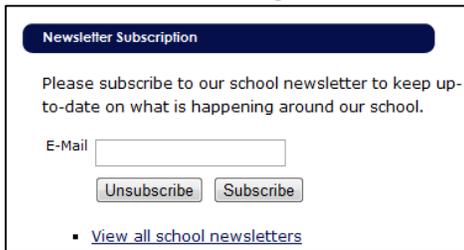
General Information

School Council

The School Council AGM and elections are held each September. Meetings are scheduled approximately once per month. Parents are encouraged to become involved and support the teaching staff and administration of the school.

Monthly Newsletter

We are now digital! Parents are therefore asked to “sign up” for a digital copy of the Newsletter through our school’s website. You will see the following on our website:



The image shows a screenshot of a web form titled "Newsletter Subscription". The form has a dark blue header with the title in white. Below the header, there is a paragraph of text: "Please subscribe to our school newsletter to keep up-to-date on what is happening around our school." Underneath this text is an "E-Mail" label followed by a text input field. Below the input field are two buttons: "Unsubscribe" and "Subscribe". At the bottom of the form, there is a link: "View all school newsletters".

Telephone Protocol

The telephone at the front office is available for use if a student is ill or if it is deemed an emergency by school administration. Students who miss a bus should phone home – do not attempt to walk home before contacting parents.

*The phone cannot be used to arrange social events with friends.

Visitors to the School

Parents are most welcome in the school. However, ALL visitors must report to the office. Parents are not permitted to interrupt the learning environment and/or instruction at school. Therefore, the school secretary will ensure that items left at the office are delivered to your child’s classroom at the appropriate time. If you will be volunteering in a classroom or working with students, you will need to sign-in at the front office and ensure that we have a current Criminal Records Check on file. The school can provide a Criminal Records Check Letter upon request.

Learning Services

Support for students through Learning Services (formerly known as Resource) is done following a series of individual tests and assessments.

*Parents are required to give their consent before testing or a placement of this kind can occur.

Speech Language Therapy services for those students in need of such a service can be accessed through a school referral. Referrals for assessment of speech difficulties are made following the consent of the parent, and/or upon the request of school.

Religious Instruction

As a Catholic School, our goal is to provide an environment where religious values are permeated throughout the entire day. Periodically, we will have masses and celebrations that mark the liturgical calendar. Parents are most welcome to attend these events. Dates and times are outlined in our digital monthly newsletters and calendars.

Students in Grade 1 to 6 receive 150 minutes of classroom instruction in Religion class per week (30 min. per day). They will also receive an integrated unit on Family Life in Grades 4 to 6. Students in Grades 2 & 3 are candidates for preparation for the Sacraments of First Eucharist and Reconciliation, respectively.

*It is the responsibility of the parents to contact the church and prepare their child for these sacraments.

The sacraments will be conferred through the Parish. We encourage you to watch your Sunday Parish Bulletin for announcements regarding parent meetings. Although the sacramental themes are discussed in the Religion programs at school, parents are required to do the preparation and instruction of the sacraments at home.

Before & After School Program

A *Before and After School Care Program* is in place for students whose parents are working and require such a service. The program will be in place if a sufficient number of students are actively participating in such services. All fees must be paid on time (no exceptions). Information on how to register for this program is available at the front office of the school.

Milk Program

The school operates a daily milk program. Parents are asked to inquire about the milk program at the front office. Parents are requested to pay for milk with cash or by cheque payable to École St. Thomas d'Aquin.

Parking (Bus Zone & Parking Lot)

We kindly remind anyone picking up students to be aware of the designated Bus Zone (in front of the school) and the Staff Parking Lot (at the side). We appreciate your help in ensuring that these areas remain open for the safety of our students as they make their way on & off their respective buses, when arriving & departing for home. Please do not drop-off or pick-up students in either of these two designated areas. Thank you very much in advance!

Lunch Policy

1. Students will eat lunch in their own classroom. Students are expected to finish eating their lunch between 12:00–12:20 p.m.
2. There are no microwaves available for student use to heat lunches.
3. Students are expected to clean up their desk area after they have eaten.
4. At 12:20 p.m., the staff member on lunch supervision will dismiss the classes. Students are required to put their disposable items in the garbage cans (located in the hallway) as they leave.
5. Students are expected to either go outside after they have eaten or to the gym to participate in intramurals (on their specified day).

6. Any student who abuses his/her lunchroom privileges may be asked to eat his or her lunch outside of the classroom.
7. Students who eat lunch at school are expected to remain in the school grounds for the entire lunch period.

Homework

The need for homework has been a much-debated topic for many years. Most studies completed on this topic indicate that homework leads to immediate, higher academic achievement, as well as improved study skills & attitudes for the remainder of a student's academic life. Homework can range from daily reading, to routine study/practice of spelling, math facts, etc.

Although homework can take on various modes, its fundamental principles & purpose are to:

- reinforce lessons taught during the school day
- give students extra drill in an area where more practice or enrichment is required
- teach students how to budget their time
- facilitate the development of self-reliance and solid study habits
- provide an opportunity for parent involvement and monitoring of their child's progress
- strengthen the ties between the school & home

Parents can help their child by:

- providing a quiet place to work where they can monitor their child's progress
- assist the child with their organization skills when it comes to assignment completion or study
- taking an active part by being an "audience" for reading practice, spelling practice, math drills, etc.
- helping the child access information for assignments on the internet or researching the Public Library

The support and interest of parents in their child's work will go a long way to help them develop a strong sense of competence and independence when it comes to their academic life. A balance of sport activity is critical to the over-all development of a child – but it is paramount that a child's academic success comes first & foremost, for without the latter, the former is not possible.

Medication

In accordance with Administrative Procedure 316, we are not authorized to administer any medications unless specifically requested and supplied by the parents. A special authorization form (available from the office) must be completed and must include the name of the medication, the amount to be administered, at what time during the day this medication is to be administered and must have the name of the student and authorizing physician well displayed on the container.

Student Health Issues

Parents are requested to inform the school of any health problems that their child may have (i.e. allergies, bladder problems, asthma, etc) at the beginning of the school year or when first medically identified. School administration reserves the right to ask for a medical note and/or documentation to support a parents' medical claim. This information will be kept confidential by teachers (and kept on file for use whenever circumstances arise).

Locked Doors

It is a policy of the school to keep all outside doors (other than the front doors) locked during the normal school day hours (with the exception of the morning and lunch recesses). Anyone visiting the school is asked to please check-in with the secretary or principal at the front office.

Nut-Sensitive School

École St. Thomas d'Aquin is a "Nut-Sensitive" school. Therefore, we would ask that ALL student lunches, snacks, etc. be free of nut and/or nut by-products. We would like to thank you in advance for your attention and cooperation with respect to this matter.