

St. Stephen School

Parent Handbook



Mission Statement

Jesus Christ is the heart of St. Stephen Catholic School which welcomes and includes students of diverse backgrounds and needs. By our words, actions, and attitudes we educate students to be active in their Catholic faith, thirsty for knowledge, and engaged in service.

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Revised 2021

The provisions contained in this handbook may be changed at any time, with or without notice. This handbook is not an all-inclusive summary of all rules governing student conduct and behavior.

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Purposes of Catholic Schools

The United States Catholic Bishops maintain that Catholic schools continue to be “the most effective means available to the Church for the education of children and young people.” Catholic schools afford the fullest and best opportunity to realize the fourfold purposes of Christian education:

- Provide an atmosphere where the Gospel message is proclaimed
- Create community in which Christ is experienced
- Provide service to others as the norm
- Cultivate thanksgiving and worship of our God

In Support of Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools, USCCB, 1990 & 2005

Further, Catholic Schools are:

- the environment in which Christian education is carried out
- places of evangelization
- places of complete formation
- places of enculturation
- places of apprenticeship in a lively dialogue between young people of different religions and social backgrounds

Catholic Schools on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 1997

The Role of Parents in Catholic Education

The parent/guardian has the primary and sacred responsibility to educate his/her child/ren in the Catholic faith. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

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Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to the responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery—the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the “material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones.” Parents have a grave responsibility to give good examples to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them.

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Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child’s earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of the Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God. The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents.

It is essential to the child’s growth and development in the Catholic Faith that the parents/guardians live the life of faith at home. The effectiveness of St. Stephen School’s education process depends upon this.

Christian Parents:

1. Participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy EVERY Sunday (or Saturday evening) with their children. The third commandment tells us to keep holy the Sabbath. The Catholic Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass" (CCC 2180). The Eucharist is the source, the heart, and the summit of Christian life.
2. Persevere in prayer. Family prayer is vital. The Christian family is the first place for education in prayer.
3. Live a life of Christian witness. This means living a moral life that reflects the values and teachings of Jesus Christ.
4. Are faithful to the teachings of Jesus Christ as presented in the doctrines, dogmas, moral teachings, and social teachings of His church. This means that it is necessary to learn the teachings of the Catholic Church.
5. Strive to be Holy.
6. Read Scripture. Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ (St. Jerome)

ORGANIZATION

The organizational structure for St. Stephen School includes the Diocesan Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools, St. Stephen Board of Directors and pastor, principal, teachers, parents, and students.

ADMINISTRATION

St. Stephen School employs a professional, full-time principal licensed by the State of Michigan. The major responsibilities include: leader of the school, faith leader, personnel director, educational leader, management/administration, public relations and planning and development. The administration is employed by the parish and has direct accountability to the pastor.

FACULTY

The faculty of St. Stephen School is comprised of fully accredited, professional teachers. All the teachers hold current licensure in the State of Michigan and are qualified to teach in the subject areas to which they are assigned. Faculty members in grades Preschool-5 are hired primarily as self-contained and semi-contained classroom teachers. Middle School teachers are hired primarily in content areas. Additional specialists may be employed in the areas of General Music/Choir and Instrumental Music, Physical Education, Counseling, Technology, Foreign Language, and Student Support. The faculty is regularly observed and evaluated by school administration in accordance with diocesan policy.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

When a teacher is out of school because of illness, professional meetings or personal business, a qualified, licensed substitute teacher will be hired to take that teacher's place. Occasionally, it may be necessary for the administration to hire a long-term substitute. Whenever possible, a substitute who is familiar to the students will be acquired. The substitute will work closely with the classroom teacher and the administration to ensure a smooth and consistent transition. Substitute teachers are to be accorded the same respect as regular classroom teachers. Substitute teachers have permission to follow every part of the St. Stephen discipline system. If

substitute teachers have discipline concerns with students their names will be written down for the classroom teacher and a detention will be given.

RELIGIOUS FORMATION

The religious formation of children is the primary reason for the existence of Catholic schools. Thus, St. Stephen School's religious education program is of special curricular importance. Scripture, doctrine, prayer, and Liturgy are related to children at their developmental levels, beginning with their own experiences. Prayer is interwoven throughout the student's day. Prayer begins and ends each day, experienced daily in religion class, before lunchtime and other parts of the day.

Children have the opportunity to celebrate Liturgy together once a week. Students plan and participate in school Liturgies. Family and friends are invited to attend school Liturgies.

Students will have the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. Special service opportunities, renewal/retreat days, and seasonal activities are shared throughout the year, as well. As a community of believers, we gather together to celebrate the Eucharist. We sincerely invite all St. Stephen families to make weekend Mass attendance a part of their routine.

ADMISSION

St. Stephen Catholic School accepts students regardless of religion or nationality. An application packet is available in the school office or by request. Parents of new students must have a meeting with the principal to discuss enrollment and school policies. All enrollment forms and requirements must be completed prior to admission.

Once admitted and enrolled, parents must re-enroll their St. Stephen School students for each successive school year. The priority for admission is as follows:

1. The currently enrolled students
2. Siblings of the currently enrolled students
3. The children of St. Stephen parishioners
4. Other students and siblings if space is available.

ACCREDITATION

St. Stephen School is fully accredited through the Michigan Nonpublic Schools Accrediting Association.

ARRIVAL OF STUDENTS

There are only two entrance doors accessible by students at the start of the day. As a matter of security, we have staffed the Northeast (Reed St. parking lot) from 7:35-7:55am. Students in Grades K-8 may enter either the Northeast or Main School Entrance door at 7:55am.

Because many of the teachers are preparing for the school day and may not be in their rooms before 7:55am, students will enter the school at the 7:55am bell. Teachers will be in their rooms eagerly waiting for their children at that time. Parents only will be allowed in the building before 7:55am if they need to stop by the office or quickly touch base with a teacher.

Kindergarten and Preschool students need to be escorted into the building via the church entrance, where the teachers will greet and receive the students until 8:05am.

ATTENDANCE/PUNCTUALITY

Regular school attendance and punctuality are very important for a student to establish good work habits and self-discipline so that he/she can be successful in schoolwork and life. Parents are therefore urged not to ask that a child be excused from school for vacation or appointments except for urgent reasons.

Absences are excused for personal illness, family emergencies, doctor/dental appointments that cannot be arranged outside of school hours, and pre-authorized absence approved by the principal. The parent/guardian is expected to notify

the school of an absence between 7:30 – 8:30AM on the day their child is absent from school. Parents and students are responsible for completing assignments covered during the time of absence.

Students are expected to be at school on time every day so that teaching/learning can begin without disruption. Learning to be punctual is an important ingredient for success at school and in life. Tardiness due to a verified family emergency or other circumstances deemed acceptable by the principal will be excused. The parent/guardian should notify the school office when a student will be tardy as well as what time they are expected to arrive. Students who accumulate excessive absences and or tardies will be subject to the corrective measure of Standard II in our Code of Student Conduct.

BAND & CHOIR

In cooperation with the band director at Catholic Central High School, we are pleased to offer band for our students in grades 5-8. Choir is offered for students in 7th and 8th grade.

BICYCLES

Students may ride bicycles to school as long as the bicycles are operated safely and according to traffic and school rules as follows:

1. Bicycles should be licensed.
2. Students must wear helmets.
3. Bicycles must be walked at street crossings.
4. Bicycles must be locked and kept at the school's bike rack during school.
5. Only one rider per bicycle is permitted.
6. Motorbikes, roller blades, or Heelys are not permitted.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors of St. Stephen Catholic School is a board with limited jurisdiction. It is composed of nine – fourteen members who are appointed by the Pastor. The meeting schedule of the Board of Directors is available in the school office.

CALENDAR

Each family will receive a calendar for the school year. The Monday Buzz is posted at the beginning of the week with upcoming events.

CARE OF SCHOOL BOOKS AND PROPERTY

All school books are to be covered with clean book covers at all times. Students will be charged for lost or damaged books.

Each student is responsible for the proper care of the school. Any destruction and defacing of school property will be reported to parents or guardians who are responsible for the cost of repairs or replacement of the property.

CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE

Behavior and Discipline

St. Stephen School, as a Christian community, fosters and nurtures the proper atmosphere conducive to helping students develop and acquire academic and social skills as well as Christian virtues.

The classroom teacher is responsible for proper order and behavior in his/her classroom. Students shall recognize the authority of the teachers, and shall comply with St. Stephen Catholic School's Code of Student Conduct and Discipline.

This document has been developed so that parents, school staff, students, and school volunteers have a common understanding of what is expected from all students in regard to their conduct as students of St. Stephen Catholic School.

St. Stephen General Rules for Student Conduct

All St. Stephen students are expected to:

1. Be honest, courteous, kind and respectful to others and property.
2. Follow directions and obey the authority of school staff and volunteers.
3. Remain on school ground and in the assigned area during school hours.
4. Attend school with proper grooming and wearing appropriate clothing according to the school uniform and dress code.
5. Complete and turn in all homework assignments on time.
6. Be punctual to school and to class, and be prepared to participate in all class learning activities.
7. Walk in the hallways and use a moderate voice level in the building.
8. Obey the classroom, lunchroom and playground rules.
9. Use only approved electronic equipment.

It is unacceptable for St. Stephen students to: (General Rules)

1. Cheat on tests or homework.
2. Chew gum in school or on the playground.
3. Spit in school or on the playground.
4. Throw sticks, stones, ice, snowballs, or objects that can cause bodily harm or damage property.
5. Use or exhibit obscene language, gestures, art, writing, or articles.
6. Use unauthorized electronic equipment such as cell phones, radios, iPods, pagers, tape recorders or Game Boys in the building or on the school grounds.
7. Destroy school property or the property of others. Restitution will be imposed upon students who violate this rule.
8. Exhibit behavior considered as a threat, harassing, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, or bully behaviors.
9. Steal or extort funds, good, or academic endeavors from another student.
10. Fight with or physically abuse another student.
11. Possess or use alcohol, drugs, prescription medicines, over the counter medicines, tobacco, matches, lighters, or other harmful material on school premises or at school activities.
12. Possess a gun, knife, or any other object that can be classified as a weapon on school premises or at school related activities. Violation will result in expulsion from school.

BEHAVIOR/CONSEQUENCES LEVEL MATRIX

School-wide PBIS is a set of strategies and systems to increase the capacity of schools to reduce school disruption and educate all students including those with problem behaviors. Any of the following behaviors are negative choices and will/can result in a consequence. Administration may determine the final consequence of any behavior depending on the situation.

LEVEL 1 BEHAVIORS	LEVEL 2 BEHAVIORS	LEVEL 3 BEHAVIORS	LEVEL 4 BEHAVIORS
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Getting out of seat - Not listening to directions - Inattentive - Getting a drink too often - Not being prepared for class - Tardy - Not following classroom procedures - Gum chewing - Negative attitude - Not working when given time during class - Tattling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sidebar conversations/ making noises - Using pencil sharpener during class instruction - Not keeping hands to self - Lack of participation (not taking notes, not writing down assignments, etc.) - Arguing during group work - Asking questions not relevant to the topic of discussion - Failure to be responsible for duties (table captain) - Horseplay - Throwing snowballs/ ice chunks -Entering building before school w/o permission - Working on other assignments during class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shouting out - Disrespect to adults - Disrespect to peers - Throwing things - Rudeness/ laughing at others - Put downs - Lying - Cheating - Forgery - Inappropriate language/ gestures - Inappropriate bathroom use - Public displays of affection - Inappropriate use of technology - Habitual Level 1 and Level 2 behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vandalizing school property - Bullying/ harassment- any physical, verbal, written, and/or electronic (habitual) - Actions that cause harm - Stealing - Fighting (punching, biting, hitting, choking) - Drugs/ drug paraphernalia - Weapons - Verbally or physically threatening to cause injury to person or property - Pulling the fire alarm - Leaving building without permission - Sexually inappropriate behavior - Habitual Level 3 behaviors
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Talking during work times - Being loud in hallways while class is in session - Dress code violation - Disrespectful body language - Running in the building - Habitual Level 1 behaviors 		
Possible LEVEL 1 CONSEQUENCES	Possible LEVEL 2 CONSEQUENCES	Possible LEVEL 3 CONSEQUENCES	Possible LEVEL 4 CONSEQUENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-verbal cue - Proximity - Verbal warning - Time out/ break 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-verbal cue - Proximity - Verbal warning - Time out/ break - Student conference - Parent contact - Pull-a-card/clip, get a mark - Referral - Behavior contract/ plan (w/ teacher) - Quiet lunch - Teacher/ parent/ student/ conference - Restitution -walking minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student conference - Timeout/ break - Parent contact - Behavior contract/ plan (w/ teacher) - Quiet lunch - walking minutes - Detention - Administrator/ parent/ student/ teacher conference - Restitution - In-school suspension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Level 4 behaviors will result in an automatic office referral. Administration will give one of the following consequences: - Mandatory parent conference - Consecutive detentions - In-school suspension - Contact law enforcement - Expulsion

DEFINITION OF BEHAVIOR CONSEQUENCE

- **QUIET LUNCH-** When a student is assigned to quiet lunch they will eat in the office and could spend their recess in the office, although we prefer they have recess time. During this time the student has the opportunity to think about their actions and talk through what they were thinking and feeling at the time of the incident.
- **CONFERCING-** May be required involving parent(s), teacher(s), student, and/or Administrator.
- **BEHAVIOR CONTRACT/PLAN-** A student may be placed on a behavioral contract/ plan with a teacher or an administrator. The contract is designed to address the area of concern with a corrective action plan and a written commitment from the student to change with parental support.
- **REMOVAL FROM THE CLASSROOM** is allowed as permitted
- **DETENTION-** (used for students in third through eighth grade) Detention is a consequence assigned to students who choose to behave inappropriately, or who receive multiple warnings/referrals.
 - Detention is earned as an immediate consequence assigned to students who choose to behave inappropriately. A detention notice or an email from a teacher or administrator will be sent home to inform the parent(s) of the incident, and the time and date the detention is to be served.
 - If the detention cannot be served on the given date, parental notification of the need to reschedule must be given to the teacher no later than the date the detention is scheduled to be served. If neither the form nor the parental notification is returned by the date of the assigned detention night, the detention cannot be served, and an additional detention will be issued to the student for missing the detention. (Therefore, they'll have 2 detentions to serve at that point.) Likewise, if a student does not show up to their assigned detention time, they will receive a new date for that time, PLUS an additional detention for the behavior of missing the original detention.
 - During detention, the student will be given a detention essay task to reflect on and write about their actions. They will write about what they should choose to do the next time they have a similar situation and/or what they could do to help themselves not be in the same situation.

- **EXCLUSION FROM CLASS OR ACTIVITIES-** This may include participation in school-sponsored activities or performances. Parental and/or administration notification may be given regarding exclusion.
- **IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION-** Students may be required to serve an in-school suspension assigned by an administrator. Parents will be notified in a timely manner. The student will serve the in-school suspension in the office and will receive all assignments for that day to be completed and turned in by the end of the day.
- **EXPULSION-** Expulsion of a student shall be made upon the recommendation of the administration. A student may be expelled from school for breach of discipline, violation of the policies and regulations established by the Board, or when the presence of the student is detrimental to the best interests of the school. In addition, the pastor and administrator may expel any student whose presence in school would be injurious to the health or morals of other students or to the welfare of the school. In regard to due process rights, parents of the student may request a hearing before and prior to the final decision. Every consideration will be made in order to avoid expulsion of a student from St. Stephen School. This may include referring the student and his or her family to a local community resource for counseling.

Appeal Process

If the parents disagree with a decision made by the teacher, they must first meet with the teacher. If they are not satisfied with the outcome of that meeting, they may then meet with the principal.

If the parents disagree with the decision made by the principal, they must first meet with the principal. If they are not satisfied with the outcome of that meeting, they may meet with the Pastor.

COMMUNICATIONS

Parents/guardians will receive communications from their child's teacher and the weekly Monday Buzz sent out through the office. Parents/guardians are also asked to check the student's Assignment Diary on a regular basis when applicable.

Parent/Teacher communication is important in nurturing positive student academic and social growth. Teachers will contact parents for student concerns and parents or guardians are expected to do the same. If a face-to-face conference is necessary, it will be scheduled at a mutually acceptable time. Parents may request a meeting with the teacher or principal by sending a note or contacting the school office. The meeting/conference must be carried out in a civil manner: abusive behavior will not be tolerated. Parents/guardians should not interrupt the classroom during school hours. In case of an emergency the parents/guardians are to check into the school office for instruction.

The school Parent-Teacher Conferences are scheduled twice during the school year, one in early October and again in February. Parents/guardians will be informed well in advance about these events.

COMPUTERS

All students will have a scheduled instruction time on the classroom computers. In addition, teachers may schedule other work in the lab for their classes or individual students according to need and availability. All students must have on file a signed copy of the Acceptable Use Policy. Internet access is available on classroom computers for all students, unless parents have indicated that they wish their child to be excluded from this service.

CRISIS INTERVENTION

In the event of a crisis, the school staff will respond according to established procedure. Our crisis intervention plan has been designed to minimize danger to anyone occupying our school should an emergency situation develop. Your child's physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being is very important to us. The main objective of this plan is to attend to the health and welfare of your child(ren) in the event of a crisis.

CROSSING GUARD

The city of East Grand Rapids provides a crossing guard for St. Stephen students at the corner of Franklin and Gladstone. The crossing guard is on duty during student's arrival and dismissal times. Students who need to cross these streets must do so where the guard is on duty, and they must treat the crossing guard with respect.

CURRICULUM

Parents, teachers, and curriculum are the three most critical ingredients for student success. Curriculum is acceptably defined as a coherent plan for the instruction and learning, which serves as the basis for teachers' and students' active involvement in the construction and application of knowledge. The St. Stephen School curriculum can be described as rigorous and as preparation for higher education. Art, Computer Literacy, Foreign Language, Music, and Physical Education are being taught along with strong emphasis on the five core subjects – Catholic Religion, Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Three Year Olds	8:00 – 11:00	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
Four Year Olds	8:00 - 11:00	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
Young 5	8:00 - 3:00	Monday - Thursday
Kindergarten All Day	8:00 – 3:00	Monday – Friday

Grades 1 – 8	7:55am	First Bell, Students may enter building
8:00 AM	Starting Bell	
	8:05 AM	Morning Prayer and Teaching/Learning begins
	12:00 – 12:40 PM	Lunch Period for grades K-4
	12:20 – 1:00 PM	Lunch Period for grades 5-8
	2:55 PM	Preparation for Dismissal
	3:00 PM	Student Dismissal Bell

Half Day of School 8:00-11:00am

DISMISSAL OF STUDENTS

Dismissal of students in grades K -8 is at 3:00pm. Students will wait for their car ride in the small parking lot on Reed Street. Preschool students will be escorted by the teachers at 11:00am to the main school doors for parent pick up.

DRESS CODE

St. Stephen School students are to be well groomed, neat, and clean. Distracting hairstyles, make-up, and jewelry are not permitted. Dangling earrings may not be worn for safety reasons. Students must bring shoes to change into if boots are worn to school. Proper shoes must be worn for physical education activities.

Students, except Preschool students, must dress in accord with the school's Uniform Code. Students who do not comply with the school's Uniform Code will have their parents notified to bring proper attire to the

student or take the student home for changing into proper school attire. Following is the St. Stephen School Uniform Code required for students in grades K-8:

Slacks: Navy; School Plaid – Grades K-8
Khaki – Grades 6-8
Dress style/Docker style
No more than four pockets (two front, two back)
No patch or sewn on pockets
No flare, Zip-off, Capri style
Must have a waistband with belt loops.

Shorts: May be worn from May 1st through September 30th
Navy – Grades K-8
Khaki – Grades 6-8
No more than four pockets (two front, two back)
Knee length or capri style

Skirt/Skort: Girls School Plaid ONLY – (no khaki or navy)
Jumper/Skort – Grades K-5
Skirt/Skort – Grades 5-8
*Skirt/skort must be within 3 inches of the knee

Shirts: White buttoned down oxford – Grades K-8
Girls Peter Pan collar – Grades K-5
White, Red short sleeved polo – Grades K-8
Navy short sleeved polo – Grades 6-8
White, Red long sleeved polo – Grades K-8
Navy long sleeved polo – Grades 6-8
White, Red turtleneck – Grades K-8
Navy turtleneck – Grades 6-8

All shirts must be tucked in.

Logos, pictures, or additional color (especially around the collar) are not permitted

Undershirts: White, no writing or print, short sleeve

Sweaters/Vests: Navy, Red, White crew, v-neck, cardigan – Grades K-8

Belts: Black, Brown, Navy

Shoes: No sandals, slip-ons, flip-flops or Crocs, shoes must provide proper support, shoes must cover front and back of foot

No rain/snow boots are to be worn during the school day. Students must bring proper shoes to change into.

Socks: Plain -Navy, White, Red, Black, Tan – Grades K-8
Socks must be visible and at least ankle (ankle bone) high.

Tights/: Navy, White, Black, Red tights – Grades K-8

Leggings Navy or Black leggings – Grades K-8
No prints or designs on tights or leggings

Ties: School Plaid

Students are encouraged to wear a tie or plaid skirt/skort/jumper on liturgy days.

Samples of school uniform clothes are available in the school office. Recommendation to purchase slacks is through Lands End. School Plaid is available for purchase through Lands End. Tops for uniform may be purchased in any store provided it fits the criteria.

Casual Day/Dress-up Day: A non-uniform day will occur on the last Friday of the month when we are in session. These days will be noted on the monthly calendar. Any additional casual days will be communicated through *the Monday Buzz* or your teacher's newsletter. The attire for school casual days or dress-up days should reflect the dress code and our school vision of modesty and integrity in all things. Students may wear jeans, sweats, t-shirts, sweatshirts, etc. Shorts, skirts, or skorts must be within 3 inches of the knee. Shirts for boys and girls must have sleeves, no tank tops, no halter or spaghetti straps, no "muscle" shirts. Any clothing item deemed as inappropriate by the principal or teacher will require a call home for a change of clothing.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING

Generally, information on school closing due to severe weather conditions or other types of emergencies (electrical, water pipe breaks, etc.) will be broadcast on local radio and TV stations such as WOOD-AM-1300, WTKG-AM-1230, and TV Channels 8 (NBC), 13(ABC), and 17 (FOX). If it is necessary to close school early, classroom telephone trees will be used to contact parents as quickly as possible.

If school is closed, all after school and evening activities will also be cancelled (athletics, pack mtgs., etc.)

If there is a **Tornado Watch** students will remain in school and staff members will take safety precautions. In case of **Tornado Warning**, students will be kept at school and take shelter there; students could possibly be detained beyond the normal dismissal time. Please do not call the school so that telephone lines will remain open for any special needs. During severe weather conditions, parents are free to pick up their children by signing them out at the school office.

FIRE/TORNADO DRILLS

Any person inside the school must leave the school building when the fire alarm sounds off. Teachers are to take their classes to the designated areas outside and remain there until the signal is given for re-entering. For a tornado drill, teachers are informed to take the classes to their designated shelter areas.

FIELD TRIPS

Class visits to places of cultural or educational significance give enrichment to teaching and learning activities. Classroom teachers plan and prepare their students for such field trips. Parents will be informed and, in some instances, encouraged to participate in the trips. No student may participate in a field trip without a signed parent permission form. Phone calls for parent permission will be permitted at the principal's discretion.

If a private passenger vehicle must be used, the signed volunteer driver's form must be on file in the school office. The minimal, acceptable liability limit for privately owned vehicles is \$500,000 CSL.

Student supervision on a field trip, in general, must have a ratio of one adult per ten students, and the school Code of Student Conduct is applied to all students.

Field trips are privileges and may be denied if standards of student academics or conduct are not met.

FUNDRAISING

St. Stephen School sponsors one main function to help raise money for the school. Our Monsignor Edward N. Alt Awards dinner is held in January. Money raised through this event goes directly into the school budget along with purchasing items needed in the school.

St. Stephen Home and School Association sponsors the Education First Program. This program encourages students to make a difference in their community, home, or school while asking for support through a monetary gift or a spiritual gift. Money raised through this event supports our Home and School which in turn goes directly back to the school through support of various field trips, enrichment programs, technology, and curriculum support.

HANDBOOK REVISION

The principal reserves the right to amend the handbook, for just cause, at any time. Parents will be notified of changes through special school bulletin, letter, or through the Monday Buzz.

HARASSMENT

School Board policy (#5012) requires all students to conduct themselves with dignity and respect for fellow students, teachers, school staff and visitors. Harassment of anyone, including sexual and racial harassment, will not be tolerated. Any student or parent who feels their child has been harassed should immediately report the incident to their teacher or principal.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS AND SERVICES

Parents/guardians are responsible for having their children properly immunized. Students can be excluded from school if they do not have an immunization record with the minimal doses.

All students will need to show evidence of a booster dose of diphtheria and tetanus vaccine if it has been 10 years since the last dose was administered.

In case of children not being immunized due to religious convictions or other objections, the parents/guardians must have a signed statement placed in the student's records.

Our students also receive these following health services at school through the Kent County Health Department: vision screening for students in grades 1,3,5, and 7; hearing screening for students in grades PreK, K, 2,4, and 6.

HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

The St. Stephen Home and School Association is the parent organization within our school community. The membership is composed of the parents/guardians and our school staff. Objectives of the organization are as follows:

1. To advance the welfare of the students in the school through the coordinated efforts of parents, teachers and students.
2. To bring into closer relation through enhanced communication parents/guardians; students; faculty and administration.
3. To promote an interest in educational matters and an understanding of the mutual responsibilities of parents and teachers in education.

4. To encourage the high standards of Christian family living.
5. To provide financial aid and assistance for special projects, educational media, activities and events for the benefit of the school.

Members of the Executive Board are listed in the School Directory. They can be contacted if more information is desired.

HOMEWORK GUIDELINES

Grades K-2

Homework requiring paper and pencil or workbooks is not assigned on a daily basis in the early elementary grades. When assignments are given they generally will center around spelling, vocabulary words, skill drills, reading or memorization.

Grades 3-8

Regular daily assignments are part of the curriculum in grades 3-8. Completion of assigned schoolwork in an acceptable, timely manner is essential to success in school. Assignments given during the school day and not completed in school, as well as assignments geared especially for homework, are to be completed at home. This work is to be handed in on the due date in order to receive full credit.

The work assigned for home may be written, studied or involve working on a project. It is intended to reinforce the skills developed during the day. Parents are encouraged to take an active role in reviewing with the student what has been learned each day. The penalty for missed assignments will be left to the teacher's discretion.

ILLNESS

If a student is ill, he/she is to remain at home and the parent/guardian is to notify the school of the nature of the illness. A child who is well enough to be in school is well enough to participate in all school activities, including recess. We adhere to the Health Department's guidelines. If a student is ill while attending school, the parent/guardian will be contacted to pick up the student.

INJURIES

A student who incurs a minor injury (scraped knee, slight bruise, etc.) at school will be administered first aid. In the case of an injury that might require medical attention, a staff member will call the parent, guardian or designee of the injured student. In an extreme emergency health situation, an ambulance service will be called and the student will be transported to a hospital. To ensure that your child receives prompt medical attention in an emergency, we ask that you sign the Medical Treatment Release Form included in the registration packet. Parents/guardians or designees will be notified immediately of the situation and will be responsible for the costs incurred.

INSURANCE

Supplemental health insurance is available for Catholic School students through Michigan Catholic Conference. Please call the school office for a form or more information.

LIBRARY

Students, in grades K-5, have a regular 20-40 minute library period weekly. Students in grades 6-8 may utilize the library when needed. They have the privilege of using the library during assigned periods and at other times with the permission of the teacher. Fines or restitution will be imposed on overdue or lost library books/materials. Students are expected to show proper respect to the librarian, librarian volunteers, and books at all times. Failure to do so is a serious matter and will be dealt with at the discretion of the principal. The library staff is primarily volunteers. Anyone wishing to help should contact the librarian for an assigned time.

LICE

We follow the state's recommendations of how to handle lice/nits. It is recommended that schools no longer send notification to the parent(s) whose student(s) is in a classroom with a student with lice. It goes against medical privacy and confidentiality, to share that information. Children are no longer mandated to stay home due to head lice. If the school becomes aware a student has lice, the family will be notified. If a family discovers their child has lice, they should let the school nurse know. The nurse is not mandated to communicate cases of head lice to anyone outside the main family, but if there are three reported cases within a classroom, there will be communication sent to the entire grade.

What do you need to know?

- Parents are to check for lice in each of their children's heads at least once a week.
- Lice do not jump. Lice cannot fly.
- Nits are non-transferable, because they are not yet live lice.
- Lice are almost always spread through direct head to head contact.
- Only ordinary household cleaning, such as vacuuming, washing bedding and clothing in hot water is needed.
- No special cleaners are needed to clean the home.
- There is no need for students to be sent home or to miss school. If parents find live lice or nits, treatment should be started BEFORE returning to school the following day.

What is expected of parents?

- PARENTS are the key to looking for and treating head lice! The IA Dept of Public Health advises parents to spend time each week carefully looking on each of their children's heads for lice or nits.
- If parents find lice, please notify the school (although it is parental choice) so we can take precautions in the classroom.

If there are any questions regarding lice, nits, or any health concern, please feel free to contact the front office.

LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS

Daily prayer is the heart of a St. Stephen education integral part of our spiritual life. Classes begin with prayer, and we pray together regularly as a school community. All grades participate in the celebration of the weekly school Mass held on Friday mornings at 8:30am. Students take an active part in the preparation of the liturgies. Parents are encouraged to attend and participate in these celebrations.

LOST AND FOUND

Lost and found articles are kept at the top of the middle stairwell where they can be seen and claimed by students every day. Any items remaining unclaimed after a month will be donated to charity or discarded.

LUNCH

Students ordinarily will bring their own lunch and eat at school. Parents are encouraged to provide their children with healthy lunches. Students must comply with Lunchroom Rules stated in the Code of Student Conduct. Students are not allowed to leave the school grounds during their lunch period, unless arrangements have been made and approved by the principal. Parents/guardians must sign the student out when leaving and sign the student in when returning.

Students may participate in the hot lunch program and milk program provided five days a week throughout the school year for a minimal cost.

MEDICATION

If a student is required to take prescribed medication during the school day, state law dictates that the medication, in the original pharmacy container, must be brought to the school by the parent/guardian. A school medication form must be completed and signed by the parent/guardian in order for the school to administer the medication.

Non-prescription medicines such as aspirin, Tylenol or other over-the-counter pain relief medications will not be administered at school without the parent/guardian's written permission and such medication must be provided by the parent/guardian.

NO PARKING ZONE

For safety reasons, parking on the northeast (corner of Rosewood St and Reed St.) lot is prohibited between hours of 7:30 am and 3:30 pm as this area is also used as part of the playground. Parking is not permitted on Gladstone Street. If you leave your car, you must park in the church parking lot or on the correct side of the street.

PESTICIDES

Routine pest inspections are made after school hours by a professional service. If necessary, pesticides are applied at that time. If you would like to be informed of these tests or applications, please notify the school office.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION

At the end of each school year, students are promoted to the next grade level or retained at the same level based upon a joint decision made by teachers, parents, and the principal. Academic progress, age of the child, and maturity level are factors taken into consideration when these decisions are made. The principal reserves the ultimate right to retain a student in the same grade level if in his/her judgment, despite the objection of the parents, a student needs another year in the same grade level in order for the student to be successful in the next grade level. Such a decision will not be made without the full prior knowledge of parents and the teacher beforehand.

REPORT CARD

Report cards are made available on Infinite Campus four times during the school year for grades K-8. Preschool students will receive assessments twice a year. Between card markings, teachers may send interim reports to parents.

SAFETY/SECURITY

All visitors, parents, delivery persons, etc. entering the building must enter through the main entrance off Gladstone St. All those entering must check-in at the school office.

If there are any court-ordered restrictions with respect to custodial/non-custodial parents/guardians, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent/guardian to see that the principal has a copy of the official document in writing. The principal then sees that the respective teachers are aware of such information.

SMOKE FREE ENVIRONMENT

St. Stephen Catholic School is a smoke-free environment. No smoking is permitted in the school building or on school grounds.

SPECIAL NEEDS SERVICES

St. Stephen students with disabilities may qualify for Special Education or for accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act as described below:

Special Education

Resident public school districts provide services for St. Stephen students identified as having a learning disability defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Documentation, including current IEPC, must be on file at St. Stephen School and the local public school providing the services.

A student can access Special Education services at their resident public school district through proper evaluation and placement procedures. Either parent/guardian involvement in this procedure is required. To inquire about Special Education programs, please contact the principal or resource room teacher.

Americans with Disabilities Act – Section 504

St. Stephen School complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure that individuals will not be discriminated against on the basis of a disability. Students with disabilities may be served within the regular education program based on an accommodation plan developed by the school in conjunction with parents/guardians.

Documentation of a student's disability must be on file at St. Stephen School. For ADD or ADHD students, the physician may provide needed documentation. The accommodation plan developed by the school staff together with parents/guardians must be included in the student's records. To inquire about creating a plan, please contact the principal or resource room teacher.

SPORTS PROGRAM

The sports program is offered to students in grades 5 through 8. Girls' sports include basketball, volleyball, softball, cheerleading and soccer. Boys' sports include basketball, soccer, football and baseball. In some years track is offered for both boys and girls.

Students who wish to participate must follow all guidelines as listed in the Diocesan Athletic Association and St. Stephen School Policy Handbook which include:

1. Parental permission is required.
2. Proof of physical examination.
3. Signed concussion form on file in the school office.
4. Waiver stating St. Stephen School is not liable for mishaps or injuries incurred during athletic season.
5. In order to participate in St. Stephen's athletic program, the student's performance must meet the guidelines in academics, conduct, and effort that are listed in the Eligibility Code.

STUDENT RECORDS

In accordance with federal legislation entitled "Family Education Rights and Privacy Act" (FERPA) we inform you that we keep the following records on your students at St. Stephen School:

1. Educational records of currently enrolled students containing information such as academic grades, test scores, health records, address, phone, etc.
2. Psychological or sociological records, reports, and evaluations of current students are maintained in the school office. They are available to teaching personnel at the discretion of the principal.

Parents or legal guardians of students have a right to inspect and review these records. A parent or guardian may challenge the contents of these records should he/she believe the records to be misleading or otherwise in violation of the privacy or the right of the individual.

The procedure for inspecting student records is:

1. Notify the principal in writing stating which records you wish to review and arrange a time

- for such a review. By law, the school has a maximum of 45 days in which to respond.
2. A school official must be present during the review to answer any questions or challenges made.
 3. Parents or legal guardians may request copies of the records but are not permitted to take the original ones from the files.
 4. Challenges to the contents of a record must be made in writing to the principal.

TELEPHONE USE

The St. Stephen School telephone is located in the school office and is used for school business only. Students will be allowed to use the school phone for emergency calls only. If it is necessary for a student to have a cell phone, the cell phone must remain in the student's backpack and be silenced during the school day. Cell phones are not permitted to be used during the school day.

TESTING

NWEA MAPS tests are administered to all 2-8 grade students three times a year. The test is designed to measure the student's basic skills in Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science. Results of this testing are shared with parents and teachers for teaching/learning improvement and planning.

TUITION AND REGISTRATION FEES

Registration fee (\$150.00) is non-refundable. If students are transferred out of St. Stephen School during the school year, tuition will be prorated on a per diem basis.

Tuition payment options are:

- A. Full year payment – due by September 1
 - B. Semester payment – First payment due September 1
Second payment due January 15
 - C. Automatic Monthly Debit/Coupon – Due monthly – July 15 through May 15
- If you prefer a different payment plan, please submit your preference in writing with your signature to the business office for approval.

Failure to pay tuition on a timely basis or make appropriate arrangements could result in your child/children being denied further admission to St. Stephen School.

Families having financial difficulty meeting their tuition commitments must contact the school office to schedule a meeting with the principal to discuss a payment plan.

VIRTUS

Parishes and schools within the Diocese of Grand Rapids participate in the VIRTUS Protecting God's Children program. **If you volunteer in any capacity with children or young people within the diocese, you are required to attend a VIRTUS Training session sponsored by the Diocese.** At the beginning of a new school year it is important to review the five step plan that has been put into place to ensure a safe environment for children and young people.

Step 1: Know the Warning Signs

Step 2: Control Access

Step 3: Monitor All Programs

Step 4: Be Aware

Step 5: Communicate Your Concerns

Parents play a key role in this plan! Children and young people naturally tell their parents when interactions with other adults are uncomfortable or make them feel uneasy. In addition, through the Teaching Touching Safety Program children and young people are trained to report their discomfort or uneasiness with a parent or another trusted adult. It is then up to the adults to communicate these concerns to the school. This plan works very well, but it can break down if the parents and other trusted adults do not **communicate concerns**.

At the beginning of this school year ask yourself...”Are there things you have overlooked? Have you talked yourself out of a concern about some interaction because you know the person or you can’t imagine that he or she would do any harm?”[i] The question that many adults struggle with is what constitutes a “concern?” Simply put, a concern is anything that you observe that gives you an uneasy feeling. The VIRTUS program defines concerns as: *Situations that give rise to uneasiness, uncertainty, apprehension, or an anxious state of mind. Concerns arise when a person is troubled by an observation that may affect the welfare or happiness of someone* [ii].

Parents - please do not hesitate to Communicate Your Concerns! If you become aware of a situation that makes you uneasy, uncertain, apprehensive, or anxious; please contact your school principal and he or she can help you determine how to best address your concern. Together, we can ensure a safe environment for children and young people.

[i] Doty, S. *Practical Reminders About the Plan*, VIRTUS Online.

[ii] *Protecting God’s Children™ for adults, Facilitator Manual*, p. 68, VIRTUS © 2001

VOLUNTEERS

Parents are expected to provide volunteer assistance when appropriate. Volunteer help from non-parents is always encouraged and welcome. If you have a background or skill in arts, crafts, athletics, clerical work, writing, public speaking, story telling, business, etc. – or if you can perform as a teacher aide or give a presentation on some specific topic, you are invited and encouraged to let us know. We would be very grateful for your services. Please contact the school office or Home and School Association with your interests. All volunteers are required to complete the necessary documents, which will include a background check.

WEBSITE

Check out our website at www.ststephenschoolgr.com for all the latest school news and updates.

I have read and agree to the St. Stephen Parent Handbook.

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Student (if in 6th-8th grade): _____