



PSS Student-Athlete and Family/Guardian Athletics Handbook

We believe that athletics helps support our school's vision by teaching students the value of practice, teamwork, goal setting, and resilience in the face of loss, as well as grace and sportsmanship in the act of winning.

Introduction & Guiding Principles

This resource is designed to guide student-athletes, coaches, and families through the values, expectations, and responsibilities that shape our athletic programs. Athletics at PSS are about more than competition, they are about community, character, and care. We acknowledge with gratitude that we learn, play, and grow on the unceded ancestral territories of the Smelqmix and Nl̓eʔkepmx peoples. We also recognize the contributions of our Metis peoples and the Vermilion Forks Metis Association.

At PSS, we ground our athletic culture in **core values** that shape conduct, competition, and relationships:

- **Respect** - for ourselves, our teammates, our opponents, the land we play on, and the communities we represent.
- **Responsibility** - acting with integrity, care, and accountability on and off the field.
- **Relationships** - placing community first and supporting one another.
- **Resilience** - building strength through adversity and challenge.
- **Reciprocity** - giving back through service, mentorship, and gratitude.
- **Courage** - facing challenges with heart, humility, and openness.

These values guide us not only as athletes, but as members of a broader, interconnected community.

The Role of Coaches and Parent Volunteers

Coaches and parent volunteers are essential to the success and spirit of PSS athletics. They act as role models, mentors, and supporters, creating safe, inclusive, and respectful environments where student-athletes can grow. Their leadership reflects the values of our school and community, helping to build strong, connected teams.

The Importance of Sport in Youth Development

Participation in school sport is about far more than wins and losses. Athletics help students develop life skills such as teamwork, leadership, time management, perseverance, and empathy. Through sport, students learn how to face adversity, celebrate diversity, and strive toward collective goals, experiences that build confident, capable citizens both on and off the field.

PSS Athletics Guiding Principles

At PSS, our goal is to develop athletes who are also strong in character. Winning is celebrated, but not at any cost, true success comes from hard work, patience, and integrity. Our programs are built on fairness, opportunity, and excellence, ensuring that all students have access to meaningful experiences in sport.

We strive to create an environment where athletes can reach their full potential through dedication and teamwork. Coaches, athletes, and families all play a role in making sport a positive, inclusive, and supportive experience. By working together, we foster a lifelong love for athletics and the lessons they teach.

Progression of Athletic Program at PSS

Grade 8 Teams

- Grade 8 is a time for discovery and exploration for many students.
- Grade 8 is a time to focus on age-appropriate skill development and building the understanding of what it means to be a positive team member.
- Coaches will focus on ensuring that each player receives equitable playing time.
- If multiple teams are formed for one sport, teams will be divided so that players will be placed on the team that best allows them to contribute meaningfully and have success.
- Our goal is for every grade 8 student who wants to play to have the opportunity to do so, but try-outs may be necessary based on coaching availability for the number of students who want to play.
- Students and families at the grade 8 level will be informed of any potential changes to team formation as soon as possible at the start of each sport's season.
- Regular practice attendance and the "Fair Play" principles of personal dedication, following rules, maintaining self-control, showing respect for opponents are expected for all student-athletes and will impact playing time over skill level.

Junior (Grade 9 and 10)

- Grade 9 and 10 are a time to further develop as athletes and team members.
- Try-outs and cuts MAY take place depending on;
 - Available coaches
 - The number of students trying out compared to roster sizes
 - Resource availability (gym time for example).
- If multiple teams are formed for one sport, teams will be divided evenly. When teams are in different tiers, players will be placed on the team that best allows them to contribute meaningfully and have success.
- Each player will receive fair playing time; however, in tournament final games, coaches may adjust playing time based on their discretion. Playing time will also be affected by attendance and effort at practice.
- Regular practice attendance and the “Fair Play” principles of personal dedication, following rules, maintaining self-control, showing respect for opponents and others are expected for all student-athletes and will impact playing time over skill level.

Senior (Grade 11/12)

- At the grade 11 and 12 level, it is expected that team membership and playing time will be based on skill level, attendance and effort in practice, as well as player conduct on and off the court.
- Try-outs and cuts may be expected at this level.
- Regular practice attendance and “Fair Play” expectations of personal dedication, following rules, maintaining self-control, showing respect for opponents and others are expected for all student-athletes and will impact playing time as will skill level

“Playing Up” at a Higher Grade Level

- Student-athletes are expected to play at their age-appropriate level.
- In certain situations, playing up may be needed for student-athletes to play at a level above what they are registered for. This is not a common occurrence but may take place in very specific situations, such as illness, injury or conflicting activities, where a team may then require a Relief Player, as determined by the coach and Athletic Director.
- Parents and guardians are **not** to advocate for playing up under any circumstances.
- In case of disagreement, a final decision will be made by the School Administrator.

- BC School Sports guidelines will apply in every case.

Try-out Policy

- PSS encourages and values participation in sports. **Try-outs are extremely rare** at our school and are only held when necessary, usually due to a shortage of coaches.
- Try-outs are to be fair, respectful, and based on clear criteria that evaluate skills, commitment, and potential team contribution.
- The goal is to give every student-athlete a chance to demonstrate their abilities and enthusiasm in order to support the success of themselves and their team.

Try-out Process

1. Try-out Dates & Communication

- Coaches will announce try-out dates in advance so that interested student-athletes can attend.
- These dates may differ from the final team practice schedule.

2. Evaluation Criteria used for Try-outs

Coaches and evaluators will assess student-athletes based on:

- Individual skill and potential.
- Team Awareness and understanding of team play / strategy.
- Coachability & Attitude, the willingness to learn and work with others.
- Work ethic, effort and dedication.
- How a player participates in and contributes to the team culture.

3. Attendance

- Student-athletes must attend try-out sessions or inform the coach in advance of the try out if not available at that time to try and find a solution if possible.

4. Selection Notification

- Student-athletes will be informed of their selection in a face-to-face meeting during practice or the school day.
- Maintaining dignity of and respect for student-athletes when not making the team will be a priority, and the reasons for not being selected as well as options for participation in other ways will be shared with student-athletes.

Coach Code Of Conduct

Overview

The student-athlete/coach relationship is a privileged one. Coaches play a critical role in the personal and athletic development of student-athletes, and with that comes significant responsibility. Coaches must be mindful of the inherent power imbalance in this relationship, acting with integrity, respect, and care at all times. Through their leadership, coaches channel the values and goals of the District, school, rightsholders, and the broader community. A coach's influence extends beyond the game — shaping how athletes grow as individuals and how families experience school sport. Positive and respectful relationships with parents and guardians are therefore essential.

In addition to modeling ethical behavior and sportsmanship, coaches are expected to create a positive team culture where all athletes feel welcomed, supported, and included. This means:

- Building Inclusive Teams-ensuring that every athlete, regardless of background, identity, or ability, feels valued and has the opportunity to contribute.
- Celebrating Diversity-recognizing and embracing differences as strengths that enrich the team and community.

By setting a tone of respect, empathy, and unity, coaches not only develop strong teams but also help nurture strong citizens.

Ongoing Communication Between Coaches and Parents/Guardians

One of the coach's responsibilities is to maintain communication with parents/guardians for the entire season. This should involve emailing or other contact that includes items such as:

- Important team decisions and planning.
- Updates regarding practice time changes.
- Updates regarding games and tournaments.

The Athletic Director should be cc'd on every email between coaches, parent/guardians, and student-athletes.

Social Media

- Please refrain from posting other student-athletes on personal social media sites as some families/guardians unless you have it confirmed that parent/guardians have filled out the permission form and provided it to the school.

- Please send anything (photo/video) you want to put to social media to Athletic Director or School Administration for approval before submitting/posting.

*The Coaches' Code of Conduct has been developed by **BC School Sports** to help coaches to assist student-athletes in becoming well-rounded, self-confident and productive human beings.

<https://www.bcschoolsports.ca/member-services/coaching/bc-school-sports-coaching-code-ethics>

Parent/Guardian Communication with Coaches

Effective communication between parents/guardians and coaches is crucial for the success of the student-athlete and the team. The guidelines and expectations for communication between parents/guardians and coaches are in place to maintain a positive and supportive environment for all involved.

If a parent/guardian has concerns, they should address them directly and privately with the coach or athletic director, and not during games or practices. The focus needs to be on solutions and the well-being and development of the student-athlete. It is critical to maintain confidentiality and avoid discussions about other student-athletes unless immediate safety is a concern.

How to Approach the Coach:

- **Email or Scheduled Meeting:**
Parents/guardians should first attempt to have their student-athlete communicate with the coach prior to their involvement. If needed, the parent/guardian should then contact the coach by email or request a meeting during a scheduled time.
- **Respect Boundaries:**
It is important to respect their time and responsibilities. Don't approach coaches during the middle of a practice or after a game unless it's an emergency. While it is expected that timely responses are provided, we recognize that coaches have multiple roles and responsibilities and respect of those pressures must be given.
- **Appropriate Topics for Discussion:**
Parents/guardians should approach coaches with concerns related to their child's well-being, progress and development, team policies and procedures.

- **What Not to Discuss:**

Playing time, team selections and positions, team game plans, and other student-athletes. If a parent/guardian is unsure or needing guidance about a difficult topic, it is recommended that they approach the Athletic Director or School Administration for support.

Contact Information

PSS Administrators:

Principal- Nadine Thibert (nthibert@sd58.bc.ca)

Vice Principal- Richard Jensen (rjensen@sd58.bc.ca)