

St. Stephen School Student-Parent Handbook

2021-2022 Academic Year

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Introduction

Educational Philosophy

The primary purpose of St. Stephen School is the development of the whole child in a mutually supportive Christian environment. Administrators, teachers, and parents, as educators, play a vital role in creating an atmosphere in which each individual is treated with respect and compassion. The strong relationships, developed at St. Stephen School, nurture an atmosphere of cooperation, understanding, and caring. Parents are recognized as the primary educators of their children. Therefore, parent and teacher communication is essential, encouraged, and maintained.

The curriculum is based on rigorous academic standards, designed to encourage the spiritual, intellectual, social, and emotional development in each child. It recognizes that each student is an individual with unique skills and talents. Intellectual growth is achieved through a variety of current strategies and effective and diverse teaching practices.

St. Stephen School fosters Catholic values along with the progressive development of each child's self-concept, self-expression, social responsibility, and physical development. By guiding students in their total development, we as Christian educators, prepare them for their future as active and participating Christian citizens of the world.

Foundational Statements

Mission Statement

St. Stephen School serves students within the Venango region by providing accredited preschool to sixth grade education while nurturing the development of the students as active Christians and responsible citizens. This is accomplished through the faith formation of students and families, high standards of academic achievement, development of values and personal initiative, and growth in a safe and caring Catholic environment.

Vision Statement

The Venango Region Catholic School community aspires to:

- Provide a safe environment, enabling students and teachers to achieve at a high level.
- Affirm the dignity of each student created in the image of God.
- Teach the whole student in mind, body, and soul.
- Promote a curriculum and philosophy of education reflecting academic excellence in the Catholic intellectual tradition.
- Graduate students who are ready to succeed personally and professionally regardless of the path they choose.
- Nurture a strongly Catholic school culture.
- Welcome students and families of diverse religious and personal backgrounds.
- Offer attractive facilities that encourage learning and teaching.
- Cultivate strong relationships with all stakeholders to provide the prayerful and material support necessary to engage our students and sustain the mission of the school.

Belief Statements

1. We believe that every child is a uniquely created gift from God graced with inherent dignity and worth.
2. We believe that all students can best reach their fullest potential in a safe, nurturing and faith-filled environment.
3. We believe that every student has unique strengths and talents and can excel in a rigorous, supportive environment.
4. We believe that Prayer, the Sacraments and Christ-centered values permeate all that we do.
5. We believe that a standard of excellence must be maintained in all academic areas.
6. We believe that it is the shared responsibility of educators, family, parish and community to provide for the development of the whole child: spiritual, intellectual, social, physical and emotional.
7. We believe it is the responsibility of our schools to help students discern God's call for their life.
8. We believe that students must develop the skills necessary to respond to God's call in a global society.
9. We believe that everyone is called to serve others.
10. We believe in the value of strategic planning and professional development as a means of continuous improvement.
11. We believe that adherence to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and fidelity to the Bishop of the Diocese of Erie will create a community united on its journey to the truth.

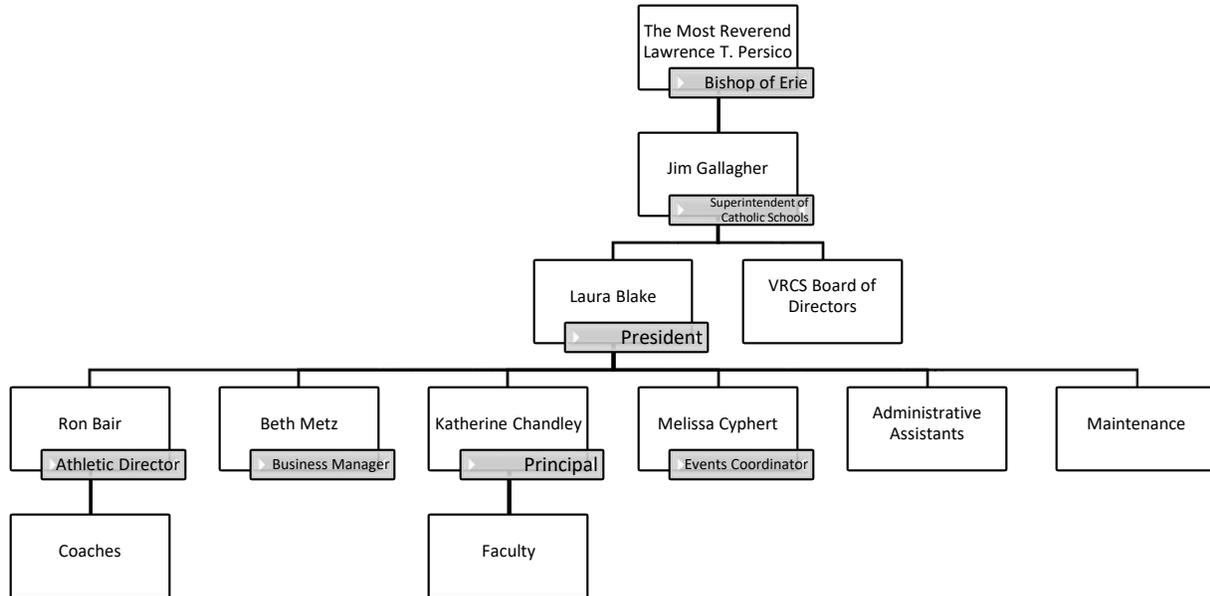
Title IX

While reserving the right to make religious exceptions as provided by law and in accord with Catholic religious belief, the Catholic schools within the Diocese of Erie do not discriminate on the basis of sex. This includes being excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity on the basis of sex.

Additional Title IX information is available at <https://www.eriercd.org/schools/titleix.html>

Organization

Organizational Chart



Authority of School Personnel

All administrators, teachers, specialists, aides, monitors, etc., have the authority to direct activities and students throughout the building. This authority exists on school grounds as well as school sponsored activities. Students are required to respond to the persons in authority in accordance with accepted standards of conduct and manners.

Student Responsibilities

Student responsibilities include regular school attendance and conscientious effort in classroom work. Students share with the administration and faculty a responsibility to develop a climate within the school that is conducive to wholesome learning and living. **NO STUDENT HAS THE RIGHT TO INTERFERE WITH THE EDUCATION OF FELLOW STUDENTS.** It is the responsibility of each student to respect the rights of teachers, students, and administrators and all others who are involved with the educational community.

Safety

In addition to a quality education, we strive to maintain a safe and secure learning environment. Student safety is of primary importance. St. Stephen School has developed a Crisis Plan to be implemented in the

event of emergencies. The plan is regularly updated and reviewed with staff. Classroom teachers periodically review safety procedures with students and safety drills are conducted.

Visitor Entry

Entryways to the school are locked during school hours. All visitors must enter through the main entrance located at the corner of West 3rd Street and Reed Street which is entered through a camera/buzzer entry system. All entryways are continually monitored via camera during school hours and posted with signs requiring everyone to sign in at the school office. Visitors must sign in upon entry and wear badges; upon exit visitors must sign out and return badges.

Hazing

Hazing is any action or situation which recklessly or intentionally endangering the mental or physical health or safety of a person or which willfully destroys or removes public or private property for the purpose of initiation or admission into or affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership in, any organization. The term shall include, but not be limited to, any brutality of a physical nature, such as whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the elements, forced consumption of any food, liquor, drug or other substance, or any other forced physical activity which could adversely affect the physical health and safety of the individual, and shall include any activity which would subject the individual to extreme mental stress, such as sleep deprivation, forced exclusion from social contact, forced conduct which could result in extreme embarrassment, or any other forced activity which could adversely affect the mental health or dignity of the individual, or any willful destruction or removal of public or private property. For purposes of this definition, any activity as described in this definition upon which the initiation or admission into or affiliation with or continued membership in an organization is directly or indirectly conditioned shall be presumed to be "forced" activity, the willingness of an individual to participate in such activity notwithstanding.

St. Stephen School does not condone any form of initiation or harassment, known as hazing, as part of any school-sponsored student activity. No student, coach, sponsor, volunteer, or employee shall plan, direct, encourage, assist or engage in any hazing activity. No administrator, coach, sponsor, volunteer or employee shall permit, condone or tolerate any form of hazing.

Students who have been subjected to hazing should promptly report such incidents to the school principal.

Weapons and Assault

Students are not permitted to have any type of weapons, including but not limited to firearms, knives, and look-alike weapons, on their person or in their desks at any time. Students are not to carry anything to school that may be harmful to the health, safety, and welfare of themselves or others. Administration may use their discretion when interpreting use and intent with such objects.

Students are not permitted to have in possession, or intent of creating or using, any device such as smoke bombs, firecrackers, M-80's incendiary devices, or other explosives, while under the authority of the school or at school related activities.

Students and non-students who see or become aware of a weapon at school must not touch it or remain in the presence of the person or group with the weapon. Students must notify an adult immediately for the safety of all concerned. Administration or a teacher must be notified immediately.

Students are guilty of assault if they attempt to cause or cause bodily injury to another student, school staff, or school employee. Fighting (no matter who started it), hitting, slapping, pinching, and pushing will not be tolerated and will most likely result in suspension from school and/or referral to police.

Possession of Tobacco

Students are not to be in possession of tobacco, tobacco products, vaping products, or any harmful substances, while under the authority of the school, on the school bus, or at a school related activity. If a student is found in possession of these products or substances will be reported to the District Magistrate.

Care of School and Grounds

Students share in the responsibility of keeping the building, property, and the equipment in good condition. Defacing or damaging school property or buses will not be tolerated. Offenders will be required to pay for damages caused. Police may be notified.

Hallways and Restrooms

Hallways are not to be used for any activity that could harm the safety and welfare of other students. Noise and talking in the hall must be kept to a minimum so as not to disrupt other classrooms. Students must have permission from their teacher to be out of their classroom. Students are not to carry pencils, crayons, markers, or marking pens to the restroom. Leaving the classroom or school building without permission will result in disciplinary action.

Money

Money sent into the school for fundraisers, field trips, etc. should be sent in an envelope clearly marked with the student's name, grade, and specific purpose. Money for different purposes are not to be combined into a single check as they may be distributed into different accounts. Checks should be made payable to Venango Region Catholic School unless otherwise noted.

Demographics

Change of Email, Postal Mailing Address, and Other Information

It is the responsibility of parents to inform the school of changes to mailing address, phone number, email address and any other important contact information in case of emergency or other communication reasons. Please inform the school office of any changes.

Child Custody Issues

It is the responsibility of parents to provide the school with a current copy of any court orders involving student(s). The school will make a copy of your current court order to be placed in the student file and for school reference.

Phone Calls

Student use of the school phone will be limited to emergencies only. If a student occasionally forgets an item at home, permission may be granted to call home under supervised conditions.

Classes will not be disrupted for incoming phone calls. If you need to leave a message for a teacher, please call the school and a message to return your call will be forwarded to the teacher. Return calls will be made at the staff's convenience.

Cell Phones and Personal Electronic Devices

Students are not permitted to use cell phones or other personal electronic devices during the school day. If a student must carry a cell phone, personal computer, or other personal electronic device it must be kept in their backpack and turned off throughout the day. The school is not responsible for any lost, stolen, or broken cell phones or devices. The first offense for violation of the cell phone and personal electronic device usage policy will result in the phone or device being confiscated and the student's parents or guardian must come to the office to retrieve it and will result in the student receiving a demerit. If there is a second offense, the child will be prohibited from bringing in the device at all and receive a detention.

Finances and Tuition

Tuition Policy

Diocesan Policy allows families to pay their tuition either annually (in August) or by using the FACTS Management Co. tuition payment program that automatically deducts a specified amount from your checking or savings account based on ten months.

Any school family failing to pay their account according to their agreement with the school or who have been unwilling to make suitable alternative arrangements with the school, may have their children withheld from class until the situation is corrected.

Families that depart from St. Stephen School with outstanding balances will not have transcripts forwarded to the student's next school until financial restitution is completed. Also, students are not allowed re-admittance until all outstanding financial obligations are met from the previous school year.

Scrip Loaves and Fishes Program

From July 1 to June 30 of the following year, each family will need to generate \$300 dollars in profit by purchasing "Scrip Loaves and Fishes" gift cards. An agreement form must be signed and on file for your family to get credit. No purchases will be applied to your account until this form has been completed. Purchases made by friends and family can also be applied to your account if they have a signed agreement on file. The \$300 Scrip requirement will be directly applied to family tuition payments. As a family earns Scrip credit, it will be applied to the family account.

For each gift card purchased, a percentage of the amount (depending on the gift card) will be applied toward this \$300 requirement. If you earn more than the \$300, the money can be:

- Applied directly to your family's individual tuition account to offset tuition
- Donated to the school
- Sent to you at the end of the school year in the form of a check

Gift cards may be purchased in any VRCS school campus office by stopping in or sending your order to school with your child. Gift cards and electronic gift cards may also be purchased through ShopWithScrip.com or the RasieRight Fundraising app by ShopWithScrip.

Tuition Assistance Programs

The Diocese of Erie provides tuition assistance for students through two programs: The Bishop's Tuition Assistance Program and the STAR Foundation grants. Both the Bishop's Tuition Assistance and STAR Program identify families in need of tuition assistance; there are no eligibility requirements nor a pre-determined amount of aid granted. Contact the school office for more information or application forms.

Communication

Parents are invited and strongly encouraged to initiate communication with school staff. Parents may contact the school by phone call, email, paper notes, or by scheduling a conference. Communication from teachers, administration, and school originations will most commonly be sent by email or in Friday Folders. It is imperative that parents/guardians review the Friday Folder contents. During summer break and for some circumstances, information is sent by mail to parents/guardians.

Please contact the school office if you need to update any contact information.

Public School District and Federal Services

St. Stephen School students are eligible for the special services available in the family's school district. For example, if a student's family resides in Oil City School District, that student is eligible for Oil City services. If the student's family lives in Franklin School District, that student is eligible for Franklin services, and so on.

Special services typically provided by the public school districts to students include: bus transportation; school health; hearing and dental exams; part-time school nurse services; the Title I program; speech therapy; and the gifted program. Intermediate Unit #6, through Act 89, provides remedial assistance and enrichment opportunities in mathematics as well as speech and language therapy. Title I services are provided by a certified Reading Specialist to eligible students.

Students are screened on an as needed basis, once referral is present, and the clear need is identified. If qualified, students will be given multiple assessments to determine their academic progress and level of proficiency throughout the year. These assessments align with and support the curriculum of St. Stephen School.

Textbooks and Supplies

Textbooks, Library books, paperbacks, and general school supplies are loaned to students. These are the property of St. Stephen School and must be returned in the condition they were loaned, excepting normal use and wear. Students who do not return textbooks or return them damaged will be required to pay for the repair or replacement.

Academic Information

Teachers and Classes

St. Stephen School is fully accredited (Middle States Association Accreditation) for grades K through 6. All teachers are certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. St. Stephen School also offers a preschool for children ages 3 through 5 years of age.

Parent-Teacher Communication

The primary means of communication between parents and teachers is through notes sent with the child and emails. Teachers also rely heavily upon sending information and notices to families in Friday Folders. It is imperative that parents/guardians review the Friday Folder contents to remain involved in their child's learning and other activities. Parents are expected to sign and return the folder every Monday or the following school day if not in session on Monday.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences for all students are held in the fall on designated conference days (see the school calendar). The parent and teacher must schedule any other conferences. Parents are invited, and strongly encouraged, to contact their child's teacher or the administration for any reason. Parents are reminded to speak to the classroom teacher first to resolve classroom problems.

Report Cards

Report cards are issued four times per year at the end of each nine-week grading period. Progress reports are issued at the midpoint of each nine-week grading period to provide an update on student progress.

Grade Scale

Letter grades are assigned to numerical grade averages based on the following scale:

- A = 93-100
- B = 85-92
- C = 76-84
- D = 69-75
- E = 68 or lower

Homework

Homework provides an important extension of classroom instruction, reinforcing skills and knowledge. Homework is usually assigned nightly. Research has shown that children that complete their homework on a regular basis perform better in school. We want each child to reach his/her optimal academic potential. Parents are the most influential people in their children's lives and can make a positive impact on their child's learning. Here are a few guidelines on how parents can support academics:

- Establish homework as a top priority for their children
- Make sure children do homework in a quiet environment
- Establish a daily homework time
- Provide supportive feedback when homework is completed

Our goal is to teach each child to be responsible for his/her own behavior. Their development in this area will enhance their potential for success. If homework is not consistently completed on time, the consequences are as follows:

- Grades 3, 4 & 5
 - 3 missed homework assignments per grading period – detention
- Grades 6
 - 2 missed homework assignments per teacher, per grading period – detention

Missed Classwork

If a student is absent from school because of illness requests for assignments will be accepted. The request must be made before 9:00 a.m. to allow teachers enough time to gather the classwork and homework, which can be picked up in the office at the end of the day or arranged to be sent home with a sibling.

Plagiarism

If a student is found to plagiarize/cheat, consequences (i.e. detention, getting a zero for the assignment) will be decided on a case by case basis by the teacher/school administration.

Field Trips

Field trips provide educational enrichment and are sought when there is opportunity to extend the learning experience. Parent permission forms will be sent home and secured for all trips. Students will only be allowed to go on a trip if the parent has completed the permission form and it has been returned to the school. If a child has two behavior detentions, per semester, he/she may not be able to go on the next scheduled field trip.

Curricula

St. Stephen School uses the Diocese of Erie curriculum guides and approved textbooks. The Erie Diocese curriculum is available at <https://www.eriercd.org/schools/parents.html>.

Religion and Ethics Education

St. Stephen School provides regular instruction in the Catholic faith and students attend Mass regularly. Students who are not Catholic are expected to receive religious instruction and attend Mass with their classmates. Non-Catholic students are welcome to express their own religious beliefs and make presentations to their class about their religions. Liturgies are conducted in the school gym.

As part of daily school life, both within and outside religion class, emphasis is placed on helping students to develop a sense of caring and respect for others, and social responsibility.

Computer Classes and Technology

St. Stephen School provides integrated computer instruction to students in grades K through 6. Students are encouraged to apply these computer skills to further their life-long learning.

St. Stephen School follows the Diocese of Erie's Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy. All students and parents are required to read this policy, sign the parental and student consent agreement, and send it to school with their child.

St. Stephen School is a 1:1 campus. Each student will be provided with a Chromebook for school use. Chromebook policy can be found on the school website at <https://www.venangocatholic.org/studentinfo>

Phones, personal laptops, iPads, or similar devices are not permitted. The school is not responsible if they are stolen, broken, or lost.

Library

The school library exists as a support service to enhance the intellectual, personal, and social development of our students. Students in all grades have a scheduled weekly library period and are encouraged to check out books. Students with overdue books will not be permitted to check out new books until the overdue books are returned. Students will be asked to pay for any damaged or lost library books.

Academic Honors

Students are recognized for outstanding academic achievement at the end of each grading period beginning in the fourth grade. The following criteria is used for the honors designations:

Principal's List

1. Students must achieve "A's" in all major subjects: religion, science, social studies, English, math, reading/literature, and spelling.
2. Students must achieve "A's" or "B's" or "1's" or "2's" in all minor subjects: physical education, computer, health, music, and art.

Honor Roll

1. Students must achieve at least "B's" in all major subjects: religion, math, social studies, science, English, reading/literature, and spelling.
2. Students must achieve "A's" or "B's" or "1's" or "2's" in all minor subjects: physical education, computer, health, music, and art.

Achievement Awards

1. Students must demonstrate commendable academic effort while falling short of the Principal's List or Honor Roll.

Failure/Retention

A student may be retained if a child is failing one or more classes. Retention decisions will be made on an individual basis by the teacher and administration.

Student Records

Parents and students over the age of 18 have the right to inspect their records upon written request. The federal mandate *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* requires that parents/guardians be

informed of this mandate every school year. Notification is issued at the beginning of every school year. Records may be reviewed by making an appointment with the principal.

Preschool

Preschool is offered for 3 and 4-year old children, and 5-year old children too young to enter kindergarten (children must be 5 years old before September 1 to enroll in kindergarten) and to 5-year old children who might benefit from an additional year of pre-kindergarten experiences. All children attending St. Stephen School must be able to use the toilet on their own.

Non-Academic Information

Catholic Mission Memorandum of Understanding

As a parent/guardian of a student in a Catholic School, I understand, affirm and support the following:

1. The primary purpose of a Catholic school education is to form students in the values of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Church.
2. Catholic schools are distinctive religious educational institutions operated as programs of the Catholic Church; they are not private schools but are administered and supported by the sponsoring parish(es), the diocese, or religious community.
3. Attending a Catholic school is a privilege not a right.
4. While academic excellence and involvement in extracurricular activities (i.e., sports, clubs, etc.) are important, fidelity to the Catholic identity of the school is the fundamental priority.
5. The school and its administration have the responsibility to ensure that Catholic values and moral integrity permeate every facet of the school's life and activity.
6. In all questions involving faith, morals, faith teaching and church law, the final determination rests with the diocesan bishop.

Religious Participation by Non-Catholic Students

Children who are not Catholic are warmly welcomed at St. Stephen School. In order to strengthen the partnership between home and school (the only true formula for educational excellence), we established a policy regarding participation in religious activities and classes by our students who are not Catholic.

The foundation of our school is its religious identity. It is that identity and commitment to religious ideals and values that makes our school distinct from other, non-religious, schools. We believe that it is very important to the continued success and identity of our school that all of our students understand and respect these basic values. For that reason, it is our policy that all students will take part in the regular religious programs of our school.

Having stated that, we also wish to affirm our respect for the individuality and faith commitment of our non-Catholic students. Ecumenism is not an option for us; it is a requirement. No attempt will ever be made to "convert" anyone to the Catholic faith nor shall any non-Catholic student be required to do more than be present with his or her classmates in a respectful manner during any Catholic religious service.

There are many more likenesses than differences among the major faiths, especially regarding moral values. We believe that by the participation of all class members in religion classes and activities, every child will be enriched through each child's unique contribution. We believe that such participation will promote harmony among and respect for the various faith traditions and will in no way endanger the

beliefs of any child (especially since many studies have shown that home and parent example has far greater impact on religious beliefs and practices than does school). Students will be exempt from the memorization of prayers that are contrary to a student's religious beliefs.

Disciplinary Measures

Each member of the St. Stephen School community is expected to accept responsibility for his/her conduct. We recognize some students will need help and encouragement to change their behavior. The following guidelines have been developed to help students grow in their understanding of responsible behavior. Our discipline program is meant to be an opportunity for learning. As such, this discipline code applies to all school-related activities as well as in the classroom.

The following is a list of positive behaviors expected of students at St. Stephen School:

- Display a Christian attitude in words and actions.
- Make moral choices and judgments.
- Respect yourself and others.
- Practice self-discipline and self-control.
- Demonstrate respect for the rights and property of others.
- Resolve differences peacefully.
- Be honest when speaking and writing.
- Be attentive and complete assignments.
- Be on time.
- Dress appropriately.
- Demonstrate responsibility for the welfare of others.

The following consequences to enforce violations of school rules will be used at the teacher's or principal's discretion.

NOTE: The order of listing does not necessarily represent the order of consequence.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| • Warning | • After School Detention |
| • Apology | • In School Suspension |
| • Parent Conferences | • Out of School Suspension |
| • Work Assignments | • Suspension of Bus Privileges |
| • Removal from Class | • Parent Conference with Administration |
| • Limited Privileges | • Expulsion |
| • Behavior Contracts | • Other Consequences Deemed Appropriate |
| • Payment for Damages | |

Students are expected to act in a respectful and appropriate manner including physical displays of affection. Inappropriate contact is not allowed in a school environment. We are asking you as parents to reinforce this at home when the situation arises. Students who do not abide by this rule will be given an afterschool detention. Should the behavior continue, the students risk detention and/or an in school suspension as a consequence. Students are reminded that they are to be young ladies and gentlemen.

Bullying and Cyberbullying

St. Stephen School is committed to providing a safe, positive learning environment for all students. The school recognizes that bullying creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, detracts from the safe environment necessary for student learning, and may lead to violence that is more serious. St. Stephen School prohibits any form of bullying or cyberbullying.

Definitions

“A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself.” Dan Olweus

Bullying is an intentional written, verbal, or physical act or series of acts directed at another person or group of people.

Cyberbullying is an intentional electronic act or series of acts, through the utilization of computers, the Internet, social media, interactive technologies, or any electronic devices that are directed at another person or group of people.

This definition includes three important components:

1. Bullying is aggressive behavior that involves unwanted, negative actions.
2. Bullying involves a pattern of behavior repeated over time.
3. Bullying involves an imbalance of power or strength.

When bullying or cyberbullying occurs in a school setting, that is severe, persistent or pervasive, it has the effect of:

1. Substantial interference with a student’s education.
2. Creation of a threatening environment.
3. Substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.

By definition, a school setting includes the school building itself, school grounds, school vehicles, designated bus stop or at any school sponsored activity, supervised or sanctioned by the school.

Reporting

St. Stephen School encourages students who experience any form of bullying or cyberbullying to promptly report such incidents to a teacher or the principal. In addition, any student, school employee, or person associated with the school is expected to report bullying that is observed.

All complaints of bullying shall be investigated promptly, and corrective action shall be taken when allegations are verified. Confidentiality of all parties shall be maintained. No reprisals or retaliation shall occur as a result of good faith reports of bullying.

Each student shall be responsible to respect the rights of others and to ensure an atmosphere free from bullying.

Every teacher will review this policy annually with students. The policy shall be posted on the school web site.

Consequences for Violations

A student who violates this policy shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, which may include, but shall not be limited to:

- Parental conference
- Loss of school privileges
- Exclusion from school-sponsored activities
- Detention
- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Recommendation for Counseling/Therapy outside of school
- Referral to law enforcement officials

Internet and Social Media

The following are prohibited by students, parents, guardians, and school employees on any social media platforms and any personal websites or blogs:

- Threats or disparaging remarks about the school, its employees or its students.
- Cyberbullying or sexual harassment or any behavior that is ill-mannered or disrespectful.

Consequences for the above will be handled by the administration on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Calendars

Annual School Calendar

At the beginning of each school year, St. Stephen School provides each family with the annual school calendar. Because many students rely on public school transportation, the calendar generally follows Oil City School District's calendar. Make-up days for school closings due to weather are listed on the annual school calendar. School calendars are also available on the school website.

Monthly School Calendar

Before or at the beginning of each month, the school office issues a monthly calendar to each family. The calendar lists a variety of school-related events and their scheduled times, such as athletic events, meetings, concerts, field trips, days when students attend Mass, days when school is not in session, etc. Parents are always invited and encouraged to join us for any event. School calendars are also available on the school website.

Uniform Policy

St. Stephen School has a uniform code to provide direction and cohesion in school attire and to promote a non-competitive atmosphere to unify the image expected of a VRCS student. Students are expected to wear uniforms that are clean and neat while appropriately fitting. Shirts must be tucked in at all times unless they are wearing a banded shirt. All head coverings, unless they are worn for religious purposes, must be removed when entering the building and remain off until exiting, including any dress down days. All hats must be removed when entering the building.

Mass uniforms shall be worn on days that the students attend Mass, Stations of the Cross, and Penance Celebrations. Administration and teachers have the option to require the dress uniform when students are representing the school off-campus, giving in-class presentations, or when honored guests are visiting.

The school crest is optional on all shirts.

School plaid and other uniform apparel is available at www.shaheens.com/venango_region_catholic_school.html

Boy's Uniforms

- Khaki dress pants – no cargo style or jean style rivets
- Khaki walking shorts – until Oct. 15th and after Easter break
- White, black, or red polo shirt – short or long sleeve
- White Oxford shirt – short or long sleeve
- Black or red cardigan/vest/zip fitted fleece
- Black sweatshirt with approved school image, no hooded sweatshirts
- Black or brown dress belt – no large buckle
- Black or brown dress socks – crew length – **no low-cut sport socks**
- Non-athletic dress shoe in a dark color – non-marking sole, no high cut boots
- Mass Uniform: Khaki dress pants, white Oxford shirt, tie (solid color or school plaid), black or brown belt (no shorts)
- All shirts must be tucked in – not rolled at the waist
- Hair must be neatly cut, clean, and well groomed – off the shirt collar and out of eyes – **no faddish colors or styles**
- No earrings
- Gym floor shoes – no street shoes on gym floor

Girl's Uniforms

- School plaid uniform jumper – grades K-3
- School plaid uniform skirt – grades 4-6
- Khaki pleated skirt – all grade levels
All skirts must be hemmed no shorter than two inches above the knee.
Skirts should not be rolled at the waistband.
- Khaki dress pants (full waist, regular rise with straight or tapered legs) – no cargo style, jean style rivets, leggings, crop length
- Khaki walking shorts – until Oct. 15th and after Easter break
- Black or brown dress belt – no large buckle (with dress pants or shorts)
- White, black, or red polo shirt – short or long sleeve
- White tailored blouse – short or long sleeve
- Black or red cardigan/vest/zip fitted fleece
- Black sweatshirt with approved school image, no hooded sweatshirts
- White or black knee-high socks, tights, or rolled dress socks – no athletic socks of any type
- Non-athletic dress shoe in a dark color – non-marking sole, no clogs, slides, sandals, open-toed shoes, crocs, etc.
- Mass Uniform: Uniform skirt or jumper, white dress blouse (no dress pants or shorts)
- Hair accessories can only be school plaid, black, red or white – no costume accessories are permissible
- Hair must be clean and well-groomed and out of eyes – no faddish colors or styles
- Jewelry must be simple and small
- Make-up is not permitted
- Gym floor shoes – no street shoes on gym floor

Gym Uniforms

- Shorts or sweat pants of appropriate length and fit
- T-Shirt – must have sleeves, crew neck, school appropriate
- Gym socks
- Tennis shoes – non-marking soles, no street shoes on gym floor
- **DUE TO COVID-19 STUDENTS WILL NOT CHANGE**

Consequences for Uniform Violations

- **First Offense:** Verbal warning to students with parent notification via prepared form that parents must sign and return.
- **Second Offense:** Student will call home or work to notify parent of infraction. Parents must make arrangements with school to bring in proper attire. If this cannot be done, the student will serve a lunch detention.
- **Subsequent Offenses** will result in after school detention.

Dress Code for Non-Uniform Days

Several times throughout the year, opportunity will arise in which students do not have to wear their uniforms. The following guidelines must be followed during a non-uniform day to ensure appropriate dress during school activities:

- Students must wear clothing that fits appropriately and is not offensive to others.
- **Shorts and skirts should be no shorter than fingertip length with arms extended.**
- Revealing clothing is not permitted (i.e. tank top, bare midriffs, and halter-tops). Shoulder strap must be at least 3 fingers wide.
- Clothing with obscene or suggestive language, advertising tobacco or alcohol products is not permitted.
- Appropriate footwear must be worn.
- Pants must be worn at the waistline.
- Skirts and pant legs must be shorter than floor length.
- Hats are not to be worn in the building.

School Supplies

Parents supply their child(ren) with basic school supplies such as pencils, pens, crayons, glue, scissors, etc. The school list of supplies is sent home to families with the last report card of the year for the following year, available on the school website, or available upon request. Students in grades 1 through 6 must purchase an assignment notebook for their grade level from the school office.

Daily Arrival and Dismissal

School hours are between 8:05 a.m. and 2:55 p.m. for all students. Busing is provided by the various surrounding school districts and Venango Catholic Jr./Sr. High School. All questions regarding busing should be directed to the school district in which the student resides. For further assistance, please contact the school office.

School buses pick up and drop off students at the West 3rd Street doors. Parents must not park in the bus lanes when picking up or delivering children.

Arrival

Students are not to arrive before 7:30 a.m. Classes begin promptly at 8:05 a.m. Students who arrive after 8:05 a.m. need to ring the bell for entrance to the school and must go to the office for a tardy slip before going to class. Repeated tardy infractions will result in a demerit.

Students will be greeted at the West 3rd Street doors or the Reed Street/West 3rd Street doors (Mary Statue Doors). Students arriving at school, are to report directly to their classrooms.

Dismissal

Staggered dismissal times begin at 2:55 p.m. for all bus riders. Students who walk home or are transported by private vehicles will be dismissed at 3:05 p.m. using the Reed Street/West 3rd Street doors (Mary Statue Doors). Changes in your child's dismissal arrangements must be received no later than 2:30 p.m. for your child's safety. After 3:10 p.m., your child will be escorted to the school office where he or she may be picked up.

School Bus Transportation

While on the bus, students are expected to behave appropriately and with respect towards the driver and other passengers. The discipline policy of St. Stephen School and the policy of the school district providing transportation, apply for all St. Stephen School bus riders.

If a student will be taking another form of transportation home or they are staying after school, the school needs to be notified either in writing or by phone by 2:30 p.m.

All questions regarding busing should be directed to the school district in which the student resides. For further assistance, please contact the school office.

School Closings and Delays

St. Stephen School follows the calendar of Oil City School District; therefore, in cases of inclement weather, we will follow the decisions made by Oil City School District's superintendent. If Oil City is closed or on a delay, then St. Stephen School will also be closed or on a delay. If school is closed all school events and after school activities are also cancelled for the day.

St. Stephen School draws students from many local school districts. If your home district is cancelled, students are not required to report to school. For example, if Clarion Area School District is cancelled due to inclement weather, students from that district are not required to report to school. This only applies to weather related closings and delays. For example, if school is cancelled in a home district due to a power outage, VRCS students are still expected to attend school at our campuses.

The decision may be made to postpone school for two hours rather than cancel school should there be reason to believe that conditions may improve. In the event of a two-hour delay, the following schedule will be utilized; the main doors of all schools will open at 9:30 a.m. Students should report directly to their classrooms as they normally do. All classes will begin at 10:05 a.m. for elementary students.

The decision to close or delay will be (in most cases) made by 6:00 a.m. If the decision is made to postpone, the superintendents of the local school districts will reevaluate the decision and weather conditions to determine if school will remain open or be canceled.

Weather-related closing or delays will be announced through School Reach, our school broadcast system. Closings and delays will also be available through Forever Media radio stations, and social media. It is the parent's responsibility to monitor the media to determine the status of school closings and transportation schedules. If you do not have access to social media or radio, please make arrangements with a dependable family member who will call you when he or she is aware of the closing.

Please keep in mind that weather conditions may deteriorate during the course of the day, and the need may arise to dismiss students early. Should an early dismissal occur, students will be sent home via their normal method of transportation. Parents should develop a contingency plan for child care needs in the event of a school delay, closing, or early dismissal. If your contingency plan requires different means of transportation rather than the usual method, please inform the school when the need arises.

Remember, our main means of communicating inclement weather to you is through our school broadcast system School Reach. It is crucial that you have an emergency number in the system. Please notify the school if you have additional work, cell phone, or other numbers that need to be included.

Student Absence & Tardiness

St. Stephen School affirms that regular attendance at school is important to student development, readiness to learn, and social and academic progress. St. Stephen School is committed to providing a school environment that enforces the compulsory attendance law through proactive cooperation among students, parents, administrators, teachers, district judges, juvenile probation, and the Office of Children and Youth. St. Stephen School is responsible for monitoring and maintaining records of the attendance of students. We want every child to succeed in school. If a child is not here, they are missing valuable information and instruction. Please have your child to school on time every day.

Lawful Excuses

Absences and tardiness are considered excused when a student is prevented from attendance for mental or physical illness, family emergency, death of a family member, medical or dental appointments, authorized school activities, and educational travel of five or fewer days.

For educational travel, parents must submit an Educational Travel Application for advanced permission from the principal for a child to miss school. Educational Travel Days (up to five full days per school year), count as part of the ten days absent without a doctor's excuse. All requests must be submitted two weeks prior to the student's absence and be preapproved by the principal. Failure to obtain preapproval for an absence for educational travel will result in an unlawful absence. Permission is given on a case-by-case basis. All missed assignments will be given upon the child's return to the school.

If a student needs to be away for more than five days for extenuating circumstances, it must be preapproved by the school principal.

In addition, lawful absences include student attendance at court hearings related to the student's involvement with the Office of Children and Youth or juvenile probation. It is the responsibility of St. Stephen School to determine the validity of all excuses.

Cumulative Lawful Absences

A maximum of ten days of cumulative lawful absences verified by written notification are permitted during a school year. All absences beyond ten cumulative days require a written excuse from a physician.

Unlawful Absences

An absence for which the school has not received a written excuse from the parent/guardian and is not listed as a lawful excuse or has advance permission to be away for educational travel, is considered an unlawful excuse. If an excuse is not received within three days of the absence, the absence is permanently counted as unlawful.

Truancy

A student is considered truant when he/she is absent for three or more days without a valid excuse. After three unexcused absences, the truant officer for Oil City Schools and Children and Youth Services will be contacted. The truant officer will issue fines if deemed necessary. The public school district is responsible for enforcing the Pennsylvania compulsory attendance laws.

Half Day Absences

Students who arrive after 9:30 a.m. will be marked for a half day absence. Students who depart before 1:15 p.m. will be marked for a half day absence. In all incidents of late arrival or early dismissal please contact the school secretary to clarify any questions regarding attendance.

Tardiness

Students are considered tardy if they are not in their classrooms by 8:05 a.m. Tardy students must obtain a tardy slip from the office before going to their classrooms. Tardiness due to bus delays is not counted against the student; however, the student must report to the office prior to reporting to the classroom to let staff know of their arrival.

Consequences for Unexcused Tardiness

After the child has been considered tardy three times, except for the exceptions previously listed, he/she must stay for detention to make-up-missed work. For every 300 total minutes that a child is late due to tardiness that is not excused, one unexcused absence will be assessed.

School Lunch Program

Students must bring their own lunches. We encourage students to bring lunches that contain healthy choices to school. Lunches should be packaged in a way that students are capable of opening all items on their own. Soft drinks are not allowed. Students are asked to bring their own utensils.

School Health Program

Please contact the school to discuss any health problems or attendance concerns. The teachers, administration, and school nurse can make necessary adjustments to ensure your child's safety and continued participation in school.

Accidents and Illness at School

If a child is injured or becomes ill at school, the teacher, staff, and/or school nurse will assess your child and determine if parent/guardian needs to be notified. If the school nurse is not in the building, they may be called to be consulted. If the parents are not available, then the person designated as the child's emergency contact will be notified. Emergency contacts need to be in our area so their response time does not endanger the child. Be sure to keep the school informed of any changes in telephone numbers, addresses, places of employment, and emergency contacts.

Immunization Requirements

All children must be immunized against the following diseases before admission to school.

- Diphtheria
- Tetanus
- Polio
- Measles
- Rubella
- Mumps
- Hepatitis

Screenings

Our goal is to assist all children to be as healthy as possible so they may profit the most from being in school. With this goal in mind, the following screenings are completed each fall.

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Pediculosis (head lice) | All Students |
| Vision | All Students |
| Hearing | Kindergarten through Grade 3 |
| Height/Weight | All Students |
| Scoliosis | Grade 6 |
| Physical | Kindergarten & Grade 6 |
| Dental | Grade 3 |

Following the screening, your child will bring home a paper informing you of their participation. The school nurse, following the screening, will retest anyone who does not pass the initial screening. You will be notified at that time if there is a need for any further evaluation.

It is recommended that physical and dental examinations be done by the child's private physician and dentist. If they are not done privately, they will be done in school. Parents will be notified and are urged to attend.

Illnesses & Hospitalizations

A confidential health record is kept for each child. Please let the school/nurse know if your child's health status changes or if your child is on any medications. The nurse, teacher, and administration can make necessary adjustments to ensure your child's safety and continued participation in school.

St. Stephen School requires that students be kept home from school when the child has a fever of 99°F or higher, or is experiencing vomiting or diarrhea. Parents are not to medicate for a fever and send the child to school. A parent will be required to pick a child up from school should he or she experience such symptoms during the school day.

Medications

Medication should be administered to students during school hours only when necessary. No medication, including cough drops (neither prescription nor over-the-counter), will be administered to students by school staff unless written authorization including parent/guardian's and physician's signatures is provided. New forms will be required for any change to dosage or frequency.

Medication must be provided in the original pharmacy or over-the-counter container properly labeled with the child's name. Medications are kept secured in the school health office or school office. Contact the school office with any questions.

Remember the nurse is willing to answer any questions or concerns you may have regarding your child's health. No medications, including over-the-counter as well as prescribed drugs are to be kept in student desks, gym bags, book bags, or pockets.

Communicable Diseases

The following are Pennsylvania Department of Health requirements regarding school attendance and communicable diseases. If you suspect your child has one of the following, please consult a physician before sending him/her to school. If your child has been diagnosed by a physician as having one of the following conditions, your child is to be kept home from school for the indicated period of time. The school, if they suspect one of the following conditions, may require you to obtain a note from the physician before returning to school.

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Mumps, Measles and Rubella | Diagnosis and recommendation by physician necessary. |
| Chicken Pox | Six days from last crop vesicles. |
| Scarlet Fever | Not less than seven (7) days from the onset or 24 hours from the institution of antibiotic therapy. |
| Pink Eye | Must be excluded from school until the eye is clear or has been diagnosed by a physician to determine it is no longer contagious. |
| Impetigo | Physician diagnosis and treatment indicated. Child may return to school with written notification from the doctor that the condition is no longer contagious. |
| Tonsillitis or Strep Throat | 24 hours from the beginning of antibiotic therapy. |
| Scabies | 24 hours after treatment. |
| Ringworm | Until judged non-infectious by a physician. |
| Pediculosis Capitis (head lice) | If you have treated your child for head lice, it is mandatory that all nits (eggs) be removed from your child's hair before they can return to school. The lice shampoo must be repeated again in 8 to 10 days, as this will kill any nits that may have been missed, have hatched, and are not now live lice. |

Pediculosis Capitis (Head Lice) Guidelines

Exclusion:

1. A child shall be excluded from school as soon as evidence of nits or lice is found. Exclusion shall be until after he/she has been treated with a pediculicide and all lice and nits are removed.
2. The nurse or other school official shall notify the parent/guardian of the head lice infestation by telephone and/or by a confirming letter.
3. If a child has been identified as having a head lice infestation, every attempt will be made to contact parent/guardian to provide transportation home for the child. If the parent/guardian has no transportation or is unable to be contacted by the school, the child will be excluded from the classroom for the remainder of that school day and an alternative study area will be provided. The student will be sent home at the regular time on the regular route.
4. Public School District Policy applies in this situation and allows for no more that three (3) days of absence per incidence of head lice infestation and treatment. Additional days absent will be counted as unexcused/illegal and citations for absences may be filed as per district attendance policy. Students may be allowed to make up all schoolwork missed during their absence.
5. Following the third (3rd) occurrence of Pediculosis Capitis all subsequent exclusions from school for Pediculosis Capitis will be deemed illegal/unexcused absences. Citations for illegal/unexcused absences will be filed as per district attendance policy. Students may be allowed to make up schoolwork missed during their absence.

Readmission:

1. The student must receive appropriate treatment with a pediculicide.

2. The student must have all of the live lice nits (eggs) removed from their hair.
3. The student may not ride the bus or attend classes until after he/she has been rechecked by the school nurse. Therefore, parent/guardian must bring the student to be checked by the school nurse after the head lice are treated and the child is free of lice and nits. The parent/guardian is expected to stay at the school until the head lice examination is completed by the school nurse.
4. The parent/guardian must provide documentation of the pediculicide and the date it was used.

Follow Up:

1. The school nurse shall recheck all infested students before they may re-enter the school and encourage parent/guardian to repeat pediculicide application per product instruction.
2. The school nurse shall check an infested student's school-age siblings.
3. The school nurse will check classmates, best friends, and relatives as warranted.
4. The school nurse will recheck students within 7-10 days from readmission.

Volunteers

St. Stephen School enjoys significant volunteerism by parents, alumni, and community members. Parent volunteers serve our school in countless ways; coordinating class parties, assisting as field trip chaperones, helping in the classroom, assisting with maintenance and development projects. All volunteers must complete the appropriate paperwork which can be obtained in the school office or the school website. <https://www.venangocatholic.org/safeenvironment/>

Occasional Volunteers

Before working with children in any school, occasional volunteers must have the following documents and clearances:

- The PA State Police Criminal Record Check (every five years)
- The PA Department of Human Services Child Abuse History Certification (every five years)
- A signed diocesan Mandated Reporter Compliance Document (once a year)
- A signed diocesan Occasional Volunteer Conduct Form (once a year)
- Their names listed on either the diocesan Occasional Volunteer List or a Sign-in/Sign-out sheet whenever they work with children
- Clearance from the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth

Regular Volunteers

Before working with children in any school, all volunteers must have the following documents and clearances:

- A signed Statement of Intent for Compliance indicating the person has received, read and agrees to conform to the diocesan Policy for the Protection of Children.
- The PA State Police Criminal Record Check (every five years)
- The PA Department of Human Services Child Abuse History Certification (every five years)
- One of the following:
 - a. The Federal Criminal Record Check which includes fingerprinting (every five years) (required for any volunteer who has not been a continuous resident of Pennsylvania for ten years)
 - b. Affidavit as required by PA law (for all other volunteers).

- A completed diocesan Application for Adults Working with Children and Youth
- State Mandated Reporter Training (every five years)
- A signed diocesan Mandated Reporter Compliance Document (every year)
- Clearance from the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth

Home and School Association

The Home and School Association provides financial support to the school along with providing extra activities for students such as field trips and presentations. They also work closely with new families, disseminating information and support as they navigate a new school environment. Finally, the Home and School Association provides assistance to the classroom teachers with projects and an always-present sense of moral support.

Sports and Extra-curricular Activities

Academic Requirement

All athletes must maintain a C average in all major subjects (major subjects are religion, science, math, English, social studies, and reading/literature).

If a student earns a D average in a major subject:

- First week - warning
- Second week – ineligible – if there has been an opportunity to improve the grade.
- D average may be considered acceptable in the case of exceptional effort.

Attendance Requirement

Students must attend school a full day of school in order attend any extra-curricular activities on that day. Exceptions to the above are those students who have pre-excused absences such as doctor or dental appointments, funerals, or other approved personal reason. A student will be considered to have attended a full day if he or she is in attendance by 9:30 a.m. and attends the remainder of the day.

Incomplete Assignments and Conduct

If a student has a detention for incomplete homework or inappropriate conduct, the student must sit on the bench for the next game. He or she must be in full uniform. The status of the student will be communicated by the teacher to the Principal who will notify the Athletic Director.

Basketball

St. Stephen School participates in boys' and girls' basketball on the junior varsity level, playing other Catholic schools in the northwestern Pennsylvania area. Junior varsity teams are comprised of 4th, 5th and 6th grade students. The girls' basketball season is from September into November, while the boys' basketball season runs from November through February.

Students in grade K-2 may participate in our Little Dribblers Program. This program is co-ed and provides an introduction to basketball. The participants meet once a week during the fall. The program is

run by the junior varsity basketball coaches along with parent volunteers. At the end of the program, the Little Dribblers demonstrate their newly acquired skills during the half time at girls' basketball games.

Cheerleading

Cheerleading is offered to girls in grades 4-6 and they cheer at the junior varsity boys' basketball games. Practices are held at the discretion of the coaches.

Application for Educational Travel

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Student Name | Parent/Guardian Name |
| Contact Phone Number | Contact Email |
| Date of First Day of Absence | Date of Return to School |
| Location of Trip | |
| Reason for Travel | |
| Educational Opportunities and Objectives | |
| Parent/Guardian Signature | Date |
| Parent/Guardian Signature | Date |

Approved

Denied

| | |
|---------------------|------|
| Principal Notes | |
| Principal Signature | Date |