



1st Grade Class Descriptions

Language Arts (Phonics, Handwriting, & Spelling)

Phonics: 1st graders begin the year by finishing up the First Start Reading program with Book E. This program takes a balanced, age-appropriate approach to phonics and reading, and a serious focus on correct pencil grip and letter formation. It takes the traditional (vowel-consonant) approach to teaching phonics combined with word families.

Handwriting: We have chosen The Good and the Beautiful for our handwriting curriculum to review and master manuscript letter formation before cursive begins in 2nd grade.

Spelling: [All About Spelling](#) Levels 1 & 2 continue working on phonics concepts while teaching students to become confident spellers. We use the Activity Book at home and in class, but word cards and tiles are optional to purchase for further practice at home.

Literature

After completing the First Start Reading phonics program, 1st graders are prepared to delve into real books, using the Storytime Treasures set. Real books, as opposed to “readers”, capture the imagination of children and motivate them in their reading lessons. The student books teach a variety of grammar skills in the engaging context of classic stories. These grammar skills are expounded upon in class and practiced through journal assignments.

Latin

[Song School Latin 1](#) is used for First Grade Latin. We take a gentle approach with introducing Latin at this age. Homework often involves a review of the songs for the week and/or a single written activity. HFA includes Latin in early grades to help form familiarity and a framework to apply future knowledge, assisting our goal of excellence in Latin.

Math

[Singapore Math](#) focuses on mastery of concepts and incorporates concrete, pictorial, and abstract models of teaching. Your book purchase comes with access to an online suite with various resources, such as a Reteach book that offers additional support if encountering a challenging concept or Extension books for a student who could benefit from an additional challenge. Our classroom days are filled with fun, interactive activities and games to help our students better understand and enjoy the material! Math fact drills are incorporated in class, but should also be ongoing at home. Teachers incorporate spiral review throughout each semester.

Science

K-2nd students take science together, with classes focused primarily on hands-on learning and the development and use of critical thinking skills. We use [Elemental Science](#) as our spine, but we incorporate age-appropriate activities, read-alouds, and experiments from a variety of sources. For the 2025-2026 school year, we will be studying Biology.

History

HFA uses the [Story of Civilization](#) books to guide our study of world history from a Catholic perspective. The books are written for an older audience, so we do not expect our K students to follow along in the book unless they are part of a family with students in our 2nd grade+ classes. This class involves a brief, simplified lesson on our weekly history topic, presented in a gentle but engaging way. Picture books and hands-on activities are the emphasis for 1st grade history. There are times in which we incorporate a different, but relevant, lesson when the weekly topic is too mature for these students. At the start of each new unit, we encourage families to choose a correlated read-aloud book to read together at home, to help our unit come to life (suggestions provided). For the 2025-2026 school year, we will be learning all about Modern/US History.

Memory Work

HFA memory work exposes students to sophisticated language/vocabulary, classical poetry, inspiring hymns, and most importantly, sacred scripture. We chose a new hymn and literary piece (poetry, scripture, historical excerpt) to work on throughout each of our history units (4-6 weeks long). Our hymns are tied to the liturgical season and learned during music class on Mondays. On Thursdays, we offer an opportunity at lunch for students to stand and recite what they know from their literary piece. While these pieces are fun and often challenging, our hope for the scripture and hymns, especially, is that they will be written on each child's heart for years to come. We always look forward to our end-of-the-year Recitation, where students recite all of our memory work from the year for our families.

Catechesis

We use [Into the Deep Level 1](#) for Catechesis, and half of the book is discussed over the course of the year (other half during the 1st Grade year). This catechesis program was created for homeschool families! It uses beautiful, original watercolor illustrations, nature study, poetry, art, music,

copywork, and story to introduce children to the Story of Salvation History and encourages them to take their place in that story as saints in God's Kingdom. Our K and 1st grade students have Catechesis together. Enrichment suggestions are sent home in the weekly syllabus to help parents go deeper into our classroom discussions when at home.

Mandarin

Students in Mandarin 1 will begin to develop an ear and mouth for listening and speaking Mandarin Chinese. Through songs, games and repetition, we will build a basic vocabulary of numbers, colors, body parts and more, plus some basic Mandarin sentences. A YouTube playlist will be linked in each week's syllabus and can be used at home to review everything we learn in class.

Music

Music is truly a gift from God! It is a delight to experience and a beautiful means to praise and honor Him. At HFA, students work on vocal training and basic music theory. Students are exposed to a "Composer of the Month" and their famous works. We spend time learning our memory hymn and practicing parts of the Mass.

Art

Our weekly art class exposes students to the elements and principles of art. Projects are fun, engaging, and develop real artistic skills. Students are introduced to works of famous artists throughout history. When possible, liturgical projects are also tied in.