



HCCS Abundant Blessings Outdoor Preschool Program Handbook 2025-26

Holy Cross Catholic School
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Gracesystem.org

Holy Cross School Mission Statement

Holy Cross Catholic School commits to each student's learning and growth, blending innovation and compassion to guide students to become dedicated followers of Christ.

Holy Cross Vision Statement

At Holy Cross Catholic School, we are committed to providing an exceptional Christ-centered education that excels not only academically but also fosters spiritual, intellectual, physical, social and moral development. Our collaborative approach ensures accountable leadership at every tier, driven by strategic planning, operational efficiencies, and financial sustainability.

We focus on attracting, retaining, and supporting our educators and administrators through continuous professional growth that also yields academic excellence.

Our unwavering commitment to both immediate and long-term financial stability ensures accessibility to a Catholic education for families. We are dedicated to enhancing our facilities, aligning them with our mission while creating and nurturing an environment that promotes sustainability. Inspired by the principles of Catholic ecology, we are also focused on our goal of reaching the Green Ribbon School status. As we look ahead, we are steadfast in our promise to strategically expand enrollment and invite more students and their families to join our faith-filled educational community that positively influences the world.

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Introduction:

Holy Cross Catholic School understands and supports the importance of introducing children to the natural world. As humans, our intellectual, social, emotional, physical and spiritual health depends on this connection as we grow and develop and even more as children of God. Having access to nature and natural items and space provides infinite benefits beyond the traditional outcomes of indoor learning. Nature instills a sense of beauty and calmness and encourages us to be curious and explore life around us. With gentle guidance and compassion, children learn to respect all of God’s living things and their environment. Nature challenges and inspires our thinking through trial and error, inquiry, observations, discussions and risk assessment. Learning becomes richer and more memorable. Our morning preschool sessions will take place outdoors every morning all year long. For those students who are registered to attend full day preschool with us, lunch and afternoon sessions will take place in the traditional school setting.

REQUIRED RESOURCES

This Family Handbook includes expectations and practices in place at Holy Cross Catholic School. All practices and expectations are based on Diocesan Board of Education and GRACE School System policies which are the governing authorities of Holy Cross Catholic School. Interpretation of this Handbook is ultimately the responsibility of the school Principal and system President.

- **Diocese of Green Bay Board of Education Policies - [LINK](#)**

- **GRACE Family Handbook 2025-26 - [LINK](#)**
 - Academic Calendar
 - Accreditation
 - Bullying/Discipline
 - Child Abuse Laws
 - Admissions and Enrollment
 - Admissions
 - Preschool Readiness
 - First Grade Eligibility
 - Grade or Program Changes
 - Transfers within GRACE
 - Exits
 - Food Service
 - Media Release
 - Medication Policy
 - Non Discrimination Statement
 - Parents as Primary Educators
 - Promotional Media Release

- Tuition and Fees
 - Financial Aid

This Handbook is available on our website. The GRACE Family Handbook protocols are linked within this School Family Handbook electronically.

The School and GRACE School System retains the right to amend the Handbooks for just cause. Parents/Students will be given notification when changes are made.

As completed within the enrollment process, parent(s)/guardians(s) agree to be governed by the School Name and GRACE Family Handbooks and understand that it is my/our responsibility to read and comply with all policies contained in the Handbooks and any revisions made to them.

Communications: Communication between families and teachers is important for student success. There are several ways we communicate with families who are enrolled in our program.

- Emails
- Monthly Newsletter
- Class DoJo
- Drop-off and Pick-up Chats
- Phone calls
- Conferences
- Special Events

Discipline: Please see the HCCS Family Handbook [link](#) for guidance to our discipline procedures.

Schedule: Sample schedule of a typical day in our outdoor program:



| Time | Activity |
|---------------|---|
| 7:30 - 8:00 | Arrival / Announcements / Bathroom Break |
| 8:00 - 9:00 | Outdoor Circle Time / Free Play |
| 9:00 - 9:30 | Outdoor Prayer / Snack |
| 9:30 - 9:45 | Recess With Other Elementary Grades |
| 9:45 - 10:30 | Outdoor Guided Activity / Exploration |
| 10:30 - 10:50 | Return To Classroom / Dismiss Half-Day Students |
| 11:00 - 11:20 | Recess With Kinder Students |
| 11:30 - 12:00 | Bathroom Break / Prayer / Lunch |
| 12:10 - 1:20 | Quiet Time |
| 1:30 - 1:45 | Prayer / Snack Time |
| 1:45 - 2:25 | Specials Classes / Closing Circle |
| 2:25 - 2:40 | Prayer / Announcements / Dismissal |

This schedule may change daily depending on the weather, play opportunities, school events and our children’s needs and interests.

Curriculum: Our curriculum is seasonal, place based and play based integrated with the tenets of the Catholic Faith. It includes a mixture of inquiry based and

hands-on activities, group and individual activities, indoor and outdoor activities, along with active and quiet activities. Children will develop self-regulation, problem solving skills, confidence and more as they learn in, from and about God's natural world.

Activities: Abundant Blessings preschoolers will participate in activities that promote physical, social, emotional, intellectual and faith development. We make every effort for child-directed unstructured play in our outdoor space during our morning sessions. Afternoon sessions will take place in the traditional indoor classroom setting. Activities will be provided in a manner consistent to each student's abilities and backgrounds. There will be a mixture of quiet and active activities as well as a mixture of child-directed and adult-directed activities. Oftentimes there will be various equipment and materials used to enhance the experience and exploration.

Sample Activities:

- Use magnifying glasses
- Catch insects with a net and examine in an insect cup
- Count natural objects
- Build with natural materials
- Read books and listen to stories
- Pretend cook and play in the mud kitchen and at the sand/water table
- Use sticks or charcoal to write letters

Sample Goals:

Physical - develop balancing skills, independence in dressing in outdoor clothes and using writing and drawing tools

Social - balance needs/rights of self and others, forms relationship with adults and navigates social problem solving

Emotional - responds to emotional cues, regulates own emotions and behaviors by managing feelings, takes care of own needs appropriately

Intellectual - shows flexibility and inventiveness in thinking, uses symbols and images to represent ideas, connects with numbers with their quantities

Faith - connect with Jesus in everyday situations, demonstrate

Standards - WEML Standards, Green Bay Diocesan Standards and Green Bay Area Catholic Education Standards

- Social and Emotional Development and Competence
- Approach to Learning, Exploration, Discovery, Problem Solving
- Language, Literacy and Communication
- Creativity, Curiosity and Arts
- Cognitive Development - Math, Science, Social Systems
- Physical and Movement Development

Student Assessment: Students are routinely assessed and their progress is continually monitored according to state, diocesan and system standards. Observations in the areas of a child's environmental connection, emotional and social development, communication, literacy and large and fine motor skills are also ongoing as we evaluate and support student progress.

Nature Play: Nature play is the primary focus of our outdoor time. Playing, learning and exploring in the grass, water and field at Holy Cross provides a safe space for children to learn how to assess physical risk and build resilience, a place to nurture good mental health and connection to God's creation and promotes overall physical and mental health through vigorous activity giving children ample opportunity to build relationships with other children and their trusted adults. Students in the Abundant Blessings Program will participate in nature play such as climbing, balancing and moving logs, playing with rocks and sticks, jumping in mud puddles, sledding, playing on ice and exploring the weeds and brush.

Stick Play: Nature play includes stick play. Many preschoolers will spend the entire outdoor time with a stick in their hands. Sticks are wonderful loose parts and can be anything a child wants them to be such as a wand, shovel, writing or cooking utensil or even a microphone. Stick play is an important form of expression for young children and we coach children throughout the year to use and control their sticks in safe ways. Staff will monitor the play and help children adjust the boundaries of stick play depending on how the children are responding to one another. While playing with sticks, children are learning that others around them need to feel safe in the space no matter what the scenario is. We may redirect children who are using the sticks in less safe ways to play with their sticks in a different way and will not allow children who use the sticks to harm others to continue stick play.

Big Body Play:

Nature play also involves children expressing themselves through exuberant, boisterous play that allows them to use their language (verbal and non-verbal), negotiation and compromise skills as well as learning cause and effect with vigorous physical activity. Teachers support safety in big play, establishing known rules within the class so that all children feel safe, designating safe areas where big body play can and cannot occur, and working with children to help them learn their own boundaries processing interactions during big body play. Teachers are constantly monitoring (and guiding - if necessary) big body play.

Getting Wet and Dirty:

Nature play lends itself to getting wet and dirty. We do have a system for drying children's gear when it gets wet from playing in the rain or snow so that if a child comes in from the outside - the gear is dry before he/she goes outside again the same day. Be prepared that your child's clothing will likely get dirty, so please dress him/her appropriately.

Gear and Clothing:

Children will need comfortable, non-restrictive clothing that is appropriate for both outdoor and indoor play each day. In addition, the clothing needs to be easy to take on and off independently in the restroom. Please send children in "play clothes" that are ok to get muddy or wet.

- **Indoor Clothing:** Each child needs a pair of indoor shoes to use when we are in the classroom and school building. Indoor shoes keep children's feet warm and dry in the classroom and restroom and keep the classroom clean. Flip-flops, sandals and open toed shoes or croc-style shoes are not allowed. Each child must have at least two extra complete and clean changes of clothes including undergarments, socks, pants, and a long and short sleeved shirt stored in their cubby. Please remember to replenish the extra clothes as they are used as the season changes and your child grows!
- **Outdoor Clothing:** Children should be adequately clothed for outdoor play for all seasons and weather conditions and we know they will likely get wet and dirty! Selecting quality outdoor gear is critical for your child's success. Be on the lookout for used or new high-performance gear that is child friendly (since they will be learning to dress/undress for outdoor play). Your child will also be bending, climbing, running and stretching while he/she plays so make

sure that the gear is big enough to keep them covered while they are moving around.

- **Tips For Footwear:** Children need comfortable, protective shoes with gripping soles for running, jumping, climbing and playing outdoors. Tennies, winter boots or well-fitting hiking boots are recommended depending on the season. For winter boots, we recommend those that come up to your child’s calf and that have laces or velcro/bungee tightening system to allow children to put them on independently.
- **Tips for Rain Gear:** Each student is required to provide his/her own rain suit/coverall as outlined in the school supply list. (This piece will also be beneficial in the winter/spring months when the snow is really wet and sloppy). *****HCCS will provide rainboots for children to borrow that will be labeled and remain at school.*****
- **Tips for Snow/Winter Gear:** For winter, we recommend one-piece snow suits or a winter jacket and bib snow pants that are a bit too big to allow that movement and activity in the snow. If you purchase two-piece snow gear, we recommend that the coat has a hood and that the snow pants are the bib/overall style with grippy/rubber cuffs to help them stick to the boots. Mittens that have a longer cuff that can be securely tucked into our/up and over coat sleeves work best to keep hands covered and snow out of mittens. A pair of wool crew socks will keep the child’s feet warm in boots. Some families prefer a pair of tall warm wool socks over a thin pair of indoor socks as an alternative. *****HCCS will also provide snow pants and winter mittens for children to borrow that will be labeled and remain at school.*****
- **Brand Recommendations:** Reputable companies with these types of clothes include but are not limited to: Polarn O. Pyret, Oakiwear, REI, Helly Hansen, LL Bean, Lands’ End, Columbia, Patagonia.

Below is a guide for the gear for each season:

| Fall / Early Spring | Winter | Spring |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bog style boots ● Tennies ● Fleece jacket ● Stocking cap ● Play pants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Base layer ● Fleece pants/sweatshirt ● Neck warmer ● Insulated hat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bog style boots ● Tennies ● Fleece jacket ● Play pants or shorts |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Warm socks ● Lightweight gloves | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Insulated mittens / waterproof mittens ● One- piece snow suit ● Down puffer jacket ● Insulated winter boots ● Wool socks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sun hat |
|--|--|---|

Sunscreen / Bug Spray: On days when children need sun and insect protection, please apply sunscreen on your child prior to sending him/her to school. We will have a supply in our classroom and will reapply as needed throughout the time, but your help with this will ensure the greatest opportunity for learning time. We recommend dressing your child in a lightweight long-sleeved shirt and pants unless it is too hot. A Sunscreen/Bug Spray Permission Slip must be signed and on file. This helps to provide protection from the UV rays and mosquitos. Children will also need hats that provide sun protection for their face and eyes. Please send/keep one for your child.

Tick Checks: Ticks are generally out April - September. It is very important to establish a routine of checking for the ticks each day with your child.

Plants / Animals: HCCS has plants and animals that live and visit here. These animals are an important part of the learning experience. These also provide visually stimulating decor, clean the air and provide the experience of caring for a living thing. *Only non-toxic plants will be used in the classroom.** The HCCS campus is home to a variety of animals including turtles, frogs, bugs, deer, birds and squirrels. Children may have daily interactions with animals. Our chickens are now part of our school community and will be instrumental in teaching us about caring for God’s creatures. During walking field trips students may observe animals in their natural habitats which may include insects, arthropods, mammals and other creatures. Children may have encounters with pet dogs and even animal feces (scat). Our rule is that children may wave to dogs but are not allowed to pet unless that animal is invited into the room as a therapy animal with certification retained in the school office. After any animal encounter all staff and children will wash their hands with soap and warm water, sanitize footwear and put on clean gear as necessary.

Weather: Children and staff will follow the HCCS Family Handbook for guidance to outdoor activities as they relate to the weather.

Outdoor Air Quality: Air quality impacts our programming and we pay attention to the air quality when your children are in our care. On days when the air quality is in the orange or red, our outdoor learning will be shortened and we will learn together more in our indoor space. You are always welcome to keep your child home on those days if you prefer.

Toys From Home: HCCS indoor and outdoor spaces are equipped with toys and materials to meet the needs of the children and to complement the curriculum. Though we provide some additional play items when outdoors, the natural world doesn't need extra toys to make it engaging or educational for our children. Therefore, we ask that children do not bring toys from home to school. Toys brought from home present potential problems relative to sharing and may get broken or lost. There may be a special day in which the staff will request that children bring in an item that correlates with the lesson/theme. ****Please note that a blanket and rest mat for nap time are encouraged.****

Water Bottles and Snacks: Each child is expected to have a non-breakable refillable water bottle to maintain hydration throughout the entire day. This should be labeled with the child's name. Half day children should bring their one healthy snack from home for morning snack time. Children attending the full day program will need two healthy snacks. Please be sure that your child's snacks are also labeled with his/her name.

**HCCS Abundant Blessings Outdoor Preschool Program
Handbook Acknowledgement Form**

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the entire HCCS Abundant Blessings Outdoor Preschool Program Handbook.

initials

I understand that it is my responsibility to follow the expectations stipulated in this handbook.

initials

If I have questions, I will contact Holy Cross Catholic School for more information.

Parent Name (print): _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____