



STAFF, PARENT, & STUDENT HANDBOOK

2026–2027

**École Secondaire Highwood High School
High River, Alberta
403-652-5500**

[Foothills School Division](#)

Updated August 30, 2026

About this handbook

This handbook communicates school expectations and practical procedures for students, families, staff, volunteers and visitors. It is intended to be read with current Foothills School Division (FSD) Board Policies and Administrative Procedures, the Alberta Education Act and regulations, and applicable ministerial orders. If this handbook conflicts with legislation, regulation, a ministerial order, Board policy or an FSD Administrative Procedure, the higher authority governs.

If you have questions or need clarification about any information in this handbook, please contact school administration:

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1. School profile and culture

School profile and mission

École Secondaire Highwood High School serves students in Grades 9–12 from High River and surrounding communities. Highwood provides academic, complementary, co-curricular and extracurricular learning opportunities in a caring, positive, and supportive environment. Our size supports relationship-based, responsive instruction and a strong sense of community.

We aim for high standards, meaningful engagement, and success for every learner. We honor our traditions while pursuing growth, change, and continuous improvement. Students, staff, families and community partners share responsibility for nurturing a school where people feel valued and are encouraged to contribute.

It is a great day to be a Mustang

Students are Highwood ambassadors. Participation in learning, activities, leadership, arts, clubs and athletics builds belonging and school pride. Mustangs demonstrate:

P	R	I	D	E
Perseverance	Respect	Integrity	Determination	Enthusiasm

Learning community

Highwood values engaged students, dedicated staff, supportive families, School Council, community partners, the FSD Board of Trustees and Alberta Education. Our shared goal is high levels of learning, wellbeing, and belonging for all students.

School Council

The School Council provides a forum for parents, staff, students and community representatives to work together in support of student learning and school effectiveness. Families are encouraged to attend meetings and participate.

See FSD [AP 110](#), School Councils.

2. Safety, attendance and daily operations

Safety and emergency response

Student and staff safety are a priority. Highwood maintains emergency plans and conducts drills during the school year. Students, staff, visitors, and volunteers must follow staff directions during drills and emergencies. Emergency closures, transportation restrictions, and cancellations are communicated through official FSD and school channels. See [AP 132](#), [AP 165](#), [AP 310](#) and [AP 315](#) for further information.

Attendance and punctuality

Regular and punctual attendance supports achievement, connection, and continuity of learning. Attendance is mandatory under the Education Act. Highwood maintains attendance records, communicates concerns and uses a continuum of universal, targeted and individualized support consistent with FSD [AP 330](#) and the Division Attendance Protocol and Toolkit.

- Parents/guardians should notify the school as early as possible regarding an absence or appointment.
- Students arriving late or leaving during scheduled class time must sign in or out at the office and follow school procedures.
- Families and school staff should work together when a pattern of absence or lateness emerges.
- For extended absences, families should contact the office and teachers in advance. Missed learning and assessment arrangements are determined by teachers and administration.
- Students are expected to complete provincially scheduled and school-based assessments at their scheduled times unless an approved alternative applies.

Attendance contact: 403-652-5500 | hhsattendance@fsd38.ab.ca

Smoke-free, alcohol-free and drug-free environment

FSD property, vehicles, and school-sponsored activities are smoke-free and vape-free. Possession, use, distribution or impairment involving alcohol, illegal drugs or restricted substances is prohibited at school and school-related activities. School responses will follow the Student Code of Conduct, progressive discipline, applicable law and FSD [AP 162](#), [AP 163](#), [AP 350](#) and [AP 355](#). Police or other agencies may be contacted when required.

3. Technology, mobile devices and digital citizenship

Personal mobile devices

A personal mobile device is a personal electronic device that can communicate or access the internet, such as a cellphone, tablet, laptop, or smartwatch. To support a focused learning environment, Highwood applies Ministerial Order 014/2024 and FSD [AP 350](#), Appendix D.

- Students may not use personal mobile devices during instructional time.
- During instructional time, personal mobile devices must be silent or powered off and stored out of view. Highwood's school expectation is that cellphones remain in lockers unless an authorized exception applies.
- Students may not access social media using school networks or school-owned devices.
- The principal or designate must permit limited use for health or medical reasons or to support special learning needs.
- The principal or designate may permit limited use for a specific educational or other purpose and may permit limited social media access.

- A student or family seeking an exception should contact school administration so that the need and an appropriate plan can be documented.
- Misuse may result in a progressive response, including direction to store the device, temporary confiscation and secure storage, parent/guardian contact, loss of privilege, restorative action or other consequences consistent with [AP 350](#) and [AP 144](#).

Responsible use of technology

FSD network resources are provided primarily to support education and administration. Use is subject to legislation, FSD procedures, and school expectations. FSD owns its network resources and may monitor its use. Access to using a personal device requires school administration permission. See [AP 144](#).

- Use assigned accounts and keep passwords private.
- Protect personal information and the privacy of others.
- Use technology for authorized educational purposes and follow staff directions.
- Do not disrupt network operation, bypass safeguards, or access another person's account or files.
- Report content or communication that is harmful, threatening, unsafe, or makes you uncomfortable to a trusted adult.
- Recording in class or at a school activity requires authorization and any required consent.
- Do not create, keep or distribute recordings or images that violate privacy, dignity, safety, law or the Student Code of Conduct.

4. Transportation, property, lockers and searches

Student transportation

Students are responsible to the bus driver for their behavior and must follow Division School Bus Rules. Drivers address misconduct first; unresolved or serious concerns are referred to school administration and may involve parents/guardians and Transportation Services. Loose items must be stored safely and may not obstruct aisles, exits or windows. Families should advise the driver when a student will not ride. See [AP 550](#) and [AP 553](#).

Student vehicles and parking

- Driving and parking on school property are privileges.
- Vehicles must be operated safely and lawfully. Speeding, stunting, disruptive parking, and recreational vehicle use are prohibited.
- Students must use designated spaces and follow posted signs and staff directions.
- The school is not responsible for loss or damage to vehicles or property left in vehicles.
- Unsafe or non-compliant conduct may result in loss of parking privileges and other responses.

Vandalism, theft and restitution

Vandalism and theft of personal, school or Division property are prohibited. Responses may include progressive discipline, restitution, loss of privileges, and referral to police. See [AP 357](#) and [AP 350](#).

Lockers and personal belongings

School lockers, desks and school-issued locks are FSD property. Students are assigned lockers for safekeeping and must keep them locked, protect combinations, and follow office procedures for changes. The school is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen personal items. See [AP 351](#).

Searches of students, personal property and school property

Searches are governed by FSD [AP 353](#). School officials must make reasonable efforts to protect privacy and may search on reasonable and probable grounds. Searches must be reasonable, sensitive, and minimally intrusive. The principal or designate conducts a search in the presence of an adult witness and records the grounds in writing. Students may be invited to consent, be present, or voluntarily disclose property. School employees do not conduct strip searches or physical searches. Police are contacted where a physical search is considered necessary or where evidence of a possible crime is found. The principal or designate may also inspect school-owned lockers and desks for health, safety, welfare or suspected rule violations. Students and families are advised that police K9 assistance may be used in accordance with [AP 353](#).

Lost and found

Money, jewelry and small valuables should be brought to the office. Other found items are placed in designated locations. Unclaimed items may be donated at school breaks. Students should not leave valuables unsecured or in change rooms.

5. Learning programs, assessment and appeals

Programs, placement and credits

Highwood follows Alberta curriculum, the current Guide to Education and FSD Administrative Procedures. Senior-high promotion is by course. Course loads, changes, withdrawals, and placement decisions are made through school processes in consultation with the student, family, counsellor, teachers, and administration as appropriate.

- Students should choose courses carefully and request changes within school-published timelines.
- A student considering withdrawal from a course must consult the school Academic and Career Advisor and follow school approval procedures.
- Diploma and certificate requirements are established by Alberta Education and cannot be changed. Students should verify current requirements with the school Academic and Career Advisor and the current Guide to Education rather than relying on a static list in this handbook.

- Post-secondary admission requirements are set by institutions and may exceed Alberta graduation requirements.

Assessment, evaluation and reporting

Assessment and reporting follow FSD [AP 360](#). Evidence of learning is based on curriculum outcomes and may include observations, conversations, and student products. Non-achievement factors such as effort, attendance, and behavior are reported separately from academic achievement. Students receive clear learning expectations and opportunities for feedback and improvement consistent with the procedure.

Academic Integrity and Dishonesty

Students are expected to demonstrate academic integrity by submitting their own work, acknowledging sources and assistance, and following teacher directions regarding permitted materials, collaboration and technology. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and presenting another person's or an artificial intelligence (AI) tool's work as one's own.

The following are considered cheating on assessments:

- Talking or whispering, regardless of the topic
- Having a phone in a pocket, on a lap, in a hand or on a desk
- Having headphones, AirPods, or a smartwatch on during assessments
- Obvious or excessive looking around the room or at another student
- Sharing materials or supplies
- Bringing personal sheets of paper, unless otherwise directed by the teacher.
- Submitting work created solely by artificial intelligence (AI) tools, without meaningful student input, is considered plagiarism or cheating and will not be accepted as the student's own work.
- Individual lab assessments must be a student's own work, except for observational data gathered by the student's group.

Teachers will determine an appropriate response based on the nature and extent of the academic dishonesty, the available evidence of student learning, and the student's individual circumstances. The response may include a conversation with the student, an opportunity to provide valid alternative evidence of learning, and communication with parents/guardians or administration when warranted. Repeated or significant concerns will be addressed by the teacher and administration, and the student's parents and/or guardians will be contacted.

Appealing a mark, grade, final standing or placement

1. First, discuss the concern directly with the teacher.
2. If unresolved, submit a written appeal to the principal within 14 days of the initial discussion with the teacher and include reasons for the appeal.
3. The principal reviews the basis of the decision and reports findings in writing within seven days of receiving the appeal.

4. If still unresolved, a further appeal may be made to the Superintendent within 14 days of the principal's decision.
5. The Superintendent reports findings in writing within 14 days of receipt. Families will be informed of any further review of rights available through Alberta Education.

This summary reflects FSD [AP 360](#). Other decisions significantly affecting a student's education may follow [AP 390](#). Diploma-examination rescore and rewrite processes are governed by current Alberta Education requirements.

Honours and Valedictorian

School recognition criteria, including honors, honors with distinction and valedictorian, are communicated annually. Criteria may be updated to remain consistent with current school, Division and Alberta Education requirements. Contact school administration or counselling for the current year's criteria.

6. Safe and caring learning environment

Every member of the Highwood community shares responsibility for creating and maintaining a safe and caring environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviors. Highwood supports learning environments where students can learn, think critically, express respectful viewpoints, and participate in school life in a manner consistent with the Education Act, [FSD Policy 14](#), [AP 309](#) and [AP 350](#).

- Treat all people with dignity and respect.
- Support fair access to learning, services, activities, and appropriate support.
- Refrain from bullying, harassment, discrimination, threats, violence, retaliation, and other harmful conduct.
- Report safety concerns promptly to a trusted staff member or school administration.
- Use preventative, restorative, and progressive approaches while giving first consideration to safety.
- Engage with a wide range of perspectives and ideas in ways that build understanding, critical thinking, and respect for others.
- Protect privacy and share personal information only as authorized or required.

Clothing should be suitable for a school setting, planned learning activities, and weather conditions. Dress may not undermine safety, dignity, inclusion, or the learning environment. Responses will be respectful, private and proportionate. A reasonable opportunity to adjust clothing or access an alternative will be provided. Highwood's expectations align with [AP 350](#) and are reviewed with the school community.

At Highwood, we want everyone to feel comfortable, confident, included, and ready to learn. Students are encouraged to express their individuality while dressing appropriately for a school setting. The goal is to maintain a positive, safe, and respectful learning environment for everyone.

Students are expected to:

- Wear clothing that is appropriate for a learning environment.

- Dress for the weather and planned activities.
- Wear clothing that allows them to safely participate in classes and school activities.
- Respect themselves and others through their clothing choices.
- Follow any specific safety requirements for CTS classes, science labs, physical education, athletics, or other specialized activities.

Clothing is not acceptable if it:

- Promotes or depicts alcohol, drugs, vaping, tobacco, weapons, violence, discrimination, hate, or illegal activities.
- Contains offensive, threatening, harassing, or inappropriate language or images.
- Creates a safety concern or significantly disrupts the learning environment.

If a concern arises:

- Staff will address the situation respectfully and privately.
- Students may be asked to modify their clothing choice or change into alternative clothing if available.
- The focus will always be on maintaining dignity, respect, and a positive learning environment.

Bullying, conflict, harassment and discrimination

Bullying is repeated and hostile or demeaning behavior intended to cause harm, fear or distress, including psychological harm or harm to reputation. Conflict is a disagreement or struggle over opposing beliefs, needs, feelings or actions and is not automatically bullying. Harassment is unwelcome conduct, comment, gesture or contact that a reasonable person should know would be offensive or inappropriate. Discrimination includes distinctions based on protected characteristics that impose burdens or limit access to opportunities. School responses follow [AP 170](#), [AP 309](#) and [AP 350](#) and applicable law.

Diverse viewpoints and respectful expression

Highwood supports learning that encourages a wide range of perspectives and ideas, fosters critical thinking, builds knowledge and skills, reflects the diverse nature and heritage of society in Alberta, and promotes understanding and respect for others. Students may express perspectives and ideas respectfully when doing so is consistent with the Student Code of Conduct, student responsibilities and the safety and dignity of others. Courses, programs, instructional materials and school activities must not promote or foster racial or ethnic superiority or persecution, social change through violent action, or disobedience of laws.

7. Student Code of Conduct and progressive supports

Purpose and scope

The [School Code of Conduct](#) promotes learning, growth, responsibility, empathy, citizenship, and belonging. It applies at school, on FSD transportation, during school-sponsored activities and to conduct outside the building or school day, including electronic conduct, when it negatively affects a member of the school community or interferes with the school's learning environment.

Violence prevention and student responsibility

Violence of any kind is prohibited at school, on FSD transportation, during school-related activities, and in conduct connected to the school community. Students share responsibility for helping prevent violence by acting safely and respectfully, reporting threats, violence or unsafe conduct promptly, and cooperating with staff for directions and safety procedures.

Student responsibilities under the Education Act

- Attend school regularly and punctually.
- Be ready to learn and actively engage in and diligently pursue education.
- Contribute to a safe and caring environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviors.
- Respect the rights of others.
- Refrain from, report and not tolerate bullying or bullying behavior, including conduct occurring electronically or outside the building or school day that affects the school.
- Comply with school rules and Board policies.
- Cooperate with people authorized by the Board to provide education programs and services.
- Be accountable to teachers and other school staff for conduct.
- Positively contribute to school and community.

Highwood behavior expectations

- Act safely, respectfully, and honestly.
- Follow reasonable directions from staff and comply with school procedures.
- Do not interfere with another person's learning, safety, dignity, property, or access to school.
- Do not bring weapons, replicas, or items intended for use as weapons.
- Do not possess, use, distribute, or be impaired by prohibited substances.
- Use respectful language and digital communication.
- Report bullying, harassment, threats, violence, unsafe conduct, or other serious concerns promptly.
- Represent Highwood positively at school, in the community, online and during activities.

Progressive supports, interventions and consequences

Responses consider safety, the nature and frequency of conduct, impact, age, maturity, individual circumstances, student needs, prior support and applicable law. Support is provided both to students impacted by inappropriate behavior and to students who engage in it. Families will receive information about decisions and support involving their own child. The school cannot disclose another student's personal information or disciplinary response.

Possible responses include:

- Teaching, coaching, check-ins, counselling and skill-building
- Collaborative problem solving, restorative processes and re-entry planning
- Parent/guardian communication and conferences
- Learning, attendance, behavior, safety or support plans
- Referral to school, Division or community supports
- Alternative settings, adjusted breaks, loss of privileges or detention
- Threat or risk assessment where warranted
- Suspension or recommendation for expulsion in accordance with the Education Act and [AP 355](#)

Suspension and expulsion

Suspension and expulsion are serious responses governed by sections 36 and 37 of the Education Act and FSD [AP 355](#). A principal may suspend a student from school, classes or courses, transportation or school-related activities in circumstances authorized by law. A suspension may not exceed five school days unless the principal recommends expulsion. Parents are informed and receive written information, and learning access continues during suspension. A recommendation for expulsion is decided through the Board's delegated Student Expulsion Committee in process within the legal timeline. The student and parent have an opportunity to make representations and receive notice of review rights.

8. Staff, parent, volunteer and visitor responsibilities

Staff

- Establish clear, consistent, and inclusive learning expectations.
- Use proactive, preventative, restorative, and progressive approaches.
- Respond promptly to safety and wellbeing concerns and follow reporting duties.
- Communicate in a timely and respectful manner with students and families.
- Protect privacy and confidential information.
- Implement authorized student supports and mobile device exceptions.

Parents and guardians

- Act as the primary guide and decisionmaker regarding the child's education, subject to law.

- Take an active role in the child’s educational success and support the child in meeting student responsibilities.
- Ensure regular attendance.
- Contribute through their own conduct to a safe and caring environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviors.
- Cooperate and collaborate with school staff to support services and learning.
- Foster positive and respectful relationships with teachers, principals, staff, and professionals.
- Engage in the school community and support the [School Code of Conduct](#) and mobile-device expectations.

Resolving concerns

1. Speak first with the employee directly involved, at an appropriate time and place, with a focus on resolution.
2. If unresolved, speak with the employee’s immediate supervisor, usually the principal.
3. If the concern remains unresolved, follow the Division pathway in [AP 151](#). Formal appeals follow [AP 360](#), [AP 355](#), [AP 390](#) and Board Policy 11 as applicable.

Concerns must be raised respectfully. Intimidation, threats, offensive language, screaming, belittling comments, and rude conduct are not acceptable. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where information must be shared to investigate or resolve a concern.

Visitors and volunteers

Visitors and volunteers must report to the office, sign in and out, wear identification, and follow school direction. The principal approves volunteer roles. Volunteers act in an assisting capacity and do not assume teacher responsibilities.

- Volunteers likely to exceed 10 hours in a school year, and all overnight field-trip volunteers, must complete the requirements in [AP 490](#).
- Required screening includes a Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Check on the [AP 490](#) cycle, annual Volunteer Offence Declaration, registration and confidentiality forms.
- A volunteer must immediately advise the principal if charged with a relevant offence or involved in a Child and Family Services investigation.
- Permission to volunteer may be denied or revoked where suitability, safety or compliance concerns arise.

Field trips and off-site activities

Off-site activities must have educational value, be approved, planned to maximize safety, and comply with [AP 260](#). Written informed consent is required as directed by the procedure. Appropriate supervision, hazard assessment, emergency planning, medical information, accessibility, and meaningful alternatives for non-participants must be considered. Students remain accountable to the teacher-in-charge and the Code of Conduct.

9. Legal and Administrative Procedure reference register

This register identifies the principal authorities used for this update. It is a navigation aid, not a substitute for the complete current source.

Authority	Handbook connection	Official source
Education Act	Student and parent responsibilities; safe and caring environments; codes of conduct; attendance; suspension, expulsion and review rights	Open source
Ministerial Order 014/2024	Minimum standards for personal mobile devices and social-media access in Alberta schools; effective September 1, 2024	Open source
Bill 25 / SA 2026 c 13	Education Act amendments: safe and caring environment language, violence-prevention code of conduct statement, intellectual diversity and respectful viewpoints	Open source
Highwood Student Code of Conduct	School-specific student code of conduct and student learning expectations	Open source
FSD Policy 14	A Place for All; welcoming, caring, respectful, safe and inclusive learning environments	Open source
FSD Administrative Procedures index	Current official collection of FSD Administrative Procedures	Open source
AP 110	School Councils	Open source
AP 119	Administrative Procedures Requiring Annual School Review	Open source
AP 132	Emergency School Closure	Open source
AP 144	Responsible Use of Technology	Open source
AP 151	Parental/Guardian Complaints or Concerns and Dispute Resolution	Open source

AP 162 / AP 163	Smoke-Free Environment; Alcohol and Drugs	Open source
AP 165 / AP 170	Critical Response; Bullying, Harassment and Threatening Behaviour	Open source
AP 260	Field Trips and Student Exchanges	Open source
AP 309 / AP 310 / AP 315	Inclusive environments; safety, security and supervision; student health and safety	Open source
AP 330	Student Attendance	Open source
AP 350	Respect for All - Student Code of Conduct, including mobile devices	Open source
AP 351 / AP 353 / AP 357	Lockers; searches; destruction or theft of property	Open source
AP 355	Student Suspension and Expulsion	Open source
AP 360	Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting of Student Learning	Open source
AP 390	Appeals	Open source
AP 490	Volunteers	Open source
AP 550 / AP 553	Student Transportation Services and co/extra-curricular transportation	Open source