



Parent – Student Handbook 2023 – 2024

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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, 2023

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.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2023 - 2024 SCHOOL POLICIES

Admission of Students	Page 1
After School/Extended Care Program	
Alcohol & Drugs	
Arrival Drop-Off/Dismissal Pick-Up/Early Dismissal	
Arrival Drop-Off/Dismissal Pick-Up/Early Dismissal	Page 2
Attendance/Tardiness.....	Page 3
Book Bags/Backpacks	
Bullying.....	Page 4
Bus Conduct.....	Page 5
Cafeteria Rules	
Calendar for the School Year	
Cell Phones/Electronic Devices.....	Page 6
Change of Address	
Clubs and After School Activities	
Communications	
Cori Check and Virtus Online Training.....	Page 7
Custody Agreements	
Dental and Doctor Appointments	
Discipline/School Conduct	
Dress Code.....	Page 8
Dress Code	
Dress Code.....	Page 9
Emergency Crisis Plan/School Evacuation.....	Page 10
Emergency Drills	
Emergency Information	
Gum Chewing	
Homework	
Honor Roll.....	Page 11
ID Badges	
Illness and Injury	
Immunization and Vaccinations	
Leaving School Grounds.....	Page 12
Library	
Littering	
Lost and Found	
Make-Up Work	
Medication and Health Policy.....	Page 13
Non-Discriminatory Policy	
Parent-Teacher Conferences	
Parent Teacher Organization (PTO).....	Page 14
Peanut and Nut Free Policy	
Playground Rules	
Playscape	

Promotion and Retention	
Report Cards	
Respect for Teachers.....	Page 15
Right to Search	
School Board	
Skateboards/Rollerblades/Bicycles.....	Page 16
Smoking	
Special Services	
Student Safe Environment Training- <i>Circle of Grace</i>	
Study Skills	
Suspension and Expulsion.....	Page 17
Technology Policy	
Textbooks	
Tuition.....	Page 18
Visitors	
Website/Facebook Page	
Wellness Policy	
Right to Amend	
Parent/Student Handbook Agreement.....	Page 19

2023-2024 SCHOOL POLICIES

ADMISSION OF STUDENTS

Every child is welcome at St. Thomas the Apostle School on a space available basis. An application and interview are part of the admission process.

AFTER SCHOOL / EXTENDED CARE PROGRAM

An after school/extended care program is offered to students in grades preschool-8 on school days. 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, including vaporized nicotine products, 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

STUDENT ARRIVAL DROP-OFF PROCEDURE

Student drop-off is NOT permitted on Pine Street due to safety concerns for the children.

K-8 ARRIVAL (to include preschool children if an early drop off is necessary)

Students should not arrive at school until 7:20. School staff will be in the parking lot at 7:20 directing you as you drop your child off. Enter the parking lot from Westfield Street and swing to the right. Do not pull in front of the busses. Wait in line behind the busses until they leave. Students will exit busses and cars at the gym doors and go directly into school to their homerooms. Parents are not allowed to walk their children to their classrooms.

PRESCHOOL ARRIVAL (for students arriving at 8:00)

Preschool drop-off begins at 7:55 at the driveway to the school off of Kings Highway. Teachers will escort students from your car into the building. Parents will continue around the school and use the Westfield Street exit. Parents are not allowed to walk their children to their classrooms.

LATE ARRIVAL All students in preschool through grade 8 that arrive late to school must enter at the office doors only.

DELAYED OPENING When there is a delayed opening, St. Thomas preschool is in session at the time of the opening of school for elementary/middle school students.

STUDENT DISMISSAL PICK-UP PROCEDURE

Student pick-up is NOT permitted on Pine Street due to safety concerns for the children.

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.

Park in the open area away from the busses 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.

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. If a sudden change in plans occurs during the day, please call the school and we will notify the teacher and your child. Parents must report to the office to pick up children that are leaving early.

K-8 DISMISSAL – to include preschool students being dismissed with older siblings

School is dismissed at 1:45. 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. A note should be sent to school in the morning with your child if you know there is a change in your child's dismissal plan. If a sudden change in plans occurs during the day, please call the school and we will notify the teacher and your child.

PRESCHOOL DISMISSAL

Half Day Preschool Students Dismissal-11:30 Children will be dismissed at 11:30 from the gym doors in the main parking lot off of Westfield Street.

Full Day Preschool Students Dismissal-2:00 Children will be dismissed at 2:00 to the driveway of the school off of Kings Highway. Please wait in your car and we will bring your child to you. If your preschooler has older siblings, your child will be brought to their classroom to be dismissed at 1:45.

EARLY DISMISSAL DAYS FOR ALL STUDENTS

Students in kindergarten - grade 8 and preschool children being dismissed with older siblings will be dismissed at 10:00 to the main parking lot. All other preschool students will be dismissed at 10:15 to the driveway of the school off of Kings Highway.

ATTENDANCE/TARDINESS

If a student is to be absent, a parent must call the school office by 8:00. Regular attendance and getting to school on time is essential to a student's success. 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. The following circumstances are the only recognized excuses for school absence: 1) personal illness, 2) serious family illness and 3) death in the family. Homework and missed classwork is available for pickup at the office on the second day of student's absence due to these circumstances.

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 school vacations, make-up work is the responsibility of each student. Work will not 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 to be on time to start the day with their classmates at 7:35. For many families this may mean adjusting your schedule to allow you to have your children arrive at school no later than 7:35. 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 late must enter through the main entrance.

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. Chromebooks must be transported at all times in the carrying case provided by the school.

BULLYING

Bullying, in any form, including cyber-bullying through the use of technology or any electronic means such as social media services, 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, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, Discord 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 <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-law-about-bullying-and-cyberbullying>
- 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 an 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 strictly adheres to the guidelines and directives put forth in the Massachusetts Bullying Law and Diocesan School anti-bullying policies.

BUS CONDUCT

School bus transportation is available for West Springfield students that live a certain distance from the school. The schedule, routes, times and rules are determined by the West Springfield School Department and the bus company employed by the town. Bus stops and time of pick up is 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 to the office. A bus pass from the office will be given the bus driver.
2. Orderly behavior is required at the bus stop.
3. Follow directions of the bus driver.
4. 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.
5. Keep the aisles clear.
6. Use quiet voices.
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

St. Thomas is a nut free school. No exceptions.

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. Students are expected to leave their places clean and in good order. Misconduct could result in the loss of cafeteria privileges.

CALENDAR FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR

St. Thomas School follows the West Springfield Public School calendar with the exception of some 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 and on the FACTS Family Portal.

CELL PHONES/ELECTRONIC DEVICES

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.

All electronic devices such as but not limited to: cell phones, iPads, iPods, Apple Watches or any other smart watch, and MP3 players or any device with head phones are not permitted to be used in school, including the After School Program.

If a student fails to comply with this policy, the device will be confiscated and sent to the office. A parent must retrieve the device. 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.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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

CLUBS AND AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Clubs and after school activities may be offered at various times during the year, on an age appropriate level. Club offerings as well as club dates are sent home with a registration form. Club fees may be assessed.

COMMUNICATIONS

A packet containing information of interest to students and parents will be distributed the first week of school. Families will receive a monthly newsletter at the beginning of every month. Monthly newsletters and other important information can also be found on our school website- www.stthomasapostleschool.org and on the FACTS Family Portal. We urge families to keep the monthly newsletter in an area where you can readily refer to it throughout the month. For important announcements and school closings, families will receive information through our FACTS Parent Alert system. Your families contact information should always be current. Please call the school office if any of this information changes.

CORI CHECK AND VIRTUS ONLINE TRAINING

It is now a requirement of the Diocese of Springfield that all parents who wish to volunteer time at school or chaperone field trips must 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 an entire day. The responsibility rests with the child to secure make-up work.

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
10. Inappropriate use of the bathroom facilities

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 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 request an appointment with the teacher. 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

School Uniform/Physical Education Uniform/Dress Down Day and Student Appearance Guideline for 2023-2024

In order to help create an environment conducive to learning, students at St. Thomas the Apostle School are required to wear simple uniforms and follow our student appearance guidelines. This policy is designed to permit students to focus their attention on academics and on those aspects of their personalities that are truly important.

School uniforms will be supplied by Blake's Uniform Store located on Parker Street in Springfield. School uniforms must be purchased from this company 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 soles ONLY should be worn
- **NO sandals, open toe shoes, Crocks or flip flops are allowed for safety reasons**

GIRLS

Girls Grades K-4

- plaid jumper
- navy blue skort
- 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 to be worn with jumpers
- red, or navy blue polo shirts with school logo to be worn with skorts
- white or navy blue knee socks or tights – ankle socks, including no-show socks may be worn May 1
- No boots or slippers/moccasins can be worn in school
- shoes or sneakers of any color may be worn

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 skort
- 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, including no-show socks may be worn May 1
- No boots or slippers/moccasins can be worn in school
- shoes or sneakers of any color may be worn

BOYS

Boys Grades K-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
- No boots or slippers/moccasins can be worn in school
- shoes or sneakers of any color may be worn, ankle socks including no-show socks can be worn

(Dress Code Cont.)

Optional Clothing for the Classroom

K-8 - navy blue sweatshirts or hoodies with school logo only (purchased at school)

- navy blue or red fleece vest (purchased from uniform store)
- plain navy blue cardigan sweaters (purchased from uniform store)

Students may continue to wear previously purchased grey sweatshirts and hoodies.

St. Thomas School hoodies and sweatshirts are purchased at 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. Gym shirts, shorts and sweatshirts to be purchased at school.

*Gym sweatpants are available for purchase at Blake's School Uniform store.

***NO LEGGINGS TO BE WORN FOR GYM**

St. Thomas School hoodies and sweatshirts are the only sweatshirts to be worn in the classroom.

Plain Navy blue 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.

STUDENT APPEARANCE GUIDELINES

- Good student hygiene is expected at all times
- Boys are not permitted to wear earrings at any time
- Make-up is not permitted
- Girls are only permitted to wear single stud earrings, no hoops or dangles (for safety purposes)
- Girls are not permitted to wear press-on or acrylic nails exceeding ¼ inch
- No student is permitted to put any tattoos on his/her body either temporary or permanent
- Hair styles are expected to be appropriate for school
- Students are not permitted to have unnatural colored or dyed hair

DRESS CODE for DRESS DOWN DAYS

On a Dress Down Day, as designated by the school or student birthday, appropriate casual dress is allowed.

- leggings can only be worn if a shirt reaches below the backside of the student

- 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.

EMERGENCY CRISIS PLAN/SCHOOL EVACUATION

An emergency crisis plan is in place. 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 our Parent Alert phone system or town officials. Parents will be told to follow the prescribed reunification plan or procedure by town officials. The plan is contained in a flyer that is sent home at the beginning of each year, however may be subject to change as situation warrants.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

Fire drills are conducted throughout the school 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 RENWEB message but are also advised to listen to local television or radio stations for this information. Please follow the 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 RENWEB phone system notifying you of such instances.

GUM CHEWING

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

HOMEWORK

Homework is an extension of the learning that takes place in school and provides practice and drills reinforcing 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 kindergarten, homework is assigned at regular intervals. 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. Homework and missed classwork is available for pickup at the office on the second day of student's absence.

HONOR ROLL

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

The honor roll criteria is as follows:

High Honors:

In all honor roll subjects student must have the following:

Grades – All A's

Work Habits – E-Exemplary, VG-Very Good, S-Satisfactory

Conduct – E-Exemplary, VG-Very Good, S-Satisfactory

Honors:

In all honor roll subjects student must have the following:

Grades – 5 A's 3B's

Work Habits – E-Exemplary, VG-Very Good, S-Satisfactory

Conduct – E-Exemplary, VG-Very Good, S-Satisfactory

The honor roll applies to the graded subjects - Religion, English/Language Arts, Reading/Literature, Spelling, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Computer

A Conduct or Work Habits grade of N-Needs Improvement or U-Unsatisfactory in any Subject to include-Art, Spanish and Physical Education will make the student ineligible for the honor roll.

An N or a U in Handwriting will not disqualify students from the honor roll.

ID BADGES

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

ILLNESS AND INJURY

In case of illness or injury, a child will be cared for by a member of the school staff. First aid treatment will be rendered. If emergency treatment is necessary, parents will be contacted. If a parent cannot be reached and the situation so warrants, 911 will be called and the child will be taken to an emergency room accompanied by the principal, school nurse or teacher. An emergency number where parents can be reached must be on file at the school. Be sure to send updated contact numbers to the office.

When returning to physical education class after an injury or prolonged illness, students must have a doctor or parent's note releasing them to participate. For their own protection, students are not permitted to participate in physical education while wearing a hard cast.

Students who have been sick should not return until they are well and 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.

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 2 days a week 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 with permission from their classroom teacher. They may use the library to read, check out books, return books, do reference work or work on special projects. 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.

MAKE-UP WORK

It is the student's responsibility to make up work for excused absences. When a student is absent from school, homework is available for pickup at the office on the second day of absence. All make-up work should be completed within the same amount of time that the student has missed (ex... if a student misses 2 days, they have 2 days to make up the work).

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.

NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY

The schools of the Diocese of Springfield admits students of any race, color, national and/or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. They do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and/or ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admission policies, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-Teacher conferences occur in the fall. Parents will be contacted by the homeroom teachers to schedule an appointment for each child; however, 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.

PEANUT AND NUT FREE POLICY

Peanut butter and products containing nuts or any nut products may not be brought to school. 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. 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 open to the preschool grades only. Teachers are on duty at all times during student use.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION

Advancement to the next grade in St. Thomas is based on a student's 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 quarterly following the completion of each 10 week grading period for grades K-8. Preschool students will receive progress reports twice a year.

RESPECT FOR TEACHERS

Parents 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 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/BICYCLES

Students are not permitted to ride bicycles, skateboards or rollerblades to or from school.

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 SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING – *CIRCLE OF GRACE*

Circle of Grace is a program designed for students in grades preschool through grade eight, required for use by the Diocesan Schools Office. *Circle of Grace* is a metaphor for the love and goodness of God that surrounds us and others. The program teaches students how to understand their own sacredness, the sacredness of others, and how to seek help through their relationships with trusted adults.

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.

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/Chromebook/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. Families with students in grades 2-8 will also receive a Student Chromebook Loan Agreement that will explain the responsibilities for the protection, use and care of the device.

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.

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 the FACTS Tuition Management Program; options for payment method are available.

PARISHIONERS

In order to receive parish sponsorship for the 2023-2024 school year, contributions by way of the envelopes needed to be a minimum of \$750.00 for the calendar year 2022.

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.

If you have any questions regarding your tuition, please call the parish business manager, Steve Coffey at (413)313-4318.

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

1. The FACTS payment process divides the tuition bill into ten payments beginning in July through April 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/FACEBOOK PAGE

You will find important school information, forms, and our monthly newsletter on our school website.

School web site address – www.stthomasapostleschool.org

St. Thomas the Apostle School uses Facebook to post classroom activities and events.

WELLNESS POLICY

For the health and wellness of others at school, students who have been out sick should not return to school until they are well and without fever for 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.

PARENT / STUDENT HANDBOOK AGREEMENT
(Please return the signed agreement the first week of school.)

We have read and understand the policies in the St. Thomas the Apostle School Parent/Student Handbook.

Family Name_____

Parent Signature_____

Student Signature_____

Student Signature_____

Student Signature_____

Date _____