The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (commonly known as FOIP) is provincial legislation that applies to government departments and agencies, and local public bodies such as school districts. In a school setting, the privacy of students and parents is protected by this Act. Schools must follow rules in the collection, use, protection and disclosure of personal information.

Alberta schools collect and use personal information about students and their families for authorized programs and activities that are a basic part of school life. The District strives to safeguard this personal information and restricts access to individuals only on a ‘need-to-know’ basis.

The FOIP Act does not dramatically change normal school activities, and it does not prevent parents from participating in their children’s education. It allows parents and students broader rights of access to information and it obligates the Calgary Catholic School District to protect privacy.

Two purposes of the FOIP Act:
- To provide individuals with greater access to information held by public organizations
- To protect the privacy of individuals

Five basic principles:
1. The public has the right to access records held by public bodies, such as the Calgary Catholic School District, unless the FOIP Act specifically allows a record to be withheld.
2. The personal privacy of individuals is protected by rules outlined in the Act relating to collection, use, protection and disclosure of personal information. Unless the FOIP Act allows it, personal information cannot be disclosed to others without individual consent.
3. An individual has the right to see personal information about his/herself. This is a broad right of access with few exceptions.
4. An individual has the right to request corrections to his/her personal information if it is not accurate.
5. An independent review of decisions about access to information and possible violations of individual privacy can be requested. The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner conducts these reviews.

Protection of privacy
Protection of privacy is an important principle under the FOIP Act. An individual's personal information belongs to him or her, and that individual has a right to privacy.

Personal information includes an individual’s:
- Name
- Address
- Telephone number
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Age
- Marital status
- Any identifying numbers or symbol
- Education
- Employment
- Medical and psychiatric history
- Anyone’s personal opinions about the individual
What parents need to know:

• A FOIP statement appears on the majority of the District’s forms that are completed by parents.

• A signed consent form is always required from the parent, guardian or access parent if disclosure of the child’s personal information is required.

• FOIP allows parents, guardians and access parents broader rights to access the information about their child that is in the custody and control of the Calgary Catholic School District. For example, parents, guardians and access parents are permitted to review their child’s student records. Section 18(2) of the School Act and the Student Record Regulations allows the parent, guardian or access parent to review their child’s student records.

Refer to School District Use of Personal Information for specific examples of activities where this information may be used.

Accessing student records

Parents, guardians or access parents can access their child’s student records by making arrangements with the school office. Access to these records will generally be granted, except when the personal privacy of others is involved. At the age of majority, students can access their own records in a similar manner.

Accessing District information

The Calgary Catholic School District has always been open and accountable to the public. A great deal of information on the District’s operations is available to the public at no charge. The FOIP Act is not intended to replace normal methods for obtaining information.

For the most part, District staff responds informally to verbal and written requests for information. Students, parents, guardians, employees and members of the community who would like information about the District should feel free to contact the appropriate school or department directly. General information is also available at www.cssd.ab.ca.

Formal FOIP requests

Although the Calgary Catholic School District readily provides information to the public, the FOIP Act establishes certain restrictions on access, in particular when personal privacy may be affected. If a school or department denies your request for information, and the explanation of why it is not accessible is unsatisfactory to you, you can make a formal FOIP request. More information on the procedures, time frames, fees, and the application process is available at http://foip.alberta.ca/