

St. Joseph's Catholic School

Alens animos et mentes -- Nurturing spirits and minds

P.O. Box 454, Smithers B.C., V0J 2N0

Phone 847-9414 Fax 847-9402

E-mail stj@telus.net

Our Parent Handbook

Principal's Message

There are many ways to measure effectiveness in schools, and even more ways to measure it in a Catholic school. Through our strong academic programs, spirit-filled classrooms, and welcoming community we see God's hand of blessings on our school.

As a staff, we are dedicated and committed to working with you to provide the best educational opportunities possible. It is our belief that each student is entitled to an environment and experiences that foster an education founded in Christ.

Part of the blessings found in our school is the support from you, our parents. As parents, you are the primary educators and I encourage each of you to take an active role in the education of your child.

May your family be blessed throughout this coming school year.

Sincerely,

Susan Forbrigger

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We live out this commitment in striving to:

- foster a family spirit within the school and share that spirit with the local community.
- have the staff of the school serve as role models of Christian values.
- enlighten the students in the teaching of Christ, through knowledge and by example.
- develop within each child a sense of self-worth through their achievements in schoolwork and acceptance within our school family.
- develop our students' skills in oral and written language to enable them to communicate ideas and feelings effectively.
- develop our students' skills in computation and in the understanding of math concepts to enable them to be effective problem solvers.
- develop within our students the ability to think critically and to use their reasoning powers to help them function effectively in society.
- instill within our students a love of learning and an appreciation of knowledge that will continue throughout their lives.
- instill within our students the motivation to attain their fullest spiritual, intellectual, and physical potential.
- foster within our students a sense of responsibility as members of the global community.
- develop our school into an institution dedicated to meeting the needs of our families.

Philosophy and Objectives of Our School

St. Joseph's School is committed to an educational program, which strives to provide academic excellence and to foster the total formation of the person. We aim to integrate the different aspects of knowledge in the light of the teachings of Jesus Christ as taught and lived in the Roman Catholic Church. We work to build an awareness of self within the community. We encourage and develop the growth of each person as a Christian.

- Other children will be considered for enrollment in the school providing there is room. All children will be expected to participate in the entire educational program of the school, including religious instruction programs and celebrations.
- The class size is set at 25 for all grades. Two openings will be reserved

for Roman Catholic transfers from other schools or dioceses.

Admission Policy for New Students

Priority for enrollment will be given to children from Roman Catholic families. Next priority will be given to students with siblings already attending the school.

Application Procedure:

The parent(s)/guardians(s) of each applicant will meet with the principal to discuss the school's philosophy, programs and policies. The child's previous school and/or other appropriate professionals will also be contacted.

Acceptance Criteria:

- the child's ability to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered by the school.
- the school's ability to meet the child's particular needs.
- the enrollment priorities outlined above.

School Funding

The Provincial Government grants our school 50% of the cost per public school student for operating costs. This funding is based on the student's attendance. Additional funding to help cover the operating costs of the school comes from tuition, special grants, and donations from the parish, groups and individuals.

Tuition and Notebook Fees

Tuition fees may be paid by 10 posted dated cheques at the beginning of the school year, in full by the end of September or biannually in Sept. and Feb. Notebook fees are payable by the end of September.

Educational Program

St. Joseph's School is dedicated to providing a quality educational program for its students. We aim to create an environment where every student experiences success in doing his/her best and where Christian values are lived. Our school is mandated by the government to meet the learning outcomes of all areas of the B.C. curriculum. In addition to these core curricular areas, St. Joseph's offers instruction in Catholic Religious Education, French, Music, and Computers for all students. A part-time learning assistance teacher is available to provide extra support to students experiencing difficulties in core subjects.

Extra-Curricular Programs

Each year a variety of extra-curricular activities are offered to students. Some of the activities offered are: basketball, cross-country running, skiing, soccer, volleyball, track and field, drama, and choir.

Enrichment Program

St. Joseph's School offers an enrichment program in grades 5 to 7. During this time, the students prepare a school yearbook.

Sacramental Preparation

Sacramental preparation for Catholic students is done primarily through the classroom religion program. The Sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion are received in grade two and the Sacrament of Reconciliation is received in grade three. Non-Catholic students in the class are involved in most of the preparation program and are invited and encouraged to come and help celebrate with those receiving the Sacrament.

Communication

We feel that effective communication between the home and school is essential for the well being of our students. In addition to this handbook which provides information to our families, a calendar is sent home at the beginning of every month and on Tuesday, our "Tuesday Note" goes home to every family. Parents are encouraged to attend PSG meetings and are welcome at School Council Meetings. Parents are also encouraged to bring any queries or concerns that arise throughout the year to their child's teacher.

General School Regulations

- **Attendance**

In the case of illness, parents/guardians are asked to phone the school before classes begin. For register purposes, a note must be sent from home stating the date(s) and reason for absence or tardiness.

Every effort should be made to attend regularly as absenteeism has an adverse effect on student progress.

- **Participation**

It is expected that students participate in the entire educational program of the school. A note is required if there is a valid reason for a student to be excused from scheduled classes and activities.

- **Discipline**

Discipline at St., Joseph's is based on Christian values and the premise of mutual respect. Discipline is seen to be a joint home- school responsibility with parents and staff being supportive of each other in requiring respectful conduct. Positive support and good communication between home and school is essential to the effectiveness of our school. Students are to be polite, co-operative and respectful in their dealings with both staff and other students. We believe that children need and want fair and firm guidelines. A school code of discipline is used in dealing with all problems. A copy of the classroom rules will be posted in each class. The classroom discipline code will be available to parents by the end of the third week of school. Parents are welcome to examine their child's discipline record at any time.

- **Leaving School Premises**

Students are required to have parental permission to leave the school grounds between 8:36 a.m. and 3:04 p.m. The school office or classroom teacher must be informed by phone or letter. Unless students regularly go home for lunch, they are not allowed to leave school grounds unless the school office receives parental confirmation.

- **Dress Requirements**

Students are to dress neatly and appropriately. For example tops should cover your middle when you raise your hands above your head, sleeveless tops should be fitted around the arms and shorts and skirts should be at least mid-thigh in length. Any slogans or pictures on clothing should be in keeping with Christian values. As students spend recess and lunch break outside, except in very inclement weather, they are asked to always dress for the weather. In order to keep the mud and dirt outside, we ask that all students have an extra pair of shoes for indoor wear. These must NOT be black soled. Gym running shoes may be worn as indoor shoes.

Expectations of Students

St. Joseph's School operates on these basic assumptions:

- Philosophical - that all of our students have a desire to develop as whole persons - spiritually, physically, intellectually, and socially - within the school environment.
- Behavioural - that all students will be respectful towards other students

and staff. Disciplined behaviour is viewed as integral to the provision of a quality Christian education at St. Joseph's.

- Academic - that all students will demonstrate a reasonable and co-operative effort in the learning process. Students will be supported and encouraged to work to the best of their ability in all program areas. Students will come prepared to work with all the necessary supplies. It is expected that students are responsible for completing their homework and making up missed assignments. The daily use of the homework book is required for intermediate students. (Primary students, as a rule, do not receive homework. Intermediate students can expect approximately 30 minutes of homework a night.)
- Be Prepared for Weather - that all students will be dressed appropriately to go outside at recess and noon break in all but very inclement weather. This means that proper rain gear is required for fall and spring and warm clothing is required for the winter months.

Bell Schedule

8:34 a.m. - Warning bell	12:20 p.m. – Noon recess
8:39 a.m. - Classes begin	12:55 p.m. – Warning bell
10:15 a.m. - Recess begins	1:00 p.m.- Classes begin
10:30 a.m. – Classes begin	3:04 p.m. - Dismissal
12:00 noon- Lunch begins	

* Kindergarten students attend school from 8:34 a.m. to 12:00 noon Monday to Thursday.

Supervision Schedule

Students are supervised on the playground from 8:00 a.m. to 8:34 a.m., at recess, noon break, and after school until 3:19 p.m. or, in the case of bus students, until boarding their bus. Students may stay in the school after school hours provided they have parental permission and a teacher to supervise them.

Bussing

Students at St. Joseph's have access to public school bussing provided there is room on the bus. Students are dropped off and picked up at the library entrance to the school. Because each child is "checked off" the bus list as he/she boards the bus, it is important that the school be informed if a child will not be taking the bus. Older children can let their teacher know, while for younger children a note or phone call from home may be more appropriate. Discipline problems arising on the bus are dealt with by the driver and /or the bussing authority.

School Calendar

Before the beginning of each month, your child will be given a school calendar of all the planned monthly events. If you do not receive your copy, please contact the office and we will send you another one. During the year there will be a number of professional development days. These dates will be given to you as soon as they are available.

Reporting Periods

There will be two interim reports and three formal reports sent home during the year. Teachers complete second interim reports only for students for whom they have concerns or have shown great improvement since the last report. Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled after the first formal report. However, feel free to call and set up an appointment at any time during the year. If you have concerns or questions about your child's progress or about something he/she is studying, please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher. Teachers will also keep parents informed on an informal basis as required.

Homework Policy

At the intermediate level, homework is seen as an important part of the educational program as it helps to develop good study habits and a sense of responsibility towards schoolwork. Homework assigned at these grade levels should require about 30 minutes to complete. In grades one to three, homework will not normally be assigned unless it is “catch up” work. Parents need to check and sign your children’s homework book each day as the regular use of the homework book is required and important to effective work habits. Good study habits also require a quiet place to work and the establishment of a routine homework time. Parents can be an audience for oral reading, spelling practice, and math drills. If, on occasion, your child is unable to complete his/her homework assignment, a note from a parent/guardian is required to be sent to the teacher stating the circumstances. The student will be expected to complete the assigned work in the near future. Students who do not have a valid reason for incomplete homework will be supervised outside class time in study hall at 12:20 p.m. so they can complete their homework. Students who do not have their homework book signed more than once a week or have misplaced a book or assignment will be required to stay at study hall for fifteen minutes. Study hall is also available for any student wanting to complete homework at school or wanting assistance with their homework. We encourage students to avail themselves of this opportunity.

Library Policy

Students are responsible to care for their books and see that they are returned weekly.

Books are due back by your child’s next library period.

- If a book is late, your child will be given a note reminding them to return the overdue book.
- If a book is more than two weeks overdue, a note will be sent home, asking your help in finding the book and your child will not be able to check out another book until the late book is returned.
- If you cannot find it, you must pay the replacement cost of the lost book as indicated on the request note. Once this is done your child will be allowed to sign out books again
- If the lost book is found after it has been paid for, you may return it and have your money refunded.

- Your child is also responsible for replacing any books which he/she has borrowed but returned in a damaged condition.

Lost and Found

Every year we accumulate clothing, shoes, boots and some unbelievable items in our lost and found. Please encourage your child to check if they have lost anything. Please ensure that all your child's belongings, including shoes, boots, and lunch kits, are clearly marked. All unclaimed belongings will be donated to goodwill.

Field Trip Policy

When you register your child you will be asked to give your permission for your child to take part in field trips which are part of the regular school program. These include such things as walking trips to the library, skating rink, and fire hall. If the field trip requires transportation, the parent's written permission for the specific event will be required.

Major Fund-Raising

Each year we hold several fund-raising events involving all the students in the school. The money raised is used for school equipment and educational resources directly used by the students. Participation in any fund-raising event is voluntary. The first fund-raising event in the school year is the chocolate almond sale, which usually starts the second week of September.

Hot Lunch Program

The PSG runs a Friday hot lunch program from October to April. Monies raised go towards resources and equipment for the school. From April to May the hot lunch program is run by the parents of the grade seven class as a fund-raiser for the annual Vancouver-Victoria field trip. Students place their orders Wednesday each week for the Friday lunch. If you would like to help out with the hot lunch program - please contact the coordinator. Each team is only scheduled for three or four hot lunches a year.

Parent Support Group

St. Joseph's PSG is an integral part of the school, fostering a sense of community and trust through the active involvement of parents and teachers. The PSG allows parents to be informed and involved in issues, events and programs concerning our school. The PSG is involved in a variety of activities (e.g. hot lunch program, Fun Day, Turkey dinner) and in activities that build a strong, supportive communication between and among teachers and parents. The PSG allows parents and teachers to work together towards enhancing the school and meeting the teachers needs in their programs. For more information on the PSG, please contact the school office or the PSG president. Parent involvement in the PSG is essential in ensuring the continued success of our school for our students and their families.

Volunteer Policy

Volunteers make significant contributions to our school in a variety of ways such as:

providing adult supervision in situations such as field trips

providing assistance to the teacher in the classroom with
instructional materials

providing assistance to the teacher by marking objective
assignments

assisting in the instruction of children by reading to children or listening
to them read

The Catholic Independent School Board of Directors has implemented a policy that requires all volunteers who are in a 'working with children situation' to complete an application form which will give consent for the completion of a criminal record search. This policy aims to ensure that children learn in a safe environment.

If you feel you have time to volunteer in any of the above ways, you **MUST** complete an application form which can be picked up at the school office.

We also require any parents who will be driving students to give the office a Driver's Abstract, this can be obtained from the Access centre.

Your contributions to our school are always welcome and greatly appreciated.

Parental Input to the School

We are dedicated to growing and improving our school. You can greatly assist us in being an effective school by providing your ideas and evaluation of school programs and policies on school surveys distributed by School Council. Parents are also strongly encouraged to attend our PSG meetings, which are listed on the monthly calendar, the monthly School Council meetings are also open to all parents. In keeping with the family nature of our school, we feel a special need to consider our parents' concerns and ideas.

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Parents' Rights

- to be recognized as the first educators of their children.
 - to participate in the religious, social and academic education of their children.
 - to visit the school.
 - to elect School Council members from members of the parish.
 - to elect PSG members.
 - to require excellence in religious and academic education.
 - to be informed regarding the progress and/or problems of their children.
 - to have their views on any aspect of the curriculum and activities taken into serious account.
 - to be heard by the School Council.
 - to have the school reinforce the Catholic moral and religious guidance and discipline given in the home.
- Ø to appeal to the Society when problems cannot be solved at the local level.

Problem Solving Policy

We feel communication is essential for providing an effective and nurturing school for your child. If a problem arises at school involving your child, it is best to first contact your child's teacher during school hours. (Please call ahead to set up an appointment at a mutually convenient time) If the problem cannot be solved satisfactorily, contact the principal. If you still have concerns you may present your concern IN WRITING to the School Council at one of their monthly meetings. If you feel you have not received satisfaction from the above parties, an appeal in writing can be made to the Board of Directors of the Society of Prince George. The decision of the Board of Directors on the matter shall be final and binding on everyone involved.

Parents' Responsibilities

- to take the initiative and leadership in the religious education of their children and to be supportive of the religious program in the school.
- to set a good example for their children by practicing the Catholic faith.
- to take an active role in the guidance of their children's education.
- to familiarize themselves with the school's policies and to abide by them.
- to co-operate with teachers for the welfare of their children.
- to attend meetings called by the school.
- to participate in school activities and events whenever possible.
- to attend parent/teacher interviews as scheduled or to make alternate arrangements.
- to ensure that the child has all the supplies needed for proper participation in school.
- to ensure that children are given enough time and suitable working space to complete homework assignments.
- to support the school financially.