

PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK

2025-2026

Saint Mark School

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St. Mark School is a Catholic elementary school located in North Buffalo open to boys and girls of all races, color, creed and national origin in Pre-Kindergarten through Eighth Grade. It is a Roman Catholic School that follows the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

It was founded in 1921 through the efforts of Father John McMahon and placed under the supervision of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

(Handbook subject to change 12/1/25)

Philosophy of St. Mark School

It is our conviction that the child of God is a unique individual with his/her own rate and pattern of spiritual, intellectual, cultural, social emotional, and physical growth. Since we believe this, we must provide optimum conditions, to the best of our ability and resources, by which a child's individual needs can be developed.

Therefore, we dedicate ourselves to the development of the whole child: striving to create a secure, challenging, and creative community, a community in which each child and adult experiences love, tolerance, understanding, and self-worth. The goal of this community is to be witness to a vital relationship with Christ and to affirm Christ's message and spirit of hope for all mankind.

The basic goal of St. Mark School is to make a difference in the lives of children: spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially. To help achieve this end, the school community strives to develop a deeper relationship with Christ and with each other, to offer challenging programs that stimulate a spirit of inquiry and satisfy each child's needs, and to come to a real appreciation and understanding of the uniqueness of each child.

St. Mark Mission Statement

ST. MARK SCHOOL'S MISSION IS TO ASSIST FAMILIES IN THE EDUCATION AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF THEIR CHILDREN. WE STRIVE TO HELP CHILDREN DEVELOP ACADEMICALLY, SPIRITUALLY, EMOTIONALLY AND SOCIALLY. CHILDREN ARE EMPOWERED TO DEVELOP THE SKILLS NEEDED TO MAKE RESPONSIBLE AND APPROPRIATE DECISIONS AND ARE ENCOURAGED TO PERFORM TO THE BEST OF THEIR ABILITIES IN ALL ENDEAVORS.

St. Mark School Honor Code

St. Mark School is committed to inspiring all members of our faith community to be visible examples of the Gospel's teachings. St. Mark School seeks to develop students who have an enthusiasm for learning and growth and a true respect for and dedication to the values of the Church and the community.

The St. Mark School Honor Code sets forth the expectations for all members of our school community – students, parents, and staff. At the heart of the Honor Code is the recognition that we are all God's children and that we are all members of His family.

All students, parents, and staff will strive to always:

- Honor Jesus Christ by modeling our behavior to be more like His in every way
- Treat all members of the school community with kindness and respect
- Value the dignity of every person, embracing differences in background, ability, and perspective
- Show care for school and parish property and the property of others
- Demonstrate honesty in both academic work and personal behavior
- Participate fully in the prayer, service, and liturgical life of the school
- Behave in a safe, cooperative, and respectful manner at all times

NO....

Name-calling, teasing, exclusion, or repeated unkind behavior toward others

Cheating, lying, plagiarism, or stealing

Aggressive or threatening language, gestures, or physical actions

Vandalism or misuse of school or parish property

Disrespect toward teachers, staff, classmates, or volunteers

Inappropriate or offensive language, gestures, or digital communication

Any behavior that disrupts the learning environment or makes others feel unsafe or unwelcome

Prayer of St. Mark

May Jesus be our way, our truth, our life

St. Mark, light our way

Guide us to the truth

Help us to live in unity and peace with one another

Amen

Principal's Message

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Students:

Welcome to St. Mark School! We are very pleased that you have chosen our school and that you have committed to the values of Catholic education.

The faculty, office staff, and administration will work to ensure a quality education for all students and promote the teachings of the Catholic Church.

This Parent/Student Handbook contains information, school procedures, and policies of St. Mark School. Families are requested to read this handbook carefully.

We look forward to continued success and growth in the 2025-2026 school year!

Sincerely In Christ,

Maureen Rudzinski

Mrs. Maureen Rudzinski

Principal

Academics

Curriculum

The curriculum follows the guidelines mandated by the New York State Education Department and the Department of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Buffalo.

Religion is an integral part of the curriculum at St. Mark School and all students participate. Christian values and attitudes permeate all areas of school life. Religion is not just a subject in the curriculum, but a way of life to be lived. The gospel message is integrated with activities so that children may grow in their faith by living their faith: sharing prayer, giving service, experiencing community, showing respect and concern for others. Included in the Religion program are monthly school liturgies.

Children in second grade receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Children in third grade receive the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Parent participation in the sacramental preparation of their children is required throughout the year.

The core curriculum subjects:

- English/Literature
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- Religion

These core curriculum subjects are taught by the classroom teachers in Grades K - 4. At the middle school level, classes are departmentalized.

St. Mark School offers Reading and Math help for students who qualify. The Buffalo Public Schools provide speech, occupational therapy, and physical therapy for children who qualify.

Physical Education, Music, Art, and Computer Instruction are a regular part of the school curriculum at all grade levels, preK – 8, and are taught by teachers trained in those areas.

A Resource Room teacher is an additional resource available at St. Mark School. Junior High students are offered a variety of electives including STREAM, Advanced Arts, Advanced Music and Library/Media.

Grading & Marking Period Standards

When preparing the trimester marks for students, the following areas are considered:

- Unit and chapter tests
- Weekly tests and quizzes
- Performance on projects, research papers, classwork/homework
- Class participation, effort, and conduct

Homework

Homework is a necessary part of the School Program. It is designed to be a constructive tool in the teaching-learning process. The students must take ownership of their learning and therefore are accountable for completion of all homework assignments.

In order to receive full credit, assignments and projects must be submitted in a complete fashion on the day that they are due. Family emergencies will be taken into consideration on an individual basis. Parents must contact the school to inform us of such situations. If homework is missing or incomplete, the assigning teacher may send home a homework sheet to be signed by a parent or guardian, and/or take points off of the child's grade.

Homework takes first priority before sports practices, games, enrichment, television, or any other extracurricular activities. A main goal of St. Mark School is to foster growth in the personal integrity of each student. As a result, the copying of homework will result in a zero for both the student lending and the student copying homework. Plagiarism, the use of another's work and claiming it as one's own, is a serious academic problem and is forbidden. When doing research or working on homework, students must credit their sources of information.

Homework for Absentees

Parents may request homework when calling a child absent in the morning.

ANY REQUEST FOR HOMEWORK MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN 8:30

AM. This allows teachers time to prepare assignments and send them to the office. Assignments will be ready for pick up at 2:30 outside the school office.

Report Cards/Progress Reports

Report Cards and/or Progress Reports will be available to the parents on our Parent Portal site for all students Pre K-8.

Parent Teacher Conferences will be held after the 1st marking period.

Parents are encouraged to contact the teacher whenever there is a question about the child's development. If a parent wishes to confer with a teacher, he/she should call the main office.

Honor Roll

First and Second Honors Students are recognized for their hard work and exceptional performance.

First Honors: An average of 100% – 94.0%

Second Honors: An average of 93.9% - 88.0%

Promotion/Retention Policy

Students who have successfully met the district and state grade level requirements will be promoted to the next grade level.

Test results and school performance may indicate that a student cannot complete a year's work in the required time. It may be necessary for a student to be retained in a particular grade level. Criteria for retention:

Kindergarten:

- Unable to consistently recognize upper and lower case letters and sounds.
- Unable to fluently read the text at grade level.
- Unable to consistently write complete grade-level sentences.
- Inability to rote count
- Maturation level

Grade 1:

- Failure in reading

Grade 2:

- Failure in Reading and Math

Grades 3 – 8:

- Failure to achieve an overall average of 70 in the core subject areas
- The lowest passing grade at St. Mark School is 70.

Testing

New York State Tests in English Language Arts and Mathematics are administered to students in Grades 3 through 8. New York State tests in Science are administered to students in Grades 5 and 8. These series of tests enable school personnel to adjust the curriculum to better meet the needs of students and to help compare St. Mark's results in these subject areas with public, private, and Catholic schools in the State. June examinations are administered in Grades 3-8.

Accidents/Illness

Parents will be notified in the event of an accident or sudden illness. If parents cannot be reached in a reasonable amount of time, an emergency contact listed on the child's registration/emergency card will be called.

Occasionally a student requires emergency medical attention. The parent will be contacted on what action should be taken. If a parent cannot be reached, 911 will be contacted.

Accident Insurance

Every child registered in St. Mark School has Student Accident Insurance. In case of an accident in a school-sponsored activity, the principal must be notified immediately. Claim forms are available in the school office.

Admissions

It is recommended that interested parents register their children at the annual Open House, usually held at the beginning of February, which is the beginning of Catholic Schools Week.

Children entering Kindergarten must be five years old before December 31st of the year of registration. Parents must present a copy of the child's birth certificate when registering a child for any grade level.

Students applying for Grades 1-8 will have their cumulative records prior to acceptance into the school. **Every child new to our school will be accepted on a probationary status only for the first year.** His/her continued attendance is based upon the ability to successfully follow the standards of St. Mark School. Students will be asked to sign a probationary contract as a part of their enrollment.

Saint Mark parishioners and parishioners from the churches in the Catholic Community of Buffalo North are given priority in registering at St. Mark School. Second priority is given to siblings of students already registered. Non-parishioners are welcome, dependent upon class size.

Nondiscriminatory Policy

St. Mark School welcomes and admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to all its programs and activities made available to students of the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, or any of its programs.

After-School Program

The After-School Program (ASP) consists of organized sessions held Monday through Friday from 2:30-5:30 pm for students of St. Mark School. A snack is provided daily. Caregivers supervise all activities. Such activities include quiet and active games, sports, outdoor activities, arts and crafts, movies, and homework time.

The families will be billed monthly. The ASP invoices are sent home the first week of every month and must be paid in full each month. If a family is not current with their monthly payment by the 1st of the following month, their child/children will not be able to attend the program until the balance is paid in full.

Children are discouraged from bringing toys and games from home. The After-School personnel or school are not responsible for any items brought to school. Please be sure to label all items and clothing with your child's name. Children are not allowed to use their phones or smart watches.

If a student participates in an extracurricular program that does not begin immediately after dismissal, then he/she will need to attend the ASP in the meantime. All students must be accounted for at all times by an adult and they are not allowed to roam the school without supervision.

Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

Purpose and Commitment

No student shall be subjected to harassment or bullying, including cyberbullying, by other students on school property, at a school function, or during any school-related activity.

Saint Mark School, as a Catholic community, calls on Jesus as the model for our thoughts, words, and actions. We believe every person is made in the image and likeness of God and therefore must be treated with dignity and respect. We strive to create and maintain an atmosphere free from threats, intimidation, and disrespect in all interactions among students, staff, and families.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined as *intentional, repeated, and aggressive behavior* that involves a real or perceived power imbalance and causes physical or emotional harm to another person.

Bullying may be verbal, written, electronic, physical, or social in nature. It includes actions such as *persistent* name-calling, intimidation, spreading harmful rumors, deliberate exclusion, or physical aggression.

Clarifying "Power Imbalance"

A power imbalance means that one student has more influence or control in a situation—physically, socially, or emotionally—and uses that power to intentionally hurt or dominate another.

This may involve differences such as:

- Physical strength or size (for example, a bigger or older student intimidating a smaller one);
- Social status or popularity (for example, using friend groups or social media to exclude or embarrass someone); or
- Access to information or authority (for example, spreading private information or threatening to "get someone in trouble").

A power imbalance does not mean that students are simply different in personality, confidence, or friend group. It becomes bullying only when a student repeatedly uses that advantage to cause harm or distress.

Important distinction:

Not all unkind behavior or conflict constitutes bullying. Children—especially as they grow and learn social skills—may have disagreements, say something hurtful once, or choose different friends. These situations, while needing attention and guidance, do not meet the definition of bullying unless the behavior is *repeated, targeted, and intended to harm or control* another student.

Examples that are *not* considered bullying include:

- Mutual arguments or disagreements between peers
- A single instance of teasing, name-calling, or exclusion that does not continue
- Situations where both students share equal social power and responsibility for the conflict

Such behaviors will still be addressed through conflict resolution, restorative conversations, and guidance consistent with the school's Catholic mission to form character and virtue.

Definition of Harassment

Harassment refers to verbal, written, physical, or electronic conduct that is targeted, unwanted, and either severe, persistent, or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment, or that substantially interferes with a student's ability to participate in or benefit from school programs and activities.

While Saint Mark School addresses all disrespectful or unkind behavior, a single rude remark, social conflict, or isolated disagreement does not constitute harassment unless the behavior continues after correction or is so serious that it clearly disrupts the learning environment or a student's sense of safety.

Importantly, a student who mocks, argues with, or responds rudely to another student who has been teasing or provoking them is not automatically engaging in harassment. In such cases, both students may have acted inappropriately, but the situation reflects mutual conflict or poor judgment, not harassment. These matters will be addressed through correction, counseling, and restorative practices rather than disciplinary action under this policy.

Harassment or bullying of any kind is contrary to the Gospel values of respect, compassion, and forgiveness that guide all relationships within our school community.

Prevention and Expectations

All members of the Saint Mark community are expected to treat others with dignity in person, in writing, and online. Students are taught that kindness, respect, and forgiveness are daily expressions of our faith.

Reporting and Investigation Procedures

School employees who witness bullying or harassment, or who receive an oral or written report, must notify the Principal or Assistant Principal verbally within one school day and submit a written report within two school days of the initial report. Parents, students, and community members may also report concerns directly to the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Upon receiving a report, the Principal or designee will begin a prompt, fair, and impartial investigation. Every effort will be made to protect the rights, privacy, and dignity of all students involved. The investigation may include:

- Private interviews with the students directly involved, as well as with parents and relevant witnesses
- Review of any written, electronic, or other evidence necessary to establish facts
- Completion of a formal behavior or incident report documenting the findings and any actions taken
- Consultation with the Diocese of Buffalo Department of Catholic Education or law enforcement when deemed necessary by the Principal

Throughout the process, both the complainant and the accused will be treated with respect and given an opportunity to share their perspective. Findings will be based on facts gathered, not assumptions or outside pressure.

If the investigation determines that the allegation was unfounded or made in error, reasonable steps will be taken to support the student who was wrongly accused and to restore relationships among those involved.

Final Communication and Follow-Up

After the investigation is complete, the Principal or designee will communicate the findings to the student who reported the concern and their parent or guardian, as well as to the student accused of misconduct and their parent or guardian, however, due to confidentiality laws, the school cannot disclose any disciplinary action taken towards any

child but their own. The Principal will take appropriate steps to ensure that any confirmed misconduct has stopped and will implement supports to promote safety, reconciliation, and healing for all students involved.

If the investigation determines that the report was unfounded or made in error, the school will provide support to the student who was accused to help restore their good standing and relationships within the school community. Documentation of the investigation will reflect that no wrongdoing was found.

Retaliation in any form is strictly prohibited. This includes retaliation against:

- any individual who reports a concern in good faith,
- any individual who participates in an investigation,
- any student who was subject to an unfounded allegation, and
- any student found to have engaged in bullying or harassment after the situation has been addressed.

All students are expected to treat one another with respect and forgiveness once the matter has been resolved. Continued hostility or retaliatory behavior will result in further disciplinary action.

Consequences

If bullying or harassment is substantiated, disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the school's Discipline Policy and Acceptable Technology Use Policy. When behavior does not meet the definition of bullying or harassment but is still inconsistent with our expectations, the school will use restorative or corrective strategies to guide students toward reconciliation and responsible choices.

Publication and Annual Review

This policy is written in plain, age-appropriate language and is published annually on the school's website and parent portal. It is shared each year with employees, parents, and students as part of Saint Mark School's commitment to maintaining a safe and Christ-centered learning environment.

Attendance/Absences

St. Mark School believes that regular student attendance and punctuality are essential to a student's success in school. These habits must be instilled in a child as soon as he/she begins school. The loss of even one day is a detriment to the progress of the child. Most subject areas are taught in sequence, requiring the understanding of each concept in the order of its presentation. Thus, persistent absenteeism or tardiness creates a genuine hardship for a student and is considered a serious problem. **Further, students who miss 20 days of school, and have not met periodically with school administration, are in jeopardy of retention which may result in student ineligibility for re-registration.**

New York State indicates that the only legal excuses are sickness, death in the family, impassable roads, religious observances, quarantine, or required appearance in court.

Children's absences for purposes of a family trip, vacations, or babysitting, are illegal and are indicated in the attendance registers. The number of a student's absences and tardiness are indicated on the student's report card, the register of attendance, and the permanent record card, a copy of which is forwarded to the student's next school.

Parents must sign up for Pickup Patrol to enter absences and dismissal plans. Pickup Patrol will be used to make changes to your child's dismissal plans and helps ensure that students are accurately dismissed each day.

- Your child's regular dismissal plan will be entered into the system by you when you Register. This is called their Default Plan.
- Whenever your child is following a *different plan*, you'll submit a Plan Change via Pickup Patrol before 1:30 pm that day.
- Absences: Please report your child's absences via Pickup Patrol only
- Daily Changes: If the normal plan changes, please update in Pickup Patrol
- If your child is walking and they usually take the bus, please change it in Pickup Patrol before 1:30pm so we don't put them on the bus. We can't take their word for it- we need the change made in Pickup Patrol
- **PLEASE NOTE: We will ONLY send your child home the way we are directed to that day in Pickup Patrol. We will not accept the child telling us or a hand-written note.**

You will only need to call the school if an emergency change has occurred after the 1:30pm deadline, making you unable to submit into Pickup Patrol.

If your child has undergone surgery or has scheduled surgery, please inform the office. Any physical restrictions due to surgery, illness, or medication must be communicated to

the school office, the school nurse, the homeroom teacher, and the Physical Education teacher.

Tardiness

It is very important for students to develop the habit of arriving at school on time. Late arrivals are disruptive to the start of the school day for other students and the homeroom teacher. All students should be present by the **7:40 am bell**. All students will be marked as tardy at 7:45 am. Excused tardiness will be limited to medical or dental appointments and emergencies.

Students who accumulate more than three unexcused tardies in a single trimester will face disciplinary consequences. These may include, but are not limited to, removal from field trips and extracurricular activities, detention, and placement on Academic Probation. Timely arrival to class is essential for academic success and maintaining a respectful, productive learning environment.

Arrival/Dismissal

Parents are asked to see that students are at school between 7:15a.m. and 7:40 a.m. and report to the cafeteria. School doors do not open prior to 7:15 a.m. For safety reasons, please have your child wait with you until you see a staff member at the door. When students arrive after 7:40 a.m., they must ring the bell and enter the building through door #2 and receive a late pass.

Dismissal begins at 2:15 for Pre-K and begins at 2:25 p.m. for Grades K-8. Students not taking buses are expected to leave the school grounds upon dismissal. If they are not picked up by 2:30 pm they will be checked into the After-School Program.

Early Dismissal

Parents must sign up for PickUp Patrol to enter dismissal plans. PickUp Patrol will be used to make changes to your child's dismissal plans and helps ensure that students are accurately dismissed each day. Whenever your child is following a *different dismissal plan*, you'll submit a Plan Change via PickUp Patrol before 1:30 pm that day.

You will only need to call the school if an emergency change has occurred after the 1:30pm deadline, making you unable to submit into PickUp Patrol. All parents must report to the office at the time of designated dismissal to sign their child/children's release. Children will not be called to the office until the parents arrive. All early dismissals must occur prior to 2:00 pm due to bussing and changing of classes.

Parents are asked NOT to block the middle of Woodward Avenue when dropping off and/or picking up their child. There is no parking on the side of the street directly in front of our school building. This presents a possible safety hazard to our school and neighborhood if emergency vehicles cannot get down our street. Parents should park on the surrounding streets if there is no available space near the school. Please be respectful of our neighbors at all times, drive slowly and do not park in or block their driveways.

Extra-Curricular Activity Attendance Policy

Any student who wishes to remain after school for any reason must have a written note from their parent or guardian given to the student's homeroom teacher. For a prolonged activity, e.g. sports team, the parent only needs to write one note which will allow the student to participate in the event for the duration of the activity.

Any student who is absent during the school day due to illness or vacation will not be able to attend or participate in any extra-curricular activity

Absence Due to Family Vacation or Sports Competition

The school calendar provides numerous days off throughout the school year. Parents are encouraged to schedule trips or family outings during these times to eliminate the need for interruption of student learning. **Teachers are not responsible to have work prepared to give to the student prior to an absence for a family vacation.** The family assumes responsibility for their child's learning under these conditions. The student is responsible for work taught during the period of absence, including classroom assignments, which should be completed within one week of returning to school from vacation.

Athletics

All students in Grades K-8 participate in physical education classes one to two times per week. The extracurricular athletic program is open to all students. All participants must abide by the policies stated in the Athletic Guidelines and Attendance Policy.

Any student who participates in the athletic program must have on file with the school a current-year release from a doctor to participate, written permission from the parents to participate, a Sports Code of Ethics signed by the parent and athlete and a completed St. Mark Waiver Form. These forms are included in the "Sports Packet" located on our Website.

Authorized Persons, Custodial, and Legal Issues

A student may only be released to people authorized by the parent or legal guardian. Only written authorization for pupil release will be accepted. If a child is a member of a family where there are legal orders regarding custody, the school must have a copy of those legal orders on file. **It is the responsibility of the parents to provide the school with an original copy of the most recent custodial papers in a timely fashion.**

The safety and well-being of each child is essential. Therefore, it is also the responsibility of the parents to provide very clear and accurate communications regarding:

- Who has primary custodial rights?
- Who is allowed to pick up the child and on what days?
- What are the non-custodial parental rights regarding contact with the child during school time and at dismissal?
- When is the child allowed to be with the non-custodial parent?

Bicycles, Skateboards & Scooters

Due to the extreme traffic congestion on Woodward Avenue and surrounding streets, the use of bicycles, skateboards and scooters is strongly discouraged. However, should a parent allow a student to travel to and from school this way, St. Mark will not be responsible for lost or damaged bicycles, skateboards or scooters.

All students must cross with the crossing guard at Amherst and Woodward when walking or biking home.

Birthday Parties

Birthday Parties are permitted in a child's homeroom only after a parent contact's the homeroom teacher to arrange a time and date for a small safe treat to be sent into school. Parents may not stay for the school birthday celebration. Please note there are allergy concerns in the building and all incoming food must be approved by the classroom teacher and school nurse.

Bus Conduct

Bussing is provided by the Buffalo Public School District for students who reside $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile or more from St. Mark School. We are grateful for this service and expect our students to conduct themselves with respect and good behavior while on the bus. The students are to follow all rules of order and safety as directed by the bus driver. These rules, which provide for a safe and efficient system of bus transportation, include:

- While talking is allowed, voices must be kept at a level that ensures safety and permits the driver to concentrate on driving.
- Courteous behavior is expected at all times.
- The children are to board the bus in an orderly fashion, with no pushing when entering or exiting the bus.
- Children are not to stand or walk around while on the bus; they are to remain in their seats until the bus comes to a stop.
- Hands and arms are to be kept inside the bus at all times.
- When exiting the bus, if it is necessary to cross the road, cross far enough in front of the driver so that you can be seen by the driver. Wait for the bus aide to cross you or wait for the bus driver's signal that it is safe to cross. Look both ways and if cars are coming, wait until they have come to a full stop. Never assume that they will stop.
- Cell phone use is prohibited on the bus unless permission to call/text a parent or guardian is granted by the driver or aide.

Since orderly behavior is vital to the safe operation of the bus, misconduct will not be tolerated. Verified reports of misconduct on the bus, especially those from the bus driver in the form of a bus disciplinary referral, will be handled by the Principal and/or Dean of Students. The discipline for bus misconduct, if it occurs repeatedly, may include assigned seating or the suspension of the student's privilege to ride the bus.

Children may only ride a bus to their assigned drop-off point. School buses are not to be used as alternate transportation to another student's house or after-school event.

Cafeteria

Students are offered breakfast, hot and cold lunches, snacks, milk and water bottles in the school cafeteria daily. Students must notify Homeroom Teachers at arrival if they will be ordering a lunch that day. All breakfast and lunch is provided at no charge to all students by the Buffalo Public Schools. A monthly menu is available on the school website. Applications for free and reduced lunch must be completed and returned to the cafeteria manager.

Cafeteria and/or school personnel may contact parents about inappropriate behavior.

Rules & Conduct

Students are to...

- Enter the cafeteria and sit at the assigned table.
- Wait to be called up to receive lunch by cafeteria monitors.
- Students are encouraged to use good table manners and speak at an indoor level.
- Be respectful and always follow the directions of cafeteria monitors.
- Ask permission from monitors when the need to leave the cafeteria arises.
- Follow directions for disposing of trash/recycling.
- Take responsibility for their own behavior.
- Stop talking and give immediate attention to monitors when the lights go off.
- All students will be dismissed by cafeteria monitors one table at a time after each table has been cleaned and cleared of trash.

Cell Phone Policy

This includes cell phones, tablets and Smartwatches which are not used by students at any time during the school day.

St. Mark School requires an electronic device policy to be signed and returned to the school office. If a student brings a cell phone or other electronic device to school, the following must occur:

- **A student is not allowed to carry their cell phone with them during the school day**
- **The cell phone must remain powered off and in the student's backpack in his/her locker.**
- If a student is found carrying an electronic device, it will be confiscated and returned to the **parent/guardian** at the end of the school day.
- Subsequent offenses will result in additional disciplinary action.

Communication to Parents

Various communications for parents are emailed on a regular basis. An Email Communication Form is to be completed at the beginning of the school year and must be returned promptly. All email addresses on this form will receive the regular correspondence. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the school of any email change.

Crisis Plans

St. Mark School has formulated Crisis Plans that detail the steps to be taken if an unforeseen situation occurs: medical emergency, bomb threat, intruder, etc. Drills will be conducted to teach students proper procedures to follow.

Diocesan Code of Conduct

Adults who work with children through the Diocese of Buffalo, or any of its parishes or schools, have the legal, moral and religious responsibility to perform their duties in a way that educates, assists, and does not harm the children with whom they work. In keeping with this obligation, the Diocese of Buffalo has established a Code of Conduct for all who minister, teach, coach or assist children in school or parishes throughout the Diocese of Buffalo. All priests, teachers, coaches, employees and volunteers must pledge to follow the Code of Conduct, attend an online Protecting God's Children Workshop and participate in monthly internet safety in-services through Virtus training.

Go to: Buffalodiocese.org

Scroll down to the Protecting God's Children icon/Workshop Registration/register and take the online course.

Discipline

Philosophy of Discipline

In accordance with the Catholic Church's documents on Christian Education, St. Mark School considers discipline an aspect of Christian development. We encourage students to exercise self-control in living and working with others. The basis of our discipline code is respect for self, others, and God. The goal of our discipline policy is to change negative behavior and teach our students to make positive choices and decisions which result in building integrity and moral excellence. Saint Mark School promotes a safe, respectful, and Christ-centered learning environment. Our discipline plan emphasizes accountability, restoration, and appropriate development of student character through progressive supports and consequences.

Security Camera/Footage

In an effort to keep St. Mark School as safe as possible, security cameras have been installed at various locations throughout the building.

In the event of a situation that leads to injury or severe discipline, the security footage may be viewed. Any viewing of security footage will be done by the School Administrator or their designees. The school reserves the right to have any video viewed only by parish/school personnel.

Certain behaviors are completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated. These behaviors include and are not limited to:

- Name-calling, teasing, exclusion, or repeated unkind behavior toward others
- Cheating, lying, plagiarism, or stealing
- Aggressive or threatening language, gestures, or physical actions
- Vandalism or misuse of school or parish property
- Disrespect toward teachers, staff, classmates, or volunteers
- Inappropriate or offensive language, gestures, or digital communication
- Any behavior that disrupts the learning environment or makes others feel unsafe or unwelcome
- Dress code violations
- Interfering with another's right to pray
- Using God's name improperly
- Threatening, harassing, bullying, or intimidating others at school or on **SOCIAL MEDIA**
- Vandalism (This means intentionally damaging or destroying property, including writing on desks, walls, computers, etc. – This is cause for immediate suspension)

and possible dismissal. The school requires that vandal damage be paid before a student is allowed to return to class. If a student accidentally causes damage, he or she should report it to the teacher immediately, so that the damage is not misconstrued as vandalism)

- Insubordination (failing to comply with the reasonable and lawful directions of the teachers, administrators, or other school staff, including substitutes and all others in charge of students)

Consequences

When students choose to behave inappropriately, they will be expected to take responsibility for their actions, make up in some way for any harm their actions may have caused and demonstrate that they have learned appropriate behaviors. Students found to have violated the provisions of this handbook are subject to the consequences listed below. *The sequence of these consequences does not necessarily indicate the order of implementation.* The specific means in which these goals are accomplished will vary according to the nature of the inappropriate behavior and may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Oral warning from any member of St. Mark faculty (including parent volunteers)
- Parent notification, either verbal or written
- Discipline Report placed in student file and documented in eSchool
- Detention – in school or after school (2:15-3:00)
- Suspension from extra-curricular activities, including sports, field trips, clubs
- Parent conference
- Suspension from school – length determined by Principal, Pastor, or Assistant Principal
- Expulsion from St. Mark School

Saint Mark School Behavior and Discipline Framework

Purpose

Saint Mark School promotes a safe, respectful, and Christ-centered learning environment. Our discipline plan emphasizes accountability, restoration, and appropriate development of student character through progressive supports and consequences.

Behavior Categories

| Level | Type of Behavior | Examples |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Level 1 – Minor | Disruptive or uncooperative behavior | Talking during instruction, off-task behavior, refusing to follow directions, rough play, calling out, dress code violation |
| Level 2 – Moderate | Disrespectful, unsafe, or inappropriate conduct | Repeated Level 1 behaviors, rude language, defiance, pushing/shoving, inappropriate gestures or jokes, minor property damage |
| Level 3 – Serious | Harassment, threats, physical conflict, major misconduct | Fighting, threats, deliberate property damage, encouraging exclusion of others, use of profanity toward staff or peers |
| Level 4 – Severe | Dangerous or illegal behavior | Possession of weapons or dangerous items, physical assault, illegal substances, theft, repeated serious misconduct |

Younger students (K–2) may require modified consequences and support-based responses due to developmental needs.

Progressive Disciplinary Responses

| Offense Level | First Occurrence | Second Occurrence | Third Occurrence | Fourth+ Occurrence |
|----------------------|--|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| Level 1 | Verbal redirection, restorative reflection | Parent contact, loss of classroom privileges | Teacher or admin conference, short detention | Individualized behavior support plan |
| Level 2 | Restorative reflection, parent contact | Detention, written apology or restitution | In-school consequence (admin-assigned), behavior contract | Extended consequence, family meeting |
| Level 3 | Administrative review, in-school consequence or other action as appropriate. Suspension may be considered, depending on offense. | Suspension; written plan and restorative process required | Increased suspension days or alternate placement; counseling referral | Disciplinary hearing and review |
| Level 4 | Suspension, removal from activities, administrative review | Long-term suspension or expulsion review | – | – |

Note: Level 3 consequences are determined case-by-case. Suspension is one option, but alternative consequences will be used when deemed more appropriate by administration.

Restorative Reflection and Support Process

When applicable, students will participate in a **Restorative Reflection**, which includes:

- A written or verbal reflection on the behavior and its impact
- Identification of who was affected and how
- An opportunity to express regret and outline steps for restoration
- A one-on-one conference with a teacher or administrator to process the incident
- Creation of a restoration plan, such as:
 - Apologizing to affected parties
 - Making restitution (e.g., repairing or replacing damaged items)
 - Completing a service activity or making amends in another constructive way

Restorative practices aim to:

- Promote empathy and accountability
 - Reinforce the dignity of all involved
 - Restore trust and repair relationships
 - Reduce repeated misbehavior
-

Documentation and Communication

All moderate to severe behaviors are documented using the school's **Behavior Incident Form**, including:

- Description of incident
- Action taken
- Parent contact log
- Follow-up plan

Behavior records are confidential and maintained by administration.

Notes for Implementation

- Administrators have discretion to adjust consequences based on student age, intent, history, and severity of the behavior.
- Responses are aimed at teaching, not simply punishing.
- In every case, communication with families is key to successful support.

Additional Guidelines for Students

- When students arrive at school in the morning, they must enter the building. No standing outside, running or rough play.
- Students are expected to leave the school grounds upon dismissal. If they are waiting for older students to be dismissed, they should wait with their teacher until picked up.
- Running is not allowed in the school except in gym class.
- Gum is NOT ALLOWED at all times in all classes.
- Students may not open the school doors for anyone, not even his/her parents, unless they are specifically asked to do so by a teacher or office staff.

Academic and Behavioral Probation Policy:

Students may be placed on academic probation and deemed ineligible to participate in athletics or extracurricular activities if their academic/behavioral performance falls below school academic standards and the St. Mark Honor Code. This determination will be made collaboratively by teachers and school administration. The goal of academic probation is to ensure that students prioritize their education and receive the necessary support to improve their academic standing.

Terms of Probation:

- Students on probation will receive an individualized improvement plan outlining specific expectations, areas for growth, and available supports.
- Progress will be reviewed at regular intervals (typically every 3–6 weeks) by teachers and administration.
- Students may be removed from probation once they demonstrate consistent improvement in academic performance, responsible behavior, and adherence to the St. Mark Honor Code.
- Final decisions regarding removal from probation will be made by the school administration in consultation with teachers.

Failure to Improve:

If a student does not show sufficient improvement while on probation, further disciplinary or administrative action may be taken. This may include continued ineligibility for extracurricular participation, extended probation, or in serious cases, dismissal from Saint Mark School.

Eighth-grade students who remain on probation and do not demonstrate improvement may lose the privilege to participate in special end-of-year events such as the 8th Grade Trip, the 8th Grade Luncheon, and other culminating activities. Additionally, Saint Mark School reserves the right to contact the student's high school of choice and withdraw its recommendation or support.

Dress Code

Guidelines

Students in grades **Kindergarten through 8th grade** are required to wear the uniform from the first day of school in September through the close of the school year in June, unless otherwise specified by the Administration. Students will be having recess outside

regularly and it is advised to have proper outerwear for the weather and perhaps a change of shoes and/or clothes to be stored at school.

Parents are asked to see that their child (ren) are in full uniform before leaving for school each morning. If unforeseen circumstances require a child to be out of uniform, a written note from parents giving a legitimate reason will excuse the child for one day. If the child does not have a note, the student will be given a verbal warning and offense will be recorded by teacher. After the second offense, students will be given a "Pink Slip" to notify parents, that must be signed and returned the following day. After the third offense, parents will be contacted at home or work and be asked to bring the proper uniform to school, and the student will wait in the office until the proper uniform is brought. Students may also be required to attend after school detention.

Uniform Options

Uniform Bottoms

Girls: St. Mark plaid school jumper (K-4) or skirt (5-8), no shorter than 3 inches above the knee. Shorts should be worn under uniform skirts and jumpers if they are not skort-type or no tights are worn. Girls may also wear slacks at any time during the school year.

Girls & Boys: Navy blue or Khaki dress slacks (**no cargo pants, pants with braids/rivets, large pockets**)

Uniform Tops

White, navy blue, or light blue tailored dress shirts collars, tailored blouses with collars, 2-3 button polo shirts. Shirts may be long or short sleeved. No logos are permitted on shirts, unless the logo is the embroidered St. Mark logo.

Uniform sweaters/sweatshirts (an acceptable collared shirt must be worn under a uniform sweater or sweatshirt unless the student is in the approved PE uniform.) No sports sweatshirts may be worn on regular uniform days.

Solid navy blue sweaters or cardigans. Must be worn with a collared shirt.

Solid navy blue sweatshirt embroidered with the SMK logo. Must be worn with a collared shirt.

Solid gray sweatshirt with the SMK screen-printed logo. Must be worn with collared shirt.

St. Mark approved Sports Team Sweatshirt may be worn *on P.E. days only* (example: gray swim team sweatshirts, navy basketball sweatshirts, navy soccer team sweatshirts) No sports sweatshirts are permitted on regular, non P.E. days.

Shoes/Socks

Solid colored white, navy or gray socks, stockings, or tights must be worn with shoes.

Dress or casual shoes (ie: boat shoes, loafers, flats, or mary janes) must be worn. Shoes can be blue, black, or brown and must be closed toe and have sturdy soles.

No Uggs, Crocs or slipper shoes.

Running shoes, tennis shoes, sneakers, or athletic shoes **are only permitted** on PE days.

Summer Uniform Option *(can be worn only in September, October, May, June)*

Navy blue or Khaki knee length dress shorts or the St. Mark uniform logo gym shorts/skorts may be worn.

Other Considerations

Hats, headgear of any kind, may not be worn in school except for medical or religious reasons. Exemptions must be pre-arranged with the principal.

Hair must be neatly cut and well-groomed; no extreme styles or hair colors.

Cosmetics including eye makeup and lipstick are not permitted.

Boys are not permitted to have earrings or any form of body piercings. Girls are allowed one small post earring in each ear. Long, dangling earrings, hoop earrings, and other body piercings are not allowed.

Shoe boots, hiking boots, or winter boots are not allowed in the classrooms.

Physical Education Dress Code (Grades K – 8)

The following uniform should be worn to school on the day the student has physical education class:

Top

Only one type of P.E. shirt is permitted: Gray school gym shirt with SMK logo. This can be purchased at The Roar Store.

No other St. Mark shirts, such as “The Shirt” or sports and SMK 5K shirts may be worn.

Bottom

Gym shorts - Only St. Mark logo gym shorts are permitted. These can be ordered in maroon from The Roar Store. Shorts from other vendors are not permitted. Shorts must reach no shorter than **3 inches above the child’s knee. No running shorts or bike shorts.**

Gym Skort- Navy blue skort, with or without the St. Mark logo, may be ordered from [Landsend.com](https://www.landsend.com). No other skorts are permitted. Skorts purchased from other vendors are not allowed.

Gym pants – solid colored maroon, navy, black, or gray sweatpants with no writing or pictures on them (*stripes down the side are permissible*).

Solid colored socks and appropriate sneakers.

Yoga pants, tight fitting sweatpants, leggings, bike shorts, and jewelry are not to be worn by any students on gym days. Shirts must be full length and cover the entire mid-section.

Guidelines for Out of Uniform Days

Exceptions to dress code may be allowed for certain classroom or school events. Notice of exceptions will be sent home in a timely manner so families have time to prepare. Students may wear “The Shirt” on designated days. These shirts should be worn with physical education bottoms and sneakers.

The following guidelines are to be followed for Out of Uniform Days:

Students may NOT wear:

- Tank or tube tops
- Low-cut blouses/tops and tops exposing midriffs or bra straps.
- T-Shirts with inappropriate writing or pictures
- Ripped jeans
- Pajama pants
- Clothing that is tight or short
- See-through clothing
- Pants that sag below the waist
- Flip flops/Crocs

Leggings are allowed ONLY when the top covers mid-thigh or longer.

Drugs, Alcohol, Smoking

It is strictly forbidden for students to distribute, use, or have the following in their possession: drugs, drug paraphernalia, alcohol, any form of tobacco, fireworks, matches, lighters, and electronic (e) cigarettes, vapes.

Any students involved with any of the above-listed items in school, on school property, or at a school-sponsored event will be suspended immediately. A conference with the student, parents, and School Administration will be arranged. The student will be placed on probation. A suitable punishment will be assigned. A second offense of a serious nature against any school rule while on probation will result in expulsion.

Emergency Evacuation

In the event of an emergency evacuation, St. Mark Church will be used as an emergency shelter. If it is not possible to use the church, we will walk to School 54 on Main Street for shelter. Our normal route for evacuation will be to walk down Woodward Avenue to Jewett, turn left on Jewett and walk to Main Street, turn right on Main Street and walk to School 54.

Emergency School Closings

In the event of a severe storm or other inclement weather, all Catholic elementary schools in the City of Buffalo will be closed if the Buffalo Public Schools are closed. It is to be presumed that the school will be open unless an announcement to the contrary is made. Announcements for Buffalo Public and Catholic Schools will be made before or about 7:00 am. In the event that a severe storm or other emergency warrants sending the children home when the school is in session, all parents will be contacted before the children are released via email.

Extracurricular Activities

Students are encouraged to become involved in after-school activities, which vary from year to year. If students remain after school for school activities, the parents are responsible for their transportation home. Activities should never interfere with academic achievement. Any student who receives two failing grades, or whose average for a marking period is below 70, receives two or more discipline notices may be excluded from all extracurricular activities for the remainder of the marking period.

Any student who is absent during the school day due to illness or vacation will not be able to attend and/or participate in any extracurricular activity that day.

Family Financial Survey

Every year the parents are asked to complete a CONFIDENTIAL survey, the results of which determine how much money and/or federal programs we obtain to provide our students with a variety of materials and services. It is one of the few educational benefits children receive from their parents' tax dollars. Parents are strongly encouraged to complete the survey.

Field Trips

Parents must complete a waiver form whenever students go on a field trip. Students will not be allowed to go on the field trip if the waiver form has not been handed in.

Parents may be invited to assist with the supervision of students on such trips. Only those parents who are Virtus trained may be chaperones on any trip. Parents may not bring any other children on a school field trip.

Please note the following regarding field trips:

- Attendance on a field trip is considered a privilege, not a right for students.
- Excessive classroom disruptions or discipline notices may result in non-participation.
- Not all grades have the same number of field trips
- Students are expected to represent St. Mark School in a positive manner when off-campus at a field trip. The standard St. Mark School dress code is in effect unless otherwise indicated.

A TELEPHONE CALL WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED IN LIEU OF A FIELD TRIP FORM

Fire, Shelter in Place and Lock Down Drills

The school is required by law to conduct a minimum of eight (8) fire drills and four (4) lockdown/shelter in place drills each school year. They are conducted to teach students to respond appropriately to emergency situations.

- Whenever the fire alarm is heard, everyone must immediately vacate the building.
- Teachers and students must proceed according to the directives posted in each classroom/assembling area. They must move rapidly without running.
- Students must keep their hands to themselves.

- Absolute SILENCE is maintained during the entire fire drill, from the time the alarm rings until students are back in their classroom or other area.
- Talking or misbehaving during a fire drill are causes for automatic detention and other consequences.
- When a lockdown is called, students are to move to a designated location in their classroom; if a student is not in a classroom, he-she must immediately move to the nearest classroom
- Doors are locked and lights turned off
- Students are to remain SILENT during the entire lock down
- All students and staff must wait until the all clear signal is given to resume normal activities

Home School Association (H.S.A.)

The St. Mark Home School Association (HSA) provides an opportunity for the parents and teachers of St. Mark to cooperate in their mutual endeavor to educate our children according to Catholic principles.

The HSA's contributions to the school over the years are numerous. Many successful financial, social and enrichment programs have been implemented and continue to be sponsored. The students have benefited greatly from this close, caring relationship, and parents enjoy the friendship which develops.

Every parent is invited to become involved in his or her own child's education, through participation in the Home School Association. Please refer to the HSA calendar on the school website for meeting dates and times.

Fundraising

Tuition and subsidy from the parish do not cover all of the operating expenses of the school. Fundraising activities are necessary to meet the school's budget. All parents are encouraged to participate in these activities. All families must purchase required HSA raffle tickets each year.

Lockers

Lockers are provided for students' belongings. In order to maintain a quiet atmosphere for class, students are allowed to use their lockers at specified times only. Lockers are to be kept closed during the school day. Inspection of school lockers may occur at any time.

Lost and Found

Students who lose or find items should make a report to their teacher or school office staff.

Lunchboxes, book bags, textbooks, workbooks and notebooks should be marked with the owner's name. All items of clothing which children may remove during the day should be labeled with name tags or marking pen. This includes uniforms, blouses, shirts, slacks, gym clothes, caps, scarves, mittens, boots, sneakers, school sweatshirts, etc. Many items are found each year and are never claimed. Unclaimed articles will be donated to charitable organizations at the end of every month.

Medication

It is sometimes necessary for oral medications to be given during the school day. Children should be encouraged to take medication before or after school, if possible. New York State Education guidelines state that oral medications may be administered by the school nurse if a ***Request Form for Giving Medication at School*** is on file. The form, available in the nurse's clinic at school, must be completed by the child's physician and signed by the parent.

Medication containers must be clearly labeled with adequate instructions by the pharmacy or physician as to when it is to be given, how much, and for how long. The medication must be delivered directly to the nurse or secretary by the parent. Parents must report to school personnel immediately if there is any change in the course of treatment or in medication. Any changes in medication or dose will require the completion of a new *Request Form for Giving Medication at School*.

Money

When money is sent to school for payment of any type, it should be put in an envelope marked with the child's name, grade, date and purpose.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences to discuss children's progress will be held during the first marking period. Parents are encouraged to contact the teacher whenever there is a question about the child's development. If a parent wishes to confer with a teacher, he/she should call the school office and leave a message for the teacher that a conference is requested.

Parking

Parking is not allowed in front of the school during school hours. Tickets for violations are given out frequently. Please be mindful of our neighbors when parking not to block their driveways.

Registration/Emergency Forms

Registration/Emergency Forms are completed or updated by parents when the child enters school in September. If there are changes during the year: address, telephone number, place of business, emergency contacts, etc., it is important to notify the school office immediately. All forms are available and must be completed online via FinalSite.

School Calendar

Please check our Web site for the year's calendar, weekly number days and other pertinent school related information. Please note that the school calendar is subject to change. Should changes be necessary, parents will be notified with as much advance notice as possible.

School Doors

The outside doors are locked during school time. Parents and visitors should ring the bell to the right of the entrance near the office (Door #2) and report to the office for a guest pass. Parents are not to proceed to the classrooms prior to receiving a guest pass. When parents are exiting the building, they are asked to make sure the doors lock securely behind them and to be cautious about allowing others to enter the building.

Student Records

All student records are held with strict confidentiality. If a parent or guardian wishes to review a child's records with the school administration, a written request for an appointment to do so must be given to the principal.

Teacher Requests

Teachers collaborate to formulate class lists for the upcoming school year. These lists are based on student academics, social compatibility and teacher knowledge of the student. Parents should reach out to teachers with concerns throughout the year and parent requests are discouraged, except in special circumstances.

Technology Use Policy

Students in Grades K-8 are asked to sign the Acceptable Use Policy which clarifies student rights and responsibilities in using computers and the internet at school. Parents must sign the agreement indicating if they give their child/children permission to use the internet.

Telephone Calls

Students are discouraged from making calls while at school. Use of the school phone is for school business only. The phone may be used in case of emergency or necessity, not for permission to visit a friend, etc. Helping children to be independent and to remember their personal responsibilities is a special form of learning that is strongly encouraged.

Textbooks

Textbooks are very expensive. It is the student's responsibility to see that textbooks are given the best possible care. Books that are written on or lost must be replaced by the student. Books and workbooks are to be carried to and from school in a book bag

or backpack. Students must pay for damaged or missing books before report cards or records are issued.

Tuition

Tuition is due in ten monthly installments beginning in July and ending in June via the St. Mark School tuition management system. Parents will not be allowed to re-register their child/children for the following school year if tuition and other student fees are unpaid. Records will not be released if there are unpaid balances.

Tuition Assistance

The BISON Fund is a privately sponsored scholarship program that offers tuition assistance to low income families. The scholarships are selected by lottery and vary depending upon family income, household size and the school's tuition costs. Applications for the BISON Fund are available in the school office. St. Mark School does also offer tuition assistance to families that are in need. Parents who are in need of financial assistance should contact the Main Office.

VISITORS

We love welcoming back our former Saint Mark students.

To ensure safety and a smooth visit, we ask that all returning students follow these simple steps:

-Please contact us in advance

Former students must notify the school *before* arriving. Walk-ins cannot be accommodated during the school day. Email Mrs. Rudzinski or Mrs. Rinker to set it up.

-Sign in upon arrival

All visitors are required to check in at the Main Office and receive a visitor badge.

-Escorted visits only

For everyone's safety, former students will be escorted through the building for the duration of their visit.

Wellness Policy

Along with spiritual and intellectual growth, the physical well-being of each of our students is a priority. Our cafeteria staff follows the guidelines of the National Child Nutrition Program with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity.

Our Physical Education and Health classes focus on activities, lessons, knowledge and skills that foster fitness and encourage students to make choices that will lead to lifelong health.

Asbestos Inspection Notice

Because friable asbestos-containing materials may cause health problems, EPA regulations require that the following inspection notice be published:

St. Mark School has been inspected for asbestos-containing building material and has been found to be in conformity with all requirements of the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA).

A record of the inspection and a diagram of the location of asbestos-containing material are located in the main office. For further information, interested persons should contact school.