



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Do you have an Early Childhood Education program at Sacred Heart?

A. Yes, we offer an exceptional Junior Primary program for four-year-olds. Our program is designed for young, developing minds and provides a solid foundation in reading and math. Our philosophy is to help children learn through play and structured activities with a focus on social development, independence and caring for others. The day begins at 8:30 a.m. with supervised free play until snack time. The day then flows from gym to music, outdoor play to story time, creative arts and crafts and much more. Our JP students have access to the entire campus including our state-of-the-art playground, two gyms, a performance theatre, lunch room, and fully-equipped Library.

Q. When can my child begin in Junior Primary?

A. Students in Junior Primary program must turn four years old by December 31st of their Junior Primary year.

Q. Do you have an After School Care Program?

A. Yes, we offer an After-School Program for our students in JP-Grade 6 starting from dismissal to 5:30pm. The fee for this Program is \$9.50 per hour. We also have numerous after-school clubs and courses, examples of which include robotics, karate, yoga, chess, mandarin, and many others. Some of these clubs have a small fee associated with them.

Q. Do the students wear a uniform?

A. Yes, all students wear one of two uniforms depending on the day and activity. The regular uniform is worn most days and a dress uniform is worn on days with formal occasions such as Liturgies and Primes (special assemblies). Spirit gear, which includes casual, branded clothing, is worn on most Fridays, and is available for sale online. Students can wear clothing of their choosing on Colour Days which are called on special occasions, often to raise awareness around a particular social action initiative. Every elementary student gets one personal colour day each year for their birthday. Our on-site School Shop sells all of our uniform pieces. The Parents' Guild class representative provides reminders on what uniform is to be worn on a weekly basis.

Q. What is the average class size?

A. Our average class size ranges from 12 to 17 students in both the Elementary and Senior schools.

Q. What are the benefits of single gender education in high school?

A. Research has shown and our experience tell us very clearly that both girls and boys thrive in a single gender academic setting. There are significant differences between boys and girls that impact their learning styles, and a single gender classroom allows us to tailor our teaching in the way they learn best. Both boys and girls are given the room to gain confidence without the distraction of, or comparison by, gender. There are opportunities to interact outside of the classroom during lunch time and through co-curricular and extracurricular activities such as band, choir and our theatrical productions.

Q. We aren't Roman Catholic. Will we feel comfortable at Sacred Heart?

A. Sacred Heart School of Halifax is a Catholic independent school that welcomes people of all faiths. While about half of our students are Catholic, many of our students identify with other religions (Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism), other Christian denominations, or claim no religious affiliation or are searching. Sacred Heart welcomes students from all ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds, and our families value the spiritual dimension of our school because our broad focus is on love, respect, generosity, and forgiveness.

All students at both the elementary and high school levels participate in our religion curriculum, which is inclusive and engaging. These courses foster understanding and deep respect for the meaningful rituals and traditions of religions around the world. Our students explore their relationship to God, to self, to others, and to all creation, and they are encouraged to share their religious traditions with their classmates.

Throughout the school year, students will learn about scripture, liturgical seasons, and will participate in assemblies, masses and celebrations that honour founding members of the Society of the Sacred Heart. In addition, our Elementary school students enjoy weekly liturgical singing practices to learn the songs that will be sung at upcoming celebrations, and these songs reinforce the themes of love, respect, generosity, and forgiveness.

Q. Is there French immersion at Sacred Heart?

A. While we do not offer a full immersion program, we have a very strong French program with numerous options as a student progresses through school that can ultimately lead to a French Diploma for bilingual proficiency (DELF). Junior Primary and Primary children receive core French instruction three times weekly. In Grade 1-2, students receive our unique Bilingual Program, with half day instruction in French and half in English. French language (listening, speaking, writing, reading, spelling), social studies, and handwriting are taught in French. Language arts, mathematics, science, religion, PE, music, and art are taught in English. In Grade 2, science and health are taught bilingually. Grade 3 to 6 students have daily core French class in which children are expected to speak exclusively in French.

As students move into senior school, we continue to balance the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing French along with introducing students to French and French Canadian culture. Our curriculum is supported by learning techniques that have proven results in helping

students acquire full fluency – being able to converse freely and competently. In Grades 10-12, the French programme is divided into Academic and Advanced. Academic courses have been developed for students with less background but a keen interest in developing their skills among students at a similar skill level. Students graduating from the advanced stream have a solid foundation in grammar, presentation and written skills, French literature and spoken fluency.

Q. What is the Advanced Placement (AP) Program and how does it compare to the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program?

A. Sacred Heart offers the internationally recognized AP program which offers students rigorous, university-level courses that are recognized internationally. As part of our AP program, we also offer educational travel, boutique online options, and experiential learning with local specialists. The benefits of AP are many - students can pick and choose the subject areas they want to excel in, they don't have to take prescribed advanced courses as they do in the IB program; they will have first-year university credit(s) before they even enter university - standard level IB programs will not earn students university credit at most institutions; also, students don't have to be enrolled in a class to take an AP exam, as opposed to IB where they do; AP participation demonstrates to universities that the student is already well-prepared to enter a first year program of study; and, AP is widely recognized beyond North America and regarded highly at top colleges and universities. In the UK, AP distinguishes our students from local students, many of whom take the IB program.

Q. What about sports and extra-curricular activities at Sacred Heart?

A. Sacred Heart offers a wide range of co- and extra-curricular activities. Elementary students can choose from a wide variety of clubs and activities including Band, Battle of the Books, Running Club, Student Council, Choir, Coding, and Robotics. Presently, outside organizations offer Yoga, Mandarin Language, Karate, MusIQ, and Mad Science after school. In the high schools, students are involved in a variety of activities including Choir, Band, Kids Help Phone, Debating, Drama, the Performing Arts Club (drama and musical productions), Playground Mentoring, CineClub, Robotics Club, Yearbook, Student Council, Duke of Edinburgh's Award Program and much more.

Intramural sports take place over lunch hour on a weekly basis for students in Grades 3 to 6. Physical Education is an important component of our programming, and students in Junior Primary through Grade 6 have three recess periods and three PE classes weekly. Our junior high students have PE every day, and our senior high students have flexibility in scheduling courses and using the Fitness Room. In addition to a comprehensive physical education program, our senior school offers a wide range of team sports including hockey, field hockey, basketball, soccer, badminton and volleyball as well as cross-country and tennis. Our teams compete with other independent schools, public schools, and in city league tournaments.

Q. What technology does Sacred Heart offer in the classroom?

A. Our School has multiple portable carts of devices: a set of 30 iPads and a set of 30 Chromebooks. Carts facilitate the free use and integration of technology throughout our building. Additionally, our classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards (Smart Boards) – large touch-sensitive displays that connect to a computer and projector and allow a user to control a computer from the board. Computers are also available in every room and students have access to the School’s wireless network. Senior students may use personal laptops in and outside of class. The School also offers a file sharing program which permits students to have access to class notes and collaboration with teachers and fellow students anytime and anywhere in the world. We also have advanced, fully-equipped science labs and a 3D printer in the Senior School.

Q. Does the School have a Strategic Plan?

A. Absolutely we do! You can link to it [here](#). The Strategic Plan is rooted in and predicated upon the Goals and Criteria of Sacred Heart Education. It reflects the way we will progress in order to live evermore authentically our Goals. The Planning Committee of our Board of Governors led us through a process of listening, research, and visioning en route to the articulation of this Strategic Plan that includes the four key areas: Access, Learning, Campus, and Unity. Essentially, the objective of ACCESS is to make our school more financially accessible to those who desire an education based on our Sacred Heart Goals and Criteria. LEARNING has the objective of renewing our teaching and learning practice and methodology to reflect an interdisciplinary and student-centered learning that is differentiated, innovative, and rooted in our Sacred Heart Goals. The third context is to ensure our CAMPUS is safe, well maintained, and serves our program; and UNITY calls us to strengthen both our local and international Sacred Heart community.

Q. What’s the difference between a private and an independent school?

A. Independent schools in Halifax are operated as not-for-profit organizations which are governed by an independent Board of Trustees or Governors which provides overall oversight to the institution. Private schools are more typically for-profit institutions run by their owners.

Q. Are you certified by outside bodies?

A. We are one of only three schools in Halifax to be certified by Canadian Accredited Independent Schools (CAIS), a community of 95 schools that represent the gold standard of excellence in independent education. Earning this seal of approval means students and parents can expect the best in education, leadership, management, and governance. As well, we are one of only two schools in Canada to be certified by the Sacred Heart Commission on Goals, a network of 24 schools in the USA and Canada that is committed to the Goals and Criteria of a Sacred Heart education.

Q. Do you have an Parents' organization of some type?

A. We have a very active and engaged Parents' Guild at SHSH and every parent is technically a member. The Parents' Guild has two primary goals: to build School community and to raise funds to support School programs which they do by hosting a number of events and activities throughout the year. The PG welcomes parent volunteers to help in any way they can.

Q. Do you offer financial assistance?

A. Yes. We use a combination of academic scholarships and bursary support to make a Sacred Heart education affordable. Scholarships are merited by mission-appropriate Senior School students, whereas bursary support, where most of our financial support is directed, is based on demonstrated financial need and available to students at Primary to Grade 12. New and returning families can apply for tuition assistance through our external partner, Apple Financial Services.

Q. Are you part of the Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HCRE), formerly known as the Halifax Regional School Board?

A. No, we are an independent, certified, not-for-profit school that is not part of the public system. While we meet and exceed the curriculum standards set out by Nova Scotia's Department of Education, we do not follow the same structure of the HCRE. Our Board of Governors sets our strategic direction, and we are accredited through the Canadian Accredited Independent Schools (CAIS) and the Sacred Heart Commission on Goals ensures we meet extremely high academic and co-curricular standards, and that our mission, vision, and values are true and meaningful.