



PARENT / STUDENT HANDBOOK

2023-2024

"Academic Excellence, Faith and Service"

St. Mark Catholic Elementary School

500 Wigwam Lane

Stratford, CT 06614

Phone: 203-375-4291

www.stmarkschool.org

Accredited by New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. (NEASC)

(Revised 9/2023)

Dear Parents and Students,

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength..."

Mark 12:30

Welcome to St. Mark School! By joining our school community, you have demonstrated a commitment to the values and philosophy of a Catholic education. The faculty and staff of St. Mark School look forward to working with you to promote academic excellence and spiritual development in the context of the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The Parent/Student Handbook reflects the policies of St. Mark School for the 2023-2024 school year. Please read this document carefully and sign the attached agreements. The agreements state that you intend to abide by the policies of St. Mark School during the 2023-2024 school year.

As partners in education, let us work together and support one another. May our school community continue to grow in love and service of our God and others.

Yours In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melitta M Warner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mrs. Warner

Principal

The principal reserves the right to revise this handbook at any time.



ST. MARK SCHOOL IS A 2009 NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

In 2007 and 2008, St. Mark School received a nomination for United States Blue Ribbon School. In 2009, St. Mark School was awarded the Blue-Ribbon Award by the U.S. Department of Education.

NEASC ACCREDITATION

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) in Bedford, MA accredits all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport. St. Mark School received its first accreditation visit from NEASC in 1997. NEASC representatives visited in May of 2017 for the ten-year review and St. Mark School is currently accredited until 2027. A yearly update report is filed with NEASC each fall. This accreditation also is valid for the State of Connecticut accreditation.

NEASC serves the public and educational community by developing and applying standards assessing the educational effectiveness of elementary, secondary, and collegiate educational institutions. The accreditation process involves a lengthy report prepared by the school faculty and staff in anticipation of a three-day peer visitation of a team of four or five educators from New England. Every aspect of the school is reviewed, and a written report is filed by the visiting team. The report is then reviewed by the NEASC Commission who votes to accredit the school.

ADMISSION

The Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic schools admit qualified students of any race, color, religion, and national or ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. Schools do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ancestry, national and ethnic origin, in the administration of educational policies, admission policies and scholarship and loan programs.

Preference in admission shall be granted to practicing members of the Catholic faith as well as siblings of currently enrolled students.

The Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic schools may not be able to provide an appropriate education to all students with special needs due to their limited resources.

The age of kindergarten and grade 1 admission shall be determined by the State of Connecticut Department of Education (Connecticut General Statutes, Sec 10-15c). Schools may not admit students who are below the age established by the State of Connecticut without approval from the Superintendent of Schools. Entrance into the pre-kindergarten program must reflect kindergarten guidelines.

No student shall be permitted to repeat a grade level already successfully completed without approval from the Superintendent of Schools.

By applying for admission to a Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic school, parent(s)/guardian(s) acknowledge and agree that they will support the school's mission and commitment to the Catholic faith.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) shall enter into a tuition agreement and agree to be bound by the policies and procedures of the school.

***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.100 - Admission
Revised: September 1, 2021***

PRESCHOOL (PK3 and PK4)

Rolling enrollment depends on the child's age and placement in the PK3 or PK4 class. Child must be fully potty trained.

KINDERGARTEN

In the event that there are more applicants ready for Kindergarten than there are seats available, the administration will use the following criteria to determine acceptance:

Readiness

The child must be developmentally ready for Kindergarten, as determined by the screening team. Placement in Kindergarten is made with the child's level of development in mind. The BRIGANCE Test is an approved screening tool used in the Diocese of Bridgeport. It is designed for a child who is 4 years and 9 months old. Therefore, younger children may be screened in the summer, as children may need more time to mature. If screening data determines the child has not yet demonstrated readiness, he or she will not be accepted to the program for the upcoming year. However, the family will be offered the opportunity to be placed on a waitlist and re-screened at a later date or the following year.

Age

The child must be 5 years old prior to December 31st of the applicable school year.

Priority

Acceptance of students who are ready for school is made in the following order:

First Priority: Children who have attended St. Mark School Little Lions PK4 Program.

Second Priority: Children who have siblings currently enrolled at St. Mark School.

Third Priority: Children of new families (having never had a child enrolled at St. Mark School or a family whose child was enrolled for PK3 but not for PK4) who are registered parishioners of one of the five Catholic parishes in Stratford or recognized National parishes.

Fourth Priority: Children transferring from a Catholic school outside the local parish area.

Applicants for Kindergarten will be accepted for a probationary period of ninety (90) days regarding academics and discipline. This means that the applicant must maintain satisfactory grades and a personal discipline, which does not impede his or her progress or the progress of his or her classmates. The probationary period may be extended or removed at the discretion of the principal.

GRADES 1 THROUGH 8

Students in Grades I through 8 are accepted in the following manner:

- An initial interview takes place with the parent, prospective student, and principal.
- The parent/guardian agrees to allow the applicant to visit with his or her prospective classmates for a day. A shadow date is set that is convenient for the parents and the school.
- The parent/guardian agrees to share all school records and reports with the St. Mark School for review prior to admission.
- Applicants for Grades 1 through 8 will be given current schoolwork/tests to determine readiness for that grade.

Applicants for Grades 1 through 8 will be accepted for a probationary period of ninety (90) days in regard to academics and discipline. This means that the applicant must maintain satisfactory grades and a personal discipline which does not impede his or her progress or the progress of his or her classmates. The probationary period may be extended or removed at the discretion of the principal.

In the admission of new students, the priority will be as follows:

- Second Priority: Children who have siblings currently enrolled at St. Mark School.
- Third Priority: Children of new families (having never had a child enrolled at St. Mark School or a family whose child was enrolled for PK3 but not for PK4) who are registered parishioners of one of the five Catholic parishes in Stratford or recognized National parishes.
- Fourth Priority: Children transferring from a Catholic school outside the local parish area.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY FOR CONTINUED ACCEPTANCE

St. Mark School Administration requires complete cooperation of parents and students in the policies stated herein. Parents have the right and duty to remind the principal, faculty and staff of their responsibilities in a respectful Christian manner. We are partners in education. Therefore, the Administration and the faculty are open to constructive suggestions and insights.

At no time does a parent or guardian have the right to enter the school or a classroom in a negative, hostile or intrusive manner. The faculty and Administration should be afforded the necessary respect as your child's teacher and Administrator. Parents should present their concerns first directly to the classroom teacher. The principal will see parents regarding classroom incidents only if parents have had a full discussion with the classroom teacher.

ST. MARK SCHOOL FACULTY AND STAFF

Pastor	Fr. Birendra Soreng
Principal	Mrs. Melissa Warner
Office Administrator/AMEN Team	Mrs. Carolyn Mannino
School Nurse	Mrs. Wendy Frate, <i>R.N., B.S.N</i>
School Bookkeeper/AMEN Team	Mrs. Evelyn Lesko
Parish DRE	Mrs. Patricia Nettleton
AMEN Team	Mrs. Theresa Sciallo
	Mrs. Jennifer Tayman
Athletic Director	Mr. Michael Sciallo
Lunch Coordinator	Mrs. Wendy Ferik
After School Program Director	Ms. Sarah Carrano
Parish Facilities	Mr. Mark Nettleton

Daytime Custodian	Mrs. Alicia Londono
PreK 3 Teacher	Mrs. Kathleen McManus
PreK 4 Teacher	Mrs. Julie Larracuente
Preschool Aide	Mrs. Claire Abdallah
Preschool Aide	Mrs. Dara DeSalvo
Preschool Aide	Mrs. Katia Dworkin
Preschool Aide	Mrs. Lauren Goode
Preschool Aide	Mrs. Emelia Reed
Preschool Aide	Mrs. Kristin Toman
Preschool Aide	Mrs. Karen Yeomans
Kindergarten Teacher	Ms. Stacey Zenowich
Kindergarten Aide	Mrs. Lori Dombroski
Grade 1	Ms. Stephanie DiMeola
Grade 2	Mrs. Kelly Tsichlas
Grade 3	Ms. Breanna Miller
Grade 4	Mrs. Janet Rodriguez
Grade 5	Mrs. Kathryn Baker
Grade 6	Mr. Matthew Bonito
Grade 7	Mr. Patrick Fallon
Grade 8	Ms. Kelly Heider
MS Science	Mr. Alexander Kennedy
MS Math Intervention Teacher	Mrs. Agnes Miller
School Social Worker	Ms. Lindsay Gowans, LMSW, School Social Worker, Catapult Learning
Special Education Teacher	Mrs. Karen Mortali
Spanish	Mrs. Rosanna Martinez Garcia
Art	Ms. Sarah Carrano
Innovation	Ms. Sarah Carrano
	Mr. Alexander Kennedy
Music	Mrs. Patricia Nettleton
Physical Education	Mr. Kevin Dougherty
Building Substitute	Mrs. Linda Holton
Building Substitute	Ms. Donna Martire-Miller

ST. MARK SCHOOL ADVISORY BOARD

Rev. Birendra Soreng, Pastor, *Ex Officio*, voting member
Mrs. Melissa Warner, Principal, *Ex Officio*, non-voting member
Mrs. Carrie Morrissey, Esq., Board Chair
Mrs. Joann Szczepanski, Board Vice Chair
Mr. Vincent Averaimo, Esq.
Dr. Steven Cheeseman
Mrs. Karen Derleth
Mrs. Renee DiMatteo
Mr. Roy Johansen, Jr.
Mr. David Robertson
Mr. Mark Szczepanski
Mrs. Theresa Sciallo
Mrs. Jennifer Tayman
Mr. Matthew McCloskey, HSA Co-President, *Ex Officio*, non-voting member
Mr. Robert Rosati, Esq., HSA Co-President, *Ex Officio*, non-voting member

SCHOOL ADVISORY BOARD

All diocesan schools will have a School Advisory Board (SAB) composed of administrators, clergy, and laity with skills in finance, facilities, marketing/development, and strategic planning.

The SAB represents the educational institutions of the Diocese of Bridgeport and are under the authority of the Office of the Superintendent of Schools. The SAB provides leadership to foster an environment which provides underlying Catholic values, long term strategic planning, and financial stability.

This role of the School Advisory Board complements the school's mission which is to nurture and foster the spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical, and social growth of the student through its religious and academic curriculum and extracurricular programs. Some general responsibilities of the SAB include, but are not limited to:

- 1. Participating in the strategic planning and goal setting for finance, facilities, marketing, and development which should complement the curriculum and instructional strategic plan developed by the local school administration.*
- 2. The Finance Committee of the School Advisory Board helps to review, and revise, if necessary, the annual operating budget prepared by the local school administration, and submit it to the Office of the Superintendent of Schools for approval. Salary and other personal information should not be shared with the board.*
- 3. Planning and facilities.*
- 4. Establishing and maintaining effective marketing and development programs.*

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 1.111 - School Advisory Board

Revised: September 1, 2021

HOME SCHOOL ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Co-President	Mr. Peter Baird
Co-President	Mr. Matthew McCloskey
Vice President	Mrs. Lisa Christoffersen
Secretary	Mrs. Cathy Kitlasz Huda

HOME SCHOOL ASSOCIATION BOARD MEMBERS

Lower School Representatives	Mr. Derek Masterbone Mrs. Jaime McEnaney Mrs. Jacklyn Sollivan
Upper School Representatives	Mrs. Suzanne Adams Mrs. Veronica Caserta Mrs. Meredith Mallon
Father's Committee Representative	Mr. Michael Aloï

SCHOOL HOURS

7:30A to 3:00P School Year Office Hours

7:30A to 11:30A Summer Hours

Teacher supervision begins at 7:30A in the classroom on regular school days and 9:30A on a delayed opening. Students should not be in the building before these designated times. Faculty and staff are not required to supervise children if they arrive early. Parents are responsible for their children if they arrive early. School doors will open at 7:30A. For the safety of our students, teachers, and staff and to encourage independence in our children, we ask that children who walk or come by car to say their "goodbyes" before entering the outside school security doors.

If parents would like to enter the school to drop off forms, materials, etc., they must enter using the door under the blue St. Mark School awning.

FULL DAY SCHEDULE is 7:45A to 2:10P

EARLY DISMISSAL DAY (due to weather, emergency, or regularly scheduled) is 7:45A to 11:25A. No lunch is served on early dismissal days.

DELAYED OPENING (2 HOURS): School begins at 9:45A. Doors open at 9:30A.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM (ASP)

Regular hour 2:10P to 6:00P

Regularly scheduled early dismissal days 11:25A to 6:00P

The ASP program does not run when school is not in session (i.e., snow days, emergency closings, vacations, and holidays) and will not be held when school dismisses early due to weather or an emergency.

HISTORY OF ST. MARK CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

St. Mark School opened on September 9, 1964. The opening of the school enabled the children of the parishioners of the newly founded St. Mark Church to receive a Catholic education. The school consisted of eight classrooms, a principal's office, secretary's sitting area, a faculty room and a small nurse's office. St. Mark School opened with 90 students in Grades 1, 2 and 3. Grades 4 and 5 were added in 1965 and Grades 6 and 7 in 1966. In 1967, all eight elementary grades were established.

The school was staffed primarily by the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth from Monroe, Connecticut, with the addition of lay staff in 1967. The Sisters maintained their presence in the school until 1992. Since 1992, the teaching faculty has been totally composed of lay persons. In 1992, the school hired its first lay principal.

Over the years, the physical plant expanded with the vision of a former pastor, Msgr. Lawrence McMahon, and the support of the parish. In 1984, the school's concrete patio was transformed into a school media center and library that housed the school's first eight computers. In 1989, a portable classroom was added to the school off the library in order to establish a full day Kindergarten which opened that September. To further meet the needs of the working St. Mark families, an After School Program was established in 1991.

In 1993, St. Mark Church built a Parish Center which included a permanent Kindergarten classroom, a gymnasium and a stage. This addition allowed St. Mark School to be named as one of the handicap accessible schools of the Diocese of Bridgeport. The new addition allowed the "portable" classroom to become permanent. It became the school's new computer room. Within a year of the 1994 opening of Kindergarten, a new enclosed Kindergarten playground was built. In 2015, the school won a new playground through a Dannon yogurt contest. Thanks to the work and efforts of many, the playground was finished and opened at the end of August, 2015.

In January of 2001, the new science lab for Grades 5- 8 was opened. Also at this time, the main office was moved to a new facility beyond the science lab. There was also space for a new Principal's office, a bathroom and a conference room. In March of 2001, the nurse's office opened (former office of the principal) with a bathroom and a waiting area.

In September of 2008, St. Mark preschool opened. Currently, our preschool program offers full day options of 2 days, 3 days, or 5 days enrollment.

In response to the Sandy Hook tragedy, security cameras, steel reinforced doors, panic buttons and film for windows were purchased to increase the safety at our school in 2013.

St. Mark School continues to grow through the vision and efforts of the administration, faculty, parents, Advisory Board and Finance Committee. Over the past three years, St. Mark has increased their wifi capacity, purchased two Chromebook carts, containing 60 new Chromebooks, and purchased two Smart TV's to begin the next phase of technological improvements.

September 2019, St. Mark School embarked on year one of a three-year gradual implementation of the Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools Personalized Learning Initiative. In this first year of implementation, the personalized learning program is designed to do two essential things: help teachers develop a deep understanding of the gifts, talents, interests, and needs of each child; and create opportunities for teachers to work individually and in small groups with children to develop their skills at their readiness level. Two core strategies to personalize learning include use of a digital adaptive learning program for about 30 minutes / subject (English, Language Arts, and Math) / week totaling about 90 minutes each week to collect information on students' current knowledge level; and establish student-centered instructional routines in classrooms, typically a center-rotation model with student conferences, which provides time for teachers to meet with students in small groups and individually. Moving forward, more routines to further personalize learning include continuing to improve differentiated instruction to ensure that each student is learning at a level and pace that is best for them and conferring with students to understand their own dataset and make plans to reach academic goals; get a better understanding of their personal aspirations and interests.

In January 2020, St. Mark School was awarded a Foundations in Education Innovation and Leadership Grant Program. The awarded grant application, Educating the Whole Child, provided the funding to implement a comprehensive PK through Grade 8 social/emotional learning (SEL) curriculum program called Second Step®. Second Step® SEL is research based, teacher informed, and classroom tested curriculum program for St. Mark teachers to use in order to directly support the social-emotional development, safety, and well-being of our students.

Additionally, a comprehensive collection of high-quality authentic books was purchased in September 2020 to support teacher-led small group Guided Reading instruction at the elementary level and novel study at the Middle School level. The complete set includes 1,560 books inclusive of 260 titles, 6 copies of each title. Guided Reading and novel studies help students process increasingly challenging texts with understanding and fluency, it engages readers and encourages active reading, robust problem solving, and deep comprehension skills.

St. Mark School is proud of its history and growth. Over the years, it has become a well-known Catholic institution of learning in Stratford and the surrounding communities.

MISSION STATEMENT

St. Mark School is a Christ-centered learning environment that teaches Gospel values and fosters academic excellence. Aware of the dignity and uniqueness of all students, we are committed to the spiritual, intellectual, moral, social, and physical development of each child.

PHILOSOPHY

Jesus said, "Let the children come to me." (Matthew 19:14).

Following in the footsteps of Jesus, at St. Mark School...

We welcome the children in His name.

We bring the Good News to God's children.

We believe that each child is created in God's image.

We are the face, the hands and the heart of Christ to our children.

As a community of faith, we strive to love and serve God, each other and our brothers and sisters in the broader community. We acknowledge and support the role of parents as the primary educators of their children. We work collaboratively in a supportive and respectful manner to provide an enriching Catholic education for all children in our school.

We are committed to educational excellence. Our educational goals and objectives are intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person. Aligned with Diocesan curriculum standards and guidelines, St. Mark School prepares students to think creatively, critically, analytically and independently to identify and solve problems in academic, personal and social situations. We integrate the Gospel values and learn the Church's mission and traditions as reflected in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

We strive to create a safe, nurturing atmosphere that encourages respect, tolerance, personal integrity and individual dignity. We instill a respect for people of all cultures as well as concern for the needs of the world.

Parents' Role in Education

It is an honor and privilege to be partners with parents in the education of children. We believe parents are the first and primary educators of their children. Parents are the role models for their children. Your words, actions, choices and beliefs form and affect your children. As partners, let us work together so that the values and ideals that we teach at St. Mark will enhance and strengthen what you are teaching and modeling at home.

During these formative years at St. Mark (Pre-K to 8), it is important that parents and teachers work collaboratively to help each child reach his/her potential spiritually, morally, intellectually, socially and physically. Our goal is the same. We are partners in education---offering our children not only our knowledge and expertise but love, support, respect, guidance, and the necessary discipline to grow and learn. It is vital that both parents and teachers remember that we must model good communication and respect. The teacher is there to help and support your child. If there are questions, comments, or concerns about your child, please call, write a note or send an email to your child's teacher.

Students are naturally eager to grow and learn. However, sometimes in the process of growth and maturation, students may lose focus. Students can often be redirected with understanding and discipline. At times, your child may perceive discipline as restrictive. We believe that appropriate discipline is not restrictive. Correcting discipline by setting boundaries and limits provides children with both guidance and security. For parents and teachers, giving our children/students correction and discipline are truly acts of love and respect. We want our children/students to grow to be caring, responsible young adults.

It is essential that each child takes responsibility for grades he/she has earned and be accountable for homework, short and long-term assignments, quizzes, tests, and service projects. If there is a prolonged absence, the student and parent must meet with the teacher to discuss work that needs to be completed.

Together, let us begin this year with a commitment to partnership as we support one another in helping your child become the best person he/she can become.

Parents as Partners

The following suggestions will help make this a successful school year for you and your child. As partners in the educational process at St. Mark School, we ask parents:

- To set rules, times, and limits so that your child:
 - Goes to bed at the appropriate time on school nights
 - Arrives at school on time and is picked up on time at the end of the day
 - Is dressed according to the school uniform policy
 - Completes assignments on time
 - Has a nutritious lunch and snack every day
- To actively participate in school activities such as Parent-Teacher Conferences
- To notify the school with a written note when the student has been absent or tardy
- To notify the school office of any changes of address or important phone numbers
- To meet all financial obligations to the school
- To inform the school of any special situation regarding the student's well-being, safety, and health
- To complete and return to school any requested information promptly
- To read school notes and newsletters and to show interest in the student's total education
- To support the religious and educational goals of the school
- To support and cooperate with the discipline policy of the school
- To see that the student pays for any damage to school books or property due to carelessness or neglect on the part of the student
- To treat teachers with respect and courtesy in discussing student problems

SCHOOL POLICIES

The following policies and procedures are designed to add to the efficient operation of our school. Please take some time to familiarize yourself and your child with them.

ABSENCE AND TARDINESS

Student attendance in Catholic schools of the Diocese of Bridgeport shall be in accordance with the statutes of the State of Connecticut. The responsibility for compliance with this law belongs to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child. Students must attend school punctually and regularly and conform to the attendance policies and procedures established by the school and outlined in the parent/student handbook.

A student not physically present at a school, excused or unexcused, is marked absent.

When a student is absent due to illness, accident, quarantine, or attendance at the funeral services of a member of the student's family, this is considered an excused absence.

When a student is absent due to a medical and/or dental appointment, verification of such appointments is required from the medical or dental office in order to be considered an excused absence.

When a student is absent because a parent wishes to take their child out of school for personal reasons, this is considered an unexcused absence.

It is recommended that the principal discuss the student's progress with the parents and advise them of the effect such an absence would have on the student's schoolwork.

By law, schools in consultation with the Office of the Superintendent of Schools, local police, and courts are responsible for enforcing the mandatory school attendance laws when parents fail to send their children to school or provide them with equivalent instruction. If a truancy problem cannot be solved by the school, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) shall be notified. Excessive tardiness may also be reported to DCF.

Students may not participate in any school-sponsored event if they are not in school on the day of the event without express permission from the principal.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.302 - Attendance
Revised: September 1, 2019

Students who have four unexcused absences in one month, or ten unexcused absences in a school year are considered to be truant.

Family vacations should not take place when school is in session. Should such a vacation occur during school time, such vacation will be deemed an unexcused absence on the part of the child.

Parents are asked to call the Main Office (203) 375-4291 by 8:30 a.m. to speak to the school nurse and report that their child will be absent. If the parent does not report the absence, the nurse will call the parent at home or at work.

Students who miss more than three consecutive days of school are required to have a note from their doctor that states that they may return to school. Every effort should be made to make dental and doctor appointments after school hours.

A student is allotted the number of days to complete assignments according to the number of days they were absent from school. For example, if a student misses two days of school, he or she will have two days to make up their work. It is the student's responsibility to ask the teacher for missed schoolwork. If the student fails to make up the assignments in the allotted time, a failing grade may be issued. In the case of a lengthy absence or extended recuperation, this rule may be amended by the teacher in consultation with the principal and parents.

Parents are asked not to take students on vacations while school is in session. Work will not be given in advance when students leave for vacation; it will be made up as soon as possible upon returning to school. Unexcused absences during school time (such as vacations) will count against a student's attendance record. Parents should check the yearly calendar before scheduling such a vacation. An unexcused absence during mid-year or final exams may result in a zero grade for the exam. Excessive absences could result in retention as determined by the principal.

The final decision to promote or retain a student is made by the principal, based on the student's academic performance and best interests. It should be made after discussion with the parent, teacher, and student.

***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.209 - Promotion/Retention
Revised: September 1, 2019***

Students who are late (after 7:45A) must report to the main office with their parents for a late slip. Please use the blue awning entrance when bringing a tardy student into the building. 5 or more unexcused tardies in the same marking period may result in the student serving an after-school detention. Such detention shall be administered by the classroom teacher in consultation with the principal and after notifying the student's parents.

A student must be in school until 11:30A to be considered present for school on a full day of school. A student must be in school until 9:30A to be considered present for school on an early dismissal school day.

If a student is absent from school, the student may not participate in any school-sponsored activity on that day. This includes school dances, sports practices, extracurricular activities, events, and performances. **This is diocesan and school policy.** However, there may be times when extenuating circumstances need to be reviewed and taken into consideration by the principal.

ACADEMICS AND GRADING SYSTEM

HOMEWORK POLICY

Homework benefits a student by reinforcing skills and material learned in class, preparing students for upcoming class topics, teaching students to work independently and evaluating student progress.

Students in grades 2-8 are strongly encouraged to have a school assignment pad to write daily assignments. Students will do their homework independently to the best of their ability. Teachers assign grade-appropriate work and reading books. A student or parent(s) may not change any daily or summer work that is assigned by a teacher. A failing grade of zero for the assignment will be given if this occurs. Only neatly done homework will be accepted. Assignments must be turned in on time. Students are responsible for making up missed assignments due to absence.

Homework is assigned daily in Grades 1 through 8. Long-term projects, make-up homework, supplementary reading and review work may be assigned on a holiday or a weekend. Teachers are advised not to schedule more than two major tests, excluding spelling and vocabulary, on a given day. Students who do not hand in assigned homework on time or who fail to make up assignments due to absence risk receiving lower grades or a failing grade of zero on that assignment.

In accordance with ***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.200 - Homework (Revised: September 1, 2019)***, homework is considered an integral part of the learning process. It is intended to reinforce learning and to foster habits of independent study. Homework shall be assigned on a regular basis and shall be closely integrated with class work. Recognizing that family time and student “downtime” are essential for student success, homework should be limited on weekends and school vacations.

While students’ ability and concentration will vary, general minimum suggested time allotments for homework in schools are as follows:

Grade 1 – 10 minutes
Grade 2 – 20 minutes
Grade 3 – 30 minutes
Grade 4 – 40 minutes
Grade 5 – 50 minutes
Grade 6 – 60 minutes
Grade 7 – 70 minutes
Grade 8 – 80 minutes

These time allotments are guidelines only. It is impossible to predict the amount of time an individual student will need to complete his/her work, and homework will vary throughout the year.

Depending on grade level homework counts for 5 to 10 percent of the quarter grade during a marking period.

REPORT CARDS

Report Cards will be issued four (4) times during the academic school year or approximately every nine (9) weeks.

The Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools requires four computerized report cards a year (November, January, April, and June). Conferences for Grades K through 8 are held in November and April. Conferences for Preschool are held in February. Additionally, a parent may request a conference anytime throughout the school year. Parents are encouraged to contact the teacher whenever there are concerns. Grades are based on daily class work, homework assignments, class participation, independent work, projects, tests, exams and quizzes. The student report card envelope is to be signed and returned within one week of issue.

DIOCESAN GRADING SYSTEM

The school is responsible for the evaluation of each student's progress through the continuum of skills or the sequence adopted by the school for each area of the curriculum. A variety of techniques and means should be utilized for placement and diagnosis as well as for demonstration of mastery or level of achievement. Teacher evaluation of each student's progress must be summarized in the standard grading and reporting system developed and approved by the Office of the Superintendent of Schools. Schools shall follow the policy and procedures for grading as directed by the Office of Superintendent of Schools.

Schools shall communicate to parents, in writing, the following system for grade-level weighting, established by the Office of the Superintendent.

GRADING POLICY

The Grading System for the elementary schools of the Diocese of Bridgeport is as follows:

PK 3 and PK4

M - Meets grade-level standards consistently

W – Working towards mastery of the standard or is inconsistent

N - Not yet meeting grade level

X - Not assessed at this time

Kindergarten through Grade 2

E - Exceeds grade-level standards

M - Meets grade-level standards consistently

W – Working towards mastery of the standard or is inconsistent

N - Not yet meeting grade level

I - Insufficient evidence provided usually due to lack of attendance or effort.

X - Not assessed at this time

Grade 3 and Grade 4

4.0 - Distinguished: Student demonstrates knowledge which exceeds grade level standards

3.5 - Student demonstrates some understanding beyond grade level standards

3.0 - Proficient: Student demonstrates mastery on grade level standards. This is the target/goal for student success.

2.5 - Student demonstrates partial success on grade level standards

2.0 - Developing: Student demonstrates basic understanding and is partially proficient at meeting grade level standards

1.5 - Student demonstrates partial success on foundational skills or made major errors on grade level standards

1.0 - Emerging: With help, the student demonstrates some understanding of foundational skills and grade level standards

0.5 - With help, the student demonstrates some understanding of foundational skills

0 - Deficient: Even with help, the student is not successful

I - Insufficient evidence provided for demonstration of mastery when assessed - usually due to lack of attendance or effort

X - Not assessed at this time

Grades 5 through 8 (All Subjects)

A 94 – 100 (Outstanding)

C+ 77 – 79

A- 90 – 93

C 74 – 76 (Average)

B+ 87 – 89

C- 70 – 73

B 84 – 86 (Above average)

D 66 – 69 (Below average, but passing)

Social Development (Grade 5)/Conduct & Effort (Grades 6 through 8):

- 1 Excellent
- 2 Good
- 3 Improvement Needed
- 4 Unsatisfactory

In certain extenuating circumstances, the grades of ‘S’, ‘N’, and ‘U’ may be used after consultation with the Superintendent of Schools. Only official Diocesan Report Cards and approved administrative software for Catholic Elementary Schools are to be used in PK3 through Grade 8.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.201 - Grading
Revised: August 15, 2022

PROGRESS REPORTS

Student progress reports, in conformity with the diocesan grading system, may be distributed mid-marking period. Parents should use the Student Information System to monitor student progress on an ongoing basis.

A progress report must be issued to the parent(s)/guardian(s) whose student is failing a subject.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.202 - Progress Reports
Revised: September 1, 2019

HONOR ROLL

Honor rolls are only applicable for grades 6 through 8.

The honor roll in elementary schools will be a two-tiered system:

- *High Honors: No grade lower than an A- including only 1s or 2s in conduct and effort. All major subjects are included in calculating High Honors.*
- *Honors: No grade lower than a B including only 1s or 2s in conduct and effort. All major subjects are included in calculating Honors.*

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.204 - Honor Roll
Revised: September 1, 2019

NATIONAL JUNIOR HONOR SOCIETY

St. Mark School has a Chapter National Junior Honor Society (Grades 6 through 8). Membership in this organization is by invitation and successful application. All core content area grades and specials classes (Art, Gym, Music, Spanish and Innovation) are used in determining eligibility. Students in Grade 6 who meet the academic criteria of a full year in Grade 6 of no grade lower

than a B AND only 1's and 2's in conduct and effort on their report card are invited to apply for membership. Students in Grades 7 & 8 who have no grade lower than a B AND only 1's and 2's in conduct and effort on their current year report cards and in the Final Grade column of the previous year's report card are invited to apply for membership. Students must complete an application which details how they display academic achievement, leadership, character, and service. The applications are reviewed by a faculty committee and students are notified of their acceptance to the society.

PROMOTION POLICY AND RETENTION POLICY

Students shall be promoted once a year based on their satisfactory completion of the grade requirements. If the principal and teacher agree that it would best suit the personal and academic development of the student, a student may be retained in a grade for a second year, but only with the prior approval of the Office of the Superintendent.

A student may be retained only once in grades K through 8.

All K through 8 homeroom teachers are required to sign or initial each student's report card certifying that the student was promoted to the next grade or retained in the current grade, defined as follows:

- *Promoted means that the student has completed the grade's work and has attained a minimum of a "D" average in all major subject areas.*
- *Retained means that the student has failed two or more major subjects on the final average.*

Major subjects include religion, social studies, math, science, and language arts.

The final decision to promote or retain a student is made by the principal, based on the student's academic performance and best interests. It should be made after discussion with the parent, teacher, and student.

***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.209 - Promotion/Retention
Revised: September 1, 2019***

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Students graduating from Grade 8 must meet the following standards:

- Students have a passing final grade in all subjects.
- Students have completed his or her final exams in each content area.
- Attendance and discipline records are in good standing.

- All tuition and all fees (graduation, volunteer hours, lost books, etc.) are paid by May 15th.
- A graduation fee will be set by the Principal and Bookkeeper and is paid by June 1st of the graduation year.
- Completion of 5 service hours.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

The After School Program is available to the parents of Saint Mark students in grades PK-6 who need a safe, dependable, and convenient place for their children after dismissal. Parents of 7th and 8th grade students may enroll on an as needed basis.

The After School Program is available on full-day and half-day sessions with a few exceptions: the first few early dismissal days at the beginning of the school year, the early dismissal days before Thanksgiving and Christmas, and the last 2 days of school (early dismissal day). The program does not run when school is not in session (i.e., snow days, emergency closings, vacations, holidays) and will not be held when school dismisses early due to weather or an emergency. Parents/guardians will be kept informed throughout the school year if the program is canceled for the afternoon.

The After School Program offers a wide variety of activities for your child, including play time, homework time and other special activities such as sports and arts and crafts.

Non- refundable registration fee per child: \$30.00

Weekly Fee Schedule PK3 through Grade 6*

Number of Children	1 Day	2 Days	3 Days	4 Days	5 Days
1	\$30	\$60	\$90	\$120	\$140
2	\$50	\$100	\$150	\$200	\$225
3	\$70	\$140	\$210	\$280	\$310
4	\$90	\$180	\$270	\$360	\$400

*Subject to change for the 2024-2025 school year

For **half-day sessions**, when the children will be in the After School Program starting at 11:25 a.m. there will be an additional charge of:

1 child - \$25.00

2 children - \$50.00

3 children - \$75.00

If your child(ren) is dismissed early from school for any reason (i.e., a doctor's appointment) and does not return to school for the day, permission to attend the After School Program on that day will be approved on an individual basis by the After School Program Director in consultation with the principal.

Please be advised that in the event you pick your child(ren) up after 6:00pm, you will be charged \$1 per minute per child. Consistent late pick up without proper communication is subject to an additional \$15 per child for every additional 5 minutes late.

BICYCLES

Students in Grade 8 may ride bicycles to school; however, they should walk them across the school grounds to avoid possible accidents. Riding double is not permitted. Bicycles are parked in the rear of the school near the garage behind the gym. The school is not responsible for damaged or stolen bicycles.

BIRTHDAYS

Students may bring a non-food birthday treat to share with classmates when it is their birthday. Parents may send in treats such as stickers, pencils, etc. Parents may also come in and read to the class. Please contact the teacher to arrange for this. Student birthdays will also be recognized at morning announcements. Students may also pass out invitations in school as long as every student in the class is invited to the event. Parents are not permitted to send in edible treats or lunch items such as pizza. Please see the section on **FOOD ALLERGY** for detailed information.

BLOGS/INSTAGRAM®/SOCIAL MEDIA

Engagement in online blogs and social media such as, but not limited to Facebook®, Twitter, Instagram and SnapChat, etc. may result in disciplinary actions if the content, photos, or captions of the student or parent's blog includes defamatory comments regarding the school, the faculty and staff, other students, or the parish. Parents should refrain from creating a Facebook® account or similar social media accounts for members of a class under the name of the school or a particular grade or organization. The only official St. Mark School Facebook® page is the one created and monitored by the St. Mark School marketing staff. A parent who chooses to create such an account may subject his/her child(ren) to separation from the school. In the event that a student is involuntarily separated from the school, there will be no reimbursement for tuition and/or fees.

BUCKLEY AMENDMENT

St. Mark School adheres to the Buckley Amendment (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act) in regard to privacy of student records and the rights of non-custodial parents. It is the responsibility of the parents to share any official custodial information decided through the courts with the school principal. Official custodial agreements will be kept in a confidential file

in the office of the principal. In the absence of any court document, the school will view each parent as having full legal custody of his/her child. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, non-custodial parents have the right to receive records about their child's academic progress or lack thereof. The school reserves the right to charge a shipping and processing fee for extra records sent to more than one home address.

Be advised that if a teacher is subpoenaed to testify in a child custody case, the parent must pay the cost of a substitute teacher and any other costs associated with the testimony (mileage, parking, food, etc.).

BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING

Bullying is prohibited in all Catholic schools within the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Bullying is defined as the repeated use of unwanted, aggressive communication or behavior by one or more students to another student that:

- *Causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property;*
- *Places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property;*
- *Creates a hostile environment at school for such student;*
- *Infringes on the rights of such student at school; or*
- *Substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.*

Bullying shall include, but not be limited to, a written, oral, or electronic communication or a physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

Bullying must not be tolerated during the school day or during any school-sponsored activities on or off school grounds. Bullying and intimidation are actions that are contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Any behavior deemed by the school administration to be considered as bullying shall result in disciplinary actions up to and including expulsion.

Any student who retaliated against another student for reporting bullying may be subject to disciplinary actions up to and including expulsion.

Clarification of terms:

"Cyberbullying" means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications.

"Mobile electronic device" means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing communication between two or more individuals.

"Electronic communication" means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by Internet, cellular, fiber, wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic, or photo optical systems.

"Hostile environment" means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate.

"Outside of the school setting" means at a location, activity or program that is not school related, or through the use of an electronic device or a mobile electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the school.

"School climate" means the quality and character of school life with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community between and among students and adults.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.310 - Bullying

Revised: October 14, 2015

St. Mark School attempts to provide a safe environment for all individuals. Verbal or written threats made against the physical or emotional well-being of any individual are taken very seriously.

Students making such threats (seriously or in jest or online) face detention, suspension, and/or expulsion. Please see the section on **DISCIPLINE** for detailed information.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

The Stratford Board of Education provides bus transportation for Stratford residents who live more than 1.5 miles from the school or if the student must cross a major road in order to come to school (such as Cutspring Road or Huntington Road). This is a free service to Stratford residents only. Only eligible students may ride the bus. Students may not ride a bus that is not assigned to them unless they have written permission from their parent/guardian and the note has been approved by the principal. "Walkers" cannot ride home with a "Bus Rider" classmate. Car transportation should be arranged. The note is then given to the bus driver. Students should not change their assigned stops.

Inappropriate behavior on the bus may result in the loss of the bus privilege or suspension for a period of time. The bus driver is in complete control during the bus route and will report disruptive, disobedient or disrespectful behavior to the Principal. Students should always remain seated and be reasonably quiet on the bus. Shouting, screaming or disruptive behavior is not permitted.

It is a custom, not a right, for the older students to occupy the rear of the bus in order to watch the younger students. The younger students sit in the front. The Principal or assigned teacher reserves the right to assign seats if necessary. Students should listen to the bus driver or one of the older students who may be attempting to correct poor behavior. Safety concerns regarding bus service should be reported to the Principal.

CALENDAR

A monthly school calendar is published listing all important dates. Additionally, there is a yearly Diocesan calendar. It is the student's responsibility to bring the monthly calendar home.

CELLPHONES

If a student in grades 5 through 8 needs a cell phone after school, they may bring the cell phone to school and leave it in the 'off' position upon arrival in the morning. Cell phones must be handed in and stored in the teacher designated area. At no time during the day should a cell phone be in a student's possession. Items such as cell phones that are taken away from students will be returned to the parent(s)/guardian(s) at the end of the day. Repeated offenses will result in consequences such as detentions.

Students involved in possession or transmission of inappropriate photos on their cell phones or other electronic devices face suspension and/or expulsion. In accordance with the law, the Stratford Police Department will be notified. See also: **ELECTRONIC DEVICES**.

CHEATING

Cheating of any type will not be tolerated. Students who choose to cheat face a failing grade, detention, suspension, and/or expulsion.

CHILD ABUSE LAWS

St. Mark School abides by the Child Abuse laws of the State of Connecticut. This law mandates that all cases of suspected abuse and/or neglect be reported to Child Protective Services.

CURRICULUM

Curriculum standards demonstrate how our Catholic schools exceed the expectations set forth by state standards. Diocesan teams of administrators and teachers have created an exceptional approach to develop academics in a faith-based environment, which nurtures each student's

unique learning potential. The curriculum standards are developed and updated through the Office of the Superintendent of Schools. Religion curriculum standards are formulated by the Office of the Superintendent in consultation with a committee of educators and approved by the bishop. These standards shall serve as the foundation for curriculum development on the school level. Curriculum standards for subject areas are provided to the classroom teachers and are available for parents on the diocesan website.

***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 3.101 - Curriculum
Revised: September 1, 2019***

Grades K through 5 are self-contained classrooms with attention given to individualized instruction. Additional part-time teachers give instruction in Music, Physical Education, Library, Spanish, Innovation and Art. Grades 6 through 8 are departmentalized in the areas of Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science, Innovation, Art, Music, Spanish and Physical Education.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Please see page 9, **SCHOOL HOURS**

DELAYED OPENINGS AND SCHOOL CANCELLATIONS

Catholic schools will follow the local public schools for emergency delayed openings, early dismissals, or school closings due to inclement weather or local emergency. If the local public school is open but the principal feels it is unsafe for students, he/she may close school for the day. They may not, however, open on a day the public school is closed due to a local emergency.

***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 3.202 - Dismissal and Days Off
Revised: September 1, 2021***

When weather conditions or other emergencies warrant a delayed opening or the closing of school, announcements may be viewed online at WFSB and WTNH. Announcements will be posted on the school's website and social media feeds.

When the Stratford public schools are closed or delayed due to inclement weather, St. Mark School will also be closed or delayed. Parents will also be notified through our emergency notification system.

If school closes early for weather related reasons, dismissal will be at 11:25A. Phone calls home for early dismissal due to weather or other emergencies should not be necessary (except in the case of extreme emergency). Parents will be alerted through our emergency notification system. The After School Program will not be held when there is early dismissal due to weather or emergencies. Please do not call the school for this information. Phone lines must remain open to get any additional necessary information from the Superintendent's Office - especially if there is

an emergency. Please discuss this ahead of time with your children so that they know what to expect when there is an early dismissal.

DISCIPLINE/STUDENT BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

The primary goal of any disciplinary code is to be formative and encourage self-discipline; enabling the student to internalize Catholic values and principles and to behave in accordance with those values and principles. Each student has the right to learn in a safe, caring, Catholic environment. This right must be respected and safeguarded.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.317 - Discipline

Revised: October 14, 2015

St. Mark School students are expected to show respect to the administration, teachers, staff, volunteer parents and peers.

Students are expected to take proper care of their desks, textbooks, technology, classroom and school. Any damage to school furniture, technology, or property (including books and computers) incurred by the student will become the parents' financial responsibility. Parents who wish to have textbooks over the summer months must secure them through the Principal's office.

Students may make phone calls from school only in an emergency. Students may not use classroom phones unless a teacher has given them permission. Phone calls should not be made for forgotten items such as homework.

Students may use rolling book bags.

Students are expected to behave during class time in a manner that will not infringe on the rights of their peers to learn.

Gum chewing is not permitted anywhere on the school property or during school activities (i.e. field trips, after school program, etc). Children who violate this rule are subject to disciplinary action. Please note that this rule also applies during the dismissal process.

Running, loud talking, screaming and littering are prohibited in the corridors and in the lavatories. All travel in the school hallways is expected to be done in a quiet and orderly manner to respect each class and the Main Office.

During recess, students are only permitted to play with balls that are soft. Hitting one another, rough contact, and "keep away" games are prohibited.

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE

There are times when individual problems arise with a student. Please follow this procedure to address your concerns:

First: contact the teacher(s) by email, phone or a written note regarding a question or concern. In non-emergency situations, a teacher will contact you within 24 hours. If it is an emergency, please state this in your message. The teacher will contact you as soon as possible. If a conference is necessary, request an appointment. It may be advisable with older students to have them present at the conference and meet with all of their teachers at the same time. **Please do not approach the teacher in the classroom, hallway, parking lot, before school or during dismissal to have an impromptu talk about your child.** Contacting the teacher by phone, email or a note models respect and a willingness to have a conversation. Making an appointment to have a private conversation will give you and the teacher the appropriate amount of time to discuss the matter or incident. Most problems can be resolved in this manner.

Second: If further discussion is needed that includes the Principal, please contact the office for an appointment for a conference. The Principal will see parents regarding classroom incidents only if parents have had a full and complete discussion with the classroom teacher first.

We will make every effort to handle situations in an appropriate and timely manner. Please communicate with your child's teacher when a problem or concern arises with your child. If incidents occur, please investigate fully. Check the source of information with the appropriate parties. Contact the teacher. We are partners in your child's education--supporting each other and respecting each other--through our words and actions.

DISCIPLINE: DETENTION

For most minor discipline issues, a student may miss part of their recess or have lunch in the office. This behavior modification has been effective for correcting most problems. A consequence for repeated inappropriate behavior may be losing the privilege of attending a class trip or school sponsored event (ie Monster Mash, Variety Show, etc).

After-school detentions may also be given as a consequence for student behavior, choices, or actions. It is the teacher's decision, in consultation with the principal, based upon the seriousness of the student's action. Detentions may be given for a variety of reasons including but not limited to academic, attendance, as well as disciplinary reasons and are usually given after warnings, discussions and possibly conferences. The teacher who issues the detention is responsible to see that the student serves the detention. Parents will be given 24-hour notice via telephone contact by the issuing teacher and are responsible for picking their child up at school after detention.

Detentions may be issued for more than one day. Multi-day detentions count as one detention on the student's record. Detention should be a rare occurrence and not a daily event. If there is a question about the detention, it is best to consult the classroom teacher who issued the detention to clearly understand the problem.

DISCIPLINE: SUSPENSION

The principal has the right to suspend students whose presence in the school becomes a serious impediment to the school's operation. Students may be suspended if their offense is of a severe nature or if prior disciplinary actions have proven ineffective. Suspension may result from actions (physical, verbal, or virtual) occurring in or out of school or on or off school property.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.318 - Suspension

Revised: October 14, 2015

On rare occasions when a student commits an extremely serious offense, the student will be suspended from school. Suspensions are noted on a student's permanent record. These serious offenses include, but are not limited to:

- blatant disrespect of a teacher, staff member, or principal
- fighting or antagonizing a fight (physical harm)
- endangering the safety of the school community (this includes verbally threatening a teacher or student with any type of harm)
- bullying
- vandalizing school property
- theft
- truancy
- dishonesty (including cheating, immoral conduct or habitual disregard for school rules)

The student will not be re-admitted until a conference between the Principal, teacher, parents and student is held. In addition, the student will be placed on a Disciplinary Contract. If the contract is broken, the student will risk expulsion from St. Mark School.

St. Mark School has a zero tolerance policy in regard to the use and/or sales of drugs or alcohol on school property and weapon possession in the school or on the school grounds. These will be cause for immediate expulsion from school.

DISCIPLINE: EXPULSION

Expulsion of a student from school should only follow a period of suspension, unless the situation calls for immediate action. Expulsion shall only be considered as a last resort; if other means of discipline have proven ineffective and/or the continuation of the student in membership of the school is considered to be a hindrance to the welfare and progress of the school.

Expulsion may result from actions (physical, verbal, or virtual) occurring in or out of school or on or off school property.

Some reasons for expulsions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *Unauthorized absence or continued tardiness;*
- *Disobedience, insubordination, or disrespect for authority;*
- *Language or behavior which is immoral, profane, vulgar, or obscene;*
- *Conduct which constitutes repeated violations of school policies, rules and standards of conduct;*
- *Use, sale, distribution, or possession of drugs, alcohol, or any other legally controlled substance;*
- *Injury, endangerment, or harm to persons or property or serious threat of same;*
- *Assault with, or possession of, a lethal instrument or weapon;*
- *Serious theft or dishonesty;*
- *Outrageous, scandalous, or serious disruptive behavior;*
- *Habitual lack of effort leading to academic failure in classroom work;*
- *Conduct at school or elsewhere which would reflect adversely on the Catholic school and/or the Church;*
- *Consistent disrespect for other students such as sexual harassment of another student;*
- *Incident of physical or virtual assault, such as bullying or verbal abuse (threats, extortion, or violence);*
- *Violation of Internet code of ethics; and/or*
- *When other means of discipline have failed.*

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.319 - Expulsion
Revised: October 14, 2015

BULLYING: REPORTING

School employees, students, and parents who become aware of any act of bullying must report the incident to the principal for further investigation. Schools shall set up a procedure for such reporting and publish the procedure in the school's parent/student handbook. Each school shall also set up a procedure so that parents of students may make written reports of acts of bullying. Reports should be submitted in a timely manner to ensure immediate action and clear recollection of facts. Students may report acts of bullying anonymously.

Upon learning of the bullying incident, the principal shall immediately begin a thorough investigation. The investigation may include interviews with students, parent(s)/guardian(s), and school staff, review of school records, and identification of family issues.

If it is concluded that bullying has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student who committed such acts and the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student against whom such acts were directed shall be notified. Consequences for students who bully others shall depend on the

results of the investigation and include parent conferences, professional counseling, detention, suspension, or expulsion. Depending on the severity of the incident or the series of incidents, the principal may also take appropriate steps to ensure student safety. These may include implementing a safety plan, separating and supervising students involved, providing staff for students as necessary, reporting incidents to DCF or law enforcement if appropriate, and establishing a supervision plan with the parents.

Bullying incidents under investigation that may result in suspension or expulsion must be reported to the superintendent. The superintendent reserves the authority to make a final decision regarding expulsion.

Schools reserve the right to notify local law enforcement when appropriate.

***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.310 - Bullying
Revised: October 14, 2015***

BULLYING INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE

Upon learning about a bullying incident, the principal or his/her designee shall thoroughly investigate the circumstances. This investigation may include interviews with students, parents, school staff, review of school records, and identification of parent and family issues.

Bullying incidents that demand in school/out of school suspension shall be reported to the Office of the Superintendent for Schools.

BULLYING CONSEQUENCES/INTERVENTION

If it is concluded that an act of bullying has occurred, the parents/guardians of the student who committed such acts and the parents/guardians of students against whom such acts were directed shall be notified. Consequences for students who bully others shall depend on the result of the investigation and may include a parent conference, professional counseling, detention, suspension and expulsion.

Depending on the severity of the incident, or the series of incidents, the principal may also take appropriate steps to ensure student safety. These may include implementing a safety plan, separating and supervising the students involved, providing staff support for students when necessary, reporting incidents to law enforcement, if appropriate, and developing a supervision plan with parents.

HARASSMENT

The schools of the Diocese of Bridgeport do not condone any form of harassment. All individuals are to be treated with dignity and respect. Harassment in any form is prohibited.

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and

other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- 1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly;*
- 2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis of decisions affecting such individual; or*
- 3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonable interference with an individual's work performance or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive learning environment.*

Verbal harassment includes derogatory comments, jokes, or slurs. It also can include belligerent or threatening words spoken to another individual.

Physical harassment includes unwanted physical touching, contact, assault, and deliberate impeding or blocking movements, or any intimidating interference with normal work or movement.

Visual harassment includes derogatory, demeaning, or inflammatory posters, cartoons, written words, drawings, novelties, or gestures.

A student who harasses another student shall be subject to disciplinary actions up to and including expulsion.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.311 - Harassment
Revised: October 14, 2015

Upon learning about the harassment allegation, the principal shall thoroughly investigate the circumstances. His/her investigation may include interviews with students, parent(s)/guardian(s), and school staff; a review of school records; and identification of family issues.

If it is concluded that harassment has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student who committed such acts and the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student against whom such acts were directed shall be notified. Consequences for a student who harasses others shall depend on the results of the investigation and include a parent conference, professional counseling, detention, suspension, or expulsion. Depending on the severity of the incident, or the series of incidents, the administrator may also take appropriate steps to ensure student safety. This may involve reporting incidents to law enforcement if appropriate.

Harassment incidents that demand suspension shall be reported to the superintendent and may lead to expulsion.

Schools reserve the right to notify local law enforcement when appropriate.

DRESS CODE/UNIFORM

The principal shall establish a uniform dress code that will promote cleanliness, health, safety and the development of Christian values. Every effort should be made for reasonable requirements and costs. Comparable dress codes must be established for both boys and girls.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.303 - Uniform

Revised: September 1, 2019

STUDENT APPEARANCE

Haircuts for Boys

Boys should not have faddish haircuts. This includes the following:

- hair should not touch ears or go below
- hair should not touch eyebrows or go below
- hair should not touch the collar or go below
- no shaved in designs of any kind
- no mohawks or fauxhawks
- no man buns or headwear

Hair for Girls

- no excessive hair pieces
- only uniform headbands; navy blue, black watch plaid, black or white
- scrunchies/hair ties; navy blue, black watch plaid, black or white
- hair should be clean and styled neatly

Accessories

- earrings: Girls may wear one pair of small stud earrings. Boys may not wear earrings.
- jewelry: No more than two bracelets may be worn. Watches may be worn on the wrist. Smart watches are not permitted. All neck chains are to be worn under the student's shirt or blouse. Neck chains are to be religious in nature (cross, saint medal, etc).
- nail polish may be worn for girls. Boys may not wear nail polish-exceptions for boys will be made for special events such as Cut-A-Thon and Color Wars.
- make-up and fake nails are not permitted
- tattoos of any kind are not allowed in school
- rings are not permitted for boys or girls

Pants

- pants for girls and boys must touch the ankle
- capri pants are not permitted
- leggings or “stretchy” pants are not uniform pants and are not permitted

Shoes for Daily Wear

Students are required to wear low-heeled, low-cut, tied or closed dress shoes or casual dress shoes. **Shoes should be constructed of leather and not canvas or any other material.**

Heel height may not exceed 1½". Slip on shoes such as loafers, top-siders (like Sperry), and Merrell shoes are also permitted. Boots, sandals, slippers, sneakers, clogs, ballerina-style slip on shoes, flip-flops, moccasins, work boots, or shoes without backs are not permitted. Sneakers are only permitted on the student's gym day. School shoes must be worn from the beginning of school until the last day of school. If your child grows out of their shoes, a new pair of shoes will need to be purchased.

Cold Weather Wear

The winter uniform, which begins November 1st, includes weather appropriate garments for both upper and lower school. Students must be in uniform even in the colder months.

Grade 8 Privileges

Grade 8 students may not wear their class sweatshirts until November. High school sweatshirts can be worn beginning in January, once a student has declared the high school, he or she will be attending. Boys must wear a tie during winter uniform months underneath their class or high school sweatshirt. Class and high school sweatshirts are required to be removed for weekly Mass attendance, Holy Days of Obligation, First Friday Masses, and other liturgical events deemed appropriate by the principal. Sweatshirts can be worn to school that day, left in the classroom, and put back on when Grade 8 returns to their classroom.

K THROUGH 8 SCHOOL UNIFORM

Fall/Spring uniform: first day of school until October 31st and April 1st to last day of school

Winter uniform: November 1st through March 31st

Uniforms may be purchased at Blake's Uniform in Merchant's Walk in Stratford or from Lands' End.

Neatness is the rule for all students. A boy who chooses to wear his trousers in a pushed down or excessively baggy fashion will be sent to the Principal. Boys and girls must have their button-down shirts or blouses tucked in at all times. Girls may not wear extremely short skirts or shorts. They should be within two inches of the knee in length. Girls may keep only the top button of their blouse unbuttoned.

Failure to wear the school uniform will result in a uniform violation slip being issued. Violation slips must be signed by a parent or guardian and returned to the teacher. Repeated offenses could result in detention.

Fall/Spring Uniform: Boys & Girls

Please note: During the spring season (April 1st- end of school year) students have the option to wear their winter uniforms (long pants, jumpers, plaid skirts, and plaid skorts).

K through 8 Boys Pants or Shorts

- navy blue walking shorts or navy blue pants (elastic waistband pants or shorts suggested for Kindergarten)
- black or brown belt (Grades 1 through 8)
- no shorts with flaps, snaps, or cargo pockets
- excessively loose or baggy pants are NOT permitted

K through 8 Boys Shirts

- white, short sleeve polo shirt with the school logo
- Grade 8 students have the option of wearing pastel blue, pastel yellow or pastel pink polo shirt with the school logo

K through 8 Boys Shoes & Socks

- regular school shoes (see above: shoes for daily wear)
- white, black, or navy blue socks (covering the ankle)
- low white socks are not permitted

K through 8 Girls Pants, Shorts, Skorts

- navy blue walking shorts, navy blue skort, or navy blue pants (elastic waistband pants or shorts suggested for Kindergarten)
- black or brown belt (Grades 1 through 8)
- no shorts with flaps, snaps, or cargo pockets
- excessively short or tight shorts/skort are not permitted for girls
- leggings or “stretchy” pants are not permitted

K through 8 Girls Shirts

- white, short sleeve polo shirt with the school logo
- Grade 8 students have the option of wearing pastel blue, pastel yellow or pastel pink polo shirt with the school logo

K through 8 Girls Shoes & Socks

- regular school shoes (see above: shoes for daily wear)
- white, black, or navy blue socks (covering the ankle)
- low white socks are not permitted

Formal Winter Uniform: Boys & Girls

November 1st through March 31st

K through 8 Boys Pants

- navy blue dress pants (elastic waistband pants or shorts suggested for Kindergarten)
- jean-like pants are not permitted
- black or brown belt (Grades 1 through 8)
- excessively loose or baggy pants are NOT permitted

K through 8 Boys Shirts

- Kindergarten: short or long sleeve, white polo shirt with the school logo
- Grades 1 through 8: short or long sleeve, white dress shirt with collar
- Grade 8 boys have the option of wearing pastel blue, pastel yellow or pastel pink dress shirts with a collar
- Only white t-shirts or undershirts may be worn beneath uniform shirts.

Ties

- Grades 1 through 7: black watch plaid print
- Grade 8 boys have the privilege of wearing any color tie, in good taste

K through 8 Boys Vests & Sweaters

Boys in Grades 1 through 7 must wear a vest or sweater over their tie. This is a part of our school uniform and not an option.

- Grades 1 through 4: knit navy vest with our school's name
- Grades 1 through 7: plain navy blue crew neck sweater with or without our school's name
- Grades 5 through 8: zip up navy fleece vest with our school's name. Ties must be visible under the fleece vest.
- Kindergarten boys have the option of adding a plain navy blue cardigan sweater with or without our school's name to their short sleeve white polo shirt.
- Grade 8 boys have the privilege of wearing their class sweatshirt in lieu of a vest or sweater. Ties must be visible under the sweatshirt.

K through 8 Boys Shoes & Socks

- regular school shoes (see above: shoes for daily wear)
- white, black, or navy-blue socks (covering the ankle)
- low white socks are not permitted

K through 8 Girls Pants

- navy blue dress pants (elastic waistband pants or shorts suggested for Kindergarten)

- jean-like pants are not permitted
- leggings or legging-style pants are not permitted
- black or brown belt (Grades 1 through 8)

K through 8 Girls Jumpers, Skirts, & Skorts

- Grades K through 4: black watch plaid print jumper with round neckline and dropped waist/buttons
- Grades 5 through 8: black watch plaid print or navy-blue skirt or skort

K through 8 Girls Shirts

- Grades K through 4: short or long sleeve white blouse or polo shirt (without logo)
- Grades 5 through 7: short or long sleeve white blouse or polo shirt (without logo)
- Grade 8 girls have the option of wearing pastel blue, pastel yellow or pastel pink dress shirts or polo shirt with the school logo

K through 8 Girls Vests & Sweaters

Girls in Grades 1 through 7 must wear a vest or sweater. This is a part of our school uniform and not an option.

- Grades K through 8: navy blue or white sweater with or without school name
- Grades 5 through 8: zip up navy fleece vest with our school's name
- Kindergarten girls have the option of adding a plain navy blue cardigan sweater with or without our school's name to their short sleeve white polo shirt.
- Grade 8 girls have the privilege of wearing their class sweatshirt in lieu of a vest or sweater.

K through 8 Girls Shoes & Socks

- regular school shoes (see above: shoes for daily wear)
- white, black, or navy blue ankle socks, knee socks, tights, or slim leggings
- low white socks are not permitted
- students may not wear sweatpants or yoga pants under their jumpers, skirts or skorts

Gym Uniform: K through 8 Boys & Girls

- navy blue t-shirt with school logo or Field Day T-Shirt
- navy gym shorts with school logo to be worn during the fall/spring uniform season
- navy sweatpants with school logo to be worn during the winter uniform season
- yoga pants or leggings are not permitted
- navy sweatshirt with school name or logo
- Grade 8 students have the privilege of wearing their class sweatshirts in lieu of a St. Mark sweatshirt.
- sneakers (in good condition)

- white socks

DRESS CODE - OUT OF UNIFORM DAYS

Each month, a day is set aside as "Out of Uniform Day" aka "Dress Down Day". In order to participate, the student must pay \$1 for this privilege. The proceeds from this collection go toward charitable causes including, but not limited to scholarships for the graduating class.

While Dress Down Days are structured to allow the students to be comfortable and show their personalities, as a Catholic school, students still need to adhere to a certain decorum as well as follow safety guidelines. Dress Down days are not intended to have students appear in outlandish outfits but are intended to give them several uniform-free days for a good cause.

On Dress Down Days, students may wear:

- clean jeans without holes or tears
- an appropriate clean shirt or sweater for boys and girls
- clean sneakers
- girls may wear shorts or skirts that are within 2 inches of the knee
- simply dress up
- Ugg style boots with a rubber sole

Students may not wear:

- hats or visors, unless it is a themed Dress Down Day (ex. Crazy Hat Day, Color Wars, Cut-A-Thon, etc.)
- "crop" tops or any top with straps instead of sleeves or that expose the stomach
- make-up
- short shorts
- extra jewelry or chains
- Crocs, slip on sandals, Ugg or Ugg style slippers, flip flops, or opened back shoes
- colored hair
- pajama (pj) or lounge style pants
- Ugg moccasins or moccasin style shoes

The principal may also award free Dress Down Day as incentives or rewards for special school-wide accomplishments. Only the Principal can declare a Dress Down Day as a reward at any time.

EARLY DISMISSAL OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

Parents must notify the main office and the homeroom teacher of a student's need to be dismissed early. Parents or guardians must report to the school office when picking up a student who is to be dismissed early and the student will be called to the office. Parents are required to

make this request in writing. Phone calls are not acceptable. In the event of an emergency, the principal shall give permission for a student to be released.

Under no circumstances may a parent/guardian interrupt class to pick up a student. The school secretary, Principal, or school nurse will bring the student to the office. At that time, the student will be "signed out" in the main office before leaving.

Students will not be dismissed early after 1:45P on a regular school day or 11:00A on early dismissal days.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The use of personal electronic devices is not permitted during the school day. Electronic devices are defined as but not limited to cell phones, smart watches (ie Apple Watch), electronic games, radios, CD players, DVD players, iPods, etc. No device which accesses cell phone networks, including Apple Watches, should be brought to school. Display or use of these devices during the school day is strictly forbidden. Unauthorized devices will be secured in the office for parents to pick up. Repeated violations of this policy may result in the student serving detention. For safety purposes, students are not allowed to use these devices in the school parking lot.

Parents are encouraged to have their children leave these devices at home. They create a distraction in the learning environment. In addition, these devices are expensive and fragile and are at risk of being lost, broken, or stolen. St. Mark School does not assume responsibility for the damage, loss, or theft of electronic devices on school property, at school events, or on school buses.

Students may be issued a school owned Chromebook (grades 2 through 8) or iPad (grades PK through Grade 1) for academic use. Additionally, students may use iPads and other educational technology as part of Innovation class instruction. Parents will assume responsibility for the damage, loss, or theft of any school issued electronic device including, but not limited to Chromebooks and iPads.

Parents and students must sign and return the *Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools Acceptable Use Policy for Technology Use Grades PK-8* found at the end of this handbook before a school owned device will be assigned to the student.

EMERGENCIES

Parents will be contacted by telephone when an illness or injury occurs. No child will be permitted to leave the building without a parent or designated substitute with their parent's permission. The parent/guardian must sign the student out at the main office.

The school office must be notified of any changes in a family's contact information including, but not limited to home address or work telephone numbers. Emergency forms are filled out in September. Please be sure that we have updated information about your child and you.

The school also has emergency plans on file for fire, illness of students and personnel, hazardous chemicals, and danger to students by an intruder.

FIELD TRIPS

Participating in a school field trip or school-sponsored activity is a privilege and not a right. All field trips must have the enrichment of the curriculum as their core purpose and must be carefully planned as an extension of the classroom experience. The cost of field trips and activities should be such that all students have the ability to participate.

There are no “traditional” field trips or activities. Class participation in a particular field trip over consecutive years does not mean that this trip will continue in future years.

All grades do not always have the same number of field trips. At least one field trip and a maximum of three field trips per student are recommended.

When traveling with a school on a Sunday or Holyday of Obligation, students are expected to attend Mass in the Roman Catholic Rite.

Trips to amusement/water park areas must have an educational rationale and must be approved by the Superintendent of Schools. An abundance of caution must be used in any event or trip that may involve swimming. In all cases, a certified lifeguard must be present at all times and there must be separate showering rooms and changing areas for adults and minors. Proper swimming attire must be worn at all times.

Overnight field trips must be approved by the Office of the Superintendent of Schools.

The principal must approve any school-sponsored social activity. These activities must have a clear purpose, be carefully planned, and be well-supervised by staff. For such activities, all the areas of responsibility should be clearly defined.

The principal is responsible for the coordination of all activities of the school, including student activities outside the school building or school day. If delegated, it should be clearly stated to whom the responsibility for the event is delegated.

The principal is responsible for establishing clearly defined procedures to be used by student organizations for management of their funds. All funds must be deposited in the school account.

The principal reserves the authority to exclude students from field trips for school sponsored activities due to discipline issues.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 3.115 Field Trips and School-Sponsored Activities

Revised: September 1, 2019

- Field trips are designed to correlate with teaching units and to achieve curricular goals.
- Field trips are re-evaluated each year to determine the compatibility of the field trip with curricular goals.
- A field trip is a privilege and not a right.
- Field trips are permissible for all grades when advanced planning, location, and the experience insure a successful learning opportunity.
- The Principal, in consultation with the teacher, reserves the right to restrict or deny student participation on any field trip due to, but not limited to, poor academic performance and/or poor conduct.
- A written official permission slip, signed by the parent, is required before a child will be permitted to attend a field trip activity. Verbal permission cannot be accepted. An email does not take the place of an original signature. A telephone call will not be accepted in lieu of the proper field trip permission slip.
- Parents may refuse to permit their child from participating in a field trip by stating so on the proper form. Students who do not attend a field trip will remain at home with the parent and will be marked absent for the day.
- Students who are participating in the field trip must ride the bus to and from the field trip with their class. Students not on the bus may not participate in the field trip and will be counted absent for the day.
- All monies collected for the field trip are non-refundable.
- The students may wear uniforms or other clothes depending on the nature of the trip, as determined by the Principal.
- Cell phones are not allowed on field trips unless otherwise directed by the teacher and/or Principal.
- Parents who are not authorized chaperones may not drive their car to a field trip destination with the plan of accompanying the class on the field trip. Our risk management insurance company insures authorized chaperones only. Participation by unofficial chaperones jeopardizes the protection for our students and all other authorized adults on the trip.
- Parents who chaperone a field trip may not bring other children on the field trip.
- All chaperones must be 25 years of age or older.

Parents are required to complete and sign the Diocesan mandated permission slip that the school provides for each field trip and medical consent form that is provided by the school. Parents and

relatives may act as chaperones. Chaperones are selected by the teacher on a rotating, first come and/or as-needed basis. All chaperones must be in full compliance with the Safe Environment Policies of the Diocese of Bridgeport. At all times there must be two *cleared adults* and the appropriate ratio as described in the Safe Environment guidelines. A *cleared adult* is someone who is in full compliance with the Safe Environment requirements of the Diocese of Bridgeport and the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

FINANCIAL AID

Tuition assistance is based on need. Bishop's Scholarship Fund applications for tuition assistance must be submitted each year using FACTS Grant and Aid Assessment. Applicants can apply online to www.factsmgmt.com. There is a \$30 application fee. If you have specific questions or concerns about the application process, you may speak with a FACTS Customer Care Representative. All questions regarding tuition payments and tuition assistance should be directed to the school's Bookkeeper.

Financial aid is also available through the TAC (Tuition Assistance Committee) at St. Mark School for qualified families. More information can be secured about financial aid through the Principal or bookkeeper.

FOOD ALLERGY POLICIES

St. Mark School has adopted a strict food allergy policy in order to protect the safety of students who have allergies. As much as possible, we wish to minimize or avoid the chances of an allergic reaction that may threaten the wellbeing of a student. While we make every effort to maintain a nut-aware school, St. Mark School cannot ensure that a student will not come in contact with a product he/she may be allergic to. Ultimately, the responsibility lies with each individual student and his/her parents/guardians. As part of our effort to maintain a safe environment for children, we will limit the amount of food based celebrations and activities--especially those that occur in classrooms.

St. Mark School is a Nut-Aware School. Our classrooms and school are kept free of peanuts and tree nuts to the best of our ability. While school is in session, we make every effort to see that our classrooms and school are free of peanuts and tree nuts. We cannot control what groups outside of our school community bring into our environment.

- Foods containing nut products are not allowed in the school building.
- If a teacher is aware that a student has come to school with a peanut or tree nut product, the student will be sent to the nurse and asked not to consume that food product. The nurse will inform the principal and the nurse may contact the parents.

- Signs are posted throughout the school indicating that we try to maintain a peanut and tree nut free environment.
- Candy is not permitted in school. Candy may be distributed in school for special occasions such as Valentine's Day or Halloween class parties. However, candy is expected to be brought home with the student and not eaten during school.
- Celebrations and activities that include food must adhere to the guidelines listed below.

CELEBRATIONS IN SCHOOL

St. Mark School strives to provide all its students with a safe and nurturing educational environment. To facilitate a safer environment, events where food is present will be carefully planned, parental permission will be obtained, and food ingredients will be checked.

Classroom Celebrations

Teachers and room parents plan class celebrations during the school year which include food. The following guidelines are to be adhered to at celebrations where food is to be served to children:

- Two weeks prior to the event, a permission slip will be sent home that describes the event and any food that will be present.
- All food must come from a commercial producer and have a label with ingredients listed.
- School personnel will review ingredient lists.
- If possible, parents of children with food allergies should be included in the planning of events where food will be served.
- Class celebrations that do not involve food must also be planned.

Goodie Bags

Arrangements to send goodie bags containing non-food items must be made in advance with the classroom teacher. Goodie bags are permitted for birthday celebrations only unless they are delegated by the room parent for a specific holiday. Goodie bags for a specific holiday must be approved by the room parent coordinator.

Student Birthdays

Student birthdays will be recognized and celebrated at St. Mark School. Students will receive a Dress Down pass from the principal in honor of their birthday.

If parents wish to send in treats on their child's birthday, treats must be a non-food item such as stickers or pencils. Food items cannot be brought in for the class. Parents may send in a special treat for their own child if it is nut free. Parents are also welcome to read a story to the class on their child's birthday. Please make arrangements to read to the class with your child's teacher.

Events Occurring Outside of School Hours (not related to the After School Program)

Adults that organize school sponsored events (Monster Mash, Breakfast with Santa, dances, etc.) that are planned for after school hours will follow the guidelines for in-school events. However, no permission slips are required. Parents must supervise their children at these events.

Home-baked goods will be allowed at after school events. We ask bakers to refrain from using nut products in their treats. A sign noting that baked goods are present at the event should be displayed.

All clubs and after-school classes will send home permission slips if food is to be included in the activity of the group.

After School Program (ASP)

Every effort will be made to prevent the presence of allergens. Parents of children with food allergies must provide a snack that is safe for their child. On early dismissal days, all students in the After School Program (ASP) must bring in their own lunch--consistent with our lunch and food allergy policy.

Food Deliveries

Food deliveries (Door Dash, McDonalds, Burger King, fast food, etc.) are not permitted. Parents will be informed if hot lunch is not available via Sodexo Food Services in advance and are required to send lunch from home to school with their child.

Food Fundraisers

❖ Food Fundraisers During the School Day

- The sale of food items during the school day will be strictly limited.
- All food sales which occur during the school day must be approved by the Principal.
- An ingredient list must be available for review before the sale occurs.
- Parental permission for students to participate in the activity as sellers or buyers must be obtained and the permission slip will be specific to the item being sold.

❖ Food Fundraisers After School Hours

- The sale of food items by students and the Home School Association will be allowed and must follow these guidelines:
 - Parents must be present to supervise students.
 - If the preparation of food items is to occur at school, a permission slip describing the activity must be obtained.
 - The sale of food items from fundraising catalogs is allowed. However, the food items may not be opened at school.

Food on Field Trips

Field trips that involve students eating meals need to be planned to accommodate children with food allergies. All field trips will have a permission slip which accounts for how meals will occur.

- Teachers will try to provide opportunities for all children to participate in a field trip.
- There will be no academic penalty for children whose parents opt them out of a trip.
- For trips involving a visit to a restaurant, the name and address of the restaurant will be on the permission slip. Parents have the responsibility of contacting the restaurant to see if the menu choices are suitable.
- If students are asked to bring their lunches from home, parents are asked to follow the same guidelines for sending lunches to school.
- Parents of children with special medical needs (including food allergies) will be invited to chaperone all field trips.

Individual Care Plans

The school nurse, parents, and Principal will ensure that every child with a serious medical condition has a care plan for how the child's needs will be addressed at school. It is the parents' responsibility to make sure that school officials are aware of their child's medical conditions. The care plan will be developed in consultation with parents and the child's physician. The plan will also include directions for emergencies. All appropriate staff will be apprised of a child's needs and care plan.

HOME SCHOOL ASSOCIATION (HSA)

Each school shall have a parent organization (Home School Association or similar organization), which operates by by-laws approved by the Office of the Superintendent of Schools (OSS).

All disbursements from income raised by parent organizations are to be determined by the school administrator in collaboration with the parent organization and may be used to offset budgeted expenses in the school's budget.

All income fund-raised for a specific purpose must be disbursed for that purpose unless alternative disbursement options were set forth at the time the income was raised.

***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 1.113 - Parent Organization
Revised: September 1, 2021***

The Home School Association (HSA) is a group of dedicated parents who chair the various committees of fundraising, community events, fellowship, staff appreciation, school culture, etc. Fund raising, parent education, and building community are the goals of this organization. The

HSA President meets regularly with the Principal to establish goals, report their progress, and plan school events and fundraisers. The HSA focuses on the current school year when planning events and programs. The HSA is responsible for meeting the fundraising goal set in the school's budget.

INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTABLE USAGE POLICY

Technology is an essential educational tool whose use must be grounded in the values and mission of Catholic education. All users, faculty, staff, administrators, and students are expected to exhibit high standards of behavior at all times when using the Internet, email, and other technology. Technology use should recognize and support the unique Catholic mission of the school by speaking, acting and instructing, consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The use of the school's network and the Internet is a privilege, not a right. The use of computer systems and the Internet at school must be in support of the educational mission and objectives of the Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools. Inappropriate use may result in cancellation of those privileges. Based upon the Acceptable Use Policy guidelines in this document, as well as all applicable policies, handbooks, guidelines and rules as determined by the school, the school administrator(s) will deem what is inappropriate use and his/her decision is final. In addition, the school administrator(s) has/have the right to close an account at any time. The administration, faculty, and staff may request the school administrator(s) deny, revoke or limit specific user access. Additionally, the cost of any repairs caused by inappropriate behavior will be the responsibility of the student and his/her family.

Transmission of any material in violation of any United States or state regulation is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, copyrighted material, threatening or obscene material, or material protected by trade secrets. Use for commercial activities is not acceptable. Use for product advertisement or political lobbying is also prohibited unless approved by the administration.

Non-academic activities on devices during school hours are prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, downloading music, games, video clips and personal material. Students may not be on websites that are unrelated to school work during school hours. A violation of this rule may result in disciplinary measures determined by school administration based on the offense.

Prior to being given access to the school's devices and Internet, all students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) must return the signed technology and Internet Acceptable Use Policy. These agreements will be completed every year.

Students in grades PK-8 will use school accounts only to access Google Apps and other software applications used by the school.

System users at school have no right to privacy and should have no expectation of privacy in materials sent, received, or stored in school-owned devices or systems. All communications (including email) and information accessible via the network is school property. Messages relating to or in support of illegal activities may be reported to authorities. The technology coordinator or system administrator supervises the use of the network by students and school personnel. He/she has access to all files and email and may authorize access as necessary. Security on our computer system is a high priority. Anyone with reason to suspect a security problem on the school network must notify an appropriate school authority.

At school, the faculty and staff blend thoughtful use of computers and Internet throughout the curriculum and provide guidance and instruction to students in their use. The school provides controls and filtering protection on the school's network. However, no tool is foolproof and users may accidentally or incidentally encounter inappropriate material. If this does happen, the user must end the connection immediately and report the incident to a teacher or school administrator.

Outside of school, families bear responsibility for the education and monitoring of their students in Internet and computer usage. Neither the child's school nor the Diocese of Bridgeport is responsible for inappropriate materials that may appear on the Internet.

Each student will receive a full copy of the Diocesan Acceptable Use Policy and the Bring Your Own Device Policy (where applicable) from their school. This must be reviewed and signed by both student and parent before students use school devices and/or network.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 3.301 - Technology and Internet Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)
Revised: September 1, 2019

St. Mark School offers each student the privilege of using school owned devices (iPads in PK-Grade 1 and Chromebooks in Grades 3-8) and our school computer network to access the Internet. To be granted the privilege of using a school issued device, students and parents must read and agree to the Diocesan Acceptable Use Policy permission as verified by the signatures on the form at the end of this handbook. Students are not permitted to “bring their own devices BYOD” to school. This includes personally owned chromebooks, laptops, iPads, tablets, and smart watches (Apple Watches, etc).

Access to the Internet will enable students to explore personalized learning platforms, databases, museums, and other repositories of information and to exchange personal communication with other Internet users around the world. Families should be aware that some material accessible via the Internet might contain items that are illegal, defamatory, inaccurate or potentially offensive. While we expect students to use Internet resources for constructive educational goals, students

may find ways to access other materials. We believe that the benefits to students from access to the Internet in the form of information resources and opportunities for collaboration exceed the disadvantages. But ultimately, parents and guardians of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using media and information sources. Students are not to use school computers for social media.

Students are responsible for appropriate behavior on the school's computer network just as they are in a classroom or on a school playground. Communications on the network are often public in nature. General school rules for behavior and communications apply. It is expected that users will comply with district standards and the specific rules set forth below. The use of the network is a privilege, not a right, and may be revoked if abused. The user is personally responsible for his/her actions in accessing and utilizing the school's technology resources. The students are advised never to access, keep or send anything that they would not want their parents or teachers to see.

Privacy

All material, including electronic mail, which is electronically stored on a school's computer, is the property of the respective school.

The principal/president and the superintendent or his/her designee retains the right to access, review, edit, and delete all user files and any material stored on any system.

Catholic school administrators have the right to monitor student use of school computers and computer accessed content.

***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 3.302 - Rights of Access and Review
Revised: October 14, 2015***

Network storage areas may be treated like school lockers. Network administrators (Principal and faculty members) may review communications to maintain system integrity and will ensure that students are using the system responsibly.

Illegal Copying

Students should never download or install any commercial software, shareware, or freeware onto network drives, unless they have written permission from the Network Administrator. Nor should students copy other people's work or intrude into other people's files.

Inappropriate Materials or Language

No profane, abusive or impolite language should be used to communicate nor should materials that are not in line with the rules of school behavior be accessed. A good rule to follow is never

view, send, or access materials that you would not want your teachers and parents to see. Should students encounter such material by accident, they should report it to their teacher immediately.

IMPORTANT COMPUTER GUIDELINES

These are guidelines to follow to prevent the loss of network privileges at school:

- Do not use a computer to harm other people or their work.
- Do not damage the computer or the network in any way.
- Do inform the Principal and/or your classroom teacher immediately if any damage should occur to your school issued computer.
- Do not interfere with the operation of the network by installing illegal software, shareware, or freeware.
- Do not violate copyright laws.
- Does not view, send, or display offensive messages or pictures.
- Do not share your password with another person.
- Do not trespass in another's folders, work or files.
- Do notify an adult immediately, if by accident, you encounter materials that violate the rules of appropriate use.
- Be prepared to be held accountable for your actions and for the loss of privileges if the Technology and Internet Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) are violated.
- Do not take pictures of other people without their consent and only do so if it is part of a supervised school activity or project.

Use of computers or other electronic devices to harm students in or out of school is cause for disciplinary action and referral to appropriate authorities.

LOCKERS

Lockers are numbered and will be assigned to each student in Grades 5 through 8. This will be their locker for the year. Students will be responsible for their locker, its contents and what happens to it (ex. cleaning up a spill). Teachers will be responsible for any empty/extra lockers.

Adhering stickers or drawings on lockers is prohibited. Students may hang magnetic and removable items on the **INSIDE** only.

Students may use a lock for their locker but it is not necessary-- locks to be provided from home. Only combination locks will be permitted and teachers must be given the combination.

Lost or forgotten combinations will result in a lock being cut off of the locker.

Lockers are for backpacks, coats, lunchboxes and extra books that do not fit in a student's desk. Lockers should be closed throughout the day with nothing hanging out of them.

St. Mark School retains the right to inspect any locker and its contents to ensure that the locker is being used in accordance with its intended purpose and/or to eliminate hazards and maintain sanitary conditions.

Students in Grades 5 through 8 with cell phones are not permitted to store their cell phone in their locker. Cell phones are to be handed in daily to the teacher.

LOST AND LEFT

Any items left in the school building or on the school grounds should be given to the Main Office to be placed in the Lost and Left basket.

LITURGY

All students, regardless of religious affiliation, are instructed in the teachings of the Catholic Church. The religion program shall present the central doctrines of the Catholic faith in keeping with the norms set by the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the National Directory for Catechesis.

The religious education in the schools of the diocese must conform to the Religion Curriculum Standards provided by the Office of the Superintendent of Schools. Catholic social teaching shall be integrated into the curriculum. Teachers shall emphasize Catholic morality as an integral part of the religion curriculum in each school.

Every faculty member, regardless of the teacher's subject area, is considered a minister of the faith, and is responsible for fostering the religious and moral growth of students.

All students, Catholic or non-Catholic, are required to attend Mass and other religious services with classmates. However, they shall not be required to participate in such services.

Academic marks for religion shall be based on the student's knowledge of course content and not on any kind of assessment of the student's practice of faith or personal behavior.

No awards or prizes shall be given under any circumstances for observance of religious practices.

***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.304 - Student Expectations Regarding the Faith
Revised: September 1, 2019***

As part of our religion curriculum, Grade 1 through 8 are required to attend 8:00 AM weekday Mass on an assigned day. Kindergarten begins attending weekly Mass beginning on November

1st. Children should not be late on their Mass day. Parents and grandparents are invited and encouraged to attend Mass with the children during the week.

Mass is celebrated for the entire student body on the First Friday of each month and on Holy Days of Obligation. Beginning with Grade 8, each month students in particular grades are lectors at the liturgy, carry the gifts to the altar, and read the Petitions. Parents and grandparents are invited and always encouraged to attend. Students in Grades 4 through 8 are encouraged to become altar servers and assist with Masses throughout the year.

When traveling on an overnight school trip, students in Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport are expected to attend Mass in the Roman Catholic Rite on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation (*Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 3.115 Field Trips and School-Sponsored Activities*). It is the responsibility of the school administrator, moderators and coaches to provide this opportunity and to attend Mass with all the students from the school who are participating in the trip/event. No student should be expected to pay an additional cost to attend Mass. While this primarily applies to overnight trips, schools are to make every effort to see that students traveling only on a Sunday know that it is their obligation to attend a vigil Mass on the prior evening.

In addition, athletic programs within Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Bridgeport must be designed so that no games or practices occur before 12:00 PM on Sundays. School administrators, athletic directors, and coaches are expected to emphasize the importance of our student athletes attending Mass on Sundays. If a practice or game is scheduled for a Holyday of Obligation, it is essential that provision be made for the athletes to attend Mass. Under no circumstances may practices or athletic games be held on Good Friday.

LUNCH AND SNACK

Students in Grades PK through 8 eat a snack daily in their classroom and eat lunch in the school cafeteria/church hall or their classroom. Parents are encouraged to pack nutritious snacks, lunches and drinks in reusable plastic containers (glass containers or glass water bottles are not permitted) in order to help promote an earth-conscious attitude in children. Students may bring water bottles to school. Water bottles must contain water only. Please follow your child's classroom expectations regarding snack, lunch, and water bottles.

Students in Grades PK through 8 have the option to pack lunch from home or order hot lunch. The hot lunch program is offered Monday through Friday. Lunch order forms are sent home a month in advance. Families must order and pay in advance. Please note the monthly due dates. Late lunch orders will not be accepted. As payment for hot lunch orders is made to Sodexo Food Services, refunds cannot not be issued for missed days of school.

OFFICE RECORDS

Parents/Guardians are requested to notify the main office in writing of any change of address, custody, home telephone numbers, cell phone numbers, business phone numbers, email addresses and/or phone numbers of emergency contacts. This will guarantee that office records are accurate, complete, and up-to-date.

PARENT ORIENTATION

New families are assigned a “buddy family” by the Admissions Team when they register at St. Mark School. It is our hope that the "buddy" family will spend some time helping the new family adjust to their new school community and reviewing the school handbook. Meetings are held for new families prior to or shortly after the beginning of a new school year. "Meet the Teacher Night" is scheduled shortly after classes begin in September. Each teacher acquaints the parents of his/her students with class requirements and procedures.

PARKING LOT: ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Please use extreme caution in our parking lot. There are large numbers of cars, school buses and vans that transport our students. Additionally, the parking lot is shared with St. Mark Parishioners who are arriving to attend 8A daily Mass.

A 5 MPH speed limit should be respected in the school parking lots at all times.

Arrival Entrances to the Parking Lot

Please DO NOT ENTER using the Nemergut Drive as an entrance. The Nemergut Drive entrance is designated as EXIT ONLY during arrival and dismissal times.

Families of students in Grades 3 through 8 are encouraged to utilize the “Drop Off Car Line” for arrival. In other words, your child will remain in the car until you drop off in the car line, and the driver never exits the vehicle. To utilize the Drop Off Car Line, please use the Wigwam Lane entrance BY THE BLESSED MOTHER STATUE. The Car Drop Off Line will then be able to "hug" the area around the buildings and not extend into the other driveway and block traffic.

Families of students in Grades PK through 2 are encouraged to park their car, exit their vehicle, and escort their child to the Parish Center doors. If you are parking your car and exiting your vehicle, please use the Wigwam Lane entrance DIRECTLY ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE FARM.

Procedure for Utilizing the Drop Off Car Line (Grades 3 through 8)

- Enter the property using the Wigwam Lane entrance by the Blessed Mother Statue. When driving in, "hug" the area around the church and school.
- Please stay in line and do not pass other drivers.

- Please ask your child to have backpacks, water bottles, etc. ready when you are dropping him/her off.
- Say good-bye in the car before you pull up to let your children out. Please do not get out of the car, walk around the car, and help your children out of the car. This defeats the purpose of the car line. Many drivers are waiting behind you. Parent volunteers on hand will be glad to help the children out of the car.
- Please be aware of the parent volunteer crossing guards. He or she will stop traffic so that groups of children can cross safely into the Parish Center entrance.
- When directed by the crossing guard, please pull up as far as possible to the stop sign at the Parish Center doors. Do not block the crossing path or stop directly in front of the Parish Center doors. When the crossing guard stops the car line to cross the children, three to five cars may unload. This will keep traffic moving smoothly.
- Once the crossing guard has crossed the students safely cars will be signaled to pull ahead and exit the parking lot onto Nemergut Drive.
- When exiting, please use the exit at Nemergut (exit closest to the playground). Please be aware of parishioners coming to daily Mass who may use Nemergut as an entrance.

Procedure for Parking and Exiting Your Vehicle

- Please enter the property at Wigwam Lane directly across the street from the farm.
- Please be aware of parishioners who may be driving across the lot to park for daily Mass.
- Park in the SECOND/ROW GROUPING of cars in the parking lot. You will be able to back up or drive out easily and will not interfere with the crossing guard or oncoming traffic from the drop off line.
- Walk your child to the designated crosswalk to wait to cross with the crossing guard. The crosswalk will be directly across from the Parish Center door entrance. Orange safety cones will mark off the area. The parent volunteer crossing guard will be in the crosswalk wearing a yellow reflective safety vest.
- When there is a sufficient group of children, the crossing guard will stop the traffic and cross the children safely. Parents may say goodbye in the crosswalk or cross with your child and say goodbye at the Parish Center door entrance. For the safety and protection of all students, parents will not be allowed into the school building to escort their child to the classroom.
- Please observe this procedure and cross with the group when the crossing guard signals it is safe to cross. The same will hold true for walking back across the oncoming car lane. Parents must cross both ways with the guard or this will defeat the purpose of a smooth, steady, safe procedure for walkers and drivers.

RECESS AND SCHOOL YARD REGULATIONS

Students have at least fifteen to twenty minutes of recess each day. This does not include snack time. Weather permitting; students spend this time outdoors playing games. Students should

remain in their assigned areas. Aggressive physical contact or rough play is prohibited at all times. The teacher and/or Principal have the right to terminate games if he/she determines they are not appropriate for recess at school. When there is inclement weather, the children remain in their classrooms for recess or use the gym on a rotating schedule.

SCHOOL NURSE, STUDENT HEALTH AND RECORDS, AND MEDICATION

HEALTH

All students attending schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport shall comply with Connecticut state law (School Health and Sanitation, Chapter 169, Sec. 10-2014a) regarding immunization requirements for students.

All students must have the required immunizations prior to the beginning of school.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.400 - Health
Revised: October 14, 2015

In accordance with Connecticut state law, no student can be admitted into school without the following:

- Grades K and 6 require a physical examination by a doctor. This form must be submitted by the first day of school.
- All immunizations must be up-to-date and verified.

SCHOOL NURSE

The school nurse shall be responsible for the health records of the students and will provide medical treatment as approved by the local public school district.

In the absence of a school nurse, the principal can administer and log medication.

At no time may a school nurse promote or entertain any medical treatment that would be contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.401 - School Nurse
Revised: October 14, 2015

A nurse is provided to St. Mark School by the town of Stratford. The nurse keeps a current medical file and attendance record on each student. The nurse will assess a student who is ill or injured. The nurse will also provide care to students who are ill or are injured while in school. It is expected that parents keep the nurse and/or the principal advised of any medical conditions that may affect their child during the school day.

HEALTH RECORDS

A current health record for each student shall be requested annually and is to be kept active and up to date.

Health records shall be kept in files separate from student records.

The school shall follow policies of related health immunizations and screenings as directed by local and state statutes as long as they do not violate Catholic moral teachings.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.402 - Health Records

Revised: October 14, 2015

EMERGENCY INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Schools must request emergency information for each student enrolled in the school. This must include pertinent information in case of accident or illness.

Emergency information records must be retained until superseded or the student leaves the school. At such time, emergency information records must be destroyed.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.403 - Emergency Information for Students

Revised: October 14, 2015

It is very important to fill out and return the Emergency Card and return it to school immediately. Please keep the information current.

MEDICATION

Administration of medication by school personnel should be in compliance with the city/town in which the school resides.

The school nurse shall administer medication which is necessary for a student to remain in school during school hours. In the absence of a school nurse, the principal or teacher (but not teacher's aide) can administer and log medication. Students are not allowed to carry any medication, prescription or non-prescription, on their person unless authorized in writing by a physician.

Students requiring prescription and/or over-the-counter medications in school must present a physician's authorization and written parent(s)/guardian(s) permission. Proper medical authorization forms must be used.

All medications must be provided by the parent(s)/guardian(s) and must be in their original pharmaceutical container labeled with the student's name. Each student's medication must be in its original container clearly labeled with the following information:

- 1. Student name*
- 2. Physician/dentist name*

3. *Date*
4. *Name of medication*
5. *Dosage*
6. *Directions for administration*
7. *Frequency and duration of administration*

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.404 - Medication
Revised: October 14, 2015

If a student must receive medication prescribed by a physician during the school day, the parent must submit the medication authorization slip to the physician for his written order and signature. Parents/guardians of students requiring medication during the school day should contact the school nurse. If medication is necessary during school hours, a written authorization by the physician and parent/guardian is required. Send one month of medication at a time. Medication for allergies and asthma inhalers which are to be used daily or as needed may be sent to the nurse's office at the beginning of the school year and will be returned to the parent at the end of the school year. Each year medication authorization forms must be filled out and signed by the attending physician.

Connecticut state law requires a physician's written order and parent/guardian authorization for a nurse (or the principal in the nurse's absence) to administer medication. Without the required authorization, the parent or guardian must come to school and administer the medication. The authorization form can be obtained from the school office or on our school website.

All medications must be brought to the nurse or Principal by a parent/guardian only with the proper authorization and directions for administering (***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.404 - Medication***).

Medication brought to school by a student or in their backpack will be returned to the parent/guardian. All medications must be brought to the nurse or Principal by a parent/guardian only.

No student is allowed medication without adult supervision and proper authorization. This policy applies to all medications, i.e. antibiotics, ointments, cough medicine, cough drops, one-day doses, etc.

No exceptions allowed.

In-School Screening

According to Connecticut state law, Section 10-214, each school must administer screening for vision in grades K- 1, and 3- 5 and hearing in grades K-1 and 3-5. Vision and hearing screenings start in early September and continue until all grades are completed. Written notices must be sent home if a child shows a vision or hearing problem with an added provision regarding a recommendation for the student to follow up with a licensed practitioner. This is a screening not an examination. Postural screenings for each female in Grade 5 & Grade 7 and each male in Grade 8.

Emergency Medical Treatment

In the event of an emergency, all necessary medical treatments will be given immediately. If needed, a student will be transferred to the nearest hospital via ambulance. If certain medications (such as epinephrine) are given for any allergy, it is required that a student be transported to the emergency room via ambulance.

Illness

No child is permitted to remain in school if he or she is sick, i.e., elevated temperature or vomiting. Please do not send your child to school if he or she is sick in the morning, especially during times of high absenteeism i.e.: flu season.

If a child has a temperature of 100.4 degrees F or above, he or she must not attend school. Students must be without a fever for 24 hours and without any medication before returning to school. If a child vomits or has diarrhea, he or she must stay at home until free of these symptoms for 24 hours. This is very important, as viruses can be easily spread even if the child appears to be feeling better.

Students who are diagnosed with strep throat must remain home for 24 hours after beginning a course of antibiotics. Students who have been diagnosed with conjunctivitis may only return to school after taking medication for 2 days.

If a child becomes ill during the school day, he or she will be sent to the health office and the nurse will contact the parents. Students who are too ill to participate in classroom activities should be picked up from the nurse's office within an hour of parental notification. Parents are asked to make plans in advance for unexpected health emergencies.

SEARCH AND SEIZURE

The principal is responsible for safeguarding the well-being of the students in his/her care.

Lockers, desks, and storage areas provided for student use are considered school property and thereby subject to inspection, access for maintenance, and search by school officials for any reason, at any time, without notice, without obtaining student or parental consent and without

obtaining a search warrant. The privacy rights of the student regarding any items that are not illegal or against school policy shall be respected in the course of conducting a search. As a preventative measure, local enforcement authorities, including the use of drug detecting dogs, shall be permitted to search desks, lockers, and/or storage areas on a random basis.

A student's personal property on school property or at school-related events may also be searched as long as the search is reasonable. Personal property and/or belongings may include, but are not limited to, handbags, briefcases, purses, backpacks, clothing, phones, electronics, vehicles, and other items in a student's possession.

If a student fails to submit to a search, this will constitute as presumptive evidence of substances against school policy and may be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.315 - Medication
Revised: October 14, 2015***

St. Mark School reserves the right to search items that a student brings onto school property. This includes backpacks, cell phones, and other electronic devices.

SAFE ENVIRONMENTS/VIRTUS

Safe Environment programs are well-established in all three Roman Catholic Dioceses in Connecticut. The Safe Environment program in the Diocese of Bridgeport has a full-time director, Ms. Erin Neil, L.C.S.W.

Safe Environment programs oversee the implementation of Charter mandates including victim assistance, criminal background checks, written Codes of Conduct, and child sexual abuse awareness and prevention training for priests, deacons, lay employees, volunteers, children, and youth.

More information can be found at: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/safe-environments/home/

Protecting God's Children

Maximizing a church's role as a child-safe environment begins with making adults more aware of the ways children and adults interact with each other. The Protecting God's Children program educates and trains adults (clergy, religious, teachers, staff, volunteers, and parents) about the dangers of abuse, the warning signs of abuse, the ways to prevent abuse, the methods of properly reporting suspicions of abuse, and responding to allegations of abuse.

VIRTUS

The National Catholic Risk Retention Group, Inc. (National Catholic) created the VIRTUS program, identifying best practices programs designed to help prevent wrongdoing and promote

"rightdoing" within religious organizations. The VIRTUS programs empower organizations and people to better control risk and improve the lives of all those who interact with the Church.

All VIRTUS training programs, including the Protecting God's Children programs, are comprehensive and multi-dimensional—incorporating proven best practice standards for the prevention of child sexual abuse by clergy, staff, volunteers, and others who interact with children within the church environment.

The USCCB and Diocese of Bridgeport requires each volunteer who works on the school grounds to receive training from VIRTUS. More information can be found at www.virtus.org.

Only *cleared adults*, including but not limited to parents, grandparents, family members, are permitted to volunteer in St. Mark School. A *cleared adult* is someone who is in full compliance with the Safe Environment requirements of the Diocese of Bridgeport and the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

STUDENT RECORDS

Student records are confidential and thereby only available to parents or staff members with legitimate educational interest in the student. A student record contains the educational history of the student and shall not contain clinical reports or comments about the personal life of the student.

The permanent record shall be the official record for each student. These records are maintained in the student information system (SIS). At the end of each school year, the school should print and retain the final report card in a locked, fire-proof cabinet in a secure location in the principal's office or in the main office safe from potential vandalism or other damage.

In accordance with Federal law administered by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), custodial and non-custodial parents shall have rights with respect to their child's education records unless the school is provided with evidence that there is a court order or State law that specifically provides to the contrary. These records shall be available to others only with written authorization of the parent, or where appropriate demands are made for such records by courts or other agencies through the issuance of a subpoena.

Types of student records include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1. Electronic record generated from student information system;*
- 2. Permanent record folder which includes application, achievement/aptitude screening test scores, attendance record;*
- 3. Student file;*

4. *Health records;*
5. *Special Records which can include records provided by the public school district such as speech and language reports, psychological evaluation, PPT reports, occupational therapy, and physical therapy reports (these records belong to the public school and are either returned to the parent or destroyed when the student leaves the school); and/or*
6. *All additional records maintained in accordance with the mandate of the city/town.*

When a student transfers to another school, a written release of records is required. Original records will be mailed directly to a Diocese of Bridgeport school and copies of records will be mailed directly to the non-Diocese of Bridgeport schools.

All financial obligations must be met prior to the release of records.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.212 - Student Records
Revised: September 1, 2019

STUDENT SERVICE REQUIREMENT

In an effort to enhance our school religion program and to teach Christian responsibility, the students in Kindergarten through Grade 8 are required to perform service for their school, parish and town communities. The service must be documented. The form must be completed and signed by both student and parent.

Service statements should be sent to the child's teacher as they are completed in order to have the student's service logged in a timely manner. Students may work in groups to assist their school, parish and town communities.

While students in Grades 4 through 8 are encouraged to live their faith through Altar Service to the Church, it is not an approved act of service for the student service requirement.

Students may not receive payment for their work unless the payment is then donated to a worthy cause.

Service hours should be above and beyond what is done in school. The service must be completed by the end of the school year as it is calculated into a student's final grade for Religion.

The service hours required during one school year are as follows:

- Kindergarten through Grade 2: 1 hour of service
- Grades 3 and 4: 1 ½ hours of service
- Grades 5 and 6: 2 hours of service
- Grade 7: 3 hours of service

- Grade 8: 5 hours of service

TESTING/ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS/SEMESTER EXAMS

Elementary School Testing

Rationale and Purpose:

- *Provide a diagnostic – Assess student strengths, weaknesses, knowledge and skills*
- *Monitor growth/benchmark – Measure academic progress to demonstrate gains within and across school years*
- *Allow for comparison – Normative assessments compare student performance to local, regional and national norms*
- *Inform teaching – provide teachers with immediate feedback to address specific student needs and to improve overall instructional practices*
- *Provide a summative evaluation – Criterion referenced tests measure a student's performance against a predetermined set of skills or knowledge base*

Assessment Protocols:

Iowa Test of Basic Skills in Grades 2, 4, 6, & 7 (Measures Achievement)

- *Nationally normed standardized tests provide comparison locally, regionally, and nationally*
- *Provide a diagnostic look at how students are progressing in key academic areas*
- *Allow teachers and parents to trace student growth over time*
- *Produce information that informs instructional decision making and provides data for personalized learning programs*
- *Provide data for professional development planning on the diocesan level*

Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) in Grades 1, 3, & 5 (Measures Ability)

- *Measures students' verbal, quantitative, and non-verbal reasoning abilities and assists educators in determining instructional strategies*
- *Results will be used to aid in differentiation of instruction for students based on individual profiles showing areas of special talent and areas which are more challenging for the student*

Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) in grades K through 3

- *Standardized reading test used to determine a student's instructional level in reading*
- *Administered individually to students by teachers and/or reading specialists*
- *Provides student reading level so teachers can plan for small group, guided reading instruction, including targeted interventions and supplemental support*
- *Teachers select materials that match students' instructional levels and provide appropriate instruction to challenge them*

NCEA Assessment of Children/Youth Religious Education (ACRE) in Grades 5 & 8

- *Nationally normed test to evaluate the faith knowledge, practices, perceptions and attitudes of students*
- *Demonstrates efficacy of school & diocesan faith formation*
- *Informs instructional practice and professional development planning*

Interim Assessments in all grades at a minimum of twice a year

- *Schools will utilize Edmentum Exact Path as the learning assessment tool*
- *Formative Assessments in Literacy and Numeracy for personalized instructional planning to maximize individual student growth*
- *Adaptive Assessments give accurate insight into a student's mastery level, help teachers set individual student goals and provide a path for improvement*
- *Provide growth data for each student, as well as, by class and school*

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.207 - Assessment Programs

Revised: September 1, 2019

Semester Exams (Midterms and Finals)

Semester examinations will be administered to students in grades 6-12.

The purpose of these examinations is four-fold:

- 1. To improve study skills;*
- 2. To cultivate organizational skills;*
- 3. To develop the skill of retaining information; and*
- 4. To prepare students for continuing education in high school and college.*

In the case of delinquent tuition, students shall not be excluded from semester examinations provided that mutually agreeable signed arrangements have been made with the business manager to bring account current.

High school administrators may choose to set school policies for exempting students from taking final examinations if they exemplify superior grades. Specific policies must be outlined in the parent/student handbook.

Elementary Schools

The following guidelines apply to semester examinations:

- 1. Time allotment for each exam will not exceed seventy-five (75) minutes.*
- 2. The first semester exam will include all materials and work covered in the first and second marking periods.*
- 3. The second semester exam will include all materials and work covered in the third and fourth marking periods.*

4. *First semester exams are to be given one week before the second marking period ends.*
5. *Second semester exams are to be given within two weeks prior to the closing of the fourth marking period.*
6. *First semester exam grades are averaged in with the first and second marking period grades to determine the midyear (first semester grade. The exam grade alone will NOT affect the honor roll status of a student.*
7. *Second semester exam grades are averaged in with the third and fourth marking period grades to determine the second semester grade. The exam grade alone will NOT affect the honor roll status of a student.*
8. *Exams must be given in all of the major subjects: Religion, Mathematics, English, Social Studies, Science, Reading/Literature. Exams in all other subjects are optional and at the discretion of the principal.*
9. *The format of the examinations will be left to the discretion of the teacher and submitted for review by the principal. The teacher must assure that the exam is comprehensive in nature, of a format appropriate to the academic subject, and is of sufficient length and scope to cover the semester's work.*
10. *Exam grades are to be reported separately on the report card.*
11. *The semester exams will be weighed according to the following weight schedule:*
 - Grade 6 - Exams count as 4% of the semester average.*
 - Grade 7 - Exams count as 6% of the semester average.*
 - Grade 8 - Exams count as 10% of the semester average.*

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.205 - Semester Examinations
Revised: October 14, 2015

TRANSFER OF STUDENTS

Notice of withdrawal of a student should be made by the parent in writing to the Principal in advance of the withdrawal date. This enables the school to prepare necessary information and settle accounts. No student records will be forwarded to another school until all Business Office accounts have been settled. Please see the sections **STUDENT RECORDS and TUITION AND FINANCIAL OBLIGATION** for detailed information.

TUITION AND FINANCIAL OBLIGATION

A goal of the Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools is to provide a Catholic school education to every student that desires one. Tuition payments are an investment in a student's education and religious formation. Tuition payments are also a financial reality necessary to keep the school in business. The school relies upon the tuition and fees for a substantial portion of the budget to operate an excellent spiritual and educational program. Therefore, when tuition and fees payments become delinquent it is a serious matter.

Tuition is billed, collected and deposited by FACTS Tuition Management Company. Tuition may be paid by credit card or automatic withdrawal using one of the four options listed below:

- Monthly (July through April)
- Quarterly (July, October, January, April)
- Semi-annually (July, January)
- Full (July)

In very rare cases where tuition payments are made as cash at the school level, the Bookkeeper will:

- Record the cash payment in tuition management system, print a receipt for the parent and one copy for the school;
- The Bookkeeper will secure the funds in a locked area until it is deposited;
- The Bookkeeper will deposit the funds in the bank the same day it is received;
- The Bookkeeper will retain the original deposit receipts and back-up documentation for the schools files.

Delinquent Tuition/Fees

When payments are not made in the manner described by a parent/guardian's tuition agreement form, the following steps will take place:

30 Days Past Due

When an account becomes 30 days past due under the arrangements established by the Tuition and Fees Agreement Form or an accepted alternate plan for payment, the family shall receive email, phone call and/or written notification from FACTS that their account is past due.

It is the responsibility of the family to contact the respective School Bookkeeper and/or Principal within 15 days of receipt of the past due notice to correct the situation or make an acceptable alternate plan for payment.

If the parent does not contact the Bookkeeper or Principal, the Bookkeeper or Principal will contact the family to set-up a payment plan by sending a letter via certified mail, email or postal mail.

If families are unresponsive, the Principal will arrange for a meeting to discuss the delinquency. The Bookkeeper will prepare a mutually agreed upon payment plan with the family and agreed upon by the Principal.

Late Fees will be assessed based on the school's Tuition and Fees Agreement Form for fees incurred due to NSF.

60 Days Past Due

When an account becomes 60 days past due under the arrangements established by the Tuition and Fees Agreement Form or an accepted alternate plan for payment, the family shall receive written notification from the Principal that their account is past due and their child(ren) may not return to school until an acceptable tuition payment is made.

Report cards and transcripts will be withheld until payment in full is received.

Students will not be permitted to register or to return for the following academic year until the balance is paid in full or an acceptable alternate plan for payment is in place.

Late Fees will be assessed based on the school's Tuition and Fees Agreement Form for fees incurred due to NSF

90 Days Past Due

When an account becomes 90 days past due under the arrangements established by the Tuition and Fees Agreement Form or an accepted alternate plan for payment, the family shall receive written notification that their account is past due.

Students will be withdrawn from St. Mark school at the end of a current marking period.

Report cards and transcripts will be withheld until payment in full is received.

In connection with tuition and fees commitment delinquencies, the school may pursue legal action against, or require promissory notes from parents/guardians for failure to honor their tuition agreement. Such notes or legal action will only be sought in an amount equal to the fair market value of the educational goods and services provided as established annually by the school, or the parent/guardian's unpaid tuition and fees commitment, whichever is less.

Parent/Guardian account information and activity will be submitted to the Bishop of the Diocese of Bridgeport, Superintendent of Schools, and diocesan attorney for review.

If a parent/guardian refuses to act in good faith, the administration, after consultation with school, may refuse to accept the child(ren) as students in the diocese and may turn the delinquent balance over to a collection agency.

Families with 8th Grade Students

All account billing and fees for graduating (8th Grade) students must be paid by May 1st or the family must have an alternate plan for payment approved by the Principal.

Grade 8 students will not be permitted to participate in the graduation ceremony or receive grade transcripts until the balance is paid in full or acceptable arrangements for payment are made.

End of School Year Balances

All account billing and fees must be paid by June 1st or the family must have an alternate plan for payment approved by the Principal and Bookkeeper. This includes fees charged for incomplete volunteer hour requirements. Please see the section on **VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS FOR FAMILIES OF KINDERGARTEN - GRADE 8 STUDENTS** for detailed information.

Families with account balances and unpaid fees that do not have an alternate plan for payment approved by the Principal shall receive written notification that their account is past due with a copy of this tuition and financial obligation policy.

Report cards and transcripts will be withheld.

Students will not be permitted to register or to return for the following academic year until the balance is paid in full or an acceptable alternate plan for payment is in place.

Withdrawal from St. Mark School

In the event of a withdrawal from school before the opening day, the first tuition payment (all plans) is not completely refundable. A withdrawal fee equal to one month's tuition will be subtracted from the total payment.

Tuition due at withdrawal during the year will be computed on a ten-month basis. Withdrawal after the 15th of the month will be considered a full month for tuition purposes.

If a child is asked to leave St. Mark School, the same tuition policy applies as stated above.

Special Circumstances

If a child cannot complete the school year due to illness, tuition will continue to be paid if the school is providing homebound or virtual instruction.

Children entering the school during the year will pay tuition which is prorated according to the month they entered the school system.

Other Information

Registration fees are not refundable. A registration fee will be paid whenever a child is registered at any time during the current school year or for the upcoming school year.

Tuition increases will be recommended by the Finance Committee of the School Advisory Board and approved by the Principal and Diocese.

A graduation fee for Grade 8 students will be set by the Principal and Bookkeeper and is paid by June 1st of the graduation year.

VISITORS

All schools shall establish procedures to register visitors on school property. The Principal is responsible for publishing the procedures in the school's parent/student handbook.

There shall only be one main school entrance for visitors. School entrances, including where visitors must sign in, must be clearly marked.

All visitors must report and register at the school office. The school shall maintain a visitor log with the name of the visitor, reason for visit, and the time that the visitor entered the school. The school shall provide each visitor an identifying badge designed to alert school personnel and students that the visitor has been authorized to be in the school. Visitors must wear an identifying badge for the duration of the visit and sign out when leaving the building. No visitor is exempt from this policy.

Each school shall develop a method of identification for the regular school faculty and staff, so as to be easily differentiated from visitors and/or unauthorized persons. Faculty, staff, and students should not allow strangers access into the school. All visitors must be granted access by the main office so the purpose of the visit may be ascertained.

All entertainers, vendors, and guests must be in full compliance with Safe Environment policies. Short-term visitors (less than 3 hours) and one-time only guest speakers must be directly monitored by a cleared adult for the entire time they are present with students and they must be instructed to use a faculty or staff-only bathroom. A cleared adult is someone who is in full compliance with the Safe Environment requirements of the Diocese of Bridgeport and the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.503 - Visitors and/or Unauthorized Persons
Revised: October 14, 2015

School visitors (volunteers, parents, etc.) must come to the main office using the school entrance under the blue St. Mark School awning. For safety and security reasons, each person is required to sign in at the office when he/she enters the building for any reason. All visitors and/or volunteers are required to wear a designated badge that may be picked up in the office. Visitors and/or volunteers are to sign out at the time of departure. Visitors may be asked to show identification in the form of a driver's license or other government issued identification.

No one is permitted to enter the classroom without the permission of the Principal. Parents are asked to deliver forgotten items to the school office and the school secretary will deliver these items to the student. Parents who volunteer to serve lunch or who volunteer in another capacity in the school may not drop into a classroom to see their child during the day. This is an interruption to the teacher and to the educational process.

VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS FOR FAMILIES OF KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE 8 STUDENTS

A major difference between a good school and a great school are the parents. This is certainly true at St. Mark. Our school has great parents! St. Mark parents have been extremely generous in donating their time as volunteers in numerous ways. Volunteerism makes our school a better place and benefits our children. Time spent with the children and the school community is infinitely more valuable than money. With that in mind, St. Mark School requires families of students in Grades K through 8 to give 30 hours of service time each school year.

Donated items for parties and school activities such as paper goods, crafts, etc. may count towards volunteer hours. Please save your receipts for these items. Items that total \$10 are counted as one service hour. If families do not donate the full 30 hours of service during a school year, parents will be billed for uncompleted service hours. The fee is \$10 per service hour.

Please note, all unpaid fees including volunteer hours must be paid in order for students to receive report cards, transcripts, etc. Arrangements must be made with the Bookkeeper if a parent is experiencing financial difficulty. Additionally, since this is considered an unpaid debt, a student may not return to school in the fall until the outstanding balance is paid.

Volunteer Program for Parents

The St. Mark School Volunteer Program will begin on July 1 and end on the first Monday immediately following Grade 8 Class Night. Every family will be required to complete thirty (30) hours of volunteer service to benefit St. Mark School.

Each hour is worth \$10. The total monetary obligation for volunteer time for each family is equivalent to \$300. We encourage parents to volunteer 30 hours of time. In lieu of volunteering for service, families also have the option of paying \$300 to the school office no later than the first Friday immediately following Grade 8 Class Night. This Volunteer Assessment is not optional. It is a mandatory obligation that must be met by all St. Mark families of students in Grades Kindergarten through Grade 8.

There will be a minimum of one hour credit for helping with hot lunch, at classroom parties or school events. For example, if 45 minutes is spent distributing hot lunch, you may take a one hour credit. However, if you set up for the talent show and it takes you an hour and a half, you should take credit for 1.5 hours not 2 hours.

All hours should be recorded on the Volunteer Hour Reporting Form (found on the school's website) and should be submitted to the school office or emailed to volunteerhours@stmarkschool.org. Please report all hours including those in excess of the required 30 hours. We are asking you to track all hours so that we can get a true idea of how many hours it takes annually to run the events and day-to-day activities at the school.

Please remember that in order to volunteer your time with our school children, you must be VIRTUS trained. After completion of the training, your VIRTUS card must be registered with the school office. In addition, volunteers are expected to follow the same standards of behavior as any employee of the Diocese of Bridgeport. Volunteers may be removed from school positions by the Principal or Office of the Superintendent for Schools if they breach professional decorum or compromise the best interests of the School or the Diocese.

Each family will receive volunteer forms that will go home with the oldest sibling or only child. Instructions and due dates are indicated on the form.

Volunteer hours must exclusively benefit St. Mark School and/or its students.

Breakdown of volunteer opportunities and determined hours:

Volunteer Opportunities:

Room Parent (see description below): 20 hours
Chairperson of a major event: 20 hours
Chairperson of catalog fundraiser/small event: 10 hours
Home School Association Officer: actual hours worked + 5 hour bonus
Home School Association Board Member: 10 hours
Hot Lunch Distribution: actual hours worked
Holiday/class party: actual hours worked
Chaperone field trip: actual hours worked
Help with a project in the classroom: actual hours worked
Bake for an event: one hour per dozen
Set up/clean up at event: actual hours worked
Event Volunteer: actual hours worked

Important Notes

Any volunteer hours accumulated more than 30 hours are greatly appreciated. They cannot be carried over to the following school year.

The following are examples of activities that are NOT considered as volunteer hours for St. Mark School:

- teaching Religious Education at St. Mark Parish or any other parish
- coaching sports teams not exclusively made up of St. Mark School students
- volunteering at St. Mark Parish (lectors and Eucharistic Ministry)

Volunteer Room Parents

Mothers and fathers are needed to serve as room parents. At least two parents are needed per classroom to assist the teacher with large projects, host holiday classroom parties, celebrate the teacher's birthday and inform the class parents of family emergencies. The room parent will serve a term beginning July 1st and ending June 30th. Room parents will be expected to meet with the Room Parent Coordinator and Principal before the school year begins. The Room Parent Coordinator will provide a detailed list of expectations/ responsibilities to each room parent. Parents may only be a designated Room Parent for one classroom at a time.

RIGHT TO AMEND

The principal reserves the right to amend this Handbook. Notice of amendments will be sent to parents through e-mail communication.



Dear St. Mark School Parents,

After reading the handbook and discussing the appropriate school rules and requirements with your child, please fill out the following forms and submit them to the school office. These forms are due on the following dates:

- Media Release Form due September 11, 2023
- Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools Grades K-8 Technology and Internet Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) due September 11, 2023
- Signature Page for St. Mark School Parent/Student Handbook due September 11, 2023

If you have any questions about our handbook, please contact me.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melinda M. Warner". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Mrs. Warner, Principal

MEDIA RELEASE FORM

2023-2024

St. Mark School and the Diocese of Bridgeport have active marketing programs. Students and their work may appear in school newsletters, newspapers, brochures, videos, websites, and official social media pages as well as other promotional material. Please complete one form per child and return it to school no later than September 11, 2023.

Please check one of the following:

- I give permission for my child and his/her classroom work to be photographed or videotaped in a school related setting. I realize that the photo may be published in the newspaper, the school website, or other publications or media and may be used for informational or educational purposes regarding the programs or curriculum at St. Mark School. I understand that no last names, home addresses or telephone numbers will appear online or in publications with his/her work or photographs.
- NO, please do NOT publish my child's photos, video or classroom work.

Child's Name (please print clearly) _____

Child's Grade: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (please print clearly) _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____

ST. MARK SCHOOL
PARENT / STUDENT HANDBOOK
2023-2024 SIGNATURE PAGE

I have read the 2023-2024 St. Mark School Parent/Student Handbook and agree to follow the school and diocese policies and procedures as stated.

Family Name (please print clearly) _____

**Please note, both parents and students must sign this agreement.*

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Student Signature _____ Date _____