



**Parent – Student  
Handbook  
2019 – 2020**

Accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges

***Welcome to St. Thomas the Apostle School!***

***As we begin a new academic year, please be assured of our commitment to the safety and well-being of all of our students.***

***I believe in Catholic education, and the value-oriented environment that we provide for our students. We aim to educate with excellence, to instill lifelong values, and build character that will define your student for today, tomorrow, and for all of the challenges that we face in the ever-changing world around us. Above all else, I believe that Catholic education grounds us in a faith that abounds in the presence of a loving God.***

***Since 1932, St. Thomas School has been staffed by Sisters of St. Joseph and many dedicated lay teachers. It possesses a rich vibrant tradition where thousands of students have received a solid academic background and deep appreciation for the teachings of our Catholic faith. So many graduates of our school have made remarkable contributions to society in every walk of life. We are delighted you have chosen to be a part of this community.***

***Because we are partners with you in the education of your children, communication between home and school is imperative. Hence, we endeavor to foster and maintain open communication at all times.***

***This handbook is an effort to communicate to you some of the things about which you may have a question, and to acquaint you with the rules and regulations that advocate for and maintain a smooth running school. Please know that we are here to assist you in whatever way we can.***

***May God bless us all in our efforts to work together for the success of your children, and thank you for the value that you see in Catholic education.***

***Sincerely,***

***Sr. Patricia Hottin, SSJ***

***Principal***

***August, 2019***

**MISSION**

*The Mission of St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School community is to nurture each child from preschool to grade eight in a peaceful, faith centered learning environment with a foundation in gospel values. Academic excellence, character development, and commitment to service challenge students to reach their full potential in an ever changing world.*

**STUDENT PLEDGE**

*At St. Thomas the Apostle School,  
I have the responsibility to learn, serve, lead and succeed.  
I will be kind and respectful.  
I will be a peacemaker by my words and my actions.  
Today, I will make a difference.*

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# **2019-2020 SCHOOL POLICIES**

## **ADMISSION OF STUDENTS**

Every child is welcome at St. Thomas the Apostle School on a space available basis.

## **AFTER SCHOOL / EXTENDED CARE PROGRAM**

An after school/extended care program is offered to students in grades preschool-8 on school days. The guidelines and procedures are those suggested by the Diocesan School Office. Specifics regarding times, fees and space availability are issued each school year.

## **ALCOHOL AND DRUGS**

The possession, sale or use of alcohol, drugs, or any other controlled substance, on the school grounds or busses, is strictly forbidden. Violation of this rule will result in immediate suspension and/or possible expulsion and will be reported to appropriate law enforcement agencies. In accordance with Massachusetts State Law, smoking on school grounds is prohibited at all times by all persons.

## **ARRIVAL DROP OFF / DISMISSAL PICK UP / EARLY DISMISSAL**

### **ARRIVAL**

Students should not arrive to school until 7:25 A.M., as no outside supervision is available until that time. Students are not allowed in the school building until the 7:35 A.M. bell rings, except in severe and cold weather. Until the bell rings, students are expected to line up at their respective entry doors.

### **STUDENT ARRIVAL DROP OFF PROCEDURE**

**Student drop off is NOT permitted on Pine Street due to SERIOUS safety concerns for the children. Student drop off is only permitted in the school parking lot off of Route 20.**

1. Upon entering the parking lot from Route 20, go to the right and swing around in a semi-circular fashion by the cones, school staff will be in the parking lot directing you as you drop your child off. If you arrive following a bus, follow the directions of the school staff. Please be respectful to the staff as they assist you in this process.
2. If it is necessary to come into school in the morning, or you are walking your child to his/her line, parking is ONLY allowed at the left end of the parking lot (closest to the gym doors).
3. Cars must never drive along the edge of the building, through the cones, or come down the aisles where teacher's cars are parked ... even when running late or in inclement weather.
4. If you are a West Springfield resident and entitled to bussing, please use it.

## **DISMISSAL**

School is dismissed at 1:45 P.M. Students riding the school busses will be dismissed first. Children on car line will not be dismissed until busses have left the parking lot. Under no circumstance is a child to be removed from the bus line. If you have a change in plans, please call the school and we will notify the teacher and your child.

## **STUDENT DISMISSAL PICK UP PROCEDURE**

**Student pick up is NOT permitted on Pine Street due to SERIOUS safety concerns for the children. Student pick up is only permitted in the school parking lot off of Route 20.**

1. Only parents and those authorized by a parent may pick-up a child at dismissal. A release authorization form must be filled out and will be kept on file at school. If someone other than the regular authorized person is picking up a child, a note must be written to the teacher or a phone call must be placed to the school office with said person's name. This person must bring an ID to show the teacher before the child will be released to them.
2. Park in the open area away from the cones and remain in your car until the busses have left. Students on car line will be dismissed after the busses have left the parking lot.
2. Parents must wait in the parking lot and not enter the building to have students dismissed before the busses. Any student requiring an early dismissal should have a note written by his/her parent. Parents must report to the office to pick up their child/ren that are leaving early and sign them out.
3. Cars must never drive along the edge of the building, through the cones, or come down the aisles where teacher's cars are parked ... even when running late or in inclement weather.

## **EARLY DISMISSAL DAYS FOR ALL STUDENTS**

On early dismissal days, all students in preschool - grade 8 will be dismissed promptly at 10:00 A.M. where the same dismissal procedure as stated above will be practiced.

## **PRESCHOOL ARRIVAL /DISMISSAL**

**Preschool parents are to follow the same procedure mentioned on page 1 for STUDENT ARRIVAL DROP OFF PROCEDURE**

(Preschool Arrival/Dismissal Cont.)

**PRESCHOOL DISMISSAL FOR HALF DAY STUDENTS-11:30 A.M. Dismissal**

1. Only parents and those authorized by the parent may pick-up a child at dismissal. A release authorization form must be filled out and will be kept on file at school. If someone other than the regular authorized person is picking up a child, a note must be written to the teacher or a phone call must be placed to the school office with said person's name. This person must bring an ID to show the teacher before the child will be released to them.

2. Children will be dismissed from the same doors through which they entered in the morning.

**PRESCHOOL DISMISSAL FOR FULL DAY STUDENTS**

**Preschool parents are to follow the same procedure mentioned on page 2 for STUDENT DISMISSAL PICK UP PROCEDURE**

**In addition -**

1. Only parents and those authorized by the parent may pick-up a child at dismissal. A release authorization form must be filled out and will be kept on file at school. If someone other than the regular authorized person is picking up a child, a note must be written to the teacher or a phone call must be placed to the school office with said person's name. This person must bring an ID to show the teacher before the child will be released to them.

2. Preschool children will be dismissed from the same doors through which they entered in the morning.

**DELAYED OPENING**

When there is a delayed opening, St. Thomas preschool is in session.



### **ATTENDANCE/TARDINESS**

Regular attendance and getting to some on time is essential to a student's success in school. Persistent absenteeism/tardiness creates a genuine hardship for a student and is regarded as a very serious problem. According to Diocesan Policy, excessive absenteeism is never acceptable. "Students absent from school for more than nine days a semester or eighteen days for the year risk promotion to the next grade or loss of credit for course work." If a student is to be absent, a parent must call the school office by 8:00 A.M. Upon returning to school, a written note explaining his/her absence is also required.

The following list of circumstances are the only recognized excuses for school absence: 1) personal illness, 2) serious family illness and 3) death in the family. The student is required to give advance notice to the school in order to be excused for any other type of absence. In the event of unscheduled vacations, make-up work is the responsibility of each student. No work will be given in advance. Excessive absences due to health issues require a note from the doctor.

### **TARDINESS**

**Every effort should be made for all students, including preschool children, to be on time to start the day with their classmates at 7:35 A.M.** For many families, this may mean adjusting your schedule to allow you to have your children arrive at school no later than 7:35 A.M. It is important to the learning process and to the student's self-esteem to arrive at school on time. It is very difficult for the teacher, as well as the students who have arrived on time, to have a disruption in their morning schedule as children who arrive late come into the classroom.

All students in preschool through grade 8 who arrive after 7:35 A.M. must enter through the main entrance.

### **BATHROOM CONDUCT**

Students are expected to use the bathroom facilities in an appropriate manner, leaving promptly after usage. Any inappropriate behavior will be reported to the principal.

### **BOOK BAGS/BACK PACKS**

Book bags/backpacks must be used to carry all school books to and from school. Please label with child's name. Backpacks with wheels are not recommended.

## **BULLYING**

Bullying, in any form, including cyber-bullying through the use of technology or any electronic means, will not be tolerated. According to Massachusetts state law, "Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at the Target that:

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the Target or damage to the Target's property;
- Places the Target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself, or of damage to his/her property;
- Creates a hostile environment at school for the Target;
- Infringes on the rights of the Target at school; or
- Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school."

Engagement in online blogs, such as but not limited to, My Space, Face Book etc. may result in disciplinary actions if the content of the student's blog includes defamatory or threatening comments regarding the school, the faculty, other students or the parish.

"Cyber-Bullying means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by:

- Wire
- Radio
- Electromagnetics
- Photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. "

Students are strongly encouraged to report any and all instances of bullying to a teacher, parent, and/or administrator. Instances of bullying will be addressed and may result in in-school or home suspension, and in extreme cases, expulsion. Age appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade is incorporated into the curriculum through the use of a variety of programs.

St. Thomas School makes every effort to adhere to the guidelines and directives put forth in the Massachusetts Bullying Law and Diocesan and School anti-bullying policies.

## **BUS CONDUCT**

School bus transportation is available for school children living a distance from the school. The schedule, routes, times and rules are determined by the School Department of the City of West Springfield and are published in the West Springfield Record in August.

Pupil behavior on the school bus should be exemplary at all times. The following rules of behavior have been established in order to ensure the safety of all students who ride busses.

1. Use only the bus and bus stops assigned, unless a note is sent from home stating otherwise.
2. Orderly behavior is required at the bus stop.
3. Remain seated, facing forward when the bus is in motion. Remain seated when the bus is in the parking lot until the bus driver opens the doors to exit the bus.
4. Keep the aisles clear.
5. Use quiet voices.
6. Follow directions of the bus driver.
7. Enter and leave the bus in an orderly manner.
8. Keep head and arms inside the bus.
9. Do not throw anything out the window.

Infractions of the above rules will be brought to the attention of parents. Continual abuse of bus privileges will result in denial of bus transportation.

## **CAFETERIA RULES/SNACK BAR**

St. Thomas constantly strives to be a nut free school.

The same rules for behavior apply in the cafeteria as in the classroom. Students should remain seated until instructed by the teacher in charge to go to the playground, if weather permits. Students are expected to leave their places clean and in good order. Misconduct could result in the loss of snack bar privileges. A variety of snacks are offered. The snack bar is open to students in grades 3-8, with grade 2 starting in March.

## **CALENDAR FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR**

St. Thomas School follows the West Springfield Public School calendar with the exception of a few early dismissal and no school days. A copy of our school calendar is sent home with each child in late spring and again during the first week of school.

You can also find it on our school website at [www.stthomasapostleschool.org](http://www.stthomasapostleschool.org)

### **CELL PHONES**

**Cell phones may not be used during school hours including the After School Program.** If a student must have a cell, then it must be kept in their backpack and the cell phone must be turned to the “off” position for the day. If a student needs to make a phone call, they may ask to use the school office phone.

If a student fails to comply with this policy, the cell phone will be confiscated and will be returned to the parent/guardian. If the problem persists, further disciplinary action will be taken by the administration.

**The school is NOT responsible for a student’s lost, misplaced, stolen or broken portable communication and/or electronic devices on school property, including the school bus.**

### **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

It is very important, for emergency and administrative reasons, that every student has an up-to-date address record at the school office. Notify the school office immediately if there is a change of address or phone number.

### **CHILD SAFETY PROGRAM**

The Child Lures Prevention Program taught in grades preschool and kindergarten is a resource designed to help protect the safety and well-being of children. This program enables the child to achieve a basic understanding of the specific Lures used in crimes against children and to learn proven prevention strategies. S.E.E.D. "Safe Environment Every Day", teaches children in grades 1-6 skills to identify, respond to and report situations that might be harmful to them. Both programs are meant to improve self-reliance, raise self-esteem and master personal safety skills.

Students in grades 7-8 participate in a Diocesan program entitled "Called to Protect for Youth". This program uses a three part DVD series and guided group discussion to teach students how to recognize their personal boundaries, and how to respond if someone tries to violate these boundaries. All three programs are mandatory for all Catholic schools in the Diocese.

### **CLASSROOM PARTIES**

Classroom parties may be held to celebrate certain holidays and birthdays. Students may dress down on their birthday. Please be sure to refer to ‘Dress Code for Dress Down Days’ before your child chooses an outfit. All food sent in must be peanut and nut free. For private parties, unless invitations are being sent to all members of the class, please mail invitations so as to avoid hurt feelings.

### **CLUBS AND AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

Clubs and after school activities are offered at various times during the year, on an age appropriate level.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

A packet containing information of interest to students and parents will be distributed the first week of school. Thereafter all monthly newsletters and other important information can be found on our school website-www.stthomasapostleschool.org  
We urge families to print this monthly letter and calendar and keep it in an area where you can readily refer to it throughout the month. For important announcements and school closings families will receive information through the CONNECT -ED telephone system. Your CONNECT-ED information should always be current. Please call the school office if any of this information changes.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

Students in grades 5-8 are required to perform a given number of community service hours each year. The goal of this program is to have the students contribute to their local communities in service above and beyond their ordinary activities. In so doing, it is hoped that they will be mindful of those in need and less fortunate, thus becoming Christ-like instruments of peace and justice. The grade requirements are: Grade 5-2 hours, Grade 6-3 hours, Grade 7-4 hours and Grade 8-6 hours. More detailed information is given to each student by his/her homeroom teacher in the fall of each year.

## **CORI CHECK AND VIRTUS ONLINE TRAINING**

**It is now a requirement of the Diocese of Springfield that all school volunteers, as well as field trip chaperones, undergo a CORI check as provided by the Criminal History Systems Board AND complete the Virtus Online Training-“Protecting All God’s Children for Adults”.** Once completed, the CORI check is good for three years and Virtus Online Training only has to be done once. This must be done regardless of previous CORI checks by other organizations other than St. Thomas School and St. Thomas Parish. All families received this information at the beginning of the school year.

## **CUSTODY AGREEMENTS**

The school office should be notified in writing of custody agreements especially when changes are made. If a court order is involved, a copy must be sent to the school office.

## **DENTAL AND DOCTOR APPOINTMENTS**

An effort should be made to schedule dental and doctor appointments outside school hours. If this is not possible, a written note should be sent to the school office. When possible, the child should return to school rather than miss a whole day. The responsibility rests with the child to secure make-up work.

## **DETENTION**

Infractions resulting in detention include: inappropriate language, improper behavior on school premises or on the bus, long term unfinished work, defiance of school authority, tardiness and the like. Detentions will be assigned by individual teachers and will be held in the classroom from 1:50pm to 2:30pm. At least a twenty-four hour notice will be given and children will be expected to serve on the day assigned with no allowances for other activities in which they might be involved. Notification will be sent home which parents are asked to sign and return, thereby agreeing to provide transportation and sign the child out at the designated time.

## **DISCIPLINE/SCHOOL CONDUCT**

Behavior expected from St. Thomas students is a combination of common courtesy, respect of self and others, and self -discipline. The following types of conduct are never permitted:

1. Bullying
2. Cheating
3. Fighting
4. Use of profanity
5. Stealing
6. Defiance of school staff
7. Possession of weapons or other dangerous objects
8. Possession or use of any controlled substance
9. Vandalism

Teachers have the authority and responsibility to maintain discipline in their classroom as well as on school grounds and at school functions.

When there is a problem, the teacher may: use classroom disciplinary procedures, conference with the student, conference with the parent(s), or refer the situation to the building principal. School discipline policies will be, and are, consistently enforced, as a means of encouraging and developing self-discipline.

It is our goal to work in partnership with parents. If there is an incident at school, parents are encouraged to investigate the complete story as the first step. Evidence of mutual respect between parents, teachers, and administration will model good behavior and mature relationships. The Administration reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of any disciplinary action that needs to be taken. The Administration also reserves the right to search all lockers, desks, and anything that is brought into school including cell phones or other electronic devices.

## DRESS CODE

### Preschool Dress Code/School Uniform/Physical Education Uniform/Dress Down Day and Student Appearance Guideline for 2019-2020

Full cooperation is expected from parents and students regarding all aspects of the school dress code and student appearance guidelines. In the event that any of the dress code policy, including student appearance requirements are not followed during the school year, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

School uniforms will be supplied by Blake's Uniform Company located on Parker Street in Springfield. Blouses, shirts with school logo, pants and shorts are to be purchased from this company so as to insure uniformity in style and in color.

#### Preschool Dress Code

Preschool children are not required to wear a school uniform. Clothing should be comfortable and allow for freedom of movement.

- sneakers and shoes (with socks) with a rubber sole ONLY should be worn
- **No sandals, open toe shoes, 'crocks' or flip flops are allowed for preschool children due to safety reasons**

#### Girls Grades K-4

- plaid jumper
- navy blue or khaki dress uniform slacks, with belts
- navy blue or khaki walking shorts, with belts until November 1 and after April 1
- white, light blue or yellow blouse with Peter Pan collar
- white or navy blue knee socks or tights – ankle socks may be worn May 1
- **No boots or slippers/moccasins can be worn in school**
- shoes or sneakers may be worn - colors (blue, black, gray, brown, or white)
- no brightly colored or neon colored shoes or sneakers, "light up sneakers" or "heelies"
- no sandals, open toe shoes or flip flops

#### Girls Grades 5-8

#### **NAVY BLUE OR RED - LONG OR SHORT SLEEVED POLO SHIRTS WITH SCHOOL LOGO ONLY –MUST BE PURCHASED AT BLAKE'S SCHOOL UNIFORM STORE**

- plaid skirt
- navy blue or khaki dress uniform slacks, with belts
- navy blue or khaki walking shorts, with belts until November 1 and after April 1
- white or navy blue knee socks or tights – ankle socks may be worn May 1
- **No boots or slippers/moccasins can be worn in school**
- shoes or sneakers may be worn - colors (blue, black, gray, brown, or white)
- no brightly colored or neon colored shoes or sneakers, "light up sneakers" or "heelies"
- no sandals, open toe shoes or flip flops

(Dress Code Cont.)

**Boys Grades K-5**

**NAVY BLUE OR RED - LONG OR SHORT SLEEVED POLO SHIRTS WITH SCHOOL LOGO ONLY –MUST BE PURCHASED AT BLAKE’S SCHOOL UNIFORM STORE**

- navy blue or khaki dress uniform slacks, with belts (no elastic bottoms or tops)
- navy blue or khaki walking shorts, with belts until November 1 and after April 1
- white or navy crew socks
- **No boots or slippers/moccasins can be worn in school**
- shoes or sneakers may be worn - colors (blue, black, gray, brown or white)
- no brightly colored or neon colored shoes or sneakers, “light up sneakers” or “heelies”
- no sandals, open toe shoes or flip flops

**Boys Grades 6-8**

**NAVY BLUE OR RED - LONG OR SHORT SLEEVED POLO SHIRTS WITH SCHOOL LOGO ONLY –MUST BE PURCHASED AT BLAKE’S SCHOOL UNIFORM STORE**

- navy blue or khaki dress uniform slacks, with belts
- navy blue or khaki walking shorts, with belts until November 1 and after April 1
- white or navy crew socks
- shoes or sneakers may be worn - colors (blue, black, gray, brown or white)
- **No boots or slippers/moccasins can be worn in school**
- no brightly colored or neon colored shoes or sneakers, “light up sneakers” or “heelies”
- no sandals, open toe shoes or flip flops

**Optional Clothing for the Classroom**

- gray crew neck sweatshirts or gray hoodies with school logo only(purchased at school)
- navy blue or red fleece vest(purchased from uniform company)
- plain navy blue cardigan sweaters

**St. Thomas School Hoodies may be purchased through the school; these are the only hoodie sweatshirts that can be worn in school.**

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION UNIFORM DRESS CODE**

Each student is required to wear the established gym uniform for physical education class. This is required of all students in grades kindergarten through eight. This attire is to be purchased at the school.

\*Boys and Girls in grades K-8 will wear established gym uniform to be purchased at school

**\*NO YOGA PANTS OR LEGGINGS TO BE WORN AT ANY TIME**

\*Only St. Thomas School Hoodies and Sweatshirts can be worn

\*Students may wear any color sneaker on their designated gym day

\*Navy blue sweatpants and/or nylon pants WITH STRIPES on the side may be worn as needed on gym days

Sweatpants and or nylon pants on gym days must be worn from November 1 – April 1 in order for students to go outside at recess time. During the cold weather students will not be allowed outside with shorts.



(Dress Code Cont.)

### **STUDENT APPEARANCE GUIDELINES**

- Good student hygiene is expected at all times
- Make-up is not permitted
- Boys are not permitted to wear earrings at any time
- Girls are only permitted to wear single stud earrings, no hoops or dangles (for safety purposes)
- No student is permitted to put any tattoos on his/her body either temporary or permanent
- Hats must be removed before students enter the building-not to include preschool
- Hair styles are expected to be appropriate for school. Hair length for boys should not be longer than their collars
- No student is to have unnatural colored or dyed hair

### **DRESS CODE for DRESS DOWN DAYS**

On Dress Down days – Birthdays, Community Out-Reach Days, Golf Tournament Dress Down Pass, etc.- appropriate casual dress is allowed.

**-no yoga pants or leggings**

**- no hats**

**-shorts must be no more than 3 inches above the knee**

**-no shirts with inappropriate words**

**-no tank tops**

**-no boots, slippers/moccasins**

**-no flip flops or open toe shoes**

**The Administration reserves the right to decide what is appropriate and acceptable.**

### **ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

All electronic devices such as but not limited to: cell phones, iPads, iPods, and MP3 players or any device with head phones are not permitted in school at any time including the After School Program. If a student fails to comply with this policy, the device will be confiscated and will be returned to the parent/guardian. If the problem persists, further disciplinary action will be taken by the administration.

St. Thomas School Administration reserves the right to search any and all electronic devices brought into the school.

Electronic Reading Devices: Kindles, Nooks and other electronic reading devices may be used by grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 for **READING ONLY**. Students may not use these devices to access the internet at any time during the school day or at the After School Program.

**The school is NOT responsible for a student's lost, misplaced, stolen or broken portable communication and/or electronic devices on school property, including the school bus.**

### **EMERGENCY CRISIS PLAN**

An emergency crisis plan is in place and may be reviewed by parents upon request. This plan provides for emergency evacuation (to Mittineague School or Grace Lutheran Church) if necessary as well as lockdown procedures. Fire drills, evacuation, lockdown and tornado procedures are practiced throughout the school year. In case of a true evacuation, parents will be notified through the use of the CONNECT-ED phone system and the media. Parents will be told to follow the prescribed reunification plan. The plan is contained in a flyer that is sent home at the beginning of each year.

### **EMERGENCY DRILLS**

Fire drills are conducted four times a year. Fire drill routes are posted in each classroom. Each class has an escape route to an outside area, a safe distance from the building. Lockdown, tornado and evacuation procedures are also reviewed and practiced throughout the year.

### **EMERGENCY INFORMATION**

In case of emergency, each student is required to have on file at the school office the following information:

1. Parent(s) or guardian(s) name(s).
2. Complete and up-to-date address.
3. Home phone and parent(s) work phone and cellular phone.
4. Emergency phone number of friend or relative.
5. Physician's name and phone.
6. Medical alert information.

School closings or delays are determined by the West Springfield School Department. Parents will receive a Connect-Ed message but are also advised to listen to local television or radio stations for this information. Please follow West Springfield Public School listing. In the event that an emergency warrants an early school closing, children should be prepared with an emergency plan such as a relative or neighbor's house to go to should no one be at home. In addition to the above, the school will employ its CONNECT-ED phone system notifying you of such instances.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

Field trips are scheduled by classroom teachers at various times throughout the school year. These trips are designed to supplement various aspects of the classroom curriculum. Parents will receive notices of field trips in advance of the scheduled trip date, and will be asked to sign field trip permission forms. Ordinarily, some fee will be requested from each student to help defray transportation or facility use costs.

**A CORI check AND Virtus Online Training-Protecting God's Children for Adults" must be on file in the office for all field trip chaperones, regardless of previous CORI checks by other organizations other than St. Thomas School or St. Thomas Parish.** All families have received this information at the beginning of the school year.

## **GUM CHEWING**

Gum chewing is absolutely prohibited in the building and on school grounds.

## **HOMEWORK**

Homework is important. It is an extension of the learning that takes place in school.

Homework provides practice and drill which reinforces classroom learning.

Parents can help their children by ensuring a comfortable place for the students to work, by seeing to it that the assignments given in school are completed, and by checking their planners at regular intervals. Beginning in first grade, homework is assigned at regular intervals. Homework may also be assigned to kindergarten students. Students are responsible for completing homework neatly and punctually according to the instructions given by the teacher. Generally, grades 1 and 2 will receive approximately 10 to 20 minutes per day, grades 3 and 4, 30 to 40 minutes, grades 5 and 6, 50 to 60 minutes, and 7 and 8, 70 to 90 minutes per day. When a student is absent from school, homework will ordinarily be sent home after on the second day of absence.

## **HONOR ROLL**

The honor roll is a special recognition for academic achievement in grades 6-8.

The honor roll criteria is as follows:

Honors	Grades	Work Habits	Conduct
First All A's	1,2,3	S	
Second	4 A's, 3 B's	1,2,3	S
Third	All B's	1,2,3	S

The honor roll applies to the major subject areas: religion, reading/literature, language, spelling, math, science, and social studies. However, a conduct mark of N or U in ANY class will disqualify a student from the honor roll. A work habits designation of 4, 5, or 6 in any subject will make the student ineligible for honor roll.

Unless arrangements have been made with the teacher, assignments turned in late shall be considered as missing.

## **ID BADGES**

Teachers will wear their faculty ID badges on a daily basis. Chaperones will likewise wear a school ID badge when accompanying students on field trips. Visitors will sign in at the office and receive a visitor's ID upon entering the school.

### **ILLNESS AND INJURY**

In case of illness or injury, a child will be cared for temporarily by a member of the school staff. Minimal first aid treatment will be rendered. If emergency treatment is necessary, parents will be contacted. If a parent is not available, the child will be taken to an emergency room. An emergency number where parents can be reached must be on file at the school. When returning to physical education class after an injury or prolonged illness, students must have a doctor or parent's note releasing him/her to participate. For their own protection, students are not permitted to participate in physical education while wearing a hard cast. For the health of the student and classmates, students who have been sick should not return until they are without fever for at least 24 hours.

### **IMMUNIZATIONS AND VACCINATIONS**

Massachusetts School Immunization Law requires that every child admitted to school must meet certain immunization requirements. Parents are notified of these requirements as the child enters preschool or any other grade. These records are kept in the school.

### **IOWA TESTS OF BASIC SKILLS**

These standardized tests are administered to grades 3,4,5,6 and 7 in the spring of each year.

### **JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT**

Community and Business is the theme taught by volunteers in the school-wide program of Junior Achievement. The volunteers come from the community and spend five to eight sessions meeting with the children. Classes are taught in kindergarten through grade 8, discussing how to save money and spend it wisely, concluding with personal economics. Along the way, the students learn about business across the nation, importing and exporting, business math, as well as community life in general.

### **LEAVING SCHOOL GROUNDS**

Students are not allowed to leave the school grounds during school hours for any reason without the knowledge and consent of the principal. Permission to leave the school grounds will be granted only upon written request from the student's parent or guardian.

## **LIBRARY**

The library is opened on a regularly scheduled basis and is supervised by the librarian. Library classes are held for grades preschool-grade 5. They are held for the purpose of library instruction as well as for the enjoyment of the materials and books. Students are allowed to use the library during library hours with the permission of their classroom teacher. They may use the library to read, check out books, return books, do reference work or work on special projects. Each student may check out one or two books for a period of up to two weeks. A replacement fee will be charged to the student for lost or damaged books. The library collection is constantly up-dated and expanded. Books are chosen for either their educational or recreational value.

## **LITTERING**

St. Thomas takes pride in its building and grounds. Students are expected to be similarly proud and to refrain from littering.

## **LOST AND FOUND**

All clothing found on the campus is placed in a lost and found area (in the hallway of the main building). Money, jewelry or any other articles of value are turned in to the office. Students can claim them after proper identification.

## **LUNCH**

A hot lunch is available every day. Lunch money is collected every Friday for the following week. Payment may be made by check or by cash for the exact amount for a week, for a month or you may pay on a daily basis. Prices for lunch are set at the beginning of each year. Free or reduced price lunches are provided for students whose families qualify. Applications are distributed to all students in September, or may be obtained anytime during the school year from the office.

A menu for each day of the month is sent home with your child at the beginning of each month, you can also find it on our school website. The Snack Bar is open daily during lunch periods for grades 3-8 with grade 2 beginning in March. The students are expected to eat lunch prior to purchasing snacks.

## **MAKE-UP WORK**

It is the student's responsibility to make up work for excused absences. If requested, homework will be sent home on the second day of absence, otherwise students should request make-up work upon their return to school. All make-up work should be completed within a reasonable amount of time to be determined by each teacher.

## **MEDICATION AND HEALTH POLICY**

If a student must take medication at school, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health regulations must be followed.

The regulations are:

**Prescription Medications:** The following forms must be on file in school before medication can be administered at school. Forms may be obtained at school.

1. Signed consent by parent/guardian to give medicine.
2. Signed medication order by physician and parent.

Medications must be delivered to school in a pharmacy or manufacturer-labeled container by a parent/guardian.

**Non-prescription Medications:**

1. Must be in the original container (aspirin bottle, cough medicine bottle, etc.)
2. A note, dated and signed from the parent must accompany the medication.

Information in the note should include: clear dosage instructions, when last dose was given at home, what other medications child is taking at home, and history of any allergies. Students are not permitted to be in possession of medication at any time.

**Health Policy Regarding Lice:**

3. If nits or lice are found on a child, the parent must contact a pediatrician immediately for proper treatment. The school must also be notified. All reported cases will be kept confidential. A child cannot return to school until he/she is nit free and proper treatment has been given.

## **PARENT - TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Parent - Teacher conferences occur in the fall. Parents are asked to make an appointment with the teachers of each child, regardless of the progress of the child.

It is not necessary to wait for the regular conference time if a parent has a special concern. Parent conferences are encouraged and can be arranged with the classroom teacher at any time during the school year.

## **PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)**

The PTO exists to provide a channel of communication between parents, teachers and the administration of St. Thomas the Apostle School in order to promote the general well-being of the students. The specific goals of this organization are:

- to raise the necessary funds to provide for additional educational opportunities for the students.
- to provide opportunities for all concerned individuals to come in contact with ideas which will promote the educational, moral, and spiritual development of the student at home and at school.
- to direct and coordinate parental support to the school through assistance activities, social functions, and fundraiser

All parents are encouraged to become members and to actively participate. A list of meeting dates and times is given out in September.

### **PARENT VOLUNTEERS**

St. Thomas School considers its parent volunteers as a very special resource. Parents are encouraged to help in classrooms, library, computer room, and extra-curricular activities. Please call the office or write a note to the classroom teacher if you have time or skills you can donate to make the school a better place for students to learn and to grow. **A CORI check AND Virtus Online Training-Protecting God’s Children for Adults” must be on file in the office for all volunteers, regardless of previous CORI checks by other organizations other than St. Thomas School or St. Thomas Parish.**

### **PEANUT AND NUT FREE POLICY**

St. Thomas CONSTANTLY STRIVES TO BE A NUT FREE SCHOOL. Peanut butter and products containing nuts or any nut products may not be brought to school or brought on any school field trip. This policy is meant to protect all of our children.

### **PLAYGROUND RULES**

Students are to remain on the blacktop area or on the playing field during recess/lunch period. Different areas may be off-limits depending on the weather. Students are expected to behave in an acceptable manner. Dangerous activities, misuse or destruction of playground equipment will not be permitted. Teachers are on duty at recess/lunch times.

### **PLAYSCAPE**

This is a secured area with playground equipment. There is a designated schedule for each grade level.

### **PROMOTION AND RETENTION**

Advancement to the next grade in St. Thomas is based on a student's daily attendance, classroom performance, test results and recommendations of teachers. Promotion to the next grade depends on successful completion of all subject areas. The Administration may recommend the repetition of a grade, tutoring, or summer school classes as requirement for promotion when, after conferences with teachers and parents, it is believed that such action will better prepare the student academically or emotionally for the next grade.

### **REPORT CARDS**

Report cards are issued following the completion of each 10 week grading period for grades 6-8. Kindergarten-grade 5 report cards are distributed three times each year. Preschool students will receive progress reports twice a year.

## **RESPECT FOR TEACHERS**

Parents/Guardians are held to the same standard as students with regard to respect for teachers. Enrollment of the child in the school implies a partnership between the school and the parents/guardian/child. If the partnership breaks down, parents/guardians can be required to withdraw the child from the school.

## **RIGHT TO SEARCH**

The Administration reserves the right to search all backpacks, lockers, desks and anything that is brought into school including cell phone or other electronic devices.

## **SCHOOL BOARD**

St. Thomas the Apostle School Board is established to assist the principal and, ultimately, the pastor, by providing advice and counsel particularly in the following areas:

1. Strategic planning
  - to assist in formulating strategic goals for the long-term direction of the school
  - to assist in formulating the school mission statement
2. Policy formulation
  - to provide advice and counsel with regard to policies in areas determined by the pastor and principal
3. Evaluation of policies, plans, mission effectiveness and board self-evaluation
4. Institutional advancement/development
  - to provide advice and counsel with regard to the programs of institutional advancement and to enhance the image, enrollment and financial viability of the school
5. Financial planning and financial management
  - to provide advice and counsel with regard to long-range financial planning, annual budget development, budget monitoring and financial reporting
6. Communications
  - to provide advice and counsel with regard to communicating school policies and activities to the various school constituencies

The school board has no authority for formulating policies separate from the pastor and principal. The board has no responsibility for determining the amount of parish funds in support of the school and has no responsibility with regard to school curriculum, staff/personnel or students.

## **SKATEBOARDS/ROLLERBLADES/HEELIES**

Students are not permitted to ride skateboards or rollerblades to or from school. Likewise, wheelies are not allowed at any time.



## **SMOKING**

As a smoke free facility according to diocesan regulation and state law, smoking is strictly forbidden in, on, or around school property. Students as well as adults are not permitted to use tobacco of any kind in the immediate school area.

## **SPECIAL SERVICES**

A quality education is provided for all students at St. Thomas School. Sometimes a student may experience some difficulty in understanding a particular concept. In this case, a student would be referred for remedial assistance. Remedial assistance is offered in reading and math for grades 1, 2 and 3 and sometimes in other grades as well. The student's hometown usually provides testing for speech, language, math and reading areas. After consultation between the teacher and the parent, the parent would contact their town regarding a student being tested.

## **STUDENT COUNCIL**

The student body will be represented by a Student Council. Students in grades 6, 7, 8 may volunteer in September to be part of the Student Council. Officers are elected in the fall each year. The goals of the Student Council are: community service, school service and school spirit. Student Council members are expected to adhere to the academic and disciplinary standards of St. Thomas School and must attend required meetings.

## **STUDY SKILLS**

Parents are encouraged to help their child be aware of skills and techniques which make learning easier and more enjoyable. The following are some student guidelines for achieving good study habits:

1. Get enough sleep and eat breakfast before coming to school.
2. Come to class prepared with pencil, paper, and other necessary materials.
3. Be an active participant in class. Listen well and take part in class.
4. Ask questions to clarify problems.
5. Plan your day and schedule time for homework.
6. Use what is learned and apply it to new situations.
7. Strive to do the very best work possible. Just "getting by" is not a worthwhile goal.
8. Student planners should be utilized on a daily basis.

## **SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION**

Suspension, the temporary prohibition of a student's attendance for no more than three school days, is within the jurisdiction of the school principal. Suspensions will be invoked for a sufficient reason. The student's parents or legal guardians will be notified by personal contact. Written documentation will be kept in the student's file.

In-school suspension - students will be given assignments to complete in a supervised area away from the classroom setting.

Home suspension - students will not be permitted to make-up any assignments/tests missed and will receive no credit for such work.

Expulsion, the permanent termination of a student's enrollment, is ordinarily invoked only as a last resort. The principal will use every means available to discover the cause of the problem and may make a referral for professional counseling *and/or* to the Diocesan Schools Office. Written documentation will be kept in the student's file.

## **TECHNOLOGY POLICY**

This technology policy gives students and parents an understanding of the guidelines and code of conduct for the use of technology at St. Thomas the Apostle School. While we understand that the use of technology is important, we also see it as a privilege for our students and not a right. In the computer room, or classroom, computer/IPad users should expect that files stored on the computers and server will not always be private.

The school is not accountable for the accuracy and quality of Internet information. Information is the responsibility of the user.

The following is not permitted:

- sending or display of offensive messages or pictures
- using obscene language
- harassing or insulting others
- damaging computers, iPads or computer systems
- violating copyright laws
- using other's passwords
- trespassing in other's folders and files
- intentionally wasting limited resources

Students in grades K-8 use programs that allow access to the Internet through bookmarked sites or supervised search. To gain access to the Internet, students must obtain parental permission and sign and return a form to the office. This form will be distributed to kindergarten and new students from the computer teacher. Once this form is signed, it is in effect as long as the student is enrolled at St. Thomas School.

## **TEXTBOOKS**

Textbooks are furnished to the student by the school. Students are responsible for the covering of all books and are expected to care properly for those books issued to them. If a book is lost, misused or damaged beyond reasonable wear, the student will be billed to replace the book. Students are likewise expected to use school bags at all times.

## **TUITION**

Tuition for the school year is set by the St. Thomas School Board and approved by the St. Thomas Parish Finance Committee. Ordinarily, notification of these rates are communicated to parents in January or February.

**All families must use SMART, the Tuition Management Program; options for payment method are available.**

## **PARISHIONERS**

In order to receive parish sponsorship for the school year 2019-2020 contributions by way of the envelopes needed to be a minimum of \$750.00 for the calendar year 2018.

## **OUT OF PARISH/NON-AFFILIATED**

For families from other parishes, lists will be sent to the pastors to identify those who will be eligible for tuition assistance.

Only correspondence from the parishes will be used to reflect tuition reduction.

People are encouraged to contact their pastor directly. Non-affiliated families will be charged the total cost of education per child.

Questions regarding tuition should be referred to the parish Business Manager at 739-4779.

The standard tuition payment policy as adapted by the school board states:

## **All families MUST use the SMART Tuition Plan.**

1. The SMART payment process divides the tuition bill into ten payments beginning in June through March of the following year.
2. No student may begin school in September or return after each marking period unless family tuition payments are current. In addition, students in grade 8 will not be allowed to participate in end-of-year activities and graduation unless all the financial responsibilities have been met.
3. Should a child withdraw during the school year, a refund will be issued for those who have paid in advance.
4. Diocesan Financial Aid is available for any families who qualify. If you wish to inquire about this aid, please contact the business or school office.

### **VISITORS**

All visitors are required to report to the school office upon entering the building and to sign in. Visitor passes are to be worn at all times.

### **WEBSITE**

The St. Thomas the Apostle School website address is [www.stthomasapostleschool.org](http://www.stthomasapostleschool.org). There you will find important school information, forms and our monthly newsletter and calendar. You can also visit the teacher webpages.

### **WELLNESS POLICY**

For the health of the student and classmates, students who have been out sick should not return to school until they are without fever for at least 24 hours.

### **RIGHT TO AMEND**

*Saint Thomas the Apostle School reserves the right to amend this handbook. Notice of amendments will be sent to parents when and if they occur.*













