

10. PARENT INFORMATION

St. Stephen School regards parents as partners in the educational process. The school values communication between home and school and depends on the active participation of parents in school activities and programs.

Communications:

Newsletters from the school are published monthly and are available online by Wednesday afternoon. Communications from the school are customarily sent home on Wednesday with the youngest student in each family in an envelope. Parents/guardians must sign the envelope and return it promptly. If envelopes are not returned by Monday of the following week, a new envelope WILL NOT be issued and you will not receive important school information. Please make sure your envelopes are returned in a timely manner.

Teachers may also send notes home and phone parents/guardians with concerns. Parents may call the school office to leave messages for the teachers or set appointments. Teachers do not accept phone calls from parents during the school day, nor do they meet without appointments. The principal will return phone calls as soon as possible and meet with parents/guardians at arranged times.

Teachers will send their goals, homework policy, classroom management, expectations and plans with the students during the first week of school.

In an effort to communicate most promptly and effectively with parents/guardians, St. Stephen School participates in Connect-Ed, an automated program that can provide parents with both emergency information and general school notices. Connect-Ed has the capacity to contact parents at home or at work, by phone, cell phone or e-mail at any time. It is the responsibility of the home to keep the school informed of any changes in contact information for the system to work effectively.

The web-site www.st-stephen.net is another source of school information.

In early September, the pastor and principal meet with all parents in the church hall to report any changes and to focus attention on issues for the school year. It is expected that all families are represented at this meeting. Immediately following the meeting in the church hall, parents/guardians of students in grades Pre-K through 8, will meet with their child's teachers in the school. The purpose of these parent/guardian/ teacher meetings is to acquaint teachers and parent/guardians with each other and to allow teachers to thoroughly explain their goals, policies and expectations.

The Parents' Forum will meet quarterly in the school. All are welcome.

Parental Notification:

Each student's parent/guardian is required to fill out a school Registration Form and the Emergency Information Card completely. It is mandatory to supply emergency phone numbers where a parent can be reached and the numbers of people authorized to act on their behalf in health matters.

When a student becomes ill or has a significant accident during the day, the parent/guardian is contacted. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached, the principal or office staff contacts the emergency number(s). It is critical that parents/guardians provide numbers of people who can actually act in their behalf in an emergency. All numbers must be kept updated. If no one is available, then the procedure would be to have a child transported to a hospital in the company of a staff person. Parents who do not wish their child treated in any particular way should indicate this on the Registration Form along with directions to be followed in the space, *Other Information*.

If those responsible for the child do not supply adequate emergency instructions, or if the instructions given cannot be followed at the time of the emergency, **the school staff will act according to their best judgment for the welfare of the child.**

It is imperative to notify the school when there is a change of address, home telephone number, work telephone number, cell or beeper or designated emergency contact person or his/her number.

Since the school does not have the facilities or the staff to provide extended care for a sick child, students who do not feel well enough to return to class after a brief stay in the office must be dismissed. Any time a student is dismissed from school, the parent/guardian or person designated on the Emergency Card must come into school and sign the child out in the Dismissal book.

Parental Notification/Connect-Ed Parents will be notified of any emergency situations via our Connect-Ed system. Parents/guardians are required to complete and return the contact information which is mailed to families in the summer. Connect-Ed is a service which will notify parents/guardians by phone or e-mail in case of an emergency or unusual situation. The Connect-Ed system can store up to six phone numbers and four e-mail addresses per family. In order for the system to work effectively, parents/guardians must keep all contact information up-to-date throughout the year. St. Stephen School is subscribing to Connect-Ed to ensure as far as we are able that parents/guardians are notified as promptly and accurately as possible of any emergency or unusual situation.

Important Call Delivery Information:

- When a Connect Ed call comes to you, your caller ID will display the school's phone number.
- When listening to a message, please be aware that background noise will cause the system to "stop and start". It is calibrated to determine whether a person or an answering machine has picked up the phone, and background noise may affect delivery. If possible, move to a quiet area, or press the "mute" button on your phone.
- If you missed any part of the message, please stay on the line and press * (star) to hear the message again. If you follow this procedure, the school phone lines will not be tied up with calls asking for the Connect-Ed message to be repeated.
- Connect-Ed Messages are also sent to the email address(es) that you provide.
- A standard "Community Outreach" message will come to your primary number and email address only. Please be advised that an "Emergency Notification" will be sent to ALL numbers listed for your child as well as email addresses. The Connect Ed System can NOT dial extensions.

Parents Non/Custodial:

St. Stephen School abides by the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Ch. 71, Sec. 34H with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, a school will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the academic records and to other school-oriented information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the principal with a court certified copy of the court order.

Parental Status Change:

Divorced or separated parents must file a court-certified copy of the custody section of the divorce or separation decree with the principal's office. The school will not be held responsible for failing to honor arrangements that have not been made known in writing. This information must be kept current.

Parental Cooperation:

Parents/Guardians will be informed when a student needs to change behavior or attitude. Parent/Guardian co-operation is expected and appreciated. St. Stephen School regards parents as partners in their child's education. As long as parents choose St. Stephen School, we rely on their positive support for their child's teacher and the school itself. In addition, a parent/guardian must attend any and all conferences requested by the school administration or classroom teachers. Any physical or verbal

assault, abusive language, or threats exhibited by a parent or student and deemed such by the principal and pastor is cause for dismissal from St. Stephen School.

Parent Volunteer Information:

vol·un·teer [vol-uhm-teer]

noun

1. *a person who voluntarily offers himself or herself for a service or undertaking.*
2. *a person who performs a service willingly and without pay.*

Volunteer Guidelines:

St. Stephen School relies on the helping hands of volunteers to assist in the smooth operation of the school and to build community among our families. All parents/guardians are strongly urged to participate in making your and your children's years at St. Stephen School happy ones.

- For all volunteer activities, including chaperoning field trips or other events, parents **MUST** meet CORI and Safe Environment guidelines described below. These requirements must be met at the beginning of the school year as scheduled by the office.
- All volunteers are required to comply with the school's request for a Criminal Offenses Record Information (C.O.R.I.) background check. Forms and related information are available at the school office. Completed forms are sent to the Diocese of Worcester, Office for Healing and Prevention, for processing and referral to the Criminal History Systems Board.
- Also, all volunteers must attend Safe Environment Training sponsored by the Diocese of Worcester. Those who by virtue of their current jobs are already Mandated Reporters (e.g., nurses, social workers, etc.) must send a letter to the school principal with that information and documentation substantiating that they have completed such training if they wish to volunteer.
- Finally, if further checks or training are required by the school or the Diocese of Worcester, volunteers must comply.

Volunteer Tuition Credit:

All volunteer opportunities, commitments and volunteer tuition credit will be handled through the principal's office under the supervision of the administrative assistant. As usual, we will be seeking parent volunteers to continue to provide the leadership that is essential for such eagerly anticipated events as the Father/Daughter Dance, The Gingerbread House, Family Night, Mother/Son Night, Spree Day and so many other activities. Without parent **volunteers** to chair and participate in planning and running these events, they will have to be cancelled.

- A tuition credit of \$200 per child (for the first two children only) will be given to those parents/guardians who give 25 volunteer hours to St. Stephen School and/or St. Stephen parish activities. When each parent volunteers at least 25 hours, double credit is given. **With administrative approval, a parent substitute will be allowed for the second 25 hours. In all cases, credit is given for the first two children only.** *At the completion of the **maximum of 50 hours allowed toward tuition credit per family, any additional time given to your child(ren)'s school is strictly volunteer time given willingly and without recompense.***

Fundraising:

Various fund-raising events are held during the school year for the direct benefit of the St. Stephen Development Fund. Your full support is essential in keeping tuition at a reasonable cost and providing additional educational experiences.

Goal of St. Stephen Volunteers:

As St. Stephen School volunteers, your goal is to participate in the life of the school, enabling it to function more efficiently and effectively because of your help. You are the role models for your children, their primary teachers. The school spirit you demonstrate shows the importance of active participation in our community. This benefits the spiritual, moral, and intellectual growth of your children.

Background Information:

Volunteers play an integral part in the life of the St. Stephen School community, performing varied duties and sharing their many talents. Some service is performed regularly, such as lunch duty, while other opportunities exist for shorter commitments such as Spree Day. Parents are generous with their time coaching sports. Others, who are only available when school is not in session, may help in the Parish Thrift Shop on Saturdays. Families of students also assist in the fundraising efforts during the school year. These projects vary from year to year.

How Can I Volunteer?

“Volunteer Opportunities” are included in this Handbook. Please

- read through the service opportunities;
- contact the school office to indicate the activity you are interested in.

You will be contacted by the school to confirm your commitments. To volunteer, you must:

- complete the C.O.R.I. form available from the school office which authorizes a criminal background check.
- attend the Diocesan mandated Safe Environment Training. Dates and times are also available from the office.

St. Stephen School maintains a database of parents and guardians who have complied with these regulations. Only those who have complied are eligible for volunteer activities, per order of the Diocese of Worcester.

Volunteers' Expectations: *Confidentiality is of the utmost importance*

Volunteers can expect to:

- be introduced to others working on the team
- be welcomed with friendliness
- receive clear instructions as to your duties and responsibilities
- have ideas and suggestions listened to
- have your contribution treated as very important to the school
- have adequate notice when your help is needed
- be informed when an activity is postponed or a time is changed
- have your availability respected
- have your hours correctly recorded and appropriately credited
- be thanked for the service you have given.

Responsibilities of Volunteers:

Volunteers must remember that they are there to help **ALL STUDENTS** and must not cater to a few individuals. Know what your duties are and how to do them promptly, correctly, and pleasantly. The leader of each activity will help you by answering your questions. Please ask!

Speak with the Administrative Assistant and/or the school principal to contribute suggestions for improvements in the program.

Expectations of Volunteers:

While volunteers are not paid personnel, your contributions are nonetheless important! Please abide by these guidelines, whether your volunteer time is spent with students or in some other way:

- sign in and sign out at the school office each time
- dress in a manner that is appropriate for the duty.
- give students your name as Mr., Mrs., or Ms.; first names only are not acceptable for the students to use when speaking to you.
- attend any training sessions scheduled for volunteers.
- inform the Administrative Assistant or school office of any planned absence, late arrival, or if you will not be able to fulfill your commitment to volunteer.
- alert the Principal to any potentially harmful situations and/or any difficulty between/among students.
- St. Stephen School exists for the students, so you must treat all students the way Jesus would treat them if He were the volunteer.
- volunteers perform their duties in a manner that benefits the school.
- volunteers protect students and act in ways that avoid litigation.
- volunteers behave as a “reasonable person,” defined as behavior or action that we can reasonably expect a person to follow.
- keep in mind that whether supervising or helping, volunteers must be alert at all times to the over-all needs and circumstances of the students.
- cooperate with administration, faculty, staff, and other volunteers and maintain a good team attitude.
- report any problems with discipline to the Principal.
- report any suspected child abuse issue to the Principal.
- follow school policies and procedures, such as refrain from:
 - * any search of a child’s person or belongings
 - * touching a student in a way that could be judged punitive.
 - * if you are in doubt about school policy, ask the principal.
 - speak in a professional manner to avoid defamation of character. Avoid:
 - * gossiping about students, teachers, staff, volunteers or administration at all times
 - * discussing student’s behavior, progress, or personal lives
 - * writing comments about a child
 - respect the confidentiality of information you may learn while in the school. Discretion is imperative.
 - exhibit sensitivity to the spiritual, emotional, mental, psychological, and physical well being of each student.
 - refer any ill or injured child to the teacher. Students are never left unattended nor allowed to go to the school office alone if they are ill or injured.

- refrain from advising or administering any medical care, unless you are a registered healthcare professional and you are performing duties of that nature with the approval of the school administration.
- avoid language that can be construed as discriminatory in any way.
- Volunteers are not to visit classrooms or be in any areas where they are not volunteering.

If a volunteer does not abide by the above policies, he/she will not be allowed to continue volunteering.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

"A volunteer is someone who gives of oneself freely."

Speech and Language Screening

Assist the younger children by walking them to the designated area for the Speech and Language Screening and escorting them back to class. This task requires patience. You can volunteer for the day or just a few hours.

Hearing Screening

You can help by bringing the children to the designated areas and back to class. Help maintain order while the children are waiting for their turn. You can volunteer for the day long screening or a few hours.

Lunch Duty

We'll be thrilled by your presence Monday through Friday, 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Help serve delicious lunches and maintain a nice environment where your children can enjoy their lunch break.

Nurse Duty

Florence Nightingale, where are you? This opportunity allows you to volunteer at a regular time each week or to assist with special types of screening such as scoliosis, vision and head lice check. A nursing degree is required and screening times will be announced.

Fundraising Assistance

Help when we call; help when you're available. Short-term projects with our long-term gratitude. Volunteer to be on our call-up list. Days and times to be announced.

Yard Duty

Stop, drop and roll with our children. This is a volunteer opportunity to monitor the children while out at recess. The days are Monday through Friday from 11:00 AM to 12:10 PM. You can do as many or as few days as you like. Ensuring safety would be your main role along with other duties such as retrieving balls that go over the fence. A teacher is also on duty. Please volunteer. We need you!

Traffic Control

Safety first. This volunteer opportunity provides for a safe dismissal of our children from the school. Every day you are posted at the front gate to prevent any congestion due to the number of cars. This takes approximately 15 minutes a day and is well worth the investment.

Coaches Wanted

We are in need of dedicated individuals to coach our children's sports teams. Coaches are needed for boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, boys baseball and girls softball. Hours spent on coaching will be credited for volunteer hours. A maximum of 25 hours may be credited.

Art Room Aide

The Michelangelo of the future awaits you. This is an opportunity to assist our art teacher in a project that the children do in class. Watch as our children express their creative abilities by transforming something simple into their own masterpieces.

Friends of St. Stephen

Being a Friend of St. Stephen is an opportunity to make meals and perform small tasks for families who are experiencing difficult times such as the death of a loved one, sickness, etc. A small gesture of kindness goes a long way when times are tough. You will be contacted when you're needed. **(No volunteer credit)**

Sweetheart Dance

Fred and Ginger, here we come. Watch the girls of St. Stephen, from Pre-K to grade eight, dance the night away with their Dad, Uncle, etc. This is an annual tradition and is enjoyed by all. Help is needed to assist with food, music, decorations, set up, clean up and picture taking. Come, have a ball. A maximum of 5 hours may be given toward volunteer credit for time spent decorating/setting up and working the evening.

Picture Days *Fall & Spring* - Say "Cheese"...

Straighten a tie or fix a collar. Lend a hand to our photographer and escort the children from their classrooms to the area designated for pictures. Volunteer for the whole day or just a few hours.

Mother & Son Night

Take me out to the ball game, or maybe to the Sharks, or bowling... Chairperson needed to plan a fun time for mothers, aunts, etc. and sons. Planning dates will be announced well ahead of this annual event. New ideas are welcome. A maximum of 3 hours may be given toward volunteer credit for this event.