

# KINDERGARTEN PARENT HANDBOOK

## EARLY CHILDHOOD PHILOSOPHY

Children are at the heart of all programs at the Calgary French & International School. We promote a climate conducive to learning, success, and personal growth. Parental involvement and support are crucial. Home and school work together to help the children attain their potential in a supportive French immersion environment.

## VISION

Calgary French & International School graduates will be active global citizens with a foundation for life-long success, and our school will be the leader in French immersion and international education.

## MISSION

Calgary French & International School develops each student's individual and academic potential through full French immersion, an international focus, and the development of the whole student in a rich and dynamic learning environment.

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## EDUCATIONAL GOALS

The CFIS kindergarten program reinforces the following goals and objectives:

### INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

The school will:

- Nurture the love of learning.
- Stimulate intellectual curiosity.
- Promote critical, analytical and creative thinking in both French and English.
- Foster the acquisition of skills, knowledge and effective work habits.

### SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The school will:

- Encourage an appreciation, respect and acceptance of individuals.
- Promote a sense of social responsibility to and cooperation with others.
- Promote an awareness of and respect for the school environment.

### MORAL AND ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT

The school will:

- Encourage a sense of self-worth.
- Promote self-discipline and independence.
- Encourage the development of personal initiative and perseverance.
- Promote a regard for work and a sense of responsibility for achievement.
- Provide opportunities to develop leadership skills.
- Promote an appreciation of tradition, culture and values of others.

### PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

The school will:

- Promote and encourage fitness, good hygiene, mental well-being and sportsmanship.

## OUR CURRICULUM

CFIS follows Alberta Education's Kindergarten Program of Studies for French Immersion. Offering a full-day kindergarten program allows us to add enrichment to this framework. This enrichment includes field trips, guest speakers, daily physical activity, music and art instruction by specialist teachers and enhanced language development activities, both structured (teacher-directed) and unstructured (child-directed). Some enrichment activities are common to all CFIS kindergarten classes and others are tailored by teachers to the particular needs and interests of class groups and individual children.

## WHAT WE BELIEVE

- Play is essential to learning and children learn best through playful, engaging, interactive, activities and experiences.
- Each child is unique and may have abilities that are different from those of other children.
- Each child has dignity and worth, and is a valued member of our community.
- A child is constantly developing physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially and creatively. All of these areas are related to and dependent on one another, and are of equal importance in the child's development.
- Children have natural curiosity, which, in an appropriate environment, results in an eagerness to learn. It is part of a teacher's role to provide an environment and program that stimulate this curiosity.
- Children learn through interaction with their environment and both adults and children who populate that environment.
- Effective programs require a team approach wherein the skills and knowledge of teachers, parents, administrators and specialists are brought together to meet the individual needs of each child.
- Frequent communication between parents and teachers about a child's overall development is a critical contributor to the child's academic and social success.

## DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

The following developmental milestones indicate a typical sequence of skill development in five-year-old children. (These are general development guidelines only, and the list is not exhaustive.) ***It is important to remember that each child has unique needs and abilities because each child's experience and background is unique.*** No two children will demonstrate these behaviours in exactly the same way at exactly the same time.

### Social skills

- Strong sense of own abilities and of fairness;
- Loves to exercise independence;
- Chooses own friends, may show preference for playmates of same gender and age;
- Plays competitive games and enjoys sports that require group participation;
- Lives in the present;
- Self-centred, with own interests; and
- Enjoys make-believe play.

### Motor skills

- Dresses self completely;
- Hand dominance may be established;
- Awareness of own right and left sides emerging;
- Copies and writes first name;
- Makes drawings that represent real people, objects and experiences;
- Laces shoes; and
- Shows interest in recreational sports (soccer, T-ball, skating, swimming, skiing, etc.) .

### Cognitive/intellectual skills

- Has difficulty distinguishing between fantasy and reality;
- Follows directions of three to four steps;
- Retells a story with reasonable accuracy;
- Recognizes cause and effect;
- May name some letters and numerals;

- May reverse some letters and numerals;
- Has a sense of time measured in meaningful increments (i.e. two more sleeps until grandma comes); and
- Attention span is task-dependent.

### Language skills

- Can take appropriate turns in a conversation; answers questions directly;
- Communicates well with family, friends or strangers;
- Likes books and being read to; reads by way of pictures;
- Relates fanciful tales in own words; experiments with impolite words; and
- Expresses emotions with words; uses a vocabulary of 2,000 words or more.

### Creative skills

- Explores new art materials;
- Art projects show creative thought;
- Puts care and effort into art projects;
- Participates in dramatic play and music; and
- Cuts shapes with scissors.

## SECOND-LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

To understand the approach used in a French immersion program, one has to realize that learning a second language has much in common with learning one's first language. In both instances, the typical progression of skills is:

1. The child understands what is being said to him or her (usually long before being able to produce speech).
2. The child begins to repeat familiar words, phrases, songs and rhymes without always understanding their meaning.
3. The child begins deliberate, spontaneous verbal communication, beginning with words and working up to complete sentences. Mispronunciations and over-generalizations are normal.
4. The child begins to write or copy letters, words and text.
5. The child begins to read written text.

A wide variety of experiences enhance this progression. Typical

learning activities include exploration, playing, singing, arts and crafts, dramatics and storytelling. Vocabulary is assimilated with the help of games, puppets, songs, poems and other child-oriented activities. Audio-visual materials and equipment are used to enhance learning.

Young children learn a second (or third or fourth) language very differently than adults. Just as infants learn their first language through meaningful interactions with the important people in their world, so do young children learn subsequent language(s) through conversation, daily routines and rituals, and both new and familiar materials and activities. Taking advantage of the young child's desire to create meaning and understanding of what is happening in the world around him or her, CFIS's French immersion program is designed to create the same kinds of experiences that occur during first language acquisition. CFIS's kindergarten program focuses on the use of language rather than the study of language.

Teachers strive to create a non-threatening, stimulating and rich environment, which encourages the child to take risks. French is the primary language used by CFIS teachers for instruction and communication, supplemented by actions, mime, facial expressions and demonstration to enhance children's comprehension. As the year progresses, children are encouraged to use more and more French in their communication with teachers and classmates. Good listening skills and vocabulary are developed throughout the kindergarten year.

## ROLE OF THE PARENT

Here are some simple ideas to help you increase the effectiveness of the French immersion experience for your child:

- Support your child's efforts at all times. His/her success is impacted by your attitude.
- Have an open and honest relationship with your child's teacher. His/her success depends on the efforts and the mutual support of all involved.
- If your child is eager to speak French at home, be encouraging. Otherwise, do not force your child to do so. Don't ask your child to dazzle friends or relatives with French conversation. It is very normal for your child to be reluctant to speak French at home.
- Don't correct your child if you are uncertain of the correct expression or pronunciation.
- It is helpful to take your children to the library to explore the French section and let them select books and tapes of their own choosing.

- Explore French radio and television programs. Take advantage of local situations and events that increase your child's exposure to French language and culture.
- Read to your child in your first language as frequently as you can.
- If you have concerns, questions or problems, speak with your child's teacher promptly. If the issues cannot be resolved speak to the Principal of Early Childhood Education Mme Amy Murray ([amurray@cfis.com](mailto:amurray@cfis.com); **403-240-1500, ext 117**).
- Encourage your child to speak up if they are uncomfortable with a situation in the classroom. If he/she is reluctant to speak up, please speak up promptly on their behalf. Teachers are available by phone, in person and via e-mail.

## DISCIPLINE

CFIS's kindergarten program encourages the development of positive self-discipline within each child. Behaviour standards are based upon CFIS's values and in alignment with our student code of conduct.

In the context of CFIS Early Childhood programs, key components of our discipline philosophy include:

- Ensuring our expectations are appropriate to children's levels of development
- Clearly explaining and modelling routines and expectations in advance
- Providing explanations that are objective, consistent and reasonable
- Providing choices and tools to help children meet behavioural expectations
- Ensuring consequences are clearly linked to the behaviour and situation
- Recognizing children's differences in temperament and experience
- Honouring children's dignity at all times

## KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

Each individual classroom teacher plans unit of study drawn from the Alberta Education Kindergarten Program Statement and from children's daily experiences, interests and needs. While the specific topics explored may vary from one classroom to another, the underlying skills, competencies and core experiences are consistent across all classrooms. The seven curriculum areas

addressed by Alberta Education are:

- Early literacy
- Early numeracy
- Citizenship and identity
- Environment and community awareness
- Personal and social responsibility
- Physical skills and well-being
- Creative expression

Field trips and guest speakers are booked in connection with units of study and vary slightly from year to year.

A typical day in class may include circle time, small group work, morning and lunchtime recess, open discovery centres, music and physical education.

## COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

Your child's classroom teacher will provide you with a direct phone number to the classroom, as well as a CFIS e-mail address. Please note that because a classroom is a busy place, teachers are not always able to respond to emails or phone calls during classroom hours. Teachers check their e-mail several times throughout the school day and you can usually expect a reply within one business day.

At least once a year, students host their families for student-led conferences, which generally occur in conjunction with our report cards. These conferences are an opportunity for students to demonstrate the skills and knowledge they have been developing in class. Although the classroom teacher is present, the children lead the conferences.

You can expect to get a quick, informal update on your child's progress from his or her teacher about once a month. These updates may happen in person, by phone or via e-mail. If you have a specific concern or question that is best addressed in a formal meeting with your child's teacher, you are welcome to request one at any time.

Your child's classroom teacher is the best source of insight and information about your child's school experience and is your primary contact. You are also welcome to address any concerns or questions to the Principal of Early Childhood Education Mme Amy Murray at [amurray@cfis.com](mailto:amurray@cfis.com); **403-240-1500, ext 117**.

The best, most up-to-date source of information about upcoming events and activities are the online calendar (<https://secure.cfis.com/calendar/month>).

[cfis.com/calendar/month](https://secure.cfis.com/calendar/month)). Please make it a priority to check the calendar at least once per week.

## INFORMATION NIGHT

CFIS hosts a Meet the Teacher Evening and a classroom open house at the beginning of each school year. These events are key to a smooth start to the new school year and attendance is strongly encouraged. The Meet the Teacher information session is for parents, and children need not attend. Both parents and children are invited to the classroom open house.

*Please see the online calendar for dates and details.*

## GENERAL DAILY SCHEDULE

This is a sample of our daily schedule. Exact times and classroom schedules may vary from year to year and from one classroom to another.

8:10 a.m.	Morning supervision begins: Supervision is available for kindergarten children at the ECE playground (inside the fence at the south end of CFIS). Supervision takes place outdoors at -18°Celsius and above. When the temperature is below -18°Celsius, kindergarten supervision takes place in hallways outside the classrooms
8:25 a.m.	Morning bell rings at 8:25 a.m. and children can enter their classrooms. To help make the best use of instructional time, ensure your child arrives slightly before 8:25 a.m.
8:25 a.m.	Small group activities
9 a.m.	Circle time and whole-group instruction
9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.	Morning instructional time: May include music class, library time, small group lessons and activities.
10 to 11 a.m.	Kindergarten classes break for morning snack and recess. The exact time varies from one classroom to another based on individual daily schedules.
11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.	Lunch break and noon recess.

12:30 to 1 p.m.	Story and rest/quiet time: Children are not expected to sleep, but to sit or lay quietly to give their bodies and brains a chance to recharge.
1 to 3:30 p.m.	Play-based discovery centres, physical education, afternoon snack time
3:30 p.m.	Dismissal: It is important to be on time for both arrival and dismissal. <b>Many young children become anxious if they are not picked up promptly at the end of the school day. Please give yourself adequate time to arrive at school, park and be at the classroom doors at 3:30 p.m.</b> Kindergarten students who ride the CFIS bus are escorted between the bus and classroom by kindergarten aides and/or school bus drivers.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

We have included some “housekeeping” details below to help you and your child settle smoothly into the CFIS school community.

### ABSENCES

Please contact the school by phone (**403-240-1500**) or email (**[elementaryabsence@cfis.com](mailto:elementaryabsence@cfis.com)**) if your child will be absent, and copy your child’s teacher if you are communicating via email. If your child will have a planned absence (such as a dentist appointment or family vacation), inform your child’s teacher in person or via e-mail. If you are taking your child out of the school during the day, please sign your child out at the office.

### ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Consistent school attendance has a significant positive effect on progress, confidence and comfort in the classroom environment. Please make school attendance a priority for your family. **The most important thing you can do to support your child’s learning is to ensure they arrive at school on time after a good night’s rest and a healthy breakfast.**

Arriving on time for school sets the tone for the day and helps your child settle into the classroom environment more smoothly. Entering the classroom at the same time as peers may also help ease any separation anxiety your child may have. Please help us make the best use of every minute of the school day by arriving slightly before the morning bell rings. Children who arrive after 8:40 a.m. will be marked as late.

### BIRTHDAYS

We try to make your child’s birthday special while encouraging healthy choices. If you plan to send treats to school for your child’s special day, please consider options such as fruit or healthy muffins or cookies. Since many children have allergies, please check with the teacher before sending food to school. Birthday treats can also be pre-ordered from CFIS’s elementary cafeteria and delivered directly to your child’s classroom.

Please use e-mail to distribute birthday invitations. Teachers are only able to facilitate paper invitations if the entire class is invited.

### CHANGES

Children are very sensitive to changes in their routines. It is helpful for teachers to know about any of the following:

- A new nanny or change to childcare arrangements
- A parent who is out of town
- A planned extended absence from school
- Any notable changes to your child’s or family’s routine

For your child’s safety, it is **mandatory** that teachers be informed of any of the following:

- How to reach you during the school day
- If someone different is dropping off or picking up your child
- If your child is going to someone else’s home after school
- Changes to your child’s medical file (i.e. allergies)
- Changes to your child’s personal file (i.e. change of address or phone number)

### EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

A parent or guardian is contacted directly in the case of a minor emergency. In the case of a serious emergency (including but not limited to unconsciousness, difficulty breathing and incidents requiring the use of an epi-pen), 911 is immediately contacted before contacting the child’s parent or guardian.

### EMERGENCY EVACUATION AND LOCKDOWN PROCEDURES

Procedures for emergency evacuations (i.e. fire) and lockdown situations are reviewed with students and practiced several

times. Teachers explain these practices in age-appropriate ways. Our evacuation and lockdown procedures are established and reviewed by the CFIS Director of Operations.

## ILLNESS

Please help everyone to stay healthy by keeping your child at home if he or she is not well. If you are unsure about whether your child is well enough to be at school, please err on the side of caution and keep them at home for the day. In addition to the risk of contagion, children who feel under the weather have trouble concentrating on school activities and struggle to participate appropriately in classroom routines. ***If your child requires medication (including Advil or Tylenol) to manage symptoms or keep a fever down, they are not well enough to be in the classroom.***

If your child becomes ill at school, we will move him/her to a supervised isolated area (the nurse's room) and you will be contacted.

Alberta Health Services maintains a list of communicable diseases on their website. If you know or suspect that your child has a communicable disease, please do not bring the child to the school for the course of the disease. If your child has a confirmed case of a disease on this list, please notify the school as well as Alberta Health Services.

## INJURIES / ACCIDENTS

If a **minor** accident occurs, the CFIS faculty or staff member who observed the incident will:

1. Apply first aid as required.
2. Call the child's parent or guardian by phone, if applicable.
3. Complete an accident/incident form to the greatest extent possible.

It is our policy to inform parents of any injury that occurs above a child's shoulders, no matter how minor. This includes small scratches, nosebleeds and minor bumps to the head.

In the case of a major injury or sudden life-threatening illness (including but not limited to loss of consciousness or mobility, compromised airway, seizure, anaphylactic allergic reaction, broken bones), CFIS will first contact EMS to request an ambulance and then contact parents.

## LABELLING

Please mark your child's name on all items that he/she may bring to school including clothes and snack boxes. This is the best way to ensure lost items find their way back home.

## LUNCHES AND SNACKS

Kindergarten children require a lunch and two healthy snacks each day. ***CFIS is a nut-aware school. Nuts, peanuts and products labelled "may contain traces of peanuts or tree nuts" are not permitted at CFIS. However, we cannot guarantee a nut-free environment***

Eating healthy foods throughout the day enhances a child's ability to learn. We know that each child has unique eating patterns and preferences; our priority is for students to be consuming adequate calories to sustain their energy level for the duration of the school day. Please send foods that are familiar to your child and that he/she is likely to eat and enjoy.

Please provide any dishes and utensils your child may need in his/her lunch bag. A microwave is available in the kindergarten classroom for lunches requiring re-heating. There is no facility to refrigerate children's lunches.

***If teachers have a concern about the quantity or variety of food being provided for a child's snacks and/or meals, they will be addressed directly to the parents. In a situation where a meal or snack is forgotten at home, staff may supplement a child's food at the parents' expense.***

## MEDICATION

If your child has a condition that requires emergency medication to be available at school (i.e. auto-injectors, asthma inhalers), we ask that you provide a belt, fanny pack or other method for your child to wear the medication on his/her person at all times. This ensures medication is available even when the child is away from the classroom at recess, lunch, field trips and specialist classes.

We recommend other medication not be administered at school. However, if any medication must be administered, the following regulations apply:

- All medications (whether prescription, over-the-counter or herbal remedies) must be in the original container and clearly labelled with your child's name and dosage.
- Prescription medications must also show the physician's name, date of issue and time period between dosages.

- Medication must be turned over to the teacher at arrival time for safekeeping.
- **Staff cannot administer any medication, including Tylenol and cough syrup, without a parent or guardian's written consent. Verbal consent is not sufficient.**

## NEWSLETTERS AND CALENDAR

You will receive a brief weekly newsletter from your child's teacher. Please read it and note all special days and events. **At CFIS, e-mail is the primary method of communicating with parents.** Please ensure that CFIS has a valid email address on file for you at all times. The best, most up-to-date source of information about upcoming events and activities is the online calendar (<https://secure.cfis.com/calendar/month>). Please make it a priority to check the online calendar regularly or subscribe to the iCal feed.

## PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Parent volunteers are essential and valuable assets to the school. CFIS is always looking for parent volunteers who can offer their help and expertise in many areas, including assisting with field trips, sports days, fundraising events, open houses and lunch days, or by serving as a classroom representative (liaising between the staff members and the parent body of their child's class). In the classroom, there are opportunities to read stories, attend celebrations and share presentations about topics ranging from world cultures to favourite hobbies.

All volunteers must have an up-to-date Police Information Check and Vulnerable Sector Search check completed through the Calgary Police Service **prior** to volunteering at CFIS. This must be renewed every five years. This can be completed using an online form and our main office can provide instructions about how to do so.

## RECESS AND OUTDOOR PLAY

All children participate in daily supervised outdoor playtime. CFIS's kindergarten playground is located at the south end of the school building, but kindergarten students also make use of the adjoining field and the outdoor classroom. Children go outside for recess in all but the most extreme weather conditions. Please ensure your child is equipped with weather-appropriate clothing daily, bearing in mind the weather can change drastically over the course of the day. Feel free to leave an extra set of warm clothing or rain gear at the school.

## REST TIME

The kindergarten schedule includes a brief quiet time in the early afternoon. Most children do not sleep during this time, but little bodies and brains benefit from the opportunity to relax and re-focus. Please send a pillowcase for rest time. A parent volunteer takes the class laundry, including pillowcases, home each Friday.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

Through community partnerships and CFIS' Student Support department, students and families have access to specialist services including speech therapy, occupational therapy and psychological referrals. Your classroom teacher can share more information if you are interested in a referral for any of these services.

## TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA USE

The integration of screen-based technology in CFIS kindergarten classrooms is aligned with the Alberta Education Learning and Technology Policy Framework, the Alberta Ministerial Order on Student Learning, and the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendations on young children and media.

Age-appropriate, screen-based devices are thoughtfully integrated into classroom learning activities to support specific goals and outcomes. Children are given opportunities to use tablet devices during specific portions of the day, with clear boundaries around the length of time, the apps being used, and the purpose of the activity.

Instruction around screen-based technology use focuses on:

- Language development;
- Collaboration and communication;
- Digital citizenship;
- Demonstrating and documenting knowledge and skills;
- Connecting with other regions and cultures;
- Global citizenship;
- Research and inquiry;
- Critical thinking;
- Problem solving; and
- Creating and innovation.

Teachers use technology to document and record student learning and to share student progress with parents and



colleagues. Children whose parents have declined our media consent will not be included in any public social media posts.

Parents are invited to follow the CFIS ECE division on Twitter and Instagram, at @ECEatCFIS.

Non-screen-based technologies, such as listening centres, age-appropriate robotics toys or remote-control toys may be provided as part of children's play experiences. "Retired" technology such as old desktop computers or disabled cordless phones may also be integrated into children's dramatic play.

## TOYS FROM HOME

As a general rule, we ask that children's personal toys remain at home and not be brought to school. This helps prevent the sadness when a precious toy is lost, misplaced or broken at school. On specific days throughout the year, children are invited to bring a toy or special item as part of "show and tell." These days are communicated in the weekly newsletters.

## UNIFORMS AND SHOES

CFIS kindergarten students wear our full school uniform. CFIS's uniform standards are posted on our website at: <https://www.cfis.com/support/uniforms>.

Kindergarten students require two pairs of shoes to remain at school: Black uniform shoes and sturdy, comfortable, clean running shoes for physical education class.

Children also require appropriate outdoor footwear to and from school and outside at recess. Depending on the season and weather, these may be sturdy shoes, rain boots or winter boots. Sandals, flip-flops and crocs are not appropriate or safe outdoor footwear options.

***We request that children not wear tie-up shoes until they are able to confidently and independently tie the laces themselves.***

*When selecting footwear and outdoor clothing for your child to wear at school, we strongly encourage shoes, boots, coats, mittens, etc., that children are able to put on and take off independently.*