



Building a foundation for lifelong achievement.

Student-Parent Handbook

2026-2027 Academic Year

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Quick Reference Guide

The information below is provided for your convenience. Additional details about each topic can be found throughout this handbook.

School Information	Details
School Hours	8:05 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Building Opens	7:30 a.m.
Bus Dismissal	2:55 p.m.
Parent Pickup/Walkers	3:00 p.m.
Main Office	(814) 677-3035

Attendance Line/Email	office@venangocatholic.org
School Website	venangocatholic.org
FACTS Family Portal	https://sis.factsmat.com/family-portal?DistrictCode=VR-PA
Friday Knight Lights	Weekly School Newsletter, Delivered by email Friday afternoon

Important Contacts	Information
Principal	Katherine Chandley
Director of Advancement	Misti Kresinski
Director of Finance	Beth Metz

Quick Reminders	Information
Report an Absence	See Attendance section
Dismissal Changes	Notify the school office by 2:15 p.m.
Chromebook Policy	See Academic Excellence
Uniform Information	See Student Life

1. Welcome

Welcome from the Principal

Dear Students and Families,

Welcome to St. Stephen School! It is my joy to welcome you to a community where faith, learning, and service come together each day. Whether you are joining us for the first time or returning for another school year, we are grateful that you are part of our St. Stephen family.

At St. Stephen School, we believe every child is created in the image of God and possesses unique gifts and talents. Our mission is to nurture those gifts through a strong Catholic education that challenges students academically, forms them spiritually, and prepares them to become compassionate leaders and faithful disciples of Christ.

Our school is built upon three guiding pillars: Academic Excellence, Catholic Identity, and Community. These pillars shape everything we do—from the lessons taught in our classrooms to the relationships we build, the service we provide, and the expectations we set for ourselves each day.

This handbook is designed to be a resource for students and families. It explains our programs, policies, and expectations while reflecting the values that define our school community. I encourage you to read it carefully and refer to it throughout the year. Most importantly, I hope it demonstrates our commitment to partnering with you in your child's education.

Thank you for entrusting us with this important responsibility. Together, through faith, hard work, and mutual respect, we will help every student build a solid foundation for lifelong achievement and a life rooted in Christ.

On behalf of our faculty and staff, welcome to the St. Stephen School family. We look forward to partnering with you in helping your child grow in faith, knowledge, and character. May God bless you throughout the coming school year.

Katherine Chandley
Principal

Our Mission

Faithful to the Roman Catholic tradition, St. Stephen School, will educate children to be people of faith and service guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Church. We will prepare students to be critical thinkers and to lead lives of integrity.

2. Our School

Effective Catholic schools are built upon strong governance and faithful leadership. Governance provides mission-centered oversight and strategic direction, while school leadership is responsible for the daily operation of the school and the implementation of its mission. Together, the Diocese of Erie, the Venango Region Catholic School System Board of Directors, and the administration of St. Stephen School work collaboratively to ensure that our school remains faithful to its mission while providing an outstanding Catholic education.

Governance

- Regional school vs. parish school
- Board of Directors
- Bylaws
- Relationship to the Diocese
- Stakeholder participation at Board meetings

Leadership

The leadership of St. Stephen School is shared among professionals with expertise in educational leadership, finance, advancement, and school operations. Working collaboratively, the leadership team ensures that the school's mission is reflected in every aspect of school life while supporting the long-term vitality of the school.

The **principal** serves as the educational and administrative leader of the school and is responsible for the day-to-day operation of St. Stephen School. The principal provides leadership for the school's academic program, Catholic identity, faculty and staff, student life, and the implementation of Board and diocesan policies.

The **Director of Finance** provides leadership in the areas of financial management, budgeting, tuition administration, and stewardship of the school's financial resources, working closely with the Board of Directors to ensure responsible fiscal oversight.

The **Director of Advancement** provides leadership in enrollment, marketing, communications, fundraising, alumni relations, and community engagement. This role supports the long-term growth and sustainability of St. Stephen School by strengthening relationships with families, donors, alumni, and the broader community.

Together, the leadership team works collaboratively with the Board of Directors, faculty, staff, families, and the Diocese of Erie to advance the mission of St. Stephen School.

Authority of School Personnel

At St. Stephen School, every faculty and staff member shares in the responsibility of advancing the mission of the school and fostering a culture of faith, academic excellence, and service. While specific responsibilities are assigned to members of the leadership team, all school personnel are entrusted with providing a safe, respectful, and orderly learning environment where every student is known, challenged, supported, and encouraged to grow into the person God created them to be.

To fulfill this responsibility, faculty and staff members are authorized to establish classroom expectations, supervise students, enforce school policies, and make reasonable decisions necessary to maintain a safe and productive learning environment. Students are expected to follow the directions of all school personnel and to treat every member of the school community with respect.

The principal serves as the chief educational and administrative leader of the school and has the authority to interpret and enforce school policies, make decisions regarding the operation of the school, and address situations that may not be specifically addressed within this handbook. The principal reserves the right to amend or modify policies when necessary to ensure the safety, well-being, and best interests of the school community.

Admissions

At St. Stephen School, we believe that every child is created in the image and likeness of God and deserves the opportunity to grow academically, spiritually, socially, and emotionally in a faith-filled community. We welcome families who desire an education rooted in **Academic Excellence, Catholic Identity, and Community** and who are committed to partnering with the school in fulfilling its mission.

As a Catholic school of the Diocese of Erie, St. Stephen School welcomes students of all faith backgrounds. While students are not required to be Catholic to enroll, all families are expected to support the mission of the school and respect its Catholic identity, including participation in the religious life and educational programs of the school.

Successful Catholic education is built upon a partnership between the school and the family. Parents, as the primary educators of their children, are expected to actively support the mission, policies, and expectations of St. Stephen School.

Catholic Mission Memorandum of Understanding

St. Stephen School is a Catholic educational institution whose primary mission is to form students in the teachings, values, and example of Jesus Christ and the Catholic

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Church. Families who choose St. Stephen School become partners in supporting this mission and the Catholic identity that guides all aspects of school life.

As part of the admissions and enrollment process, parents and guardians are asked to acknowledge the **Catholic Mission Memorandum of Understanding** established by the Diocese of Erie. The memorandum affirms that families understand and support the Catholic identity and mission of the school, including the integration of faith and Catholic teaching throughout academics, student life, extracurricular activities, and the broader school community.

St. Stephen School warmly welcomes families of all faith traditions who desire a Catholic education for their children. Enrollment does not require a family to be Catholic; however, all families are expected to understand, respect, and support the Catholic mission of the school. All students participate in Religion classes and in the religious life of the school as appropriate, including prayer, Mass, service, and other faith-based activities.

Parents and guardians are expected to review and acknowledge the Catholic Mission Memorandum of Understanding as part of their commitment to partnership with St. Stephen School.

Title IX

While reserving the right to make religious exemptions 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, being denied the benefits of, or being 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>

Tuition & Financial Commitment

At St. Stephen School, we believe that every child should have the opportunity to receive an outstanding Catholic education. Through the generous support of our parishes, donors, fundraising efforts, and tuition assistance programs, we strive to make a St. Stephen education accessible to as many families as possible.

While tuition helps offset a portion of the cost of educating each student, it does not cover the full cost of a St. Stephen education. The continued partnership of our families, parish communities, benefactors, and volunteers makes our mission possible.

Tuition

Tuition rates are established annually by the Venango Region Catholic School System Board of Directors and are approved prior to each enrollment period.

Current tuition rates and payment options are published annually and are available through the school office and the school's website.

Tuition Assistance

St. Stephen School is committed to making Catholic education affordable for all families. Tuition assistance is available through diocesan and school-sponsored programs. Families are required to apply annually, regardless of income, as additional assistance may be available through multiple funding sources.

Information regarding tuition assistance deadlines and application procedures is provided during the enrollment and re-enrollment process.

Financial Partnership

Families are expected to meet all tuition and financial obligations in accordance with their tuition agreement. If financial circumstances change during the school year, families are encouraged to contact the Director of Finance as soon as possible so that appropriate assistance or payment arrangements may be explored.

Our goal is to work collaboratively with families whenever possible while ensuring the financial sustainability of St. Stephen School.

Because tuition alone does not cover the full cost of educating each student, St. Stephen School relies on the active participation of families in fundraising and school community initiatives. Information regarding annual fundraising expectations and opportunities is provided each school year.

3. Family Partnership & Communication

At St. Stephen School, we believe that a child's education is most successful when families and the school work together in a spirit of trust, respect, and shared responsibility. Parents are the primary educators of their children, and our faculty and staff are privileged to partner with families in supporting each student's academic, spiritual, social, and emotional growth.

Our partnership is rooted in open communication, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to the mission of St. Stephen School. We encourage families to become

active participants in school life by communicating regularly with teachers, supporting learning at home, volunteering when possible, and participating in the many activities that strengthen our school community.

Together, we strive to create an environment where every child is known, challenged, supported, and encouraged to grow in faith, knowledge, and character.

Family Partnership

At St. Stephen School, we believe that the education of a child is most successful when parents and the school work together as partners. Parents, as the primary educators of their children, play an essential role in fostering a love of learning, supporting faith formation, and encouraging responsible behavior.

We ask every family to actively support the mission, values, and policies of St. Stephen School by:

- Encouraging regular attendance and punctuality.
- Supporting learning and completing assignments at home.
- Reinforcing the school's expectations for behavior and respect.
- Maintaining open and respectful communication with teachers and school staff.
- Participating in school activities and events whenever possible.
- Supporting fundraising and stewardship efforts that strengthen our school community.
- Modeling Christian values through words and actions.

Together, we create a school community where students can thrive academically, spiritually, and socially.

Parent Partnership Program

The purpose of the Parent Partnership Program is to drive **engagement, volunteerism, and community building** within St. Stephen's School and our local area. This program will provide opportunities for school families to engage in their preferred way, offering credit for contributing their time, talent, and treasure.

Each school family will have a **\$300.00 Parent Partnership** charge applied to their tuition account. Throughout the year, families will have the **opportunity to offset or negate** this charge by participating in the program in ways such as volunteering at events, soliciting sponsorships, and donating raffle prizes

The outline of the Parent Partnership Program is included in the appendix.

Volunteers

At St. Stephen School, we are blessed by the generosity of parents, grandparents, alumni, parishioners, and community members who share their time and talents in support of our students. Volunteers enrich our school community in countless ways, including assisting in classrooms, chaperoning field trips, coordinating special events, supporting fundraising efforts, and helping with school projects.

While we warmly welcome volunteers, the safety and well-being of our students is our highest priority. To ensure a safe environment for every child, the Diocese of Erie requires all volunteers who work with children to complete the appropriate application, training, and clearance process **before** serving in the school.

We understand that the clearance process may seem overwhelming, especially for first-time volunteers. Please know that our staff is happy to guide you through each step and answer any questions along the way. We encourage all interested volunteers to contact the school office for assistance.

For the most current requirements, forms, and instructions, families are encouraged to contact the school office or visit the Diocese of Erie's Office for the Protection of Children and Youth website.

Fundraising & Stewardship

At St. Stephen School, we believe that providing an exceptional Catholic education is a shared responsibility. While tuition provides an important source of revenue, it does not cover the full cost of educating each student. The generosity of our parishes, donors, volunteers, fundraising efforts, and scholarship programs allows us to provide an outstanding Catholic education while keeping tuition significantly below the actual cost of education.

Fundraising is not simply about raising money—it is an opportunity for our school community to come together in support of our mission. Every fundraiser helps provide resources for academic programs, student experiences, facility improvements, and tuition assistance while ensuring that Catholic education remains accessible to families.

Although St. Stephen School is blessed to have a Director of Advancement who provides leadership for fundraising, marketing, and community engagement,

successful fundraising requires the participation of our entire school community. ***Every family has unique gifts and talents to share, and the continued success of our school depends on all of us working together.***

As part of our commitment to this shared mission, each family is expected to participate in the school's fundraising efforts and fulfill the annual Parent Partnership requirements, including volunteer hours. These expectations are not intended as an additional burden but as an opportunity for families to become actively involved in the life of the school while helping sustain the mission of Catholic education.

Throughout the school year, families can expect opportunities to support a variety of fundraising initiatives, which may include:

- School-wide fundraising campaigns
- Community events and celebrations
- Raffles or ticket sales
- Sponsorship opportunities
- Volunteer opportunities
- RaiseRight participation
- Other special fundraising initiatives as determined by the school

Specific fundraising events, volunteer opportunities, and Parent Partnership expectations are communicated to families at the beginning of each school year and throughout the year.

RaiseRight

RaiseRight is an important part of St. Stephen School's fundraising program and provides families with an easy way to support the school through everyday purchases. Whether shopping for groceries, gas, dining, travel, or online purchases, families can generate fundraising rebates without spending anything beyond their normal household budget.

Each family is expected to contribute \$300 annually through RaiseRight fundraising rebates during the school's fundraising year, which runs from July 1 through June 30. A signed RaiseRight Agreement Form must be on file before purchases can be credited to a family's account. Friends and family members are also welcome to participate, and their purchases may be credited to your account when an agreement form is on file.

RaiseRight rebates are applied directly toward the family's annual fundraising requirement. If a family generates more than the required amount, the additional rebates may be:

- Applied toward the family's tuition account

- Donated to St. Stephen School
- Issued to the family as a check at the conclusion of the fundraising year

Most families find the RaiseRight mobile app to be the easiest way to participate. Digital gift cards can often be purchased and used immediately from a smartphone, making it simple to generate fundraising rebates while shopping. Families may also purchase physical gift cards through the school office or participate through the RaiseRight website and its online shopping opportunities.

Additional information, enrollment instructions, and assistance with the RaiseRight program are available through the school office.

Our Commitment to Communication

At St. Stephen School, we believe that effective communication is essential to a strong partnership between home and school. Open, honest, and respectful communication fosters trust, strengthens relationships, and helps us work together to support the academic, spiritual, social, and emotional growth of every student.

We are committed to providing timely, accurate, and meaningful communication so that families remain informed and engaged in the life of our school. Throughout the school year, information may be shared through a variety of communication methods, including the FACTS Family Portal, email, *Friday Knight Lights*, our weekly school newsletter, classroom communications, the school website, social media, and other school publications.

While we strive to communicate through multiple channels, families are encouraged to regularly review school communications and reach out with questions whenever clarification is needed.

Family Communication

Successful communication is a shared responsibility between the school and families. Parents play a vital role in fostering a positive partnership by remaining informed, communicating openly and respectfully, and working collaboratively with faculty and staff to support their child's success.

To strengthen this partnership, families are asked to:

- Read school communications regularly, including Friday Knight Lights, the FACTS Family Portal, and email correspondence.
- Maintain current contact information, including phone numbers, email addresses, mailing addresses, and emergency contacts.

- Notify the school promptly of changes that may affect a student's academic progress, health, safety, or emotional well-being.
- Communicate questions or concerns in a timely, respectful, and solution-oriented manner.
- Support school policies and partner with teachers and administrators in helping students grow academically, spiritually, and socially.
- Model Christian values by treating all members of the school community with kindness, respect, and professionalism.

Together, through open communication and mutual respect, we build a strong partnership that supports every student's success and strengthens the St. Stephen School community.

Resolving Questions & Concerns

At St. Stephen School, we believe that questions and concerns are best addressed through open, respectful, and timely communication. We are committed to working collaboratively with families to resolve concerns in a spirit of Christian charity, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to what is best for our students.

Whenever possible, parents are encouraged to communicate directly with the individual who is most closely connected to the situation. Addressing concerns at the appropriate level often leads to the quickest and most effective resolution while strengthening the partnership between home and school.

Parents are asked to assume positive intentions, seek understanding, and work collaboratively toward solutions. We believe that respectful dialogue strengthens relationships and reflects the values of our Catholic faith.

Chain of Communication

In most situations, concerns should be addressed in the following order:

1. **Classroom Teacher** – Questions regarding classroom instruction, assignments, student behavior, grades, or other classroom matters should first be discussed with the classroom teacher.
2. **Principal** – If a concern cannot be resolved after communication with the teacher, or if the matter involves school-wide policies, administration, or student safety, parents are encouraged to contact the principal.
3. **Board of Directors** – Matters related to the governance of the Venango Region Catholic School System may be brought before the Board of Directors in accordance with the Board's Stakeholder Participation Policy. The Board does not become involved in matters related to individual students, personnel, or the

day-to-day administration of the school, as these responsibilities are delegated to the principal.

By following this process, we promote effective communication, collaborative problem-solving, and a school community built on trust, respect, and shared responsibility.

Our shared goal is always to work together in a manner that supports our students, strengthens our school community, and reflects the love and respect that are at the heart of our Catholic faith.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences provide an important opportunity for families and teachers to work together in support of each student's academic, social, emotional, and spiritual growth. These conversations strengthen the partnership between home and school by celebrating student successes, discussing areas for continued growth, and identifying strategies to help each student reach their fullest potential.

Formal **teacher-led** parent-teacher conferences are held annually during the **week of Thanksgiving**. During these conferences, teachers share information about each student's academic progress, classroom performance, work habits, and overall development while providing parents with an opportunity to ask questions and discuss their child's educational experience.

At St. Stephen School, we believe that meaningful communication should occur throughout the school year and not be limited to scheduled conference times. Whenever possible, questions or concerns should first be discussed directly with the classroom teacher, who is most familiar with the student's daily academic and classroom experience.

Parents are welcome to request a conference with a teacher at any time if they believe a question or concern would benefit from a face-to-face conversation rather than email or telephone communication. Likewise, teachers may request an in-person conference whenever they feel it would be beneficial to discuss a student's academic progress, behavior, or overall well-being.

By working together through open communication, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to student success, families and teachers strengthen the partnership that allows every child to flourish in **Academic Excellence, Catholic Identity, and Community**.

Communication Methods

St. Stephen School utilizes a variety of communication methods to ensure families receive timely and accurate information throughout the school year. Families are encouraged to regularly review these communication channels to stay informed about school news, upcoming events, important announcements, and their child's academic progress.

- *FACTS Family Portal*
 - The **FACTS Family Portal** serves as the school's primary student information system. Families may access grades, attendance, assignments, report cards, school calendars, tuition information, and other important school documents through the portal. Parents are encouraged to regularly monitor the FACTS Family Portal to remain informed of their child's academic progress.
- *Email*
 - Email is one of the primary methods of communication between the school and families. Parents should ensure that the school always has a current email address on file and are encouraged to check email regularly for important announcements, classroom updates, and school communications.
 - To help ensure timely communication, parents are encouraged to respond to emails requiring a response within a reasonable timeframe.
- *Smore Newsletter*
 - **Friday Knight Lights** is St. Stephen School's weekly electronic newsletter and serves as the primary source of communication between the school and families. Published each Friday, the newsletter keeps families informed about upcoming events, important announcements, volunteer opportunities, fundraising initiatives, academic reminders, athletic information, and celebrations of student achievement.
 - Families are encouraged to read **Friday Knight Lights** each week to stay informed about important deadlines, school activities, and opportunities to become involved in the life of the school. Because many time-sensitive announcements are communicated through the newsletter, regularly reviewing **Friday Knight Lights** is an important part of the partnership between home and school.
 - While important information may also be communicated through the FACTS Family Portal, email, the school website, and other communication methods, **Friday Knight Lights** serves as the school's primary weekly publication and should be considered an essential resource for every St. Stephen family.

- *Friday Folders*
 - Students in **Preschool through Grade 8** receive a **Friday Folder** each week containing important school communications, classroom information, student work, permission slips, and other materials requiring parent review.
 - To help reduce paper usage, some school-wide communications are sent home **one per family** rather than one per student. These items will be sent home with the **youngest child** in the family. Families with multiple children are encouraged to pay particular attention to the Friday Folder of their youngest student to ensure important information is not overlooked.
 - Parents are asked to review the contents of the Friday Folder each weekend, sign the folder, and return it to school on the following **Monday**. Promptly reviewing and returning the folder helps ensure important forms, permissions, and communications are received and processed in a timely manner.
- *Grade 3-8 Assignment Planner Books*
 - In **Kindergarten through Grade 2**, teachers use age-appropriate communication methods, such as ClassDojo, communication folders, or other teacher-selected tools, to keep families informed.
 - Beginning in **Grade 3**, students are issued a school assignment planner. Teachers and students are expected to use the planner consistently to record assignments, important dates, and reminders. Parents and guardians are encouraged to review the planner with their child each evening, as it serves as the primary source of information regarding homework, upcoming assignments, and school responsibilities.
 - Using the planner consistently supports the gradual development of organization, accountability, time management, and independence as students prepare for greater responsibility in the upper grades.
- *School Website*
 - The St. Stephen School website serves as an important resource for current and prospective families. The website provides access to school news, calendars, admissions information, forms, athletic information, and other important resources throughout the school year.
 - The website also serves as the primary location for information related to **Flexible Instruction Days (FIDs)**. On designated Flexible Instruction Days, families should visit the website to access instructional information, assignments, and to **report student attendance** in accordance with school procedures.
 - Families are encouraged to visit the website regularly for the most current information about school programs, events, and announcements.

- *Social Media*
 - St. Stephen School maintains an active presence on **Facebook** through the **Venango Region Catholic School** page. Our social media platforms celebrate student achievements, highlight school events, share reminders, and promote the mission and accomplishments of our school community.
 - While Facebook is an excellent way to stay connected and celebrate the many successes of our students, it is intended to **supplement—not replace—official school communications**. Families should rely on **Friday Knight Lights**, the **FACTS Family Portal**, email, and other official school communications for important announcements, school policies, deadlines, and time-sensitive information.
 - Families are encouraged to follow the **Venango Region Catholic School** Facebook page to stay connected with the life of our school community and celebrate the many ways our students grow in **Academic Excellence, Catholic Identity, and Community**.
- *Phone Calls*
 - Telephone communication is appropriate for urgent or time-sensitive matters that require immediate attention. Parents should contact the school office regarding student absences, changes in dismissal plans, emergencies, or other matters that cannot wait for email communication.
 - To protect instructional time, classroom teachers will not be interrupted during the school day to receive telephone calls. The school office will gladly take a message, and teachers will return phone calls as soon as reasonably possible, typically after students have been dismissed for the day.
 - Because students keep their personal electronic devices in their lockers or backpacks during the school day, they do not have access to their phones. Parents should contact the school office if they need to communicate important information to their child during the school day.

Change of Contact Information

To ensure timely communication and the safety of every student, families are responsible for keeping all contact information current throughout the school year.

Parents should notify the school office as soon as possible if there are changes to any of the following:

- Home address or mailing address
- Telephone numbers
- Email addresses
- Emergency contacts
- Parent or guardian custody information

- Individuals authorized to pick up a student from school
- Medical information that may affect a student's health or safety

Accurate contact information is essential for routine school communication, emergency notifications, and the safety and well-being of our students.

4. Academic Excellence

Academic Philosophy

At St. Stephen School, we believe that every student is created in the image of God with unique gifts, talents, and the ability to learn, grow, and succeed. Our commitment to **Academic Excellence** is rooted in the belief that learning is a journey of continuous growth, supported by high expectations, meaningful relationships, and a Christ-centered environment.

We strive to provide rigorous, engaging, and purposeful instruction that challenges students to think critically, solve problems creatively, communicate effectively, and become confident, independent learners. Our teachers design learning experiences that encourage curiosity, perseverance, collaboration, and personal responsibility while nurturing each student's God-given potential.

Our instructional program is grounded in clearly defined learning objectives aligned with diocesan and state standards. We believe students learn best when they understand what they are learning, why it is important, and how they can demonstrate their understanding. Through meaningful feedback and ongoing assessment, teachers help students recognize their strengths, identify areas for growth, and continue progressing toward mastery.

As we continue to grow as a school, St. Stephen is committed to expanding the use of standards-based instructional practices. While traditional grades remain part of our reporting system, our long-term vision is to place greater emphasis on student learning, growth, and mastery of essential knowledge and skills. We believe assessment should do more than measure achievement—it should inspire reflection, guide instruction, and help every student reach his or her fullest potential.

Ultimately, our goal is to graduate young men and women who are academically prepared, grounded in their Catholic faith, committed to serving others, and equipped with the knowledge, skills, and character needed to thrive in high school and beyond.

Curricula

At St. Stephen School, curriculum is more than a textbook or a list of topics to be covered. Our curriculum is a carefully designed framework that aligns diocesan and state academic standards with curriculum maps, scope and sequence documents, lesson planning, instructional resources, and assessments. This intentional process ensures that every student has access to a rigorous, coherent, and engaging educational experience that builds knowledge and skills throughout each grade level.

Guided by the curriculum of the [Diocese of Erie](#), our teachers work collaboratively to ensure instruction is aligned, purposeful, and responsive to student learning. Through ongoing assessment and professional collaboration, teachers make instructional decisions that support students who need additional intervention while also providing enrichment opportunities for students who are ready for greater challenges.

Instruction is aligned with the academic standards established by the [Diocese of Erie](#) and the [Pennsylvania Department of Education](#), ensuring that students receive a rigorous and well-rounded education that prepares them for success in high school and beyond.

Our curriculum includes instruction in:

- Religion
- English Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- Technology
- Art
- Music
- Physical Education
- Library
- STEM and Robotics
- Additional enrichment opportunities

In every classroom, our Catholic faith provides the foundation for learning. Students are encouraged to recognize God's presence in all areas of study, develop an appreciation for truth and beauty, and use their knowledge and talents in service to others.

Classroom Instruction

Effective teaching is the foundation of student success. At St. Stephen School, our teachers design engaging learning experiences that actively involve students in the learning process while maintaining high expectations for academic achievement.

Instruction is intentionally planned around clearly defined learning objectives aligned with diocesan and state academic standards. Teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners, encourage meaningful discussion, promote critical thinking, and provide opportunities for students to apply their learning in authentic ways.

We believe students learn best when they are actively engaged, challenged appropriately, encouraged to ask questions, and provided with timely feedback that supports continuous growth.

Teachers regularly monitor student understanding and adjust instruction to ensure every student has the opportunity to achieve success.

Learning Objectives

Every lesson at St. Stephen School begins with a clearly defined learning objective that communicates what students are expected to know and be able to do. Learning objectives are aligned with diocesan and state academic standards and provide a clear focus for instruction and assessment.

By sharing learning objectives with students, teachers help learners understand the purpose of each lesson, monitor their own progress, and recognize what success looks like. Clear learning objectives encourage student ownership of learning and help ensure that classroom activities remain focused on meaningful academic growth.

Learning objectives also provide families with a clearer understanding of classroom expectations and support ongoing communication about student progress.

Assessment & Feedback

At St. Stephen School, assessment is an essential part of the learning process. Teachers use a variety of assessments to understand student learning, celebrate progress, identify areas for growth, and make instructional decisions that support the success of every learner. Assessment is not simply a measure of achievement—it is a tool that guides teaching, informs planning, and helps students continue progressing toward mastery.

We believe that meaningful feedback is one of the most powerful tools for learning. Through timely feedback and ongoing assessment, students develop a deeper understanding of their strengths, recognize areas for growth, and learn to take ownership of their learning.

In partnership with the Diocese of Erie, St. Stephen School is committed to continually strengthening instructional practices through collaboration, reflection, and the thoughtful use of assessment data. As we continue our transition toward standards-based instructional practices, assessment will increasingly emphasize student learning, growth, and mastery of essential standards.

Homework

At St. Stephen School, we believe that homework should have a clear purpose. It should reinforce learning rather than simply occupy time and should encourage students to develop organization, responsibility, perseverance, and effective study habits.

Homework is intended to extend learning beyond the classroom by providing students with meaningful opportunities to practice skills, reinforce concepts, prepare for future learning, and develop greater independence as learners. Whenever possible, homework should support the learning objectives introduced in class and help students continue progressing toward mastery.

Reading is one of the most important forms of homework. Students are expected to engage in reading every evening, either independently or with a family member as appropriate for their age and reading level. Daily reading strengthens fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and a lifelong love of learning while supporting success across all academic disciplines.

The amount and frequency of homework will vary by grade level and subject area and should be developmentally appropriate. Meaningful homework may include purposeful practice, independent reading, studying, long-term projects, or completing assignments that were not finished during class. **Meaningful homework is valued over excessive homework. Assignments should be purposeful, appropriate for the student's age and developmental level, and designed to enhance learning rather than simply increase workload.**

Families play an important role by providing a supportive environment for homework completion while encouraging students to take ownership of their learning. Parents are encouraged to support their child's efforts while allowing students to develop the independence and problem-solving skills necessary for long-term success.

When questions or concerns arise regarding homework expectations, families are encouraged to communicate directly with the classroom teacher.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is an essential part of the educational experience at St. Stephen School. Students are expected to complete their work honestly, take responsibility for their own learning, and demonstrate integrity in all academic activities.

Acts of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

- Cheating on quizzes, tests, or assignments.
- Copying another student's work.
- Allowing another student to copy one's work.
- Plagiarizing written work or presenting another person's ideas as one's own.
- Unauthorized use of artificial intelligence or other technology to complete assignments.
- Falsifying academic records or signatures.

Students who violate expectations for academic integrity may receive academic and/or disciplinary consequences appropriate to the situation. More importantly, students will be encouraged to reflect on the importance of honesty, responsibility, and personal integrity as essential qualities of Christian character.

Grading & Reporting Student Progress

Grades and progress reports are intended to communicate a student's level of academic achievement and provide families with meaningful information about their child's learning. At St. Stephen School, we believe that reporting student progress should reflect learning, encourage continued growth, and strengthen the partnership between home and school.

While grades provide a snapshot of achievement at a particular point in time, they are only one measure of a student's learning. Teachers also consider classroom performance, assessments, observations, and ongoing feedback to develop a comprehensive understanding of each student's progress.

As St. Stephen School continues its transition toward standards-based instructional practices, we are committed to placing greater emphasis on student learning, growth, and mastery of clearly defined academic standards. Our long-term vision is to ensure that reporting practices provide families with a clear understanding of what students know, what they are able to do, and the next steps in their learning.

As educational best practices continue to evolve, St. Stephen School may refine its methods of assessing and reporting student learning to better reflect student mastery, growth, and achievement while remaining aligned with diocesan expectations.

Mid-Quarter Progress Reports

Progress reports are issued at the midpoint of each academic quarter to provide families with an update on their child's academic performance and learning behaviors. These reports are intended to encourage ongoing communication between home and school and provide families with an opportunity to celebrate successes while identifying areas that may require additional support or attention.

In addition to academic progress, St. Stephen School values the development of the habits and behaviors that contribute to student success. Progress reports include teacher feedback regarding work habits, organization, responsibility, classroom participation, cooperation, and other behaviors that support learning and personal growth.

Parents are encouraged to review the progress report with their child and discuss both accomplishments and opportunities for improvement. Questions or concerns regarding a student's progress should be directed to the classroom teacher.

Report Cards

Report cards are distributed **quarterly** at the conclusion of each academic quarter and provide families with a summary of each student's academic achievement and progress. Report cards are an important tool for communicating student learning and supporting the ongoing partnership between home and school.

Report cards vary by grade level to reflect the developmental needs of students and the instructional practices appropriate for each stage of learning. Currently, students in **Grades 6–8** receive traditional percentage grades, while report cards in the elementary grades include additional indicators that communicate student progress and development in age-appropriate ways.

As St. Stephen School continues its commitment to academic excellence, the school is intentionally moving toward **standards-based reporting practices**. Over time, report cards will place greater emphasis on clearly communicating each student's progress toward mastery of grade-level learning standards. This approach is intended to provide families with a more meaningful understanding of what students know, what they are able to do, and the areas in which they continue to grow.

Parents are encouraged to review report cards carefully with their child, celebrate accomplishments, and discuss goals for continued growth. Questions regarding report card information should be directed to the classroom teacher.

Grading Philosophy & Practices

At St. Stephen School, grading is intended to communicate a student's level of academic achievement and progress toward the learning objectives established for each course. Grades should reflect what students know, understand, and are able to do while providing meaningful feedback that supports continued growth.

Teachers use a variety of evidence to evaluate student learning, including classwork, projects, written assignments, quizzes, tests, presentations, discussions, and other assessments appropriate to the subject and grade level. No single assignment or assessment provides a complete picture of a student's learning.

As our instructional practices continue to evolve, St. Stephen School is committed to placing greater emphasis on student mastery of clearly defined learning standards. While traditional grading practices remain in place, teachers are encouraged to use assessment to provide meaningful feedback, guide instruction, and support each student's continued academic growth.

Students are expected to complete all assignments to the best of their ability and submit them by the established due date. Timely completion of assignments is an important part of developing responsibility, organization, and effective work habits. When assignments are incomplete or submitted late without an approved reason, academic or disciplinary consequences may be assigned in accordance with classroom expectations and school policies.

Parents are encouraged to monitor student progress through the FACTS Family Portal, review progress reports and report cards, and communicate with teachers whenever questions arise regarding grading or academic performance.

Standardized Assessments

At St. Stephen School, assessment is an important part of understanding and supporting student learning. In partnership with the Diocese of Erie, we use standardized assessments to measure academic growth, inform instructional decisions, and help ensure that every student receives the support and challenge needed to succeed.

Standardized assessments provide one measure of student achievement and growth. They are **not intended to replace classroom assessments or teacher observations**, but rather to complement them by providing additional information about a student's progress over time. Assessment data is used to strengthen instruction, identify learning needs, and celebrate student growth.

St. Stephen School administers the **NWEA MAP Growth** assessment throughout the school year. These computer-adaptive assessments measure student growth in key academic areas and provide valuable information to teachers, students, and families.

Grades	Assessment(s)	Frequency
Kindergarten-Grade 2	NWEA MAP Growth Reading & Mathematics	Three times each year (Fall, Winter, Spring)
Grades 3–8	NWEA MAP Growth Reading, Mathematics, Language, and Science	Three times each year (Fall, Winter, Spring)

Assessments are administered electronically using student Chromebooks. Teachers and administrators review assessment results to:

- Monitor individual student growth over time.
- Set meaningful academic goals with students.
- Adjust instruction to meet student needs.
- Identify students who may benefit from intervention or enrichment.
- Evaluate curriculum and instructional effectiveness.
- Communicate student progress with families.

Assessment results are shared with parents and are used in conjunction with classroom performance, teacher observations, and other assessments to develop a comprehensive understanding of each student's learning.

Technology & Robotics

St. Stephen School recognizes that technology plays an increasingly important role in education, communication, and the modern workforce. We are committed to providing students with meaningful opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, and digital citizenship necessary to become responsible, ethical, and confident users of technology.

Technology is integrated throughout the curriculum in grades Kindergarten through 8 to enhance learning, encourage creativity, strengthen collaboration, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Students are encouraged to use technology as a tool for research, communication, innovation, and lifelong learning.

As a 1:1 Chromebook school, each student is provided with a Chromebook to support classroom instruction and school-related learning. Additional information regarding Chromebook expectations and responsibilities is available in the Chromebook Handbook and on the school website.

Beginning in Grade 4, students participate in the VEX Robotics program, where they apply engineering, coding, teamwork, and problem-solving skills through hands-on STEM learning. In Grade 5, students have the opportunity to prepare for and participate in local VEX Robotics competitions, further developing collaboration, creativity, and innovation.

All technology use at St. Stephen School is governed by the Diocese of Erie's Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy. Students and parents are required to review the policy annually and submit the appropriate acknowledgment forms prior to using school technology.

Library & Information Literacy

Expectations regarding personal electronic devices, including cell phones and other privately owned technology, are outlined in the Living as a St. Stephen Knight section of this handbook.

The St. Stephen School Library supports our mission of fostering a lifelong love of learning by providing students with access to literature, informational resources, and opportunities to develop research and information literacy skills. The library encourages curiosity, imagination, critical thinking, and a love of reading while supporting classroom instruction across all subject areas.

Students in all grades participate in a scheduled weekly library period and are encouraged to borrow books for both academic and recreational reading. Regular reading is an important part of developing strong literacy skills and fostering a lifelong appreciation for learning.

Students are responsible for returning library materials by their due date and caring for borrowed items. Students with overdue library books may not check out additional materials until previously borrowed items have been returned. Families may be responsible for the cost of replacing books that are lost or damaged beyond normal wear.

Academic Honors

St. Stephen School recognizes and celebrates students who demonstrate outstanding academic achievement. Academic honors are intended to recognize excellence while encouraging every student to pursue growth, demonstrate perseverance, and strive to reach their full potential.

The school currently recognizes students through the **Principal's List** and **Honor Roll** using the criteria outlined below.

Principal's List

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

Honor Roll

- Students must achieve at least "B's" in all major subjects: religion, math, social studies, science, English, reading/literature, and spelling.
- 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.

As St. Stephen School continues its journey toward a more standards-based approach to teaching, learning, and assessment, the methods used to recognize academic achievement may evolve. While the form of these recognitions may change over time, our commitment to celebrating student learning, growth, and academic excellence will remain constant. The school will continue to recognize and celebrate students for their academic achievement, growth, and commitment to learning in meaningful and appropriate ways.

Academic Eligibility

Participation in athletics and extracurricular activities is an important part of the educational experience and carries academic responsibility. Students are expected to maintain satisfactory academic progress while representing St. Stephen School.

Academic eligibility requirements are established to encourage students to prioritize learning while balancing their commitments inside and outside the classroom. Students who fail to meet eligibility requirements may be placed on academic probation or

become temporarily ineligible to participate in extracurricular activities until academic expectations have been met.

Specific eligibility procedures are outlined in the school's Athletic Handbook and other extracurricular program guidelines.

Promotion & Retention

Promotion to the next grade level is based upon a student's overall academic progress, mastery of essential learning standards, social and emotional readiness, attendance, and the professional judgment of teachers and school administration.

When a student experiences significant academic difficulty, the school will communicate with parents throughout the year to develop strategies for improvement. Retention is considered only after careful review of all relevant information and after meaningful collaboration between the school and the student's parents or guardians.

Final decisions regarding promotion and retention are made by the principal after careful consideration of teacher recommendations, student performance, assessment data, and the individual needs and best interests of the student.

Student Records

St. Stephen School maintains accurate and confidential student records in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. Student records support each child's educational program while protecting the privacy of students and families.

Parents and guardians—and students over the age of 18—have the right to inspect and review educational records upon written request, as provided by the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**. Annual notification of FERPA rights is provided at the beginning of each school year.

Parents wishing to review educational records may do so by contacting the principal to schedule an appointment.

5. Student Life

What is daily life like at St. Stephen School?

Introduction

Revised Aug 2026

Student life at St. Stephen School is about much more than schedules and routines. Each day is intentionally designed to provide a safe, welcoming, and faith-filled environment where students can learn, build relationships, develop responsibility, and grow in character. From morning arrival through dismissal, our daily practices help create an orderly community where every student is known, valued, and encouraged to succeed.

The following policies and procedures are intended to support a positive school experience while ensuring the safety and well-being of all members of our school community.

School Day

Daily Schedule

A well-structured school day provides students with the consistency and routine needed to learn, grow, and thrive. At St. Stephen School, each day is thoughtfully organized to balance academic instruction, prayer, enrichment opportunities, and community, creating an environment where every student is prepared for success.

Families play an important role in helping students have a successful school day by ensuring they arrive on time, prepared to learn, and ready to participate fully in the life of the school.

Event	Time
Building Opens	7:30 a.m.
School Day Begins	8:05 a.m.
Bus Dismissal Begins	2:55 p.m.
Parent Pickup & Walkers	3:00 p.m.

Transportation is provided by St. Stephen School and several surrounding public school districts. Families with questions regarding bus routes or schedules should contact the transportation office for the district in which their child resides. The school office is happy to assist families when needed.

School buses arrive and depart using the **West 3rd Street entrance**. For the safety of all students, parents and visitors may not park in designated bus loading zones during arrival or dismissal.

Arrival

Students may enter the building beginning at **7:30 a.m.** Students should not arrive before this time unless participating in a school-sponsored activity or other approved program.

Students are welcomed through either the **West 3rd Street entrance** or the **Reed Street/West 3rd Street (Mary Statue) entrance** and should report directly to their classrooms to prepare for the day.

Morning prayer, announcements, and classroom routines begin promptly at **8:05 a.m.** Arriving on time allows students to begin the day alongside their classmates and helps ensure a smooth, uninterrupted start to instruction.

Students arriving after **8:05 a.m.** must report to the school office before going to class. Additional information regarding attendance and tardiness can be found in the **Attendance** section of this handbook.

Dismissal

Dismissal begins at **2:55 p.m.** for students riding school buses. Students who walk home or are picked up by a parent or authorized adult are dismissed at **3:00 p.m.** through the **Reed Street/West 3rd Street (Mary Statue) entrance**.

A safe and orderly dismissal is one of the school's highest priorities. To help ensure every student arrives at the correct destination each day, any changes to dismissal arrangements must be communicated to the school office no later than 2:15 p.m.

Students who have not been picked up by **3:10 p.m.** will be escorted to the school office, where they will remain under staff supervision until a parent or authorized adult arrives.

Attendance

Attendance Philosophy

Regular attendance is essential to a student's academic success, spiritual growth, and participation in the life of the St. Stephen School community. Every school day provides opportunities for instruction, collaboration, prayer, and relationship-building that cannot always be recreated through make-up work. We ask families to make school attendance a priority and to partner with the school in ensuring students attend regularly and arrive on time.

St. Stephen School follows the Pennsylvania Compulsory Attendance Law and maintains attendance records in accordance with state requirements. Parents and guardians are responsible for notifying the school office whenever a student will be absent or arrive late and for submitting the required written documentation within the timelines established by school policy.

The school recognizes that absences may occasionally be necessary because of illness, medical appointments, family emergencies, or other circumstances permitted under Pennsylvania law. Whenever possible, vacations and other discretionary travel should be scheduled during school breaks to minimize interruptions to student learning.

Students arriving after the start of the school day must report to the school office before going to class. Consistent punctuality helps students begin each day prepared to learn and minimizes disruptions to classroom instruction. Chronic absences or tardiness may require additional communication between the school and family and may be addressed in accordance with Pennsylvania attendance law.

Complete attendance procedures, including excused and unexcused absences, educational travel, parent-excused absences, tardiness, and truancy, are outlined in the school's **Attendance Policy**.

Reporting Absences

Parents or guardians are asked to notify the school office as early as possible whenever a student will be absent or arrive late. Written documentation must be submitted in accordance with the school's Attendance Policy

Tardiness

Arriving at school on time helps students begin the day prepared to learn and minimizes disruptions to classroom instruction. Students arriving after **8:05 a.m.** must report to the school office before going to class. Families are encouraged to make punctuality a priority as part of supporting their child's academic success.

Partial-Day Attendance

Whenever possible, medical, dental, and other appointments should be scheduled outside of school hours. Parents requesting a late arrival or early dismissal should notify the school office in advance. Students must report to or sign out through the school office whenever arriving after the start of the school day or leaving before dismissal.

For attendance purposes:

- Students who **arrive after 9:30 a.m.** will be considered **absent for one-half day.**
- Students who **leave before 1:30 p.m.** will be considered **absent for one-half day.**

School-wide early dismissal days designated on the official school calendar are considered **full instructional days**. Because the shortened schedule applies to every student and instruction is planned accordingly, attendance on those days is recorded as a full day of school.

Whenever practical, students should attend school before or after appointments to maximize instructional time.

Educational Travel

Regular classroom attendance provides learning experiences that cannot always be duplicated through make-up work. Families are encouraged to schedule vacations during school breaks whenever possible. Requests for educational travel must be submitted to the principal in advance and are reviewed in accordance with the school's Attendance Policy.

Medical Appointments

Whenever practical, students should return to school following medical or dental appointments so they may continue participating in classroom instruction. If a student is able to return to school after an appointment, the remainder of the day should be attended. Full-day absences will not be excused when a return to school was reasonably possible.

School Closings & Flexible Instruction

Learning continues even when circumstances prevent students from gathering in person. St. Stephen School is committed to providing a safe learning environment while minimizing disruptions to instruction whenever possible. When weather conditions or

other emergencies affect the safe operation of the school, the school may implement a delayed opening, early dismissal, Flexible Instruction Day (FID), or school closure.

Whenever practical, St. Stephen School will utilize a Flexible Instruction Day before canceling school. This allows students to continue learning remotely while reducing the need to make up instructional days later in the school year.

School closing decisions are made after carefully considering weather conditions, road safety, transportation, and information provided by surrounding school districts. While St. Stephen School frequently aligns with the decisions of the Oil City Area School District, the final decision is made based on the safety and needs of St. Stephen students, families, and staff.

Flexible Instruction Days

When a Flexible Instruction Day is implemented, students are expected to participate in remote learning and complete assignments as directed by their teachers. Attendance and assignment completion requirements are outlined in the school's Flexible Instruction Day Policy.

Because St. Stephen School serves families from several surrounding school districts, transportation and attendance may occasionally be affected by conditions within a student's home district.

- Students whose home school district is closed due to weather are not required to report to St. Stephen School and will receive an excused absence.
- If a student's home district utilizes a Flexible Instruction Day, families are encouraged to send students to St. Stephen School whenever travel can be accomplished safely. If travel is unsafe, students should follow St. Stephen School's Flexible Instruction Day procedures.
- Closures in a student's home district for reasons other than weather (such as utility outages or building maintenance) do not excuse attendance at St. Stephen School.

Delayed Openings

When weather conditions are expected to improve, St. Stephen School may operate on a two-hour delay rather than cancel school.

During a two-hour delay:

- The school building opens at 9:30 a.m.
- Classes begin promptly at 10:05 a.m.

Any additional schedule adjustments or transportation information will be communicated as needed.

Communication

Families will be notified of school closings, delays, early dismissals, and Flexible Instruction Days through:

- FACTS Parent Alert (phone call, text message, and email)
- The St. Stephen School Facebook page

Every effort is made to communicate weather-related decisions by 6:00 a.m. whenever conditions allow. Families are encouraged to keep all phone numbers and email addresses current in FACTS so they receive emergency notifications promptly.

Early Dismissals

Weather conditions or other emergencies may occasionally require an early dismissal during the school day. Students will be dismissed using their normal method of transportation unless the school has received alternate instructions from a parent or guardian.

Families are encouraged to develop a contingency plan for child care and transportation should an unexpected early dismissal become necessary.

Health & Wellness

The health and well-being of every student are essential to creating a safe, caring, and productive learning environment. St. Stephen School partners with families to promote healthy habits, minimize the spread of illness, and ensure that students receive appropriate care while at school. Parents and guardians play an important role by keeping emergency information current, communicating health concerns, and helping students arrive at school healthy and ready to learn.

Illness

The health and well-being of every student is a shared responsibility between families and the school. Parents and guardians are asked to monitor their child's health each day and keep students home when they are ill to help promote recovery and reduce the spread of illness within our school community.

A confidential health record is maintained for each student. Families should promptly notify the school of any changes to a student's health, medications, allergies, or other

medical conditions. Sharing this information allows school personnel to provide appropriate care and make reasonable accommodations to support each student's safety and success.

Students should remain home if they:

- Have a fever of **100°F or higher** (or as otherwise recommended by their healthcare provider).
- Have vomited or experienced diarrhea within the previous 24 hours.
- Have symptoms of a contagious illness that could place others at risk.
- Are not well enough to participate in normal school activities.

Students should be **fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication** before returning to school. Parents should not administer medication to reduce a fever solely for the purpose of sending a child to school.

If a student becomes ill during the school day, school personnel will provide appropriate care, and a parent or guardian will be contacted if it is determined that the student should return home.

Communicable Diseases

Students diagnosed with a communicable disease should remain home until they meet the return-to-school recommendations provided by their healthcare provider and any applicable guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Health or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The school may request documentation from a healthcare provider before a student returns to school when necessary to protect the health and safety of the school community.

Medications at School

Whenever possible, medications should be administered at home before or after the school day. Because St. Stephen School does not have a full-time school nurse on staff, families are encouraged to schedule medication doses outside of school hours whenever practical.

When it is necessary for a student to receive medication during the school day, the required **diocesan medication authorization forms** must be completed before any prescription or over-the-counter medication may be administered. New authorization forms are required whenever there is a change in the medication, dosage, or administration schedule.

All medications must be delivered to the school in their original pharmacy-labeled or manufacturer's container clearly marked with the student's name. Parents or guardians should notify the school office before sending medication to school so arrangements can be made to receive and store it properly.

Students may not keep prescription or over-the-counter medications, including cough drops, in desks, backpacks, gym bags, or pockets unless specifically authorized by the school and permitted by diocesan policy and applicable law.

Parents or guardians with questions regarding medication procedures or student health needs are encouraged to contact the school office before sending medication to school.

Immunization Requirements

Pennsylvania law requires all students to meet state immunization requirements for school attendance. Parents or guardians are responsible for providing complete and up-to-date immunization records and ensuring that all required immunizations are received within the timelines established by the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

Students who do not meet state immunization requirements may be excluded from school until the required documentation or immunizations have been provided.

Health Screenings

To support student health and academic success, St. Stephen School conducts health screenings in accordance with Pennsylvania Department of Health requirements. Screenings may include vision, hearing, growth, scoliosis, and other state-required assessments appropriate for a student's age and grade level.

Parents or guardians will be notified of any screening results that indicate additional evaluation may be beneficial. Families are encouraged to maintain regular medical, dental, and vision care with their child's healthcare providers.

Snacks

Good nutrition helps students stay focused and energized throughout the school day. Students may bring one nutritious snack to enjoy during the morning.

To minimize distractions and allow instruction to continue, snacks should be simple, easy to eat, and not require refrigeration or heating. Families are encouraged to send low-mess snacks that students can eat independently and without utensils.

Classroom Treats

To help protect students with food allergies and dietary restrictions, families are strongly encouraged to send **commercially prepared treats and snacks** with clearly labeled ingredient lists.

Before sending birthday treats or other classroom snacks, parents or guardians should communicate with the classroom teacher regarding allergies, dietary restrictions, or other student needs within the classroom.

Water Bottles

Students are encouraged to bring a reusable, spill-resistant water bottle to school each day to help them stay hydrated and ready to learn.

To protect classroom spaces and reduce spills, **only plain water** is permitted in student water bottles. Sports drinks, flavored beverages, juice, and other drinks should remain at home.

Students should arrive with a filled water bottle each morning and may refill it throughout the day using the school's bottle filling stations. Students who forget a water bottle may use the drinking fountains as needed.

Lunch Program

St. Stephen School encourages healthy eating habits that support student learning and wellness. Students may bring a packed lunch from home or participate in the school's lunch program when available.

Students bringing lunch from home should bring everything needed for their meal, including utensils, napkins, and beverages. Lunches should be nutritious, well-balanced, and consist of foods that students can open and eat independently. Because microwave ovens are not available for student use, lunches should not require heating.

To promote healthy choices and maintain a positive learning environment:

- Soda and energy drinks are not permitted.
- Fast food should not be brought to school or delivered to students during the school day, including after appointments.

Food Allergies

St. Stephen School is committed to providing a safe environment for students with food allergies and other medically necessary dietary restrictions. Families are asked to

notify the school of any food allergies or dietary needs before the start of the school year or whenever a new diagnosis occurs. The school will work collaboratively with families to implement reasonable accommodations that promote student safety while allowing students to participate fully in school activities.

Uniform and Dress Code

"Set an example for those who believe in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity."
— 1 Timothy 4:12

At St. Stephen School, our uniform reflects more than appearance—it reflects our shared commitment to respect, responsibility, and school pride. A consistent dress code promotes a positive learning environment by minimizing distractions, fostering a sense of community, and helping students focus on learning and growing in faith.

Parents and guardians are responsible for ensuring that students arrive at school each day in the proper uniform and in a manner that is neat, clean, and appropriate for the school environment. Students are expected to wear the uniform with pride and represent St. Stephen School with dignity both on and off campus.

Daily Uniform

Item	Boys	Girls
Shirts	White, black, or red polo (short or long sleeve). Mass: White Oxford shirt.	White, black, or red polo (short or long sleeve). Mass: White tailored blouse.
Bottoms	Traditional khaki dress pants or khaki walking shorts (through October 15 and after Easter Break).	Grades K-3: Plaid or khaki jumper.Grades 4-8: Plaid or khaki skirt, traditional khaki dress pants, or khaki walking shorts (through October 15 and after Easter Break).
Socks	Black or brown dress socks.	White or black knee-high socks, tights, or rolled dress socks.

Belts	Required whenever pants have belt loops.	Not applicable.
Mass Uniform	Khaki dress pants, white Oxford shirt, black, red, or school plaid tie, and black or brown belt.	School plaid skirt or jumper with a white dress blouse.

Uniforms for All Students

Item	Expectation
Sweaters & Approved Outerwear	School-approved sweaters, cardigans, sweater vests, zip fleece, or crewneck sweatshirts may be black or red and may display the school name or crest. Grey crewneck sweatshirts with the school crest are also permitted.
Footwear	Dress shoes must be black, brown, or tan with non-marking soles. Solid black, brown, or tan canvas loafers (such as TOMS or HeyDudes) with dark soles are permitted. Sneakers may be worn only for recess and Physical Education. Sandals, Crocs, slides, clogs, open-toed shoes, glitter, and patterned shoes are not permitted.
General Uniform Expectations	Uniforms should be clean, neat, appropriately sized, and in good repair. Shirts should remain tucked in throughout the school day. Traditional uniform-style khaki pants are required. Athletic, cargo, jogger, denim-style, or fashion stretch pants are not permitted. Girls' skirts should be no shorter than two inches above the knee and may not be rolled at the waistband.

Personal Appearance & Grooming

Students are expected to present themselves in a manner that reflects the dignity of the St. Stephen School community.

- Hair should be clean, neatly groomed, and kept out of the eyes.

- Unnatural hair colors and distracting hairstyles are not permitted.
- Hair accessories should be school plaid, black, red, or white.
- Jewelry should be simple and age appropriate. Facial piercings are not permitted.
- Makeup is not permitted.
- Boys may not wear earrings.
- Fingernails, including artificial or acrylic nails, must not interfere with classroom instruction, learning activities, or student safety.
- Novelty or costume accessories (such as cat ears, tails, wings, or similar items) are not permitted during the school day.

Hair & Protective Hairstyles

St. Stephen School values the dignity of every student and is committed to providing an educational environment free from discrimination. In accordance with applicable law, the school's dress code and grooming expectations shall not prohibit or discriminate against natural hair texture or protective hairstyles historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, braids, twists, locs, cornrows, Bantu knots, and Afros. Grooming expectations are intended to promote a safe, respectful, and appropriate learning environment and shall be applied consistently and without discrimination.

Gym (Physical Education) Uniform

Physical Education provides students with opportunities to develop healthy habits, teamwork, and lifelong fitness skills. Students in **Grades 3–8** are expected to wear the school-approved Physical Education uniform on their scheduled Physical Education days.

Item	Requirement
T-Shirt	Plain black or red T-shirt, or a St. Stephen School spirit T-shirt
Shorts	Plain black athletic shorts that extend to at least mid-thigh. Bike shorts and form-fitting spandex shorts are not permitted.
Sweatpants	Plain black athletic sweatpants may be worn in cooler weather.

Shoes

Athletic shoes suitable for physical activity.

Students in Grades 3–8 should arrive at school wearing their regular uniform and change into their Physical Education uniform before class at the instruction of their classroom teacher. Students remain in their Physical Education uniform for the remainder of the school day and may wear it home.

School Supplies

Having the proper supplies helps students come to school prepared, organized, and ready to learn each day. Parents and guardians are responsible for providing their child with the basic school supplies needed for classroom instruction, such as pencils, pens, crayons, glue, scissors, and other grade-level materials.

School supply lists are distributed with the final report card each spring for the upcoming school year. Lists are also available on the school website and through the school office upon request.

School Property

Textbooks, library books, classroom novels, technology, and other instructional materials are provided for student use throughout the school year. Students are expected to care for these materials responsibly and return them in good condition, allowing for normal wear through regular use.

Some instructional materials are provided through state and federal educational programs. Required parent permissions for these materials are maintained by the school office.

Families may be responsible for the repair or replacement cost of materials that are lost, damaged beyond normal wear, or not returned.

Transportation

St. Stephen School serves students from several surrounding school districts, and transportation arrangements vary according to each student's district of residence. Bus transportation is provided through the student's home school district when available. Questions regarding bus routes, stops, schedules, or transportation eligibility should first be directed to the school district providing transportation. The St. Stephen School office is available to assist families when additional support is needed.

Student Conduct on School Transportation

Riding a school bus or van is both a privilege and a responsibility. Students are expected to demonstrate the same respect, responsibility, and appropriate behavior while using school transportation that is expected throughout the school day.

Students must follow the directions of the driver, remain seated as required, respect other passengers and their belongings, use appropriate language and behavior, and avoid actions that could distract the driver or compromise the safety of others. Whether traveling to and from school, attending a field trip, or participating in a school-sponsored event, students represent St. Stephen School while riding school transportation. These expectations are also reflected in the school's **Student Transportation Pledge**.

The behavior expectations of St. Stephen School, as well as the regulations of the transportation provider, apply to students while riding a school bus or van. Reports of misconduct received from a driver or transportation provider will be addressed by school administration. Consequences may include suspension or loss of transportation privileges depending upon the frequency or severity of the behavior. If a student's transportation privileges are suspended, the parent or guardian is responsible for providing transportation to and from school.

All students and their parents or guardians are asked to review and sign the **Student Transportation Pledge** each school year. Because students may use school transportation for field trips and other school-sponsored activities even if they do not regularly ride a bus to and from school, this expectation applies to **all students**.

Changes in Transportation

For student safety, any change to a student's normal dismissal or transportation plan must be communicated directly to the school office by a parent or guardian. If a student will be leaving school with another student or family, **written permission from the parent or guardian must be provided to the school**.

Students may only ride the school bus to which they have been assigned by their transportation provider. **Students may not ride another student's bus or an alternate bus for transportation to a friend's home, activity, or other destination.**

Students may not make their own transportation changes during the school day. Unless the school receives alternate instructions from a parent or guardian, students will be dismissed according to their regular transportation arrangements.

School Safety & Security

In addition to providing a quality education, St. Stephen School is committed to maintaining a safe and secure learning environment. The safety of our students, staff, and visitors is a primary responsibility shared by the entire school community.

Visitors

All exterior doors remain locked during school hours. Visitors must enter through the school's main entrance at the corner of West 3rd Street and Reed Street, which is equipped with a camera and buzzer entry system.

All visitors must report directly to the school office upon entering the building, sign in, and wear a visitor badge while on school grounds. Before leaving, visitors must return to the school office to sign out and return their badge.

Parents, guardians, and other visitors should not proceed directly to classrooms or other areas of the building without first reporting to the school office. This procedure applies even when the visitor is known to school staff.

School entrances and other designated areas are monitored by security cameras to support the safety and security of the school community.

Emergency Preparedness

St. Stephen School maintains a comprehensive **Crisis Plan** to guide the school's response to emergencies and other situations that may affect student safety. The plan is reviewed and updated regularly, and faculty and staff receive information and training regarding their responsibilities during an emergency.

Students are taught age-appropriate safety procedures, and emergency drills are conducted periodically throughout the school year. Students are expected to take all drills seriously and follow the directions of teachers and staff promptly.

Student Belongings & Personal Items

Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their personal belongings and to bring to school only those items needed for the school day. Whenever possible, personal belongings should be clearly labeled with the student's name.

Items that may distract from learning, including toys, games, trading cards, collectibles, or similar personal items, should remain at home unless specifically permitted by a teacher or school administration for a classroom activity or special event.

Students are discouraged from bringing large amounts of money, valuable items, or irreplaceable personal belongings to school. St. Stephen School cannot assume responsibility for personal items that are lost, damaged, or stolen.

Lost & Found

Items found in the school are placed in a designated Lost & Found area. Students and families are encouraged to check the Lost & Found promptly when an item is missing. Clearly labeling clothing, lunch boxes, water bottles, and other belongings greatly increases the likelihood that lost items can be returned.

Unclaimed items may periodically be donated or discarded after families have been given reasonable notice and an opportunity to retrieve them.

Cell Phones & Personal Electronic Devices

St. Stephen School recognizes that families may choose to have their child carry a cell phone or other personal electronic device for communication before or after school. However, personal electronic devices are not needed for use during the school day and should not interfere with the learning environment or participation in school-sponsored activities.

Cell phones, smartwatches, earbuds, and other personal electronic or communication devices must be **turned off or silenced and stored inside the student's backpack during the school day**. Backpacks should remain in the student's designated storage area or locker as appropriate. Devices may not be kept in pockets, desks, or otherwise carried on the student's person. Smartwatches with communication, messaging, or internet capabilities may not be worn during the school day and must be stored in the student's backpack.

Students may not use personal devices to make calls, send or receive messages, access social media, take photographs or recordings, or otherwise communicate with others during school hours unless specifically authorized by a teacher or school administrator.

If a student needs to contact a parent or guardian during the school day, permission should be obtained from a teacher or the school office, and communication will take place through the school office when appropriate. Likewise, parents or guardians who need to communicate an important message to their child during the school day should contact the school office rather than the student's personal device.

Field Trips & School-Sponsored Activities

The school's expectations for personal electronic devices extend to field trips and other school-sponsored activities unless otherwise communicated by the supervising teacher

or school administration. Students should not assume that cell phone use is permitted simply because an activity takes place away from the school building or outside regular school hours. Teachers and administration may establish device expectations appropriate to the nature and circumstances of each activity.

Responsibility & Consequences

Students who bring personal electronic devices to school do so at their own risk. St. Stephen School is not responsible for devices that are lost, stolen, or damaged.

Failure to follow these expectations may result in the device being collected and held in the school office. Repeated or significant violations may result in additional disciplinary consequences in accordance with school procedures.

Field Trips

Field trips are an extension of the classroom learning experience and provide students with opportunities to enrich and apply their learning beyond the school setting. Field trips are planned at the discretion of teachers and administration and should have an educational, cultural, spiritual, or community-building purpose.

Permission to Participate

Parent or guardian permission is required for students to participate in field trips. Permission forms will be provided in advance and must be completed and returned by the established deadline. **Students may not participate in a field trip without the required permission, and verbal permission cannot replace a signed permission form.**

Families are responsible for reviewing all information provided for each trip, including transportation arrangements, appropriate dress, meals, spending money, departure and return times, and any other trip-specific expectations.

Student Expectations & Eligibility

Students represent St. Stephen School whenever they participate in a field trip or school-sponsored activity. All school rules and behavioral expectations remain in effect while students are away from campus, including expectations related to personal electronic devices.

Participation in a field trip may be restricted when there are significant or repeated behavioral concerns, safety concerns, incomplete or missing schoolwork, or other circumstances that indicate a student is not prepared to participate responsibly.

Teachers and administration will consider the individual circumstances when determining a student's eligibility to participate.

When appropriate, parents or guardians will be notified in advance if concerns may affect their child's participation.

Chaperones

Parent and guardian volunteers are an important part of many field trip experiences. All chaperones must meet the volunteer and clearance requirements established by St. Stephen School and the Diocese of Erie before accompanying students on a field trip.

Chaperones are expected to follow the directions of the supervising teacher and assist in maintaining a safe, respectful, and positive experience for all students.

Athletics & Extracurricular Activities

St. Stephen School encourages students to participate in athletics, clubs, competitions, and other extracurricular activities that support their interests, talents, personal growth, and connection to the school community.

Participation in extracurricular activities is a privilege and carries additional responsibility. Students participating in school-sponsored activities represent St. Stephen School and are expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship, responsible behavior, respect for others, and conduct consistent with the values and expectations of the school.

Academic Eligibility

Students participating in athletics and extracurricular activities are expected to maintain satisfactory academic progress and fulfill their academic responsibilities. Specific eligibility requirements, probation procedures, and consequences for academic ineligibility are outlined in the **St. Stephen School Athletic Handbook** or the guidelines established for the individual activity.

Attendance Requirement

Students must attend a full day of school in order to participate in or attend an extracurricular activity, athletic practice, competition, or school-sponsored event that day.

Exceptions may be made for pre-approved or excused circumstances, such as medical or dental appointments, funerals, or other circumstances approved by school administration.

For purposes of extracurricular eligibility, students must arrive by **9:30 a.m. and remain in school for the remainder of the day** to be considered in attendance for a full day.

Student Conduct

School behavioral expectations apply to students participating in or attending school-sponsored extracurricular activities, whether those activities take place on or off school grounds.

Significant or repeated behavioral concerns may affect a student's eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities. Consequences will be determined by school administration in accordance with school policies and any applicable athletic or activity guidelines.

Individual teams, clubs, and activities may establish additional expectations for participation. Students and parents or guardians are responsible for reviewing and following those expectations.

School Closings & Extracurricular Activities

When school is **closed** or the school building is **closed due to a Flexible Instruction Day (FID)** because of inclement weather or other emergency conditions, **all athletic practices, competitions, meetings, performances, rehearsals, and other extracurricular activities are canceled unless otherwise communicated by school administration.**

6. Living as a St. Stephen Knight

St. Stephen School Pledge

I am Faithful.

I am Respectful.

I am Responsible.

I am here for a specific purpose,
and I will follow Jesus in all that I do.
I will serve others with kindness and love.

I will care for our school, our building, and all our materials.

I will work hard,
face challenges with courage,
and never give up.

I will respect my teachers,
my classmates,
and myself at all times.

I am a St. Stephen School Knight.

What does it mean to be a St. Stephen Knight?

At St. Stephen School, our expectations for student behavior are rooted in our Catholic identity and expressed through our School Pledge. The pledge is more than something we recite; it is a commitment to the way we strive to learn, serve, and live together as a school community.

Being a St. Stephen Knight means striving each day to be Faithful, Respectful, and Responsible. Students will make mistakes as they learn and grow. Our role as a Catholic school is to help students recognize their choices, accept responsibility, make things right when harm has been done, and grow from their experiences.

The expectations outlined in this section are intended to help students understand what it looks like to live the St. Stephen School Pledge throughout the school day, during school-sponsored activities, and while representing our school in the community.

I Am Faithful

*"I am here for a specific purpose,
and I will follow Jesus in all that I do.
I will serve others with kindness and love."*

Faith is at the heart of life at St. Stephen School. Being a St. Stephen Knight means recognizing that each person is created and loved by God and striving to follow the example of Jesus through our words, choices, and actions.

Faith Formation & Participation

Religion is a core academic subject at St. Stephen School. Students receive regular instruction in the Catholic faith, including Sacred Scripture, Church teachings and traditions, moral development, prayer, and service.

Faith formation also extends beyond Religion class. Prayer is incorporated into the school day, students regularly attend Mass and other liturgical celebrations, and

Catholic teachings and values are integrated throughout the life and curriculum of the school.

Students are expected to participate respectfully and reverently in Religion classes, prayer, Mass, service opportunities, and other religious activities of the school.

Students of Other Faith Traditions

Students of all faith backgrounds are warmly welcomed at St. Stephen School. Families who choose St. Stephen School understand that Catholic faith formation and participation in the religious life of the school are essential parts of the educational experience.

Non-Catholic students attend Religion classes, Mass, prayer services, and other religious activities with their classmates and are expected to participate respectfully. They will not be required to receive Catholic sacraments or participate in religious practices that would conflict with their own faith tradition.

St. Stephen School respects the religious beliefs of all students and encourages an environment in which students learn to appreciate both the Catholic faith and the dignity of those whose religious traditions may differ from their own.

Living Our Faith

Faith is not limited to Religion class, prayer, or Mass. Students are called to put their faith into action each day by treating others with kindness and dignity, serving those in need, including others, practicing honesty, offering forgiveness, seeking reconciliation, and caring for the school community.

Living faithfully does not mean that students will always make the right choice. When mistakes are made, students are encouraged to acknowledge their actions, seek forgiveness, make amends when possible, and learn from the experience.

Reverence

Prayer and worship are sacred parts of the St. Stephen School experience. During Mass, Adoration, prayer, and other liturgical celebrations, students are expected to demonstrate age-appropriate reverence and follow the directions of teachers and staff.

School-Student-Parent Compact

A Compact is a commitment to sharing responsibility for student learning. This document explains what families and schools can do to help children reach high academic standards of excellence. This agreement outlines the goals, expectations and shared responsibilities of the school and parent as equal partners for student learning.

The School-Student-Parent Compact must be signed before the start of each school year. The document details the expectations for all parties involved in order to further the education of the student while at St. Stephen School.

I Am Respectful

*“I will respect my teachers,
my classmates,
and myself at all times.”*

At St. Stephen School, respect begins with recognizing the God-given dignity of every person. Being a St. Stephen Knight means treating others with kindness, courtesy, and compassion through our words, actions, and choices—even when we disagree, feel frustrated, or experience conflict.

Students are expected to demonstrate respect for themselves, their classmates, teachers and staff, visitors, school property, and the wider community.

Respect for Teachers & Staff

Students are expected to treat teachers, staff members, volunteers, coaches, and other adults with courtesy and respect. Students should listen when others are speaking, follow reasonable directions promptly, use appropriate manners, and respond respectfully when corrected or redirected.

Students may appropriately ask questions, express concerns, or disagree with an adult. However, disagreement should always be communicated respectfully and at an appropriate time.

Respect for Fellow Students

Every student has the right to learn and participate in school without being intentionally embarrassed, excluded, intimidated, or mistreated by others.

Students are expected to respect the personal space, belongings, ideas, abilities, and feelings of their classmates. When disagreements occur, students should work toward resolving them peacefully and honestly and seek assistance from a trusted adult when needed.

Students should strive to include others, demonstrate good sportsmanship, celebrate the successes of their classmates, and recognize that differences among individuals strengthen our school community.

Appropriate Language

The words we choose reflect the respect we have for ourselves and others. Students are expected to use language appropriate for a Catholic school environment.

Profanity, vulgar or sexually explicit language, slurs, insults, threats, demeaning comments, and language intended to embarrass or hurt another person are not acceptable. This expectation applies to spoken and written communication as well as electronic communication connected to the school community.

Christian Conduct

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the values of St. Stephen School throughout the school day and while participating in school-sponsored activities.

Christian conduct calls students to demonstrate honesty, kindness, compassion, forgiveness, self-control, and respect for the dignity of others. Students are encouraged to seek peaceful solutions to conflict, acknowledge when their actions have caused harm, apologize sincerely, make amends when possible, and extend forgiveness to others.

Students represent St. Stephen School when participating in field trips, athletics, extracurricular activities, and other school-sponsored events and are expected to demonstrate conduct consistent with the School Pledge.

Bullying & Cyberbullying

St. Stephen School is committed to providing a safe, positive, and respectful learning environment for all students. Bullying and cyberbullying are inconsistent with the dignity of each person and with the expectations of a St. Stephen School Knight and are prohibited.

Students are encouraged to report suspected bullying or cyberbullying promptly to a teacher, the principal, or another trusted school adult. Students who witness bullying are also expected to seek the assistance of an adult. Reports will be taken seriously and addressed in accordance with the school's **Bullying & Cyberbullying Policy**.

It is important to recognize that not every disagreement, unkind interaction, or conflict between students constitutes bullying. However, behavior does not need to meet the definition of bullying to be inappropriate or contrary to school expectations. Disrespectful, hurtful, threatening, harassing, or otherwise inappropriate behavior will be addressed by the school as warranted.

The complete **St. Stephen School Bullying & Cyberbullying Policy**, including definitions, reporting procedures, investigation procedures, and consequences, is available on the school website and through the school office.

Internet, Social Media & Digital Citizenship

Being a St. Stephen Knight means demonstrating respect and responsibility both in person and online. Students are expected to use technology and social media in ways that respect the dignity, privacy, and well-being of others.

Students should communicate online with the same care and respect expected in face-to-face interactions. Profanity, vulgar or inappropriate language, threats, harassment, intimidation, impersonation, deliberately embarrassing another person, or other harmful communication is inconsistent with the expectations of a St. Stephen Knight, regardless of the platform being used.

Students may not use electronic communication, social media, messaging applications, online games, shared documents, or other digital platforms to harass, threaten, intimidate, or intentionally harm another member of the school community. Students should also exercise appropriate care when photographing, recording, posting, or sharing images, videos, or personal information involving others.

Representing St. Stephen School Online

Students should remember that their online presence can reflect upon themselves and their school community. When students post photographs, videos, or other content in which they are wearing a **St. Stephen School uniform, spirit wear, athletic uniform, or other apparel that identifies them with the school**, they are publicly representing St. Stephen School and are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the values and expectations of the school.

The same expectation applies when students identify themselves as St. Stephen students in social media profiles, posts, videos, or other public online content.

Off-Campus Digital Conduct

Parents and guardians are primarily responsible for supervising their children's use of personal devices, cell phones, social media, messaging applications, and other online platforms outside of school hours.

At the same time, interactions that begin outside of school can have a very real impact on students during the school day. Online or electronic behavior may become a school matter when it involves members of the St. Stephen School community and **substantially disrupts the learning environment, interferes with another student's ability to learn or participate fully in school, creates a safety concern, or significantly affects a student's school experience.**

For example, inappropriate group messages, social media posts, texts, photographs, videos, or other electronic interactions between students may require school intervention when their effects carry into the school environment, even when the original communication occurred away from school or outside regular school hours.

When such circumstances arise, school administration reserves the right to investigate and respond in accordance with school policies.

Responsible Digital Citizenship

Students are encouraged to pause before they post, send, comment, share, or forward content and consider whether their actions demonstrate the same **faithfulness, respect, and responsibility** expected of them in person.

Students should understand that digital communication can be copied, forwarded, photographed, or preserved even when content was intended to be private or temporary. Students should never share passwords or account information, access another person's account without permission, impersonate another individual, or knowingly share harmful or inappropriate content.

Use of school-owned technology and school accounts is also governed by the **Diocese of Erie Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy** and applicable St. Stephen School technology policies.

Care of School Property

Students share responsibility for caring for St. Stephen School and the resources entrusted to them. Being a St. Stephen Knight means taking pride in our school and treating the building, grounds, furnishings, equipment, technology, books, supplies, and other materials with care and respect.

Students are expected to use school property only for its intended purpose and to follow the directions of teachers and staff regarding its proper use. Writing on, defacing, intentionally damaging, or misusing school property is not permitted.

Students are also expected to respect the personal property of classmates, teachers, staff members, and visitors. Students should not take, use, move, hide, or damage another person's belongings without permission.

When school or personal property is intentionally damaged or damaged as a result of misuse, the student may be expected to participate in making the situation right. This may include cleaning or restoring the property when appropriate, as well as the family being responsible for repair or replacement costs.

I Am Responsible

*"I will work hard,
face challenges with courage,
and never give up."*

Being a St. Stephen Knight means taking responsibility for one's learning, choices, actions, and role within the school community. As students grow, they are expected to develop greater independence, self-discipline, perseverance, and ownership of their responsibilities.

Responsibility does not mean that students will never make mistakes or need help. It means learning to recognize what is expected, make thoughtful choices, accept responsibility when mistakes are made, and work to make things right.

Responsibility for Learning

Students are expected to come to school prepared to learn and to make an honest effort each day. This includes being attentive during instruction, completing assignments, bringing necessary materials to class, meeting deadlines, and seeking help when something is not understood.

Students are encouraged to persevere when learning is difficult. Asking questions, accepting feedback, correcting mistakes, and trying again are important parts of becoming an independent and successful learner.

As students progress through the grade levels, St. Stephen School gradually increases expectations for students to manage assignments, materials, due dates, and other academic responsibilities independently.

Responsibility for Choices

Students are responsible for the choices they make and the effect those choices have on others. Students are expected to follow school and classroom expectations, respond appropriately to directions from adults, practice self-control, and make choices that support a safe and productive learning environment.

When a student makes a poor choice, he or she is expected to be honest about what occurred, accept appropriate consequences, and participate in repairing any harm caused by the behavior.

Taking responsibility also means learning from mistakes. Students are encouraged to reflect on what happened, consider what they could do differently, and make better choices moving forward.

Responsibility for Others

Being responsible also means recognizing when another person may need help. Students should immediately report any statement, message, behavior, or other information that causes them to believe someone may intend to harm themselves or another person. **Reporting a safety concern is an act of responsibility and care, even when a student is uncertain whether the person was serious.**

Students should never promise to keep information secret when they believe that a friend or classmate may be in danger. Asking an adult for help is an act of care and responsibility.

Responsibility & Growing Independence

Part of the educational experience at St. Stephen School is helping students become increasingly responsible for themselves. Age-appropriate expectations for independence will increase as students progress through the school.

Students are encouraged to solve appropriate problems independently, communicate respectfully when they need assistance, keep track of their belongings and responsibilities, and learn from the natural and school-based consequences of their choices.

Parents and school personnel share an important role in supporting this growth by allowing students appropriate opportunities to practice responsibility, experience accountability, and develop confidence in managing their own responsibilities.

When Expectations Are Not Met

At St. Stephen School, discipline is an extension of our educational mission. Just as students are taught academic skills, they must also be taught how to make responsible choices, resolve conflict, repair harm, and live in community with others.

Students will make mistakes as they grow and learn. When expectations are not met, school personnel will respond in a manner intended to help students understand the impact of their choices, accept responsibility for their actions, and make better choices in the future.

Discipline at St. Stephen School is guided by the principles of **faithfulness, respect, responsibility, accountability, and restoration**. Whenever appropriate, consequences should be related to the behavior and provide an opportunity for the student to repair harm or restore trust.

Disciplinary responses will take into consideration factors such as the student's age and developmental level, the nature and severity of the behavior, the student's disciplinary history, the impact on others and the school community, and the circumstances surrounding the incident. For this reason, similar behaviors may not always result in identical consequences.

Teachers and administrators will work in partnership with parents or guardians when behavioral concerns arise. The school may also develop individualized behavior plans or recommend additional supports when a student demonstrates repeated difficulty meeting school expectations.

St. Stephen School administration reserves the right to determine appropriate disciplinary action based upon the circumstances of each situation and the safety and well-being of the school community.

Classroom Management

Teachers establish age-appropriate classroom expectations, routines, and behavior-management practices designed to create an environment in which all students can learn.

Whenever possible, minor behavioral concerns will be addressed first at the classroom level through redirection, conversation, reflection, loss of a classroom privilege, communication with parents or guardians, or another appropriate response.

Repeated behaviors, significant misconduct, or behaviors that interfere substantially with learning or safety may be referred to school administration for additional intervention.

Demerit System

St. Stephen School utilizes a demerit system in Grades 3–8 as a means of **communication, documentation, and accountability**. Demerits provide students, families, teachers, and administration with a consistent way to document when school expectations have not been met and to identify patterns of behavior that may require additional intervention.

A demerit serves as a formal notice of a behavioral concern. Depending upon the nature and severity of the behavior, an incident may result in **one or more demerits**. Minor concerns may first be addressed through classroom interventions or redirection without the issuance of a demerit.

The accumulation of demerits results in progressively greater consequences:

Demerits Accumulated	Consequence
3 demerits	Lunch detention
5 demerits	After-school detention
Additional demerits	Additional consequences and/or administrative intervention

Demerit totals used to determine routine consequences reset at the beginning of each academic quarter, providing students with an opportunity for a fresh start. However, demerits remain part of the student's disciplinary record for the school year. Repeated patterns of behavior across multiple quarters may result in additional intervention or consequences at the discretion of school administration.

Demerits are intended to help students recognize patterns in their behavior and make more responsible choices. They are not intended to replace teacher judgment or administrative discretion. Some behaviors are sufficiently serious that they may result in multiple demerits or immediate disciplinary action, including detention, loss of privileges, suspension, or other appropriate consequences, without requiring a student to first accumulate a specified number of demerits.

Issuing & Communicating Demerits

Demerits may be issued by **any St. Stephen School staff member** who observes behavior that does not meet school expectations and determines that a demerit is warranted. This includes teachers, administrators, office personnel, instructional aides, cafeteria staff, maintenance staff, and other school employees. Students are expected to demonstrate the same faithfulness, respect, and responsibility toward all members of the school community, regardless of an employee's role.

Demerits are documented electronically through **FACTS**, creating a consistent record of behavioral concerns. **When a demerit is entered into FACTS, the student's parent or guardian will receive an email notification of the incident.** Families are responsible for maintaining a current email address in FACTS and are encouraged to review these notifications promptly.

A printed copy of the demerit will also be sent home in the student's **Friday Folder**. Parents or guardians are asked to review the demerit with their child, sign the printed copy, and return it to school with the Friday Folder on the following Monday.

A parent or guardian's signature acknowledges receipt of the demerit; **it does not necessarily indicate agreement with the demerit or disciplinary decision.**

Questions or concerns regarding a demerit should be directed first to the staff member who issued it. School administration may become involved when additional review or intervention is appropriate.

Levels of Behavioral Concerns

Not all behavioral concerns are equal in severity. St. Stephen School uses levels to help provide consistency in documenting and responding to student behavior. The level assigned will reflect the nature and severity of the behavior, its impact on others, whether the behavior is repeated, and the circumstances surrounding the incident.

The examples provided are intended as guidance and are not an exhaustive list. School administration reserves the right to determine the appropriate level and consequence when circumstances warrant.

Level I – Minor Behavioral Concerns

1 Demerit

Level I behaviors are minor violations of school expectations that warrant formal documentation and communication with families. In many cases, students will have received redirection or other classroom intervention before a demerit is issued.

Examples may include:

- repeated classroom disruption
- horseplay
- inappropriate language
- failure to follow a staff member's direction
- disrespectful behavior
- minor misuse of school property
- repeated dress code violations
- other minor violations of school or classroom expectations

Repeated Level I behaviors may be elevated to Level II when previous interventions have not resulted in improvement.

Level II – Significant or Repeated Behavioral Concerns

3 Demerits + Lunch Detention

Level II behaviors are more significant violations of school expectations or repeated Level I behaviors that demonstrate a need for a direct disciplinary consequence.

A Level II violation results in **three demerits and a lunch detention**, regardless of the student's demerit total prior to the incident. Additional consequences may be assigned when appropriate.

Examples may include:

- repeated Level I behaviors after previous interventions;
- significant defiance or disrespect;
- profanity, vulgar language, or highly inappropriate language directed toward another person;
- intentional aggressive behavior or physical contact;
- significant misuse of school property;
- theft;
- significant misuse of technology or electronic communication;
- harassment, intimidation, or intentionally harmful behavior toward another student; and
- other conduct determined by administration to warrant an immediate disciplinary response.

Level III – Serious Misconduct

Immediate Administrative Intervention

Level III behaviors involve serious violations of school expectations, significant safety concerns, or conduct that substantially threatens the well-being of an individual or the school community.

Level III behaviors are referred immediately to school administration and are **not dependent upon the student's accumulated demerit total**. Consequences may include after-school detention, loss of privileges, in-school or out-of-school suspension, behavioral or safety plans, dismissal from St. Stephen School, or other appropriate action.

Specific serious offenses and applicable school policies are addressed in the **Student Safety & Serious Conduct** section of this handbook.

Consequences are based both on the level of an individual incident and the student's cumulative demerit total. When a single incident causes a student to cross more than one cumulative threshold, administration will determine the appropriate consequence rather than automatically stacking multiple detentions for the same incident.

Disciplinary Consequences

Consequences at St. Stephen School are intended to promote accountability, protect the learning environment, and help students learn from their choices. The consequences assigned will reflect the nature and severity of the behavior, the student's age and disciplinary history, the impact of the behavior on others, and the circumstances of the incident.

Consequences may be used individually or in combination and may include reflection or restorative activities, loss of privileges, detention, behavior plans, parent conferences, suspension, or other appropriate interventions. Suspension and expulsion will be administered according to the procedures outlined in this handbook and applicable Diocese of Erie policies.

Lunch Detention

Students assigned a lunch detention will eat lunch separately from their classmates in a designated supervised area. Lunch detention provides an opportunity for students to reflect upon the behavior that resulted in the consequence and consider how they can make a better choice in the future.

Students are expected to report to lunch detention as directed and follow the expectations established by the supervising staff member.

After-School Detention

Revised Aug 2026

After-school detention is a more significant disciplinary consequence and may result from the accumulation of demerits, a significant behavioral incident, or repeated failure to meet school expectations.

Detention is generally served from 3:00–4:00 p.m. on the date communicated by the school. Parents or guardians are responsible for arranging transportation and ensuring that the student is picked up promptly at 4:00 p.m.

Students may be assigned reflection, restorative work, school-related service, academic work, or another appropriate activity during detention.

Loss of Privileges

When appropriate, students may temporarily lose a privilege connected to their behavior. This may include participation in special activities, extracurricular activities, dress-down days, recess activities, or other privileges.

Whenever possible, the loss of a privilege should be reasonably connected to the student's behavior and used to help the student understand the impact of his or her choices.

Behavior Plans & Parent Conferences

Repeated behavioral concerns may require additional support beyond individual consequences. Teachers or administration may request a conference with the student's parents or guardians and may develop an individualized behavior plan outlining expectations, supports, goals, and consequences.

The school may also recommend that families seek additional outside support when a student's needs extend beyond the resources available within the school.

Suspension

Suspension may be imposed when a student's behavior is serious, repeated, significantly disruptive, or threatens the safety or well-being of the school community. Suspension may be in-school or out-of-school and will be determined by school administration based upon the circumstances.

Except in cases requiring immediate action, the following process will occur prior to suspension:

1. **Notice of Concern:** The student and parent or guardian will be informed of the behavior or incident under consideration and the potential disciplinary consequence.

2. **Opportunity to Respond:** The student and parent or guardian will be provided an opportunity to meet with school administration and present information relevant to the incident.
3. **Administrative Review:** School administration will consider the available information, including the nature and severity of the behavior, circumstances surrounding the incident, and relevant student history.
4. **Decision & Notification:** The parent or guardian will be notified of the disciplinary decision, length and type of suspension, and any expectations or conditions for the student's return to school.

In the case of a **grave offense**, a student may be suspended immediately when, in the reasonable judgment of school administration, the student's continued presence poses a serious threat to the health, safety, or welfare of the student or others in the school community. A grave offense may include conduct that violates the law or represents a significant repudiation of the Catholic identity of the school. The parent or guardian will be contacted as soon as reasonably possible, and the review process will continue following the student's removal from school.

During an out-of-school suspension, a student **may not attend or participate in school-sponsored activities, athletics, practices, competitions, or events and may not be on school property unless specifically authorized by school administration.**

Students are responsible for completing academic work assigned during the period of suspension. A parent conference and/or re-entry plan may be required before the student returns to regular participation in school.

Expulsion

Expulsion is the permanent removal of a student from St. Stephen School and is reserved for the most serious circumstances. Expulsion may be considered for grave misconduct or when repeated behavioral concerns have continued despite appropriate interventions and disciplinary measures.

Before a decision to expel a student is made, except for any immediate suspension necessary to protect the school community:

1. The student and parent or guardian will receive notice of the conduct or circumstances that may result in expulsion.
2. The student and parent or guardian will be provided an opportunity to meet with school administration and present their perspective and any relevant information.

3. School administration will review the circumstances, disciplinary history, interventions previously provided when applicable, and other relevant information.
4. The parent or guardian will be notified of the final decision.

A written record of the steps leading to an expulsion, including applicable communications and reports, will be maintained in the student's permanent record. The Superintendent of Catholic Schools will be informed of all expulsions, and the student's public school district of residence will be notified that the student has been removed from the school's attendance roster as required by diocesan policy.

A student who has been expelled **may not attend school activities or events or be present on St. Stephen School property without the prior permission of school administration.**

All suspensions and expulsions will be handled in accordance with **Diocese of Erie Policy #302.6, Suspension and Expulsion**, and the principles of good faith, fair dealing, consistency, and fairness.

Student Safety & Serious Conduct

The safety and well-being of the St. Stephen School community is a shared responsibility. Certain behaviors present a significant risk to students, staff, or the school environment and are considered serious misconduct.

Serious misconduct may result in **immediate referral to school administration** and does not require a student to first progress through the regular demerit system. Depending upon the circumstances, consequences may include multiple demerits, loss of privileges, detention, suspension, expulsion, referral to law enforcement or other appropriate authorities, or other actions necessary to protect the school community.

All incidents will be reviewed individually. Suspension and expulsion will follow the procedures outlined in this handbook and applicable Diocese of Erie policies.

Weapons & Dangerous Objects

Students are prohibited from possessing, using, displaying, distributing, or threatening to use weapons or dangerous objects while on school property, on school transportation, or participating in school-sponsored activities.

Weapons and dangerous objects include, but are not limited to, firearms, knives, look-alike weapons, explosives, incendiary devices, fireworks, or other objects or devices capable of causing harm. An ordinary object may also be considered a

dangerous object when it is used, displayed, or intended to threaten, intimidate, or cause harm.

Students may not possess, create, or attempt to create explosive or incendiary devices, including smoke bombs, firecrackers, or similar devices.

Any student who sees or becomes aware of a weapon or dangerous object should **not touch the object, approach the individual possessing it, or remain unnecessarily in the area.** The student should immediately notify a teacher, administrator, or other trusted school adult.

School administration will consider the nature of the object, the student's age, possession, use or intended use, and the circumstances of the incident when determining the appropriate response. Incidents may result in immediate suspension or expulsion and may be referred to law enforcement or other appropriate authorities.

Fighting & Physical Aggression

Students are expected to resolve disagreements without physical aggression. Fighting, hitting, kicking, slapping, pinching, intentionally pushing or shoving, or other acts intended to cause physical harm are prohibited.

Students should seek assistance from a teacher or other trusted adult when a conflict is escalating or when they believe that they or another person may be in danger.

Physical aggression is considered serious misconduct and may result in immediate disciplinary action, including suspension. School administration will investigate the circumstances of the incident and consider the actions of each student involved when determining consequences.

A student who acts reasonably to protect himself or herself or another person from immediate physical harm will not automatically be treated in the same manner as a student who initiates, encourages, or escalates physical aggression.

Tobacco, Vaping, Alcohol, Drugs & Prohibited Substances

Students may not possess, use, distribute, sell, provide to others, or be under the influence of tobacco products, vaping devices or materials, alcohol, illegal drugs, or other prohibited or harmful substances while on school property, on school transportation, or participating in a school-sponsored activity.

Students may not possess vaping devices or related materials regardless of whether the device or material contains nicotine or another substance.

Prescription and over-the-counter medications used for legitimate medical purposes are governed by the school's Medication Policy and are not considered prohibited substances when handled in accordance with that policy.

Violations are considered serious misconduct and will be referred immediately to school administration. Parents or guardians will be notified, and the school may contact law enforcement or other appropriate authorities when required or warranted by the circumstances.

Hazing

Hazing in any form is prohibited at St. Stephen School and in all school-sponsored teams, clubs, organizations, and activities.

Hazing includes any intentional, knowing, or reckless action or situation connected with initiation, admission, affiliation, membership, or continued participation in a group that endangers the physical or emotional health or safety of another person, causes humiliation or degradation, or results in the destruction or removal of property.

Hazing may include physical acts, forced consumption of food or substances, exposure to unsafe conditions, sleep deprivation, forced exclusion, humiliating conduct, or other activities that jeopardize an individual's health, safety, or dignity.

An individual's willingness to participate does not make hazing acceptable.

No student, employee, coach, moderator, volunteer, or other person associated with a school-sponsored activity may plan, direct, encourage, assist, participate in, permit, or knowingly tolerate hazing.

Students who experience, witness, or become aware of suspected hazing should report the concern promptly to the principal, a teacher, coach, moderator, or another trusted school adult. Reports will be investigated and appropriate disciplinary or other action will be taken.

Threats or Acts of Harm

St. Stephen School takes **all threats of harm seriously**, whether they are made verbally, in writing, electronically, through social media, or by any other means. Students should understand that statements or actions involving threats of violence or harm cannot be dismissed simply because they were intended as a joke, made in anger, or not intended to be carried out.

Any student who hears, sees, receives, or otherwise becomes aware of a possible threat of harm is expected to report the concern immediately to a teacher, administrator, or

other trusted school adult. Students should not attempt to investigate or determine the seriousness of a threat themselves.

When school administration becomes aware of a possible threat, the information will be evaluated in accordance with the **Diocese of Erie Terroristic Threats Policy #302.5**. If the incident is classified as a threat of harm, law enforcement will be notified and a threat assessment process will be initiated. Each situation will be evaluated individually to determine the level of risk and the actions necessary to protect the safety of the school community.

A student who makes a threat of harm may be immediately suspended while the situation is investigated and assessed. Parents or guardians will be notified and provided an opportunity to meet with school administration in accordance with the school's suspension procedures.

Depending upon the circumstances, school administration may require appropriate professional evaluation or other credible evidence that the student does not pose a risk of harm to others before the student is considered for readmission to school.

Threats of harm may result in significant disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion, in addition to involvement by law enforcement or other appropriate agencies.

Suicide Awareness & Prevention

St. Stephen School is committed to protecting the health, safety, and well-being of every student. Suicide prevention is a shared responsibility, and any concern that a student may be at risk of self-harm or suicide will be taken seriously and addressed promptly.

In accordance with Diocese of Erie Policy #302.9, Suicide Awareness and Prevention, St. Stephen School maintains procedures for prevention, intervention, parent/guardian notification, referral, and response when concerns regarding student safety arise.

Reporting a Concern

Students are encouraged to seek help whenever they are concerned about themselves or another student. A student who becomes aware of statements, messages, social media posts, behaviors, or other information suggesting that someone may be considering suicide or self-harm should immediately tell a teacher, administrator, parent/guardian, or other trusted adult.

Students should never promise to keep thoughts of suicide or self-harm secret. Telling a trusted adult is an act of care and responsibility, even when the student is uncertain whether the person is serious.

All school employees who become aware of a possible suicide risk are required to report the concern immediately to school administration so that appropriate procedures can be followed.

School Response

When school personnel have reason to believe that a student may be at risk of suicide or self-harm, the student's immediate safety will be the first priority. The student will remain under appropriate adult supervision while the situation is assessed and the student's parent or guardian is contacted.

School personnel will follow diocesan procedures for assessing the concern, notifying parents or guardians, seeking emergency assistance when necessary, and connecting families with appropriate community or professional resources.

When warranted by the circumstances, the school may require appropriate documentation or recommendations from a qualified professional before the student returns to regular school participation. School personnel will work with the student and family, within the school's role and available resources, to support a safe return to school.

Parent/Guardian Partnership

Parents and guardians will be contacted when the school has reason to believe that a student may be at risk of suicide or self-harm. Families are expected to take concerns seriously and cooperate with recommendations intended to protect the student's safety and well-being.

School personnel do not replace qualified mental-health professionals. When additional evaluation, counseling, or treatment is recommended, parents or guardians are responsible for obtaining appropriate professional services for their child.

Confidentiality & Student Safety

Information regarding a student's safety will be handled with appropriate care and discretion. However, confidentiality cannot be promised when a student's health or safety may be at risk. Information may be shared with parents or guardians, appropriate school personnel, emergency responders, law enforcement, healthcare professionals, or others when necessary to protect the student or others.

Crisis Assistance

In an immediate emergency or when there is imminent danger, emergency services will be contacted.

Families and students may also contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by calling or

texting 988.

Appendix

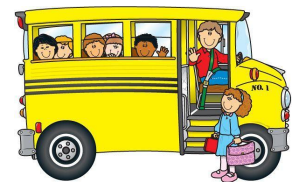


ST. STEPHEN SCHOOL

St. Stephen School Student Transportation Pledge

As a student of St. Stephen School, I understand that riding a school bus or van is a privilege and a responsibility. Whether I am traveling to and from school, going on a field trip, or attending a school event, I represent my school in the community. I pledge to:

1. **Follow all rules** set by the driver and the transportation company.
2. **Remain seated** and keep my hands, feet, and belongings to myself.
3. **Use respectful language** and speak in a quiet, appropriate voice.
4. **Treat the driver and all passengers** with kindness and courtesy.
5. **Keep the bus or van clean** and free of damage.
6. **Respect the safety of everyone** by avoiding distractions and following directions the first time.
7. **Represent my school with pride** by being polite and demonstrating good behavior at all times.



I understand that my behavior on the bus or van affects my safety and the safety of others. I will do my part to make every ride safe, respectful, and reflective of the values of St. Stephen School.

Students who become serious discipline problems on the bus may have their riding privileges suspended by the principal. The parent of a suspended child is responsible for seeing that their child gets to and from school safely.

The following procedure will be used should the driver report an offense to the school:

1st Offense - Warning

2nd Offense- School Consequence

3rd Offense – 1 day of suspended bus riding privileges

4th Offense – 3 days of suspended bus riding privileges

5th Offense – 5 days of suspended bus riding privileges

6th Offense – possible suspension of bus riding privileges for the remainder of the year

* These consequences are a guideline, and at any time administration may use their discretion to issue a higher level of consequence based on the severity of the infraction

Parent Signature

Date

Student Signature–One form per student please.

Grade

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

Technology Lease Agreement

* In conjunction with Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy

To enhance learning, enrich the educational experience, and provide for the development of twenty-first-century skills, St. Stephen School students will be provided access to electronic devices to use during the school year. This incredibly powerful tool empowers students to maximize their full potential by preparing them for the future and distinguishes St. Stephen School as a model of academic excellence.

Within this document, **Device** is defined as any computer, cellular phone, smartphone, digital camera, video camera, audio recording device, or another electronic device that can be used to create, store, or transmit information in the form of electronic data.

The use of these technologies is a privilege that carries responsibility and behavioral expectations. The devices are school property; students must take the utmost care of their assigned devices to ensure it is in good working order to be returned to the school. All members of the St. Stephen School community will use devices along with the school's network in a responsible, ethical, and legal manner at all times by following the Technology Lease Agreement and Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Talk to your children about values and the standards that should be followed on electronic devices just as you would for the use of all media information sources such as social media, television, phones, movies, and music. In addition:

- Review the Technology Lease Agreement and Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy with your child(ren).
- Monitor your child's treatment, care, and home use of school devices to help instill in them a pattern of responsible ownership.
- Provide access for the device to be charged regularly at home.
- Provide optional accessories, for example, a mouse.
- Provide internet access (at home).
- Provide printer capabilities (at home – optional).

School Responsibilities

- Provide device, charger, and protective carrying case.
- Provide internet access (at school).
- Provide required educational apps and software for use with the device.
- Provide professional development to school staff to support students' device use and ensure student compliance with the Technology Lease Agreement and Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy.
- Teach students to use and embrace new technology in meaningful ways.
- Label each device with a unique serial number that will be assigned to each student.

Student Responsibilities

- Use devices in a responsible, ethical, and legal manner by following the Technology Lease Agreement and Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy.
- Follow all policies concerning responsible care of devices and accessories.
- Obey school rules concerning behavior and communication that apply to device use.
- Turn off and secure their device after they are finished working to protect their work and information.
- Back up all critical files.
- Make sure the device is ready for classes, charge the device at home every night before school.
- Take the device home and bring the device back to school every day unless directed otherwise.
- The device and all accessories may not be used by anyone other than the student they are issued.
- No stickers, writing, scratching, etc. may be placed on the device or any accessories (chargers, cases).
- Devices must always be in their school-issued protective case; alternative cases are not allowed.
- No food or drink may be consumed near the device. Devices are not allowed in the cafeteria when food and drink are present.
- Do not leave the device in direct sunlight, in vehicles, or places of extreme temperatures.
- Report the need for repairs to administration immediately. Do not

- attempt to dismantle or repair the device yourself.
- Do not attempt to root, jailbreak, or unlock the device.
- Do not attempt to bypass, disable, alter, or uninstall security software, school device policies, or user accounts on the device.
- Never leave the device unattended or in plain view.
- **Do not access social media or install any social media apps or software on a school-issued device.**

Acceptable Use

The use of the St. Stephen School technology resources is a privilege, not a right. The privilege of using the technology resources provided by St. Stephen School is not transferable or extendible by students to people or groups outside the school. It terminates when a student is no longer enrolled in the school. This policy is provided to make all users aware of the responsibilities of the efficient, ethical, and lawful use of technology resources.

Apps, music, video, books, etc., hereafter referred to as “media,” are allowed to be installed on student devices as long as they are the owner of that content. Media must not be offensive or inappropriate.

Unacceptable Use

Any attempt to circumvent or bypass the web filter is a significant offense. Internet usage on the device is not monitored while students are away from the school network, and St. Stephen School takes no responsibility for students’ content. Parents should monitor student activities as they feel necessary while at home. There should be no expectation of privacy; devices are subject to inspection at the request of administration and without prior notice. Student Activities Strictly Prohibited includes but is not limited to:

- Illegal installation, appropriation, or transmission of copyrighted materials
- Any action that violates existing St. Stephen School policies, St. Stephen School student handbooks, or public law
- Sending, accessing, uploading, downloading, or distributing offensive or embarrassing, profane, threatening, pornographic, obscene, or sexually explicit materials or those that can be interpreted as harassing or demeaning
- Using the device camera, video, video/audio conferencing

apps/software, or other apps/software in any way that is offensive, profane, threatening, pornographic, obscene, sexually explicit, or damaging to another person

- Use of chat rooms sites selling term papers, book reports, and other forms of student work
- Taking pictures of other student's work unless working on a group project
- Use of peer-to-peer file-sharing or illegal file-sharing sites
- Any form of jailbreaking, rooting, unlocking, or in any other way tampering with the device's operating system
- Changing device settings (exceptions include personal settings such as font size, brightness, etc.)
- Spamming, sending mass, or inappropriate emails
- Gaining access to other students' accounts, files, and data
- Use of the school's Internet, network, or email accounts for financial or commercial gain or any illegal or inappropriate activity
- Use of any form of anonymous and false communications
- Participation in credit card fraud, electronic forgery, or other forms of illegal behavior
- Vandalism (any malicious attempt to harm or destroy hardware, software, or data, including but not limited to the uploading or creation of computer viruses or computer programs that can infiltrate computer systems and/or damage software components) of school equipment
- Bypassing the school's web filter through a proxy server or VPN
- Using another student's device
- The device may not be used to take pictures, videos, or record sounds of other students, guests, or school personnel without their consent.

Legal Propriety/Copyright

All students must comply with trademark and copyright laws and all license agreements. Ignorance of the law is not immunity. If you are unsure, ask a teacher or parent. Plagiarism is a violation of St. Stephen School handbooks. Give credit to all sources used, whether quoted or summarized. This includes all media forms on the Internet, such as graphics, movies, music, and text. Use or possession of hacking software is strictly prohibited. Violation of applicable state or federal law will result in criminal prosecution and disciplinary action.

Policy Violations and Disciplinary Consequences

Misuse of a school device will result in confiscation and search of the device. Suppose violations of the technology agreement are found on the device. In that case, the device will be restored to the school default settings at the discretion of the administration, resulting in the loss of all installed media and any school assignments/classwork that was not backed up. Students would be held accountable by their teachers for not completing assignments if their device was restored due to misuse. The school may take additional disciplinary action and or loss of privileges/features depending on the severity of the infraction, including detention, daily check-in/checkout of the device from the administration, device privilege suspension, and termination of privileges. Violations may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion for students. When applicable, law enforcement agencies may be involved. The school administration will be the sole judge of interpretation, violation, and penalization of every aspect of the Technology Use Policy.

Loss of School Property

Students are responsible for the loss of devices, including devices that are assigned to them. The student will be responsible for the device's replacement cost if it is not found within two weeks. Any missing or stolen equipment must immediately be reported to the administration and, if appropriate, the nearest law enforcement agency. Every effort will be made to locate and recover the missing device.

- **Procedures for Reporting Theft Outside the School**
 - Report immediately to the law enforcement jurisdiction where the loss/theft occurred and file a report.
 - Request a copy of the report to give to the school.
- **Procedures for Reporting Theft Inside the School**
 - Report immediately to the office.
 - Retrace all steps taken since the loss of the equipment. Check with teachers, classmates, siblings, etc.
 - Follow the above procedures for reporting outside the school.

Malfunctioning devices must be reported immediately to the administration so that the device can be repaired or replaced.

Unattended devices – devices are not to be left alone and should be secured when not in use.

Device Check out Procedure

Criteria for checking out a device:

- A completed, signed copy of this agreement (only the last page is needed).
- A completed, signed copy of the ACCEPTABLE USE and INTERNET SAFETY POLICY (only the last two pages are needed).
- Insurance for the device must be purchased through St. Stephen School.

Once the equipment has been checked out, it is in the student's full possession and responsibility.

Device Return

All items that were checked out to the student when the device was assigned must be returned when the student graduates, transfers out, or at any time at the school's direction. When the device and accessories are returned, they will be inspected for damage. Damages outside of normal wear and tear must be paid for by the student or parent at the time of return. If you do not return the device or make arrangements to return the device, you will be billed the device's market value and all accessories.

Warranty Information/Assessment of Costs

If a manufacturer defect causes a problem, it will most likely be covered under the device warranty. Accidental damage warranty coverage is subject to the terms set by the warranty provider, who will ultimately decide whether or not the damage will be covered. Examples of accidental damage include liquid submersion, power surge due to lightning, theft, fire/flood/natural disaster, and vandalism.

The accidental damage warranty will not cover intentional damage or willful neglect, and the student will pay for the damages out of pocket. Examples of damage not covered by warranty:

- Throwing or punching the device
- Carrying the device unprotected in the rain
- Leaving in extreme temperatures

School User Account

The school will provide each student with a user name and password for google, network files, and internal web sites. You are responsible for this user account's activities, so you must protect your account from being used by others. Be sure to log out of any computers when you are finished with them and do not share your account information with anyone.

The school account includes an email account. This account will be used by faculty, staff, and administration, and fellow students.

- Email is to be used for school-related communication only. Advertising, jokes, chain letters, etc. are not permitted.
- File attachments should only be sent when they are for educational purposes.
- Per the Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy, all account information is the school's property and may be accessed by the administration at any time for any reason.

Personal Device Use at School

Personal computers and devices are prohibited from use at school. School provided computers will be available for computer class assignments that cannot be performed on assigned student devices.

None of these policies and guidelines shall interfere with school authorities' right to act swiftly and decisively in dealing with situations believed to be detrimental to the student's welfare, the student population, or the learning environment.

PARENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (P³)

Date: 7/16/26



• PURPOSE

The purpose of the Parent Partnership Program (P³) is to drive **engagement, volunteerism, and community building** within St. Stephen School and our local area. This program will provide opportunities for school families to engage in their preferred way, offering credit for contributing their time, talent, and treasure.

• PROCEDURE

Each school family will have a **\$300.00 Parent Partnership** charge applied to their tuition account. Throughout the year, families will have the **opportunity to offset or negate** this charge by participating in the program in ways such as volunteering at events, soliciting sponsorships, and donating raffle prizes.

\$10 = 1 Volunteer Hour (Dinners, Reverse Raffle, Gala, Lunch Duty, Athletics, H&S, etc.)

\$10 = \$10 in Event Sponsorships or Donated Gift Cards (for Raffles)

• Tracking

Volunteer hour tracking will be **completed via a self-submittal** using the FACTS Parent Portal. You will also be asked to sign in at each event you are volunteering for.

An account balance will be distributed along with Raise Right Distributions for review. Total hours will also be visible through your Parent Portal. Should there be any reconciliation discrepancies, please work through the school office.

• Distribution

Earned hours and donations earnings will be distributed in the following ways:

- **For families that utilize the FACTs program** = A credit will be made to your tuition three-times a year based on the number of hours of service in November, February and May
- **For families that pay in full** = A check will be issued once hours are complete at the next distribution.

• Q & A

If your question is not directly answered below, please contact the school office for clarification.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- *Can we opt to pay the \$300 instead of volunteering?*

When re-enrolling students in the spring, parents are given the option to pay the \$300 upfront which is then paid in full before the first day of school.

- *What if we have multiple students at St. Stephens, will I be charged multiple times?*

No, the charge will be applied 1x per school family, per school year.

- *What if I am a single parent or guardian?*

The program still applies as outlined in Section 2. Both Custodial parents, if they are both financially responsible, can split the hours (mom will volunteer 15, and dad will volunteer 15).

- *Can my family or other school supporters contribute to my account balance?*

We recognize and deeply appreciate the many grandparents, relatives, and friends who generously support St. Stephen School. However, because the Parent Partnership Program is intended to strengthen the partnership between the school and each student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s), Parent Partnership responsibilities must be completed by the student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s).

- *Do I need clearances to volunteer?*

For volunteer opportunities that involve working at the school during school hours or directly supervising students, volunteers will need to have all required clearances on file with the school office prior to the volunteering event. This process takes some time, so we encourage you to begin ASAP so you are able to volunteer when needed.

- *What if I am unable to participate?*

The \$300 charge will remain on your school account as payment in lieu of participation.

- *What if I volunteer beyond my 30 hours? Will I earn more than \$300 in tuition credit?*

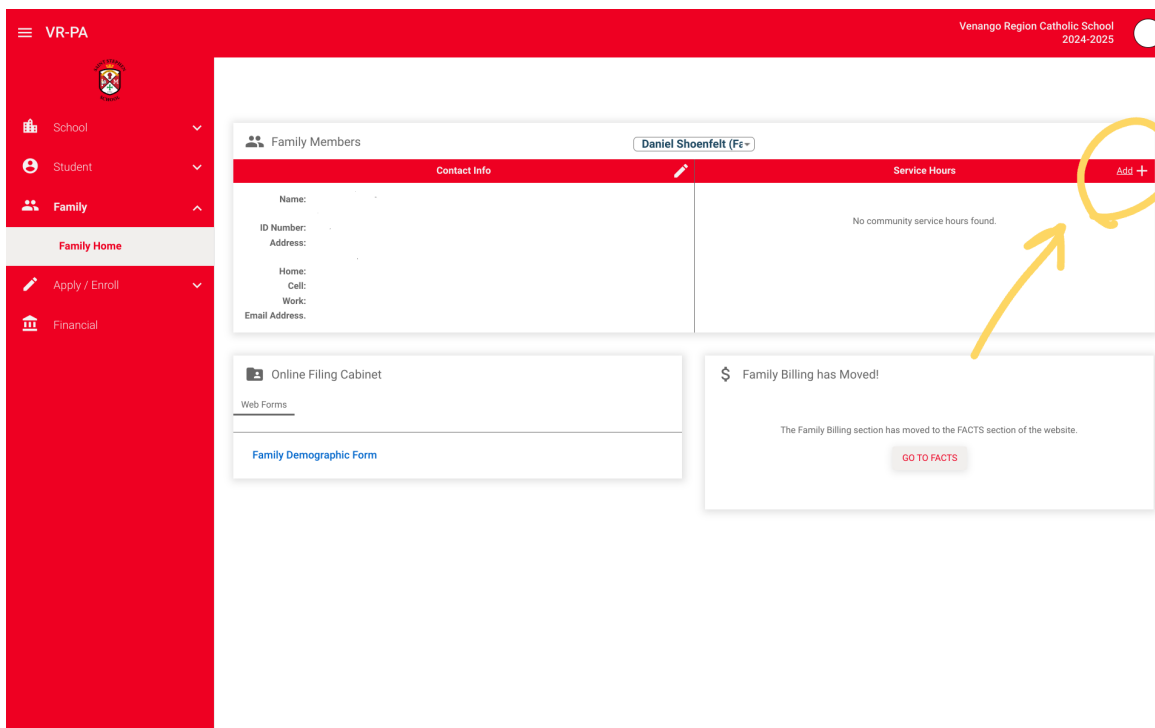
\$300 is the maximum amount that will be credited towards your tuition or refunded. However, we will ask families to volunteer and support our fundraising efforts as much as possible. Many hands make light work!

How to log Parent Partnership Hours

1. Log onto your FACTS family portal.
2. Choose the "Family" tab at the far left (see below).



3. Click on the “Add +” on the Service Hours box.



4. Complete the form and press save.

VR-PA



School

Student

Family

Family Home

Apply / Enroll

Financial

Venango Region Catholic School
2024-2025

Service Hours - Add

Name:

* Date: 9/27/2024

* Hours:

* Description:

Note:

Verified By:

Save