



LITTLE LIONS PRESCHOOL PARENT / STUDENT HANDBOOK

2025-2026

"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 12/2025)

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 look forward to working with you to promote academic excellence and spiritual development in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church. By choosing to accept enrollment in a Catholic school, you inherently agree to promote the best interests of the Church and to uphold the expectations and policies established by the Diocese of Bridgeport and the St. Mark School administration, recognizing that these guidelines are essential to maintaining our school's Catholic identity and mission.

Whether as a parent or as a teacher, it is a deeply spiritual experience to love a child. Everything we do at St. Mark School is not only of great importance to the children but also adults. We know that children learn best when they feel secure, know what to expect, and are given multiple methods of experiencing and responding to new ideas and information. Many of the procedures and rules in this handbook are designed to help to achieve a predictable, pleasant, and engaging learning environment for all.

The *Parent/Student Handbook* reflects the policies of St. Mark School for the 2025–2026 school year. Please read this document carefully and sign the attached agreement, which affirms your understanding of and compliance with the policies, expectations, and responsibilities outlined in the handbook. As partners in education, let us work together and support one another. May our school community continue to grow in love and in service to God and others.

Yours in Christ,



Mrs. Warner
Principal

The administration 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.

ST. MARK SCHOOL FACULTY AND STAFF

Pastor	Reverend Reginald Norman
Associate Pastor	Fr. Joseph Cervero
Principal	Mrs. Melissa Warner
Assistant Principal	Ms. Stacey Zenowich
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
AMEN Team	Mrs. Theresa Sciallo
	Mrs. Jennifer Tayman
Athletic Director	Mr. John Dinihanian
Assistant Athletic Director	Mr. James Markland
Lunch Coordinator	Mrs. Wendy Ferik
After School Program Director	Ms. Sarah Carrano
Facilities Technician	Mr. Paul Hillis
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. Nicole Polifka
Preschool Aide	Mrs. Emelia Reed
Preschool Aide	Mrs. Kristin Toman
Kindergarten Teacher	Ms. Stacey Zenowich
Kindergarten Aide	Mrs. Lori Dombroski
Grade 1	Ms. Erin Vimini
Grade 2	Mrs. Kelly Tsihlas
Grade 3	Ms. Breanna Miller
Grade 4	Ms. Emily Scinto
Grade 5	Ms. Caroline Journick
Grade 6	Mr. Matthew Bonito
Grade 7	Mr. Patrick Fallon
Grade 8	Ms. Kelly Heider
MS Science	Mrs. Andrea Borbor
MS Math Intervention Teacher	Mrs. Agnes Miller
Math Intervention Teacher	Mrs. Karen Laracca
School Counselor	Ms. Sarah Capela
Special Education Teacher	Mrs. Karen Mortali

Spanish	Mrs. Rosanna Martinez Garcia
Art	Ms. Sarah Carrano
Innovation	Ms. Sarah Carrano
	Mrs. Andrea Borbor
Music	Ms. Donna Martire-Miller
Physical Education	Mr. Kevin Dougherty
Building Substitute	Mr. Kevin Dougherty
Building Substitute	Mrs. Linda Holton
Building Substitute	Ms. Donna Martire-Miller
Building Substitute	Mrs. Karen Laracca

ST. MARK SCHOOL ADVISORY BOARD

Rev. Reginald Norman, Pastor, *Ex Officio*, voting member
 Mrs. Melissa Warner, Principal, *Ex Officio*, non-voting member
 Mrs. Carrie Morrissey, Esq., Board Co-Chair
 Mrs. Joann Szczepanski, Board Co-Chair
 Dr. Steven Cheeseman
 Mrs. Karen Derleth
 Mr. Roy Johansen, Jr.
 Mrs. Norine Pigliucci
 Mr. David Robertson
 Mrs. Kristen Rosati
 Mrs. Jennifer Tayman
 Mrs. Alexandra Sliva, HSA 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 1.110 - School Advisory Board (Diocesan Schools)

Revised: August 30, 2025

HOME SCHOOL ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President	Mrs. Alexandra Sliva P'28 P'29
Vice President	Mrs. Jamie McEnaney P'31
Secretary	Mrs. Sarah Pucci P'30 P'32 P'35

SCHOOL HOURS

7:30A to 3:00P when school is in session

7:30A to 11:30A summer hours (Monday through Thursday)

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. 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, or make a payment, they must enter using the door under the blue *Welcome to St. Mark* 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. Lunch is not 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 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.

The school building 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 ninety 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.

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 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 newly 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 through 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 a full day program (7:45a-2:10p) for 3- and 4-year-olds. Students in PK3 have 2-, 3-, 4-, and 5-day options and students in PK4 are required to enroll for 4+ days for Kindergarten readiness.

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

In 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 was 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 approximately 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 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, six 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.

CHARISM STATEMENT

We are called to extend the Kingdom of God's love among ourselves, the students we serve, and their families by accompanying them on their faith journey to Heaven through daily encounters with Christ. *Our Charism statement bridges our past, rooted in the legacy of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, with our present and future.*

OUR PATRON: SAINT MARK

April 25th, Feast Day

Our patron, Saint Mark was an evangelist, or Gospel writer. In fact, he was the pioneer in Gospel writing. His is the shortest and the oldest of the Gospels. Little is known of Mark except from the New Testament. He was not one of the twelve apostles but was a member of the first Christian community. Mark had firsthand experience of the early Church and apostolic life. He was a traveling companion and assistant of Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey.

Mark's Gospel was a great contribution to the Church. It included oral and written tradition concerning the words and deeds of Jesus. He shows Jesus as the suffering Son of God. Mark knew that to accept the Risen Jesus meant to come to terms with the cross. Jesus was glorified because He willingly allowed himself to suffer death for our salvation. Mark writes that anyone who wishes to follow Jesus must accept the cross.

Over the years artists have given a symbol to each of the evangelists. Mark's symbol is a winged lion because his Gospel begins with the story of John the Baptist who, like a roaring lion, called people to repent. © Loyola Press

PRAYER TO SAINT MARK

O Glorious St. Mark, through the Grace of God our Father, you became a great evangelist, preaching the Good News of Christ. May you help us to know him well, so that we may faithfully live our lives as followers of Christ. Amen.

PHILOSOPHY

"Go into the world and proclaim the gospel..." Mark 16:15

Our Catholic faith is the foundation for our community and the educational initiatives that form the whole child through evangelical values. At St. Mark School, we form students into true

disciples of Christ, fostering a strong sense of Catholic identity and pride. Within a safe and nurturing environment, we encourage our students to deepen their faith, strive for academic excellence, and live out the teachings of Christ in their everyday actions. Service to others is at the heart of our community, instilling in each student a commitment to love, integrity, and making a positive impact in the world around them. Through this mission, St. Mark School not only prepares students for academic achievement but also for a life of faithful service, rooted in Catholic values.

PARENTS AS PARTNERS

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.330

Effective: August 30, 2025

Our Catholic tradition and culture teach that parents are vital partners when it comes to school success. The Catholic Church recognizes parents as the primary teachers of their children. The essential mission of Catholic schools is to partner with parents in teaching their children to know Jesus Christ within the Catholic faith. In this policy, “parent” symbolizes a child’s natural or adopted parent, a legal guardian, or any person or agency with the legal jurisdiction to act in lieu of parents. When parents enroll their children in a Catholic school, they have certain expectations of the school, its teachers, and administrators. The school, likewise, has certain expectations of parents.

Parental Rights, Responsibilities and Expectations

Some parental rights include, but are not limited to:

- Having their children receive an academically appropriate education in a Catholic environment;
- Having their children taught by competent teachers who respect and care for them;
- Having their children’s safety be a priority; and
- Exercising appropriate participation in the life of the school.

Some parental responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Respecting the school, its staff, and the school community;
- Supporting the school’s mission and commitment to the Catholic faith;
- Partnering with the school administrators, faculty, and staff in the education of their children;
- Reading all communications from the school;
- Supporting school activities and volunteering assistance when possible;
- Promoting the school and speaking well of it to others;
- Meeting financial obligations in a timely manner and supporting fundraising efforts;
- Adhering to all the school policies and procedures outlined in the school handbook; and
- Discussing concerns and problems with appropriate personnel and following school protocols.

Some expectations for parents include, but are not limited to:

- Supporting and reflecting the school's culture and Catholic values through their behavior;
- Setting a good example for students through their behavior and the way they interact with staff, students and other adults;
- Working together with staff for the benefit of their children;
- Treating staff members, students, other parents and any other individuals connected to the school with dignity and respect;
- Working cooperatively with staff members to resolve any issues of concern;
- Where appropriate, clarifying their child's version of events with the school to bring about a peaceful solution to any issue;
- Respecting and supporting the decisions made by the school;
- When necessary, supporting the school and their child to change behavior appropriately, particularly where it could otherwise lead to escalating conflict or aggressive or unsafe behavior; and
- Respecting the school's property and environment.

Parent Communication: School Responsibilities

The school is expected to treat all concerns, issues and parent complaints with respect, seriousness and diligence. The school will respond reasonably and professionally to resolve concerns promptly and effectively. The school is expected to implement sound judgment and refer to the processes outlined in the school's handbook including but not limited to communication channels, student code of conduct and parent code of conduct.

Parent Communication: Parent Responsibilities

A parent who wishes to discuss concerns about his/her child should follow the appropriate chain of communication as defined by the school. If the school addresses an issue in a manner that lacks compassion or fails to follow the school's policy and procedures as set forth by the school, then the parent may elevate the concern to the appropriate next level (i.e. the Office of the Superintendent of Schools, Executive Director).

Parent Code of Conduct

Parents/caregivers are expected to model the values of the school community at all times. This includes conducting themselves in a kind, respectful, and peaceful manner—even outside of school hours and off-campus.

Inappropriate Behavior and Actions to Address Inappropriate Behavior

Inappropriate behavior of parents/guardians is taken very seriously, especially when it affects the dignity, safety, or well-being of students, staff members, or other members of the school community.

The school will address all concerns raised by parents, regardless of how they are communicated. However, when those concerns are expressed in an inappropriate or harmful manner, the inappropriate behavior will be addressed separately. In such cases, meetings, phone calls, or email exchanges may be paused and resumed only once all parties are able to communicate respectfully and safely.

Level 1 Offenses

These behaviors are considered inappropriate but do not immediately jeopardize the safety of students or staff. They are typically correctable through warning and dialogue. Repeated Level 1 offenses may escalate to Level 2.

Examples of Level 1 offenses include, but are not limited to:

- *Speaking disrespectfully to staff, students, or other parents;*
- *Using a raised voice, aggressive tone, or condescending language;*
- *Sending inappropriate, accusatory, or overly critical emails, texts, or voicemails;*
- *Bypassing school communication protocols (e.g., not following the proper chain of command);*
- *Publicly criticizing or misrepresenting the school or school personnel on social media;*
- *Disregarding school policies or procedures (e.g., speed limit, pick-up/drop-off rules);*
- *Causing minor disruptions during school events or meetings;*
- *Distributing or wearing materials on school grounds or at school functions that are suggestive and inappropriate, obscene, advocate illegal action, promote illegal substances, appear libelous, obstruct the rights of others, or are disruptive to the school program;*
- *Entering school property without signing in or seeking authorization.*

Consequences for Level 1 offenses may include verbal warnings, written notices, required meetings with school leadership, or temporary restrictions from school events. Repeated or unaddressed Level 1 behavior will result in escalation to Level 2 consequences and will be referred to the Office of Safe Environments and Office of the Superintendent of Schools for further action.

*No restriction, however, will prevent the parent from working collaboratively with the school to meet the child's educational needs, nor will a parent/guardian be excluded from a child's PPT meeting or Parent/Teacher conference.

Level 2 Offenses

These are serious violations that endanger the emotional or physical safety of the school community or significantly disrupt the academic environment.

Examples of Level 2 offenses include, but are not limited to:

- *Threatening or intimidating any student, staff member, or other parent;*

- Approaching someone else's child to rebuke/chastise them;
- Using profane, vulgar, or offensive language;
- Acts of vandalism or destruction of school or personal property;
- Harassment, bullying, or discrimination based on race, religion, gender, or any protected status;
- Recording or videotaping interactions without consent, including classroom instruction or staff conversations;
- Cyberbullying or public online harassment involving any member of the school community;
- Bringing weapons or illegal substances onto school grounds;
- Engaging in physical altercations or threats of violence;
- Disrupting transportation services or confronting bus drivers;
- Repeated failure to comply with school directives after prior warnings.

Consequences for Level 2 offenses may include:

- Immediate removal from school property;
- Temporary or permanent ban from school premises and/or school-sponsored events;
- Required mediation or compliance with directives from diocesan offices;
- Legal action if criminal or civil laws are violated;
- **In severe or repeated cases, dismissal of the student(s) from the school.** Dismissal will be considered only after careful review and in consultation with the Office of the Superintendent and Office of Safe Environments. Every effort will be made to preserve the student's educational support, but the overall well-being of the school community must take precedence.

Appeal Process

Level 1 offenses are not appealable to the Superintendent of Schools.

Level 2 offenses may be appealed by submitting a written request, including any supporting evidence, to the Office of the Superintendent within five (5) calendar days of receiving notice of the consequence. Email submissions are acceptable. The Office will respond in writing within five (5) school days to either uphold, amend, or overturn the consequence. The decision of the Superintendent is final.

***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.330 – Parents As Partners
Effective: August 30, 2025***

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 student illness, death in the family, or mandated court appearances, this is considered an excused absence. Written documentation must be provided to the school.

When a student is absent due to 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 if there is a continuous pattern of unexcused absences.

Please note that in accordance with state law, the school may be required to report cases of habitual truancy or frequent unexcused absences to appropriate local or state authorities.

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.

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 the express permission from the principal.

In order for students 'shadowing' or spending the day at another school to be marked with an excused absence, they must have provided prior notification to the school and the visiting school must confirm that the child was present for the day. Excused absences for school visits are not to exceed three (3) during a school year and are not to include multiple visits to a single school within one school year. Such excused absences will not affect a student's eligibility for perfect attendance recognition.

Family vacations should not take place when school is in session. Should such a vacation occur during school time, such vacation will be deemed as an unexcused absence. It is expected that all missed assignments will be made up in a period of time determined by the teacher and approved by the principal. The school is not under obligation to provide tutoring, make-up work, or special testing schedules for such a period of absence.

Students are responsible for all class work, assignments, and exams missed due to absences or tardiness.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.302 - Attendance
Effective: August 30, 2025

Punctual and regular attendance at school is vitally important to a child's success. Thank you for your anticipated cooperation with the following attendance policy.

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. Absences for dental and doctor appointments are recorded on the student report card as an absence to reflect that the student was not present in school on that day. Rediker student information system may reflect the date as an excused absence.

Parents are asked not to take students on vacation while school is in session.

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.

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.

If a preschool student is regularly scheduled to attend school on the day of a school-sponsored activity but is absent, the student may not participate in that activity. If the student is not regularly scheduled to attend school on that day, a parent may accompany the child to participate in school-sponsored activities held during school hours, including class parties, concerts, performances, and field day.

ACADEMICS AND GRADING SYSTEM

REPORT CARDS

Report Cards will be issued two (2) times during the academic school year or approximately every nine (9) weeks.

The Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools requires two computerized report cards a year (January, and June). Conferences for Preschool are held in November and 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, class participation, and independent work. 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.

***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.210 - Grading
Effective: August 30, 2025***

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

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
Effective: August 30, 2025***

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 PK3 or PK4. Students in PK4, whose family has applied for their child to enroll in St. Mark School Kindergarten, will be assessed using the Brigance Kindergarten Screening Tool during the application process. After review of data collected, if the principal and teacher agree that it would best suit the personal and academic development of the student, the principal may recommend that the student be retained in PK4.

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 for kindergarten admission shall be that the child reaches age 5 on or before December 31 of the school year of attendance. Schools may not admit students who are below the established age without approval from the Superintendent of Schools. Schools must utilize a screening process before acceptance to determine readiness. Entrance into the prekindergarten program must reflect established prekindergarten guidelines as established for ages 3 through 5.

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.

All students new to a school will be subject to a 1-year probationary period to determine if the fit is appropriate. During this time the student may be dismissed at the school's discretion for any reason.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.100 - Admission

Effective: August 30, 2025

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 to be admitted to and remain in the preschool program.

Preschool admission requires that a child turn 3 years old on or before September 1st of the school year for PK3, and 4 years old on or before December 31st of the school year for PK4.

KINDERGARTEN

If there are more applicants ready for Kindergarten then there are seats available, the administration will use the following criteria to determine acceptance:

Readiness

Care is taken to establish whether a child will benefit from, or is an appropriate fit for, our program of studies. Screenings, review of school records and report cards, teacher recommendations, and reports of conduct are some of the criteria used in making admission decisions. 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

Kindergarten admission requires that a child turn 5 years old on or before December 31st of the school year.

Priority

Admission is offered at the discretion of the principal, based on factors that may include, but are not limited to developmental readiness, the presence of currently enrolled siblings at St. Mark School, alumni status, and parish affiliation.

CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE

All new students are admitted on a conditional basis for one year. If it is determined by the principal that the placement is not beneficial, parents will withdraw or the school may dismiss the student. Tuition will be refunded on a prorated basis. Non-refundable fees are not considered tuition and thereby will not be refunded.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.108 – Conditional Acceptance
Effective: August 30, 2025

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 this. Student birthdays will also be recognized in morning announcements. Students may also pass out invitations in school if 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. If 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
Effective: August 30, 2025***

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.

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.

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 the Connecticut Department of Children and Families.

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

Curriculum standards demonstrate how our Catholic schools exceed the expectations set forth by state standards. A diocesan team 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 Standards

Effective: August 30, 2025

Preschool 3 and Preschool 4 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.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Please see page 9, **SCHOOL HOURS**

DELAYED OPENINGS AND SCHOOL CANCELLATIONS

In the event of inclement weather, Catholic schools will follow the local public schools for emergency delayed openings, early dismissals, or school closings. 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 inclement weather or hazardous conditions.

If deemed necessary, the principal, with the approval of the superintendent, reserves the authority to delay, dismiss early, or cancel school.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 3.202 - Inclement Weather Decisions, Early Dismissal & Days Off

Effective: August 30, 2025

When weather conditions or other emergencies warrant a delayed opening or the closing of school, 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 EXPECTATIONS/CODE OF CONDUCT

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
Effective: August 30, 2025

Children learn best when they feel safe, happy, and secure. Security often comes from a child being able to predict “what will happen next.” Thus, schools are run on having school-wide and in class procedures so that children know what to do and how they are expected to behave. We do not expect perfection from children, but we do want to help them develop consistent school behaviors that will work in any setting. Examples include when to ask a question, how to organize one’s materials, and persevering when a task is difficult. The structure of a Catholic school is ideal for helping children develop these skills gently and consistently over-time.

Proper Catholic Christian behavior, based on the principles of respect, charity, responsibility, and honesty, is expected of all students attending St. Mark School as well as of all faculty and staff members and parents. We are human, and when human failings prevent us from meeting this standard, we reflect on our behavior and strive to do better, with God’s unfailing love and assistance, in the future.

Code of Conduct Guidelines

Each student attending St. Mark School will:

- Display a positive Christian attitude when interacting with others
- Speak and act in a respectful and responsible manner
- Contribute to a positive and productive classroom environment
- Exhibit respect for personal and school property
- Be sensitive and aware of others by quiet movement throughout the school building
- Have all assignments, supplies, and materials necessary for class and a productive school day
- Follow rules of proper classroom decorum as posted in the classroom
- Adhere to the uniform, student appearance, and out of uniform day policies
- Obey the rules governing conduct in the cafeteria, hallway, gym, lavatory, recess, and playground
- Follow the rules outlined in the Acceptable Use Policy for Technology

In a complimentary fashion, all adults are asked to remember when they were young and understand that our Catholic faith teaches us that perfection is not possible, nor necessarily desirable. The desire for perfection can create unnecessary stress and obscure the observation of the many wonderful accomplishments and attributes each child possesses.

Student discipline for inappropriate behavior is developed

- to help the student identify, understand, and correct the inappropriate behavior,
- to set goals for immediate behavior change, with outlined consequences for failed compliance including detention, suspension, and expulsion,
- to provide the student internal and external support for improved behavior, and
- to work in partnership with parents/guardians to support the student in correcting the behavior.

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 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.

Hitting one another, rough contact, and 'keep away' games are prohibited.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

In collaboration with the faculty and staff, the principal shall develop a code of conduct and disciplinary procedures based on the Diocesan Schools Code of Conduct, Catholic values and the dignity of the human person to which students must adhere. The purpose of the code of conduct is to develop sound moral character, responsibility, and citizenship in students.

Each school must have its code of conduct and discipline procedures approved by the Office of the Superintendent and published in the parent/student handbook.

At the beginning of the school year, the expectations of student conduct should be clearly explained to faculty, staff, students, and parents.

*While students and parents are required to sign an acknowledgement that they have received and read the Handbook, **failure to sign does not negate obligation for compliance.***

Students and parents will be required to sign the parent/student handbook signature page. The school must keep the signature pages on file for each school year.

By enrolling your child, parents/guardians acknowledge and agree that enrollment constitutes acceptance of the school's policies, rules, and procedures as outlined in this manual. A signed acknowledgment form is not required for these policies to be binding. Continued enrollment and attendance indicate agreement to adhere to the standards and expectations established by the diocese and school.

If a student's conduct is repeatedly disruptive of the educational process and is not adhering to a behavioral policy of the school or negatively impacts the school or any persons at the school or on school property, this may be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.300 – Student Code of Conduct
Effective: August 30, 2025***

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE

“Discipline is a slow, bit-by-bit time consuming task of helping children to see the sense in acting in a certain way” Dr. James Hymes

We recognize that young children are learning self-control and the ability to interact with peers and adults daily. We believe that self-discipline is best, and we have established our environment to encourage children to develop respect for others, self-control, and social adjustment.

The staff are expected to:

- Recognize and reinforce positive behaviors.
- Redirect the child to choose alternative choices when behavior is unacceptable
- Initiate problem-solving, determine and discuss appropriate behaviors with older toddlers and preschool children.

At times, children are unable to control their behavior, and it may be necessary to provide a separate activity away from the group until the child is calm. Teachers will sit with and talk with preschoolers helping them recognize and verbalize their feelings.

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
Effective: August 30, 2025***

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
Effective: August 30, 2025***

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
Effective: August 30, 2025***

Student Appearance

It is our strong belief that a student's appearance for school has an impact on his or her attitude, behavior and readiness to learn. We encourage our students to take pride in their appearance. Our uniform dress code helps them to focus on what is appropriate attire for school and reflects the identity, unity, and spirit of our school. A formal student appearance and uniform policy is not meant to stifle the individuality of our students since every child remains unique and special while wearing a uniform that shows membership in our community of faith and learning. It is important that we establish a standard of modesty and decorum that contributes toward an environment of respect and mutual understanding.

Parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that their children follow these guidelines. Faculty also have a responsibility for taking appropriate action when policies are not followed.

Failure to abide by the student appearance policy will result in a 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.

Hair for Boys

- Hair for boys should be clean and styled neatly.
- Boys should not have faddish haircuts. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - hair should not go below the top of the ear

- 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 ponytails
- no man buns
- no mullets

Hair for Girls

- Hair for girls should be clean and styled neatly.
- no excessive hair pieces or hair accessories.
- no cat ears or any type of animal ears, headbands or headpieces.
- uniform headbands of black watch plaid are preferred.

Accessories

- Girls may wear one pair of small stud earrings or small hoop earrings. Hoops must be smaller than the size of a dime (coin). Dangle or drop earrings are prohibited.
- Boys may not wear earrings.
- No more than two bracelets may be worn.
- Watches may be worn on the wrist. Smart watches, including step-trackers, any watch that can send or receive data, messages, texts, or other forms of communication are prohibited.
- All neck chains are to be worn under the student's shirt or blouse. Neck chains are to be religious in nature (a small cross or crucifix, 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, including but not limited to mascara of all types (ex. clear mascara), is not permitted. Vaseline is not permitted as a substitute for mascara.
- Fake nails, including but not limited to gel nail, acrylics, press on nails, and dip polish manicures are not permitted.
- Tattoos of any kind are not allowed in school.
- Rings are not permitted for boys or girls.

Shoes for Daily Wear

Students are required to wear sneakers. Velcro or slip on sneakers are required if your child can not tie his/her shoes.

YEAR-ROUND PRESCHOOL UNIFORM

It is our strong belief that uniforms reinforce our school's Catholic identity and sense of community. Wearing a uniform can be a daily reminder of belonging to a Catholic virtue-based

environment and aligns with the school's mission to foster respect, unity, and a Christ-centered learning environment.

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

Boys & Girls

Shorts

- navy-blue shorts with or without the school logo (elastic waistband)
- no shorts with flaps, snaps, or cargo pockets

Pants

- navy-blue sweatpants with or without the school logo for boys
- navy-blue leggings or navy-blue sweatpants with or without the school logo for girls

Shirts/Sweatshirts

- navy-blue short sleeve t-shirt with the school logo
- navy-blue long sleeve t-shirt with the school logo
- navy-blue sweatshirt with the school logo

Girls' Dress

- navy-blue knit dress with the school logo
- (bike) shorts, navy-blue or white slim leggings, or navy-blue or white tights must be worn underneath a dress

Shoes

- Sneakers are required. (Velcro or slip-on sneakers are required if your child cannot tie his or her shoes.)

DRESS CODE - OUT OF UNIFORM DAYS

Each month, a day is set aside as "Out of Uniform Day" aka "Dress Down Day". 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
- clean sweatpants

- modest yoga/athletic style pants for girls, with a long shirt that is longer than/extends below their hips
- an appropriate clean shirt or sweater for boys and girls
- clean sneakers
- girls shorts or skirts must be longer than two inches above the knee in length
- 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 or dress that expose the stomach
- tops or dresses with straps instead of sleeves
- make-up, including but not limited to mascara, is not permitted. Vaseline is not permitted as a substitute for mascara
- fake nails, including but not limited to gel nail, acrylics, and dip polish manicures are not permitted
- rings are not permitted for boys or girls
- excessively tight shorts/skort are not permitted
- extra jewelry or chains
- Crocs, slip on sandals, Ugg or Ugg style slippers, flip flops, or opened back shoes
- Ugg Tazz style clogs
- colored hair
- Pajamas (PJ) or lounge style pants
- Ugg moccasins or moccasin style shoes
- Yeezy slides, Yeezy slippers, Yeezy Foam Runners, and Foam Runner styles of any brand are not permitted.

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 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 (i.e. Apple Watch), electronic games, radios, CD players, DVD players, iPods, etc. No device which accesses the internet or cell phone networks, including Apple Watches, should be brought to school. Any watch that can send or receive data, messages, texts, or other forms of communication are prohibited. 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.

To ensure adherence to Catholic beliefs, values, and standards of appropriateness, students are not permitted to use Chromebooks or electronic devices to listen to music during the school day or in the After School Program.

Students in Kindergarten through Grade 8 are required to have wired headphones as part of their student school supplies. Wireless earbuds, air pods, and any form of wireless or Bluetooth enabled headphones or listening devices are not permitted. Wired headphones are a required school supply for the entirety of the school year. It is the parents' responsibility to replace their child's broken headphones. The school does not supply headphones for student use.

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* 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.

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.

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.

FOOD ALLERGY POLICIES

St. Mark School has adopted a strict food allergy policy 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.

- 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.
- Food present is limited to snack items. Providing pizza, lunch, or a meal for the class is prohibited.
- 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.

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 OSS. The primary objective of the Parent Organization is raising funds for the purpose of meeting budgetary goals and enhancing the education of the students.

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.

When advisable, parent organizations are to dispense and collect monies using the school procedures and shall not have a separate account that is not authorized or supervised by the school's financial office, principal, and/or Board of Directors.

***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 1.112 - Parent Organization
Effective: August 30, 2025***

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.

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.

The subject of Religion is reserved for instruction by teachers who are practicing Catholics, in alignment with the mission and identity of the 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
Effective: August 30, 2025***

As part of our religion curriculum, preschool students attend 8:00 AM First Friday Masses after Christmas break.

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.

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) to help promote an earth-conscious attitude in children. Students may bring water bottles to school, labeled with his or her name on it. Water bottles must contain water only.

Water bottles must contain plain, non-caffeinated, non-sweetened, non-sugar water only. Juice, soda, flavored water or other soft drinks are not permitted. Please follow your child's classroom expectations regarding snacks, lunch, and water bottles.

Students in Grades PK through 8 have the option to pack lunch from home or order a 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 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.

PARKING LOT: ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Please take 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 always respected in the school parking lot.

Student Arrival Entrances to the Parking Lot

Please DO NOT ENTER using 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 strongly advised to use the "Drop-Off Car Line" for morning arrival. This means your child should remain in the vehicle until reaching the designated drop-off point, and the driver must always stay inside the car.

To access the Drop-Off Car Line, please enter via the Wigwam Lane entrance by the ***Blessed Mother statue***. This route allows the car line to follow the perimeter of the buildings, helping to prevent traffic from backing up into the main driveway.

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 GREAT LAWN**.

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

- Enter the property using 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 or 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 crosswalk 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, five to seven 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 (PK3 through Grade 2)

- Please enter the property at Wigwam Lane directly adjacent to the Great Lawn.
- 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 and exit easily and will not interfere with the crossing guard or moving traffic from the drop-off car 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 at 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 at the crosswalk or cross with their child and say goodbye at the Parish Center 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.

Dismissal

Dismissal for preschool students on a full day of school begins at 2P. Dismissal on an early dismissal day begins at 11:15A. PK3 students are dismissed out of the exit only doors outside the Grade 1 classroom. PK4 students are dismissed from their classroom door outside the Kindergarten playground. Preschool teachers review dismissal procedures with parents every August at preschool parent orientation.

RECESS AND SCHOOL YARD REGULATIONS

Students have at least thirty to forty-five minutes of recess a 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 always prohibited. 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, parents will be asked to send in snow gear for their child to enjoy the snow.

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
Effective: August 30, 2025

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
Effective: August 30, 2025

All immunizations must be up-to-date and verified. Religious and/or medical exemption requests must meet the State of Connecticut Public Act procedure and guidance.

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
Effective: August 30, 2025***

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.

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
Effective: August 30, 2025***

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. The following over-the-counter medications may be given with written permission from the parent(s)/guardian(s) only:

- *Tylenol or Ibuprofen;*
- *Cough drops; and*
- *Tums/Antacids.*

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*

Glucose testing and insulin administration is to be coordinated by the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), in collaboration with the school's principal.

Students who violate the medication policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.404 - Medication
Effective: August 30, 2025

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 parents 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 administration (***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.

Cough drops for students must be handed in to the nurse. A student may be sent to the nurse's office to retrieve a cough drop during the school day.

No exceptions will be made.

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 they are 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.

A student with a skin rash of unknown origin may be sent home from school until the rash is identified as non-contagious.

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 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 – Search and Seizure
Effective: August 30, 2025***

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 "right doing" 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 the Diocese of Bridgeport require 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 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
Effective: August 30, 2025

TRANSFER OF STUDENTS AND SEPERATION FROM SCHOOL

The education of a child is a partnership between the parents and the school. Just as the parent has the right to withdraw a child if desired, the school administration reserves the right to require

the withdrawal of a student if the administration determines that the partnership is irretrievably damaged.

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.

The parents may apply for admission in the future. The circumstances regarding the separation will be reviewed by the principal, in consultation with the Superintendent of Schools, when determining if admission will be offered.

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 fee 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.

If a student is withdrawn, separated, or expelled from St. Mark School at any time, report cards and transcripts will be withheld until all payments are received and FACTS account is deactivated.

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 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 and 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 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 at 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 the Office of Superintendent of Schools, 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 THROUGH 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 student is withdrawn, separated, or expelled from St. Mark School during the academic year, report cards and transcripts will be withheld until all payments are received and FACTS account is deactivated.

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 and technology 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
Effective: August 30, 2025***

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.

PARENT SUPPORT: RESPECTING THE DIGNITY OF EVERY STUDENT

A distinguishing characteristic of Catholic schools is strong parent engagement, and this is certainly true at St. Mark School. Our parent community has consistently demonstrated generous support by volunteering their time in a variety of meaningful ways. Volunteer service strengthens our school, enriches our programs, and directly benefits our students. Recognizing the value of

this partnership, St. Mark School requires families of students in Grades K through 8 to contribute 30 hours of service time each school year.

When parents are on the premises, either volunteering or visiting, they will undoubtedly observe many interactions among students and teachers. Teachers are professionals and are held to a high adult standard of conduct. Children, on the other hand, are expected to make mistakes, have a bad day or be upset from time to time. This does not make them “bad” or “difficult” – just young. We expect that parent volunteers understand that part of their agreement to volunteer is that they will refrain from discussing the behavior of children other than their own child outside of school.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILIES

Room Parent (see description below)

Chairperson of a major event

Chairperson of catalog fundraiser/small event

Holiday/class party

Help with a project in the classroom

Bake for an event

Set up/clean up at event

Event Volunteer

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.

WALKING TO SCHOOL

For reference, Stratford Public Schools allow students in Grade 4 and above to walk to and from school with written permission from parents or guardians. Additionally, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) advises that children are typically ready to walk to school alone around fifth grade or approximately age 10, as they are developmentally better equipped to navigate traffic and other potential hazards safely. Every student is required to have a dismissal plan form on file in the Main Office. Only students in Grades 6 and above are permitted to walk to and from school within 1 mile radius. Students in Grade 6 and above can supervise a younger sibling walking home only with parental permission indicated on the student's dismissal plan on record.

RIGHT TO AMEND

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



**ST. MARK SCHOOL
LITTLE LIONS PRESCHOOL
PARENT / STUDENT HANDBOOK
2025-2026 SIGNATURE PAGE**

*Students and parents will be required to sign the parent/student handbook signature page. The school must keep the signature pages on file for each school year. While students and parents are required to sign an acknowledgement that they have received and read the Handbook, **failure to sign does not negate obligation for compliance.***

By enrolling your child, parents/guardians acknowledge and agree that enrollment constitutes acceptance of the school's policies, rules, and procedures as outlined in this manual. A signed acknowledgment form is not required for these policies to be binding. Continued enrollment and attendance indicate agreement to adhere to the standards and expectations established by the diocese and school.

***Diocese of Bridgeport Policy 2.300 – Student Code of Conduct
Effective: August 30, 2025***

We, the undersigned parent, acknowledge that we have received, read, and understand the St. Mark School Little Lions Preschool Handbook. We understand and acknowledge the Roman Catholic religious nature of St. Mark School. By choosing to accept enrollment in a Catholic school, we inherently agree to promote the best interests of the Church and to uphold the expectations and policies established by the Diocese of Bridgeport and the St. Mark School administration, recognizing that these guidelines are essential to maintaining the school's Catholic identity and mission.

By signing below, we affirm our understanding of and agreement with the policies, expectations, and responsibilities outlined in the Parent Handbook.

Family Name (please print clearly) _____

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

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Preschool Student's Name _____

Preschool Student's Name _____

Preschool Student's Name _____