



Fort Vermilion School Division
“Our Children, Our Students, Our Future”

New school year marks opening of school bus loop in High Level

The beginning of the 2019/2020 school year also marks the official opening of the new school bus loop system in High Level.

The new Fort Vermilion School Division bus loop links Florence MacDougall Community School, Spirit of the North Community School, and High Level Public School as a single drop-off and pick-up point for FVSD bus students in High Level.

“We’re really excited,” said FVSD Superintendent Mike McMann on Monday morning from the site of the loop, where he was on hand to welcome students on their first day back at school. “This is the first time in High Level where we have an opportunity for every student to arrive at the same time in the same way.”

The loop includes parking space for all school buses currently in use in High Level as well as sidewalk access for the three schools. Lights were installed in the area back in January.

Work on the loop remained on track in spite of delays caused by the Chuckegg Creek Wildfire, including the two-week evacuation of High Level at the end of May as well as ongoing evacuation issues throughout the summer for larger portions of Mackenzie County.

It is expected that having a single point for drop off and pick-up will help mitigate supervision of the students during this time, streamlining the process and ensuring safety of the students. The change will assist in alleviating some of the significant parking and congestion issues which can occur during this times – particularly for Florence MacDougall.

For parents, the new bus loop means there will be no more navigating around school buses when they visit a High Level school.

“It’s way easier,” said McMann. “Right now, you can go into any school parking lot in High Level and you’ll never have to worry about a bus. You’re never going to run into one, you’re never going to have to worry about one turning out in front of you. You don’t have to worry so much about kids going in between buses to come and meet you.”

Parents picking up and dropping off their children are being asked to park in the front of those schools. The old bus lane at Spirit of the North has been repurposed as an access point for the new bus loop and, as a result, remains closed to all public traffic.

“No public traffic is supposed to be in there,” said McMann. “There is a sign at the entryway. It’s been there for years. Some people may forget that it’s there, but it is a no entry zone for all public traffic.”

For the children, Spirit of the North students will see a bit of a further walk to school than they were used to, but Florence MacDougall students – the youngest student base of the three schools – will be closer.

And there is a particular benefit to older students who are tasked with ensuring younger siblings make it to the bus – with everyone being loaded in the same spot, they no longer have the uncertainty of looking for those young students.

“When they get on the bus, they won’t have to worry they missed the bus at Spirit of the North or those sorts of things because they will be able to get on their bus and see their brother or sister on there too.”

The loop is not a large enough disruption on the field to seriously affect field activities in the area, such as soccer.

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