



# Elementary School

## Academic Guide 2023-24

Sacred Heart School of Halifax is an independent Catholic school that educates students intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically in a caring and trusting environment. Our heritage and Sacred Heart spirit inspire commitment to value-based education relevant to a pluralistic student body.

The goals of the School are to educate to:

- ♥ A personal and active faith in God
- ♥ A deep respect for intellectual values
- ♥ A social awareness which impels to action
- ♥ The building of community as a Christian value
- ♥ Personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom

Welcome to Sacred Heart School of Halifax, one of the top independent schools in the region. Here, we offer an unparalleled education — one that is tailored to our students by gender, aptitude, interest, and dream. We also offer an experience no other school can match. As part of a worldwide network of Sacred Heart schools, we offer meaningful traditions and global opportunities. We also believe in faith, hope, and love as guiding principles in the spiritual development of students. That solid moral grounding means we can inspire our students to be the best for the world, not just the best in the world.

Sacred Heart School of Halifax meets and exceeds all provincial Department of Education requirements and standards. We also know that education is inherently relational, so we invest in small classes with dedicated teachers and emotionally positive and academically motivated peer groups. To round out the academic experience, we offer a robust co-curricular program that includes educational travel, athletics, artistic development, and social action — all designed to prepare each student for their journey through life.

We are accredited by the Canadian Accredited Independent Schools (CAIS), one of only three Halifax schools to earn this distinction. It's your guarantee of excellence — it means we offer the best in education, leadership, management, and governance.

Our Academic Guide provides an overview of our Elementary School program, yet it is our outstanding faculty who bring it to life. We welcome you to explore this Guide and let us know if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

Dennis Phillips, Head of School  
Jared Griffiths, Principal, Elementary School

# Sacred Heart Elementary School Academic Program

In our Elementary School, we teach the whole child, encouraging healthy development in language, cognition, and physical, social, emotional, artistic, and spiritual growth, because we know children need and deserve balance in their lives.

Our co-ed Elementary School is a thriving and nurturing environment, where every child is known, where love and joy are abundant, and teachers work in partnership with parents. We intentionally make the best use of instructional time through blocks of reading, writing, and math every day. And at the same time, we value and support learning across many disciplines. Our students engage in physical education, French, music, science, religion, social studies, art, and health classes. We also teach them positive values rooted in the Catholic tradition and universal in relevance — kindness and gratitude are part of our daily lives.

We provide age-appropriate French instruction to serve our students' developmental needs. Love of language is introduced in Junior Primary and Primary. Our enhanced French program in Grades 1 and 2 provides English and French language instruction daily. The program provides a solid foundation of oral fluency and confidence. Building on this, our daily academic core French class in Grades 3 through 6 sets our students on the path to achieving strong French language skills into high school.



## JUNIOR PRIMARY - An Engaging Entry into School Life

The philosophy of our Junior Primary Program is to encourage learning through play and structured activities with a focus on school readiness.

A typical day in Junior Primary starts with drop-off between 8:00-9:00 a.m. with children and parents welcomed into their classroom by engaging and certified early childhood educators.



Parents are encouraged to touch base with their child's teachers. A calm separation makes for a great start to the day for the child, parent, and teacher. The children settle into their day with Morning Circle, followed by a snack, specialist time, small group lessons, and lots of playtime. Following lunch and quiet time, the children complete literacy and numeracy activities and engage in crafts and creative arts before finishing their day with more outdoor play and art.

Added elements of our JP program include:

- Inclusion in full school life with participation in liturgies, special assemblies, and use of all facilities such as gymnasiums, the Library, and multiple outdoor play spaces;
- Three physical education classes weekly with a specialist;
- French classes weekly with a specialist;
- Music classes weekly with a specialist;
- Reading buddies with Grade 4 students;
- Senior School student volunteers in our classrooms.

## PRIMARY - A Solid Foundation for Future Learning



Grade Primary extends through a full academic day and includes child-centered activities that stimulate intellectual, physical, social, emotional, artistic, and spiritual development. Our School provides safe, clean, bright, and comfortable learning spaces.

The Primary Program at Sacred Heart Elementary School is designed to be a joyful learning experience where your child will develop a love of learning, positive self-esteem, and a caring, accepting attitude toward others.

Age-appropriate objectives meet each child's need for growth. The curriculum objectives introduce your child to formal learning through activity and instruction.

The program is based on extensive research and established pedagogy in language, literacy, and math development. Our teachers are engaged in ongoing reflection and professional development to further enhance the learning experience for our students.

### English Language Literacy

Language learning is a complex process. Children have learned most of the syntax and semantics of their own language and have developed a large speaking and listening vocabulary as they enter school. Here, the language curriculum builds on and extends the language knowledge and skills the child has already acquired. Reading and writing are developmental extensions of speaking and listening.

We also provide a stimulating language environment which includes many opportunities for children to explore language and to use language for many purposes. Students develop skills and fluency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Great emphasis is placed on developing effective communication and literacy skills. A rich and diverse environment of text is visible in each classroom, and teachers present an extensive variety of children's literature to support literacy growth for all students. Guided Reading, Phonological, and Phonemic instruction are components of our balanced approach to literacy instruction. We also utilize the Wilson's Language Program for our students to support development in all of these areas.

## Mathematics

The Math Program at Sacred Heart Elementary School recognizes that young children learn math best through manipulating concrete materials and interacting with their environment. They later extend this authentic mathematical experience into conceptual understanding. Students' attitudes toward math and their self-image as learners strongly influence their success in the subject. An environment which is accepting, encouraging, stimulating, and fun fosters a positive attitude toward math.



Mathematical reasoning is developed at all levels. Math is taught as a problem-solving activity. Opportunities are provided for students to use materials and explain their reasoning, and activities are carefully designed and sequenced to allow children to explore and discover the order, relationships, and patterns that are the basis of mathematics.

## Science

The Primary Science Program develops children's natural curiosity to discover how the world works. Activities based on a range of topics encourage students to develop the basic scientific skills of observation, manipulation, prediction, recording, and classification. These activities accommodate the child's need for direct, concrete experimentation, and promote questioning and problem-solving attitudes.

## Social Studies

A thematic study of the child's community in school, at home, and in the neighbourhood offers opportunities for students to discover how groups of people work together. The objective is to demonstrate how many different people work together to make a home, school, or community a good place for everyone. Children learn through discussion, literature, art, games, songs, and other cooperative activities that they can be responsible, contributing members of a group.

## French

Primary French classes introduce students to French vocabulary and simple language structures through games, songs, stories, and other activities. A child who has a good command of his or her

first language typically finds it easy to learn a second language. Linguistic strategies from one language are readily transferred to a second language.

## Art

The basic goal of art classes is to foster enjoyment of art through making and doing. Artistic expression is encouraged to communicate feelings and ideas. Art can be integrated with



children's literature and seasonal themes. Emphasis is placed on exploring the design possibilities of various materials, shapes, and colours. Art and craft activities are used to develop drawing, cutting, pasting, and other fine motor skills. Art is an integral part of all areas of the curriculum. Artistic expression is also encouraged as a free-time pursuit.

## Music

Music complements all areas of our curriculum and is also taught as a separate subject by a music specialist. The music program engages students in music exploration activities which include: songs, games, movement, playing classroom instruments, and rhythm activities to develop music skills and appreciation. The Program also introduces students to the elements of music.

## Religion

Sacred Heart welcomes students of all races, cultures, and religions. Religious education is an important part of our Program. Emphasis is placed on God's love for all people and our call to respond in faith, hope, and love. All students participate in religion classes and are involved in planning and celebrating prayer liturgies. Students have the opportunity to participate in grace, espacio, and weekly morning prayer services at their appropriate age.



## Physical Education

The major emphasis of the primary physical education program is to further inspire a love of movement and physical activity. Students will develop their physical literacy and fundamental movement skills through a wide variety of games and activities and will become familiar with using various types of small and large equipment. Students will also experience the connection between making healthy choices, having fun, and developing positive interpersonal relationships.



## GRADES 1-6

### French Language

Our unique French Program provides students with a jumpstart in the French language and a firm foundation for future development. Students are exposed from an early age to all strands of French language learning. Students in the early years begin their experience with an introduction to oral French through songs, stories, games, and activities. From this young age, they learn phonemic awareness and then progress into phonetic development. Further progressing to correct pronunciation and fluency. Students encounter French culture and develop a respect and appreciation for it through singing "O Canada" in both official languages and participating in "La Journée de la Francophonie."

Students in Grades 1 and 2 are further immersed in French through an enhanced French Program, with students taught in French and English each day by dedicated teachers.

Students develop the ability to orally communicate in French, learn basic grammar structures, and further build their vocabulary. They build on their pronunciation skills through phonetic sound blends. They begin to write simple sentences and move towards more creative writing as they proceed



through the enhanced French program. At this stage in our program, they work towards communicating with their teachers in French. Students from Grades 3 to 6 participate in daily French classes, where they fine-tune and expand the foundation built at the earlier grade levels. They are prepared for an environment in which French is the primary language of communication. Students are introduced to basic grammar structures, both orally and in writing, in tandem with authentic communication. They continue to develop their oral reading and reading comprehension skills during the entirety of the program.

For students in Grades 3-6 who are new to the French language, we offer instructional support for their development. By the end of the Elementary Program, students are well-prepared, comfortable, and confident in their abilities as they enter Junior High.

## Language Arts



The communication and literacy skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing are learned through language experiences. Reading, writing, development, and growth include abundant exposure to oral experiences and text.

A rich language environment at all levels encourages the love of reading and writing. We study a variety of texts which teach the students to appreciate language and the many writing styles

used by authors. Guided Reading is an important component of our balanced Literacy Program. Phonics instruction, begun in early childhood, continues through to the end of Grade 2. Many opportunities are provided for students to develop rich vocabularies for effective communication.

A thematic study of many topics encourages students to develop and apply their language skills within all subject areas. Students learn that writing is a process that involves generating ideas, drafting, revising, editing, proofreading, and publishing. Starting in Grade 3, cursive writing is taught. The *Handwriting Without Tears* (HWT) Program enhances literacy learning in Junior Primary through 5. The use of technology, particularly in Grades 3 to 6, facilitates and enhances the writing process including using a dedicated touch typing program to develop their skills in upper elementary school.

## Mathematics

The Math Program recognizes that, in the early years, children learn mathematics best through manipulating concrete materials and interacting with their environment. Practical experiences lead to conceptual understanding. As children progress through the grades, they naturally move from concrete to more abstract processes. Our use of the best educational math resources in Grades 1 through 6 provides all learners with a structured, sequential progression through the foundational skills and concepts that will prepare them for high school mathematics and beyond.

Children's attitudes toward math and their self-image as learners strongly influence their success in the subject. Our mathematics program is designed to support diverse student learners and to ensure that no learner is left behind.



An environment which is accepting, encouraging, stimulating, and challenging fosters a positive attitude toward math. Mathematical reasoning is developed at all levels. The skills of problem-solving are taught and practised. Activities are carefully designed and sequenced to allow children to explore and uncover the order, relationships, and patterns that are the basis of mathematics. The following strands are addressed cyclically, year to year, throughout our Math Program: number sense, probability, data management, geometry, financial literacy and measurement.

## **Science**

The Science Program encourages inquiry and discovery. Critical thinking and problem-solving are encouraged through hands-on activities that provide opportunities for students to develop basic science skills of observation, prediction, recording, analysis, and questioning. Teachers use a wide variety of resource materials. Students are encouraged to question, experiment, and research. The Elementary Science Program is also designed to provide a solid base of scientific knowledge and skills for further study and development.

## **Social Studies**

The emphasis of this program is the study of communities, both local and global. By the end of Grade 6, students will have learned about communities around the world. Study begins with our local community and gradually moves outward. As early as Primary, students learn mapping skills and as they progress, they explore the effects of geography on given communities. Field trips and guest speakers complement all levels of the program.



## Health Education

Our Health Education Program provides the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to inspire healthy living. Our approach to health education stresses the importance of students making informed choices and taking personal responsibility for their well-being and development.

## Art

Visual arts classes with a specialist teacher are scheduled bi-weekly for every class. In addition, art is an integral part of learning in all subject areas. Emphasis is placed on the process rather than on the finished product. A wide variety of media, forms, and techniques is explored. Artistic expression is encouraged both as a vital communication skill and a leisure pursuit.

## Music

Music classes are taught by our specialist music teachers. Students have two lessons per week in which they explore various elements of music. These may include singing, listening, composing, movement to music, and playing instruments. Our music program provides students with the chance to explore music spanning eras, cultures, and genres, delivering a diverse and all-encompassing musical education.



We also offer an Elementary Choir which students in Grades 4-6 can join. The Choir works towards performances at important events throughout the year. These students also have the opportunity to participate in the Elementary School Musical, a highly anticipated event each year.

Band classes are offered to students in Grade 6 who wish to learn how to play a concert band instrument.

## Religion

Religious education is a valued part of our academic program, as rooted in the Sacred Heart Goals and Criteria. Emphasis is placed on God's love for all people and our call to respond in faith, hope, and love. Bible study and personal prayer are developed at all levels. A wide selection of literature, music, and art is used, and a concern for social justice is promoted throughout the School. Students are involved in planning and celebrating prayer liturgies. Our students represent a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds; there are common values in our faiths, and we encourage sharing and respect for our diversity. Two weekly morning prayer services (JP-Grade 2 and Grade 3-6) provide time for our students to learn hymns and prayers for our school liturgies and prayer services.

## Physical Education

Our Phys Ed Program provides a safe and inclusive environment for all Grades 1-6 students to further develop their physical literacy and fundamental movement skills. Our Program aims to inspire students of all abilities to develop a lifelong love of movement and physical activity. Students will experience a wide range of games and activities, and many traditional and



non-traditional sports are taught through the "*Teaching Games for Understanding*" pedagogy. With an emphasis on developing a growth mindset, students are encouraged to focus on personal development and cooperative skills, rather than competition. Intramural activities are available for Grades 4-6. Co-curricular participation in cross country, swimming, and badminton tournaments takes place throughout the year.

## Information Technology

We aim to develop skillful users and creators of information technology. Our vision of technology is an integrated tool to enrich and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of teaching and learning. Interactive whiteboards, iPads, and Chromebooks are used in class. Students can learn computer, touch typing, and digital literacy skills throughout their time here. Students in Grades 3-6 are assigned their own Google accounts for use at school and home.



## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

The culture and environment of Sacred Heart School of Halifax contribute profoundly to the development of our students. Sacred Heart teachers are committed to working with our children and their families to nurture and develop all aspects of the whole child. We continue the unique Sacred Heart tradition of a monthly assembly called Primes during which individual children's accomplishments, academic and otherwise, are recognized and celebrated.

### **Support for Student Learning**

Our Learning Strategist works with classroom teachers to provide support and enrichment for students to meet their learning needs. Students are recognized for their strengths and areas of need. Our goal is to help students be successful by learning to appreciate the skills they possess and develop strategies to advance their learning. Instruction can be delivered one-on-one, in small groups, or in class. The Learning Strategist works in consultation with the Principal and classroom teachers to facilitate positive learning experiences for all children. Teachers and administration will work with parents before removing students from class for support or

enrichment.

## After School Program

We understand that many of our children finish class long before their parents' workday ends. Therefore we offer a service to all of our families in which children remain engaged and cared for in a safe and familiar environment.

Sacred Heart School of Halifax offers after-school supervision and programming through an After School Program (ASP) daily until 5:30 p.m. and on camp days (PD days, March Break, June camps). ASP provides supervised

age-appropriate activities after school in a healthy, safe, and caring environment. The fee for care is \$5.50 per half hour or part thereof. Billing begins at 3:15 p.m. (Grade JP-2) or 3:30 p.m. (Grade 3-6). Registration is required monthly for ASP and ASP Camps.



## School Uniform

All students are required to wear our school uniform. All uniform items, except for shoes, can be purchased [online](#). Optional Spirit Gear, also available for purchase online, can be worn on Spirit Gear days.



## Daily Schedule

Our doors open at 8:00 a.m., and the school day begins at 8:30 a.m. Junior Primary dismissal is fluid (between 2:00 p.m. and 3:15 p.m.); Grades Primary, 1, and 2 dismiss at 3:15 p.m.; and Grades 3 to 6 dismiss at 3:30 p.m.

Three outdoor recess periods daily are staggered throughout the day. Teachers are in their respective classrooms at 8:00 a.m. and students are expected to be in their class by 8:25 a.m. as classes begin at 8:30 a.m.

Lunch is supervised by teachers and school staff. Cold 1%

milk is available by order through the Business Office. The Sacred Heart Parents' Guild offers a daily Hot Lunch Program with online ordering.

## **The EAL Program**

The EAL (English as an Additional Language) Program is for students from Primary to Grade 12 who are learning English as another language. The EAL Program allows students to focus on curriculum content, language skills, and learning strategies. Students will work on reading, writing, listening, speaking, critical thinking, spelling, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary within the context of their grade-level material. Students will attend small group EAL classes, three to five times a week. Following a language assessment, students will be given the EAL support they require for them to understand and interact with their grade-level classes and reach their maximum potential. The EAL classes involve content-based learning of grade-level curriculum topics. Students will be taught how to prepare academic presentations, research papers, essays, compositions, grammar and vocabulary exercises, as well as test preparation. Students will complete daily homework and assignments each term. They will receive a textbook for grammar, writing, and vocabulary work.

The main goal of the EAL Program is to help students become successful in English and their school careers. We are proud to be a multicultural school and welcome all families regardless of their race, culture, or language.

