



# Student and Parent Handbook

2020-2021

# The School of Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales

307 School Street  
Bennington, Vermont  
05201

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Providing excellence in academics and a deepening faith in God and Gospel Values in an environment that is caring, challenging, and respectful, striving to develop in every student the habits of thinking critically and acting responsibly in daily life.

## **THE SCHOOL OF SACRED HEART ST. FRANCIS de SALES**

The School of Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales (formerly known as Sacred Heart School) was established as an educational institution on September 1, 1891. It is a part of the educational mission of Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales Parish and the Catholic Community of Bennington, Vermont.

Our school works to develop and nourish the ideas, curiosity, creativity, attitudes, and behaviors, which are necessary for good Christian living. Our school teaches each child to recognize that he/she is special and is God's child, to think intelligently, to make sound decisions, and to act in the light of the morals developed by Catholic teaching. Care is given to the total development of each student and open communication with parents is maintained throughout the school year.

The school exists today as a Catholic community dedicated to the education of young people providing excellence in academics, a deepening faith in God, and Gospel values in an environment that is caring, challenging, respectful, striving to develop in every student the habits of thinking critically and acting responsibly in daily life.

**WE WELCOME YOU  
TO  
OUR  
COMMUNITY OF FAITH!**

## **SCHOOL POLICIES**

### **ACCIDENTS**

Any injury received anywhere on school property must be reported at once to the Principal, teacher or person in charge, or the school nurse.

### **ACTIVITIES**

Teachers or coaches must supervise students who participate in extracurricular activities. No student is to enter the school building or classroom unless a teacher or supervisor is present and aware of the student's presence.

### **CARS**

School Street is the designated drop-off area for students who are transported to school by cars. No cars, other than those of the staff, are allowed in the parking area during the hours of 8:00 AM and 2:00 PM. At dismissal, students are dismissed to parents via a car line. Cars may begin lining up at 2:00 PM. Once the bell rings at 2:40 PM, cars will be given a signal to start the car line. The use of this procedure ensures that all children are safely placed in the vehicles that will be transporting them home.

Any change in student transportation plans should be made known in writing at the beginning of the school day.

### **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Jesus came that we might have life and have it to the full (John 10:10). Discipline in our school is about students learning to choose life to the full and becoming disciples of Jesus. It is considered an element of moral guidance rather than a form of punishment. We also help develop a student's conscience, and for positive behaviors and growth, we provide the following principles:

#### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

##### **Excellence**

A commitment to be the best that we can be  
Responsibility in all areas of school life

##### **Respect**

Respect for self and others  
Respect for materials and property  
Respect for our own learning and that of others

##### **Honesty**

Honesty in all areas of school life

## **Dignity**

Honoring the inherent dignity of each person

## **Compassion**

Sensitivity to the feelings of others

A willingness to help and support others

The formation of a child into discipleship is a shared responsibility. Teachers and staff members will model appropriate behavior to support the necessary structure for learning self-discipline. Parents and/or guardians also have the responsibility and must make a commitment to work with the faculty and administration to provide a safe environment conducive to learning. Good classroom order and school structure help to insure the safety of all children, facilitate the learning for all students, and promote self-control and self-respect in the individual child. Together, we foster the child's self-discipline and self-esteem.

By enrolling a child in our school the parents and/or guardians agree to be supportive of the rules and regulations that we deem as critical in the spiritual, academic, and behavioral growth of the child.

While most parents and guardians find our approach to discipline to be very favorable, there are instances when a child breaks a rule and must suffer the consequences of his or her action. It is then that parents and/or guardians may attempt to debate the fairness of the school policy or make excuses for the child's misbehavior. The administration of this school will not engage in debates with parents and/or guardians about our rules and regulations, nor can it be supportive of parents and/or guardians who are interfering with a child's growth in accepting personal responsibility for his or her actions.

In addition to following the rules established by each teacher and in order to create a safe and respectful learning environment, students are also expected to behave in the following manner:

### **Before school**

- Upon arrival, after 8 AM, report directly to your classroom.
- Enter the building quietly.
- Cell phones will be turned off upon entering school grounds.

### **In the school buildings**

- Walk quietly through the halls.
- Use proper language at all times.
- Follow the dress code for regular school and any out of uniform days.
- Respect school property and the property of others.
- Have a respectful attitude toward everyone you encounter.
- Be on time for school as this affects the other students' ability to learn.

**In the classroom**

- Follow all classroom rules.
- Be responsible by submitting homework assignments on time and making up missed assignments.
- Have a respectful attitude towards teachers and one another.
- Be responsible for school supplies.
- Be honest in all communications.
- Use computers and school equipment appropriately.
- Be in the classroom only when a teacher or another adult is present.

**During lunch**

- Remain seated until finished eating and until dismissed by an adult monitor.
- Clean up at tables, pick up all papers, scraps of food, etc., and dispose of them properly.
- Obey the lunch room supervisors at all times.

**During recess**

- Remain outdoors unless there is an emergency or the playground teacher has given you permission to enter the school building.
- Obey the playground teacher at all times.
- Use the playground equipment appropriately.
- Display good sportsmanship and exercise self-control.
- Play only in assigned areas.
- Stay on the school grounds at all times.
- Stop playing when the bell rings and walk quietly to designated lines.

**After school**

- Follow dismissal procedures assigned by your teacher.
- Walk to the car line with teacher and wait until parents arrive.
- Do not reenter the school building unless accompanied by a teacher or staff member.
- Leave by exiting via the driveway if walking or being picked up before the car line.

**At school sponsored activities**

- All school rules apply.
- No running in the multi-purpose room.
- Use school equipment appropriately when and only if permission is granted.

**At athletic events**

- Practice good sportsmanship as spectators and participants.
- Show respect toward coaches, referees and visiting teams.

**Outside of school**

- Behave responsibly off school property.
- If the Principal is made aware of misconduct off school property of a Sacred Heart St. Francis student, parents and/or guardians may be notified. (It is important to note, however, that the school is not

responsible for students' actions that occur off school property, but if the action in anyway harms the reputation of the school and/or parish, disciplinary actions may be taken.)

Teachers discipline students directly for minor classroom disruptions, for not coming prepared to class, not being in the complete school uniform, for not completing assigned homework/class work, for minor verbal disputes with other classmates, or other incidents which interfere in the teaching-learning process for the child and his or her classmates. In the event correction/discipline by teachers does not remedy the misbehavior, the teacher will notify the parents and/or guardians who will be asked to help the teacher insure that inappropriate behavior is modified.

Teachers discipline students directly for behavior judged to be infractions of acceptable behavior. Some examples of unacceptable behavior are:

- disrupting class; such as talking out, throwing objects, unnecessary movements, etc.
- not meeting the requirements for class work/homework preparation and submission
- violation of uniform code; wearing inappropriate clothing
- using profane language
- not returning required paperwork/communication

It happens that some classroom discipline issues are referred to the administration of this school. This would include chronic minor problems listed above or major problems such as, but not limited to, chronic lateness, the verbal abuse of the teacher by a child; signs of disrespect to a teacher or another adult on the staff; fighting; physical, sexual, or verbal harassment of a fellow student; violent behavior; stealing; vandalism; or the possession of a drugs, alcohol, or a weapon. The administration handles such matters in a variety of ways depending on the severity of the incident. Some examples of such behavior are:

- theft
- cheating and other forms of dishonesty
- evidence of violent and aggressive behavior that poses threats to the safety of others and to the school community\
- carrying weapons and other objects deemed to be potentially dangerous to others and to the school community
- bringing to school amounts of money unrelated to standard school activities and events
- showing by word or deed serious disrespect to other
- behaving in a manner that suggest the use of alcohol or illegal drugs (see section on Drug and Alcohol Abuse Policy)
- possession of drugs or alcohol

- possession of pornographic material
- inappropriate use of technology (see section on Technology Policy)
- defacing or destruction of school property persistent misbehavior over minor matters that continue to be unacceptable
- other behavior deemed inappropriate by the administration and faculty
- bullying
- disrespect of the race or gender of others
- verbal, written and or physical threats made by any student toward any other student, staff member, and any other member of our school and parish community, or the physical plant.

The school employs a progressive discipline system for minor acts of misbehavior in order to encourage students to change inappropriate behavior so that sanctions do not increase in severity. For acts such as previously listed, students are often given conduct referrals, detention, etc.) Repeated violation of these rules and regulations may result in suspension from school or the non-re-registration of the child for the next school year.

Uniform Notices are issued indicating that a violation of the dress code has been displayed by a student. Conduct referrals are issued indicating that a violation of the discipline code has been displayed by a student. More severe violations will be assigned a Detention Notice in lieu of a conduct referral. Violations by upper grade students are dealt with more severely than with lower grade students. Any combination of three uniform notices and/or conduct referrals equal one detention. An accumulation of three detentions can be cause for suspension. An accumulation of suspensions can be cause for expulsion procedures.

After school and lunchtime detentions are acceptable forms of discipline. When students are given after school detentions, a written notification will be sent to the parents and/or guardians. The student will serve the detention on the day indicated on the detention notification. Chronic lateness can result in detention. Lunchtime detention may be assigned when faculty and administration agree that removing a student from the company of their peers at lunch and recess will have a greater impact on changing negative behavior.

In certain instances of unacceptable behavior, administration reserves the right to ask that a student remain at home until an investigation of this behavior can be conducted. This situation would be required to insure the physical and emotional well-being of all students and staff. These instances may or may not be considered suspensions depending on the severity of the infraction and the age of the student(s) involved. A conference with administration and parents and/or guardians will be held before the student is allowed to return to school. Under normal circumstances, this conference would be held within 5 school days.

Suspension and expulsion are measures that are reserved for chronic forms of misbehavior that have not responded to other remedial measures. Suspension and expulsion are also measures that are reserved for extreme form of misbehavior such as fighting, criminal acts, scandal, immorality, disruption constituting a threat to the physical or moral welfare of other students or staff members or acting in a way on or off campus that damages the good name and reputation of the school and parish.

Suspensions will be served as “out-of-school” penalties. During suspensions students are required secure all assignments and to submit all work upon their return to class. Suspended students however are not permitted contact with classmates, may not participate in any school functions such as practices, or games, etc., and may be prevented from completing tests administered on the day(s) of their suspension. Such exclusion will result in a grade of zero for any missed test.

For more serious acts of misbehavior such as fighting, stealing, vandalism, swearing at or being disrespectful to an adult in the building, and harassment, the student is immediately suspended for a period of one to five days. In cases of vandalism, the parents and/or guardians must pay the full cost of the repair or replacement of the item before the child may return to school. In cases of theft, the item is either returned in good condition or the cost of replacement is borne by the parents and/or guardians before the child can return to school.

In cases in which a child engages in a fight which causes injury to another child or adult, the police will be summoned and, then, the parents and/or guardians will be notified. Likewise, the possession of drugs or alcohol by a child are reported to the police. The school reserves the right to expel such a child.

In cases in which a child brings a weapon to school, the police are summoned, and then the parents and/or guardians are called. The school reserves the right to expel a child for the possession of a weapon. It is the expectation of this school that student behavior is exemplary both on and off school grounds. A student always represents his or her parents, guardians and the entire school community. Therefore, the school reserves the right to punish students for acts such as, but not necessarily limited to stealing, fighting, vandalism, harassment or any other type of threatening or inappropriate misconduct (personally, via the telephone or the Internet) and prohibited use of personal electronic devices including but not limited to cell phones, cameras, camera-phones, public displays of affection and the like. (See also - Technology Policy) Such misconduct could result in any number of punishments including the possibility of suspension and/or expulsion.

A child’s arrest for a crime on or off of school grounds, within or beyond the vicinity of the school, at any time could result in the child’s suspension or expulsion. A child’s conviction of a crime on or off of school grounds, within or beyond the vicinity of the school, will likely result in a child’s expulsion.



Poor behavior and conduct referrals may prevent a student from participating in after school activities, clubs, practices, sports, etc.

We also reserve the right to dismiss a child at any time it becomes evident to the Principal that his or her **behavior** or **attitude**, either inside and outside of school, or that of his or her family, are inconsistent with the community principles and are detrimental to the reputation of the school or parish.

Lastly, discipline matters often involve information which cannot be made public. For that reason, all discipline matters and decisions will be private and kept confidential between the administration, the staff members involved, the student, and his/her parents and/or guardians. Information concerning discipline matters will not be discussed or shared outside this context.

### **HARASSMENT**

“Harassment” means an incident or incidents of verbal, written, visual or physical conduct based on or motivated by a student’s or a student’s family member’s actual or perceived race, creed, color, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, or disability that has the purpose or effect of objectively and substantially undermining and detracting from or interfering with a student’s educational performance or access to school resources or creating an objectively intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Harassment includes conduct which violates any subsection of this definition and constitutes one or more of the following:

- Racial harassment, which means conduct directed at the characteristics of a student’s or a student’s family member’s actual or perceived race or color, and includes the use of epithets, stereotypes, racial slurs, comments, insults, derogatory remarks, gestures, threats, graffiti, display, or circulation of written or visual material, and taunts on manner of speech and negative references to racial customs.
- Harassment of members of other protected categories, which means conduct directed at the characteristics of a student’s or a student’s family member’s actual or perceived creed, national origin, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, or disability and includes the use of epithets, stereotypes, slurs, comments, insults, derogatory remarks, gestures, threats, graffiti, display, or circulation of written or visual material, taunts on manner of speech, and negative references to customs related to any of these protected categories.

### **Consequences for Harassment**

Documented acts of harassment will result in the perpetrator being disciplined. Disciplinary consequences may include, but are not limited to: after school detention, loss of privileges, loss of the ability to participate in any after

school and extracurricular activities, mandatory remedial classes, parent conferences and suspension. Disciplinary consequences may also include a recommendation to the school board for a long term suspension or expulsion. The school will also provide clear notification to the parents of the student who commits a verified act of harassment of the school's response and consequences of any further harassment by their child. Law enforcement authorities may be contacted upon verification of acts of harassment.

## **HAZING**

Hazing is a form of harassment and will not be tolerated in conjunction with The School of Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales athletic program. Hazing is defined as "a willful act, occurring on or off school grounds, directed against a player or prospective member of a school-sponsored team, that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a player or prospective team member for the purpose of initiation, admission into, or continued membership on any such team."

Consequences for hazing violations may range from individual suspension from participation in the athletic program for a period of time, to cancellation of an athletic schedule, depending upon the magnitude of the incident and number of athletes involved. Consequences for hazing violations brought to the attention of the administration after the season may be applied to and/or include subsequent athletic participation or athletic probation. The coach(es) and principal will determine consequences. There is also now a Vermont law making hazing a crime, and students should be aware that, in addition to the school penalties outlined above, they could face prosecution for engaging in hazing.

## **BULLYING**

### **Bullying**

Bullying is a form of dangerous and disrespectful behavior and will not be permitted or tolerated within The School of Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales. "Bullying" means any overt act or combination of acts directed against a student by another student or group of students and which (A) is repeated over time; (B) is intended to ridicule, humiliate, or intimidate the student, and (C) occurs during the school day on school property or at a school-sponsored activity, or before/after the school day or at a school-sponsored activity.

### **Reporting Bullying**

Bullying within The School of Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales will not be tolerated in any form. If a student feels they are being bullied, and it is safe to do so, TELL THAT PERSON TO STOP. Victims and witnesses are asked to report bullying to any teacher or staff member. Students are allowed to anonymously report acts of bullying to their teachers and school administrators. Parents and guardians are also able to file written reports of suspected bullying with the school. Any student or parent/guardian of a student who believes they have been the victim of bullying

should report the matter in writing immediately to the principal. The administration will investigate the situation and contact the family of the perpetrator.

### **Consequences for Bullying**

Bullying is a serious offense. Documented acts of bullying will result in the perpetrator being disciplined. Disciplinary consequences may include, but are not limited to: after school detention, loss of privileges, loss of the ability to participate in any after school and extracurricular activities, mandatory remedial classes, parent conferences and suspension. Disciplinary consequences may also include a recommendation to the school board for a long term suspension or expulsion. The school will also provide clear notification to the parents of the student who commits a verified act of bullying of the school's response and consequences of any further bullying by their child. Law enforcement authorities may be contacted upon verification of acts of bullying. (Please see [www.sacredheartbennington.org](http://www.sacredheartbennington.org)) for a detailed policy.)

### **DRESS CODE**

DRESS CODE - Unless otherwise indicated in writing from the school office, it is expected that students wear their complete uniforms on a daily basis.

The girls' uniform in Grades PK-5 consists of a plaid school jumper, a white dress blouse, and knee socks, or tights (white or navy blue). The girls' uniform in Grades 6-8 consists of a plaid school skirt (2 different styles), a white dress blouse, a uniform navy blue vest, and knee socks or tights (white or navy blue). A white turtleneck and khaki dress pants may be worn from **NOVEMBER 1<sup>st</sup>** through **MARCH 31<sup>st</sup>**.

The boys' uniform in all grades consists of a plaid school necktie, light blue or white dress shirt, and navy blue or khaki dress trousers. Denim jeans of any kind or sweat pants are not acceptable.

Threaded and beaded braids, unnatural dyed hair, tails, shaved heads w/messages, body painting, and body piercing undermine our school's commitment to simplicity and lack of competition in the area of dress. They are not consistent with the school dress code, and therefore, are not acceptable.

Hair on boys will be neatly trimmed with at least the bottom half of the ears exposed and a length not touching the top of the shirt collar. Girls may wear any tasteful hairstyle. No gaudy or extreme cuts, designs, or colors are allowed for girls or boys. Hair must be clean and groomed appropriately.

Jewelry should be simple and of a conservative nature. Pierced earrings are to be limited to no more than one pair per ear (on ear lobe only).

In addition, students are not allowed to wear choker necklaces of any kind. No student will have a tattoo, permanent or temporary, that is exposed while wearing school uniforms (including athletic uniforms). Hats are not to be worn in the school building at any time.

Shirts are to be fully tucked in at all times.

If the children wear sweaters during the school day, they must be uniform sweaters purchased from the uniform company. Sleeveless fleece vests/jackets with the school's emblem embroidered may be worn on cooler days. Sweatshirts of any kind are not allowed during the school day. All school uniforms, ties, and sweaters can be ordered through the Flynn and O'Hara Uniform Company at any time during the school year at 1-800-441-4122.

A warm weather option consisting of a dark green polo shirt with the embroidered school name and khaki walking shorts (or skorts for girls) is available through the last Friday of September and for the months of May and June. The dark green polo shirts may also be worn with uniform pants and skirts/jumpers during this time of year. This option is only obtainable from a uniform supplier determined by the school. There are no substitutions. All students must wear solid white or navy crew socks with the summer uniform option.

Sneakers and dress shoes are both acceptable for the classroom but on gym day students must wear sneakers. Shoes must have backs. High heels, flip-flops, sandals, or other backless shoes are not allowed for daily wear or for dress down days.

Shoes that have built in wheels also pose a safety hazard. The wheels on these shoes should never be used in school.

Socks are required for all students as a part of their uniform.

## **NO-UNIFORM DAYS**

The Principal will have the discretion to determine if a student's attire is appropriate on no-uniform days and will also have the authority to set the mode of attire for these special occasion days. On no-uniform days students should choose attire appropriate for the school environment. **Inappropriate attire includes:** tank tops, shorts that are more than two inches above the knees, tights worn without a skirt or pants, beach or hiking attire, bare midriff tops, t-straps, halter tops, T-shirts with inappropriate slogans, logos or designs, mini-skirts, etc. Shoes must be appropriate for steep stairs, recess, physical education, etc. (for example: no shoes without ankle support, no flip-flops, sandals, slippers, crocs, etc.). If your child wears clothing that does not meet the no-uniform code, parents will be contacted and asked to bring a change of clothing for them.

## **OUT OF UNIFORM NOTICE**

An out of uniform notice will be sent home when a student is not following the dress code. This notice will bring the non-compliance to your attention and ask for an immediate correction. The notice should be signed by a parent and returned to school the next school day. Parents will be called, if necessary to come and take the student home to remedy the situation when the violation is considered grave and repetitive.

## **MULTIPLE VIOLATIONS**

Consequences for multiple violations will be at the discretion of the Principal.

## **ATHLETICS**

Competitive soccer, basketball, and softball programs are available at Sacred Heart St. Francis for middle school students. Before the start of each season, students and parents must sign a code of conduct agreement. Players must also retain a passing grade point average.

Student athletes must represent both our school and our community in the best possible manner. Coaches will determine consequences for any player that acts inappropriately at practices and games. Further infractions may result in removal from the team for the remainder of the playing season.

A medical release form along with a physical examination by a medical doctor is also required before any student athlete can begin practicing.

## **CONCUSSION PROTOCOL**

Assessment of concussion-like symptoms **MUST** be determined immediately following one of the following:

- Direct head to head contact
- Direct trauma following a vicious hit
- Head to ground contact

A coach, referee or an athletic trainer may pull ANY athlete from competition if there is suspicion of a concussion. A physician must clear the athlete prior to being allowed to return. If concussion-like symptoms ARE present that athlete **WILL NOT** be allowed to return to any athletic activity.

### **Symptoms to look for:**

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Light sensitivity
- Feeling in a fog or out of their body
- Difficulty remembering simple words/previous coach discussions
- Difficulty concentrating
- Extreme fatigue/lethargy

**Treatment:**

Any concussion-like symptoms will be monitored by the person in charge following an injury until the athlete is released to his parents. If symptoms worsen within the same day a referral to the doctor is warranted.

**PLEASE NOTE:** A mild headache with no other symptoms still may indicate a concussion.

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

Ingestion of harmful substances such as drugs or alcohol hinders the growth and development of the individual and is contrary to the philosophy of Sacred Heart St. Francis. The presence of devices of any kind associated with drug or alcohol usage is prohibited from school premises at all times.

The home has primary responsibility for treating health problems; however, Sacred Heart St. Francis shares these responsibilities in the areas of education and referral. The school also shares the responsibility of supporting any student who is attempting to change a pattern of use.

School administration and support services will work with the family in providing prevention and treatment opportunities.

A violation is any drug or alcohol related incident which occurs on school premises or at school sponsored functions and includes the purchase, use, possession, being under the influence of alcohol and any other drugs, dealing in alcohol or other drugs and the possession of devices associated with alcohol or drug use.

All school personnel are expected to immediately confront students verbally to discuss any suspected or actual drug/alcohol incident that occurs on the school premises and/or at school sponsored functions and to report instances of actual drug or alcohol policy violations immediately to the school Principal.

In all reported instances of actual drug or alcohol policy violation, the Principal will notify the parent or legal guardian immediately. The Principal will also investigate and evaluate to determine appropriate action.

If in the opinion of the Principal, an emergency situation exists, an area Rescue Squad and/or Bennington Police Department will be called upon for their service. The school nurse and any other personnel will serve in a support capacity in such instances. The parent or legal guardian will be notified prior to such action when possible and in other instances as soon as possible thereafter.

**Consequences:** Disciplinary action for the first reported violation of this policy shall involve suspension from school to begin immediately and last for a maximum of ten school days.

Students found to be selling drugs and/or alcohol will be recommended to the school board for immediate expulsion.

When the administration has sufficient information as the result of observation or referral to suspect that a probable violation of this policy has occurred, the students(s) will be expected to cooperate fully. This may include emptying pockets,

pocketbooks and/or backpacks, etc. In such situations, the administration also reserves the right to inspect all other student belongings.

The student(s) will meet with the school Principal before re-entering school following suspension. In some instances, sustained professional treatment may be a condition of continued enrollment in school.

A second violation of this policy within a given school year shall result in an automatic ten-day suspension to begin immediately. A recommendation shall also be made to the parents for them to refer their child to an alcohol and drug treatment program.

In the event that a third violation of this policy occurs within a given school year, a recommendation will be made to the school board for expulsion.

### **MANDATED REPORTING**

All staff members are bound by state law to report any suspected cases of child abuse to Department of Children and Families. (formerly known as SRS)

### **CHILD RESTRAINT**

From time to time, restraint or seclusion of a child may be necessary when his or her behavior or action poses imminent danger of physical harm to self or others. It is not a routine strategy implemented to address instructional problems or inappropriate behavior.

Any use of either seclusion or restraint shall be supervised, short in duration and used only for the purposes of de-escalating the behavior. A report will be written and given to the Principal if restraint of a child is used for any reason and that information will be shared with the child's parents.

### **EMERGENCY INFORMATION**

At the beginning of each school year, every student will receive an "emergency information" form to be filled out completely by the custodial parent and returned to school immediately. Such information is crucial when an emergency occurs or if a child becomes ill during the school day. This information needs to be kept current; any changes in this information should be reported immediately to the school office.

### **RELEASE OF STUDENTS**

If it is necessary for your child to go to the doctor or dentist during the regular school hours, a written note from a parent must be presented to the school office before 9:00 a.m. This note must contain the time and nature of the child's appointment, who is to pick up the child and if he/she will return to school after the appointment.

In cases where parents are separated or divorced, the Principal should be informed in writing as to which parent has custody of the child. This is necessary for the safety and protection of your child. Such information is considered confidential and will be held in strict confidence.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

Sacred Heart St. Francis has an active parent outreach group and each family is encouraged to support the efforts sponsored by each class throughout the school year. Room parents coordinate these activities. Some are fundraising opportunities, but many are social and family centered events.

## **RELIGION CLASS AND RELIGIOUS FUNCTIONS**

Sacred Heart St. Francis is a Catholic school. Therefore, any student enrolled in the school must be a part of the religion classes taught in the school. At regular times during the school year, the faith community of the school will celebrate liturgies together; and all students attend these celebrations. Non-Catholic students join their schoolmates at the celebrations, but do not participate in the sacramental aspects of these events. Full student participation at such religious functions is necessary to build the type of community we desire at this school. This includes all devotions as well. We are a Catholic school, and we celebrate our beliefs as a vital part of our lives.

## **SMOKING**

For health and fire safety reasons, smoking is not allowed anywhere on school grounds before, during and after school hours. The Principal will contact the parents of any student violating this rule and appropriate school consequences and those in compliance with Vermont State Law will be imposed.

## **VISITORS**

For safety reasons, all entrances to our school are locked during the school day. There is a video monitoring system located at the front door, where, after identifying yourself, you will be let in. Please use this door, and then report to the school office, for all school business. Do not allow other people to follow you in the school who have not announced themselves to the office. ***All visitors, including parents, are to report to the school office to sign in upon entering the school building.*** At no time is any visitor, parent, etc. to go to any classroom to speak with a teacher unless a specific appointment has been arranged with that teacher through the school office. ***Visitors must also sign out when they leave the building.***

## **ATTENDANCE**

Regular attendance is essential for a student to succeed in school. Therefore, we ask your cooperation with regard to the following:

**Absence** - If your child is ill and will not attend school, please call the school office by 9:00 a.m. If you would like homework for your child, it should be requested when you call. When your child returns to school after an illness, a note written by a parent must be brought to the school office explaining the absence.



Early Dismissal - A student will not be released from school except by the written request of a parent. As far as is possible, all dental and medical appointments should be made after school hours.

Unexcused Absence - A school calendar is included with this handbook. This calendar indicates all of the in-service days, holidays, and school vacations that we are aware of at this time. Unless otherwise indicated in a note from the Principal, we will follow this school calendar.

Tardiness - The school day begins at 8:15 AM for PK-8. Students who are not in their seats by 8:20 AM, are considered tardy. Being late for school is disruptive to the start of the school day.

## **FUND RAISING**

Since the cost of educating a child continually increases from year to year it is necessary to engage in fund raising activities. Sacred Heart St. Francis is a religious school and by virtue of that it cannot be subsidized by local tax money. Therefore, fund-raising plays a key role in helping educating your child. It is also important to note that tuition does not fully cover the cost to educate each child this year at our school; so all families are expected to help raise funds. These funds also help to provide financial assistance to many of our families.

The school sponsors these drives and they are announced at the beginning of the school year. Everyone is asked to participate and support these efforts in some way. Active participation will enhance the education of all your children.

Any fund raising activities using the school's name must be presented first to, and approved by, the Sacred Heart St. Francis School Board.

## **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

If any information such as an address, telephone number, emergency number, etc. changes during the school year, please inform the school office so that this new information can be recorded for your child. It is important that we be able to reach you quickly should an emergency occur during school hours.

## **CHANGE OF PARENTAL CUSTODY**

In cases where parents are separated or divorced, it is necessary that the Principal be informed in writing as to who is the custodial parent. Any changes in custody must also be made known in writing to the Principal.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

All school communications come to the parents either through e-mail or notes given to each child on each Wednesday in a large white envelope or folder. Please check with your child or check your child's backpack weekly for any notes regarding school activities and then return the empty envelope to school.

Anyone requesting an appointment with the Principal or teacher should send a note or call the school office to request an appointment. The Principal or teacher will then contact the parent to arrange a convenient meeting time.

Parents are always acknowledged as the primary educators of their children. Therefore, every effort will be made to keep parents informed of the intellectual progress and general behavior of their children. Parents are asked to inquire of their children, the outcome of any tests or assignments received from a teacher or any other concerns they may have during the year.

Parents of students in Preschool through Grade 4 are expected to have a conference with their child's teacher at least twice a year. A schedule will be sent home well in advance for your convenience.

Any student-to-student communications, such as **birthday or holiday party invitations** should be sent through the mail, made over the telephone, or given outside of the school hours and grounds unless the entire class has been invited.

### **COMPUTER USE**

Our computer network is established for the educational use of our students. The goal in providing this service is to promote educational excellence by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication. It is an exceptional educational opportunity and privilege.

Using the network responsibly is the best way to avoid inappropriate information. Even though filters have been installed, there may be the rare occasion when a student comes across something unacceptable on the Internet. It is his or her responsibility to stop the connection and tell the teacher about it immediately.

Students are also entitled to a reasonable expectation of privacy for their files by other students. Taking advantage of someone who inadvertently leaves a computer without logging off is no different than entering an unlocked room and stealing, reading a personal letter, or destroying someone's personal property. Students are permitted to use only those programs that they have been instructed to use

E-mail, the use of chat rooms, and instant messenger, by students at school, is strictly prohibited, as is plagiarism of material placed on the Internet. Students should treat information found electronically the same way that they treat information found in printed sources.

Students found violating these guidelines will have their network privileges revoked and may face further disciplinary action.

### **DISTANCE LEARNING**

If distance learning becomes necessary for the health and welfare of our students, faculty, and staff, it is not intended to permanently replace in-classroom education.

Distance learning during prolonged school closure must preserve, augment, and transmit knowledge and foster the abilities of students to learn. The school will equitably utilize resources to ensure all eligible students are able to participate in distance learning.

Students participating in distance learning will be held to the same requirements of academic honesty as students involved in regular in-person classes.

## **CELL PHONE AND OTHER ELECTRONIC USE BY STUDENTS**

The use of cell phones, iPods/mp-3 players, etc., in our society is rapidly expanding to include a larger proportion of young people, including those of grade school age. As usage expands so does the question of school procedure regarding use of cell phones and other electronic devices during school hours and even more so, text-messaging by students. The following guidelines have been established regarding cell-phones and electronics:

Cell phones are **not** allowed to be used during school hours; (from arriving at school to 3:00 pm on a regular school day); iPods/mp-3 players must be shut off once arriving at school.

Cell phones/other electronics will be required to be confined to the students' backpack.

Anyone caught text-messaging or using the phone during a test or quiz will receive a 0% on that test or quiz.

Cell phones/electronic devices must be shut off during school hours; a cell-phone/iPod causing a classroom distraction (ringing, alarms, etc.) will result in the item being taken away from the student.

Phones/electronics taken from students during the regular school day will be taken to the school office where they can be picked up after school hours;

Cell phones/electronic devices will be returned to **parent/guardian** only.

## **DANGEROUS MATERIALS**

The possession, use or distribution of dangerous materials such as knives, fireworks, or weapons of any kind, will not be allowed at school, on school grounds, or at any school-sponsored activity. Anyone violating this policy will face severe consequences including expulsion from school.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Occasional field trips by teachers and students to places of cultural and educational value are approved under the following conditions:

- the trip has some clear educational value.
- the trip is planned to coordinate with class work, the trip has specific goals, parents have been informed and their permission obtained, the cooperating organization has been informed.
- adequate adult supervision must be assured, teachers will accompany their students on all trips.
- the trip does not involve great expense.
- there is some form of follow-up evaluation done.

All field trips are considered privileges. Students will be denied participation if they fail to meet academic and behavioral requirements.

In addition, any trip requiring fund raising beyond the immediate school students, faculty and staff must be approved by the School Board. Before a trip will

be approved, a complete description of the trip and a plan for fund raising must be submitted.

Transportation for class field trips will be provided by a School Board approved bus service when field trips are not within walking distance or within a thirty-mile radius of the school. When transported by private vehicles, seat belts will be worn. Students under the age of 8 must ride in an approved child restraint (booster seat). Those students 8 years of age and older who are a minimum of 4'9" must wear seat belts (lap and shoulder belt). No student will be allowed to ride in the front seat of any private vehicle used for field trip transportation. All drivers must have a copy of a valid driver's license and proof of insurance on file in the school office. When using a bus service, children may be transported by other means only if the driver is the child's parent.

A permission slip request from parents asking the school to take a student on a field trip must be signed by the parent for each field trip. Requests by telephone are not acceptable and may not take the place of the written request. Parents are also encouraged to suggest specific areas for field trips.

### **FIRE DRILLS AND LOCKDOWNS**

The Principal will ensure that all teachers, staff members, substitutes, volunteers, and students are certain of the procedures to be followed in an emergency or fire drill. Unannounced fire drills and lockdowns are routinely practiced throughout the year.

Everyone must leave the building immediately in a quiet and orderly manner at the sound of the fire alarm.

### **FOOD**

School lunches are offered through a food service corporation used by the public school system.

If you choose to pack a lunch or snack for your child, it is strongly encouraged that it be nutritious in nature.

Nutritious food may be eaten at the classroom teacher's discretion and at lunch time while in the school building. Milk may be purchased through the school.

Snack sales, usually used as fund-raisers, may take place during the school day when permission is granted beforehand by the Principal or designee.

Please be sure that each child's lunch bag or box is labeled with the child's name.

**CHEWING GUM** is not permitted in the building or on the school grounds at any time.

### **GRADES**

To evaluate student progress, a variety of means is employed including teacher-made tests, quizzes and assignments, tests provided by textbook publishers, direct observation, oral presentations, all forms of written materials, etc.

Grading is the most widely used method of reporting student progress. If a

parent has a specific concern about his/her child's grades, please contact the teacher.

Special subject areas such as Art, Foreign Language, Music, and Physical Education will be graded according to a child's interest, behavior, and participation.

In addition, the report card evaluates a student's work and study habits as well as social development.

Progress reports, grades, and assignments for students in Grade 3-8 are available through our school's administrative software, FACTS/SIS. Parents are encouraged to log in regularly to monitor student progress and behavior.

## **HEALTH SERVICES**

A nurse is on duty at the school at least once a week through the school year. The school nurse takes care of all medical histories, immunization records, etc. Please contact the school office for inquiries about this type of information.

The nurse's office is located in the main office and it is used in handling medical situations as they occur. Emergency medical supplies and first aid equipment are kept here as well.

It is not the school's responsibility to diagnose or treat illness or injury. School personnel are responsible for giving immediate aid and notifying parents. If the parent cannot be reached, the Principal or nurse will call one of the emergency numbers designated on the child's emergency card. This person will care for the child and notify the parent.

A child will be sent home for the following: abdominal pain; emergency bee sting when allergic reaction occurs; elevated temperature; head injury; continuing nose bleed; any communicable disease; weeping poison ivy or poison oak or poison sumac; serious skin condition such as an unknown rash; ringworm; sprain, fracture or dislocations; severe toothache or broken tooth; vomiting; convulsions; animal bites; earache; eye injury; fainting; head lice. Parents will be notified of anything of a serious nature.

A student returning to school after an illness should be well enough to participate in all of the school activities, including recess and physical education class. Exceptions to this policy will be made upon receipt of a note from the student's physician. If at all possible, medication should be given at home.

Parents should check their child before sending him/her to school to be sure the child is free of any sign of disease or illness such as: headache, upset stomach, sore throat, runny nose, rashes, flushed face, red and watery eyes and the like. If your child is exhibiting any of these symptoms before the start of a given school day, please keep them home. It is in everyone's best interest to do so.

A child should also be "fever free" for 24 hours before he/she returns to school.

A complete Health Guide will be available at the beginning of each school year.

## **ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION**

No medication will be given without written instructions and a parent's signature.

An authorized adult will bring all prescription and non-prescription medication to school in the original container with the child's name printed clearly.

All medication will be kept in a locked area and distributed by a designated staff member only. No child will administer his/her own medication. No medication will be kept on his/her person. All medication will be given to the secretary or nurse upon arrival to school in the morning. (Please see additional information in the Health and Wellness Handbook.)

## **IMMUNIZATIONS**

No student may enroll in The School of Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales unless the appropriate the school has received a record of certificate of immunization issued by a licensed physician or health clinic that the student has received immunizations appropriate to age as specified by the Vermont Department of Health.

Exemptions to this requirement are allowed if the immunizations are in process, would be detrimental to the person's health or are not appropriate, or if the immunizations are contrary to the person's or parent or guardian's religious beliefs.

If immunization records are not provided as required, a notice will be sent home. If, after the notice, immunization records are still not provided, the student will not be allowed in school until the records are submitted.

## **HOMEWORK**

Homework should serve a positive purpose and be closely integrated with class work. It is not a substitute for what should be taught in the classroom; rather homework serves as a review or enrichment of materials learned within the classroom environment. Parents are encouraged to provide a suitable time and place for their children to do their homework.

The following time frame should be used as a daily guide for Grades 1-8.

Grade 1 - 10 minutes

Grade 2 - 20 minutes

Grade 3 - 30 minutes

Grade 4 - 40 minutes

Grade 5 - 50 minutes

Grade 6 - 60 minutes

Grade 7 - 1 hour and 10 minutes

Grade 8 - 1 hour and 20 minutes

The school policy is that no homework assignments are given over weekends unless the student is to do work that he/she has missed because of absenteeism or failure to complete homework or classroom assignments on time. Long-term assignments such as reports or projects do not apply to this rule because of the nature of time allowed.

If a student has not been completing assignments within a specific time frame,

a note will be sent to the parent indicating the incomplete assignments.

Students who are absent are expected to make up work that was missed. The student or parent should contact the teacher regarding the work to be done. Siblings may relay the message for assignments to the teacher and then return to pick up work at the end of the school day.

### **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

Sacred Heart St. Francis will usually follow the "School Delays and the No School" announcements of the Southwestern Vermont Supervisory Union during inclement weather and school closing. School delays or school closings are announced on television stations WCAX (Channel 3) and WNYT (Channel 13) from 6:00 a.m. on. All parents should be notified through the Renweb broadcasting system either by telephone or through e-mail. This same policy will be followed should it ever be necessary to close school early due to bad weather. Should this happen, your child should know where he/she is to go if the parent is not at home. The school will always attempt to contact parents should it ever be necessary to dismiss the students early, but this is not always possible. Therefore, it is vital that your child knows what to do in such an emergency.

### **LIBRARY**

The School of Sacred Heart St. Francis' library is located in our media center. Each class visits the library once a week. Students are permitted to take out books after their visits and to work on research projects when the library is not in use by a specific class. Parents are encouraged to participate in library activities. If you are able to do this, please notify your child's teacher at the beginning of the school year.

The Bennington Free Library is also used by the school as a resource for our teachers and students.

### **LOST AND FOUND**

Lost items should be reported to the classroom teacher. The teacher will report the missing items to the Principal. Found articles, including clothing should be turned into the main office. ***All personal property and articles of clothing should be labeled with the child's name.***

### **PEANUT ALLERGIES**

As with the general population, The School of Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales is seeing an increased number of children with severe nut allergies, including potentially life-threatening anaphylactic reactions. Complete avoidance of peanut butter and nut products is the only way to prevent these children from having an allergic reaction. This reality has necessitated the elimination of peanut butter and nut products from all areas at The School of Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales.

To our families, we ask that no type of food containing peanut butter and/or nut products be sent to school. This applies to all food coming into the school

building, including lunches, snacks, and special-occasion foods. We will continue to allow home-baked goods into The School of Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales; however, we ask that these home-baked goods also be completely free of peanut butter and nut products. We realize that this may cause some inconveniences, but we feel that the health of our children with these intense reactions must be a priority.

As we strive to provide a nut safe environment, please recognize that our facilities are used for many purposes and we cannot guarantee our facilities are completely nut free. We do appreciate all efforts to make our facilities as safe as possible for all who use them.

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Physical Education class is a requirement for all students unless there is a medical reason for non-participation. If a student is to be excused from class, a written note from a parent is to be presented to the office and also to the physical education class teacher.

Sneakers are required for participation in all Physical Education classes. For safety reasons jewelry that may be considered potentially dangerous during physical activity, is not allowed.

### **RECESS**

Weather permitting, students in Grades Preschool - 5 are given a recess each day. The decision to have outside recess during cold and rainy days depends on the temperature and the wind chill factor. Students should always dress for outside recess on cold days. All students must be on the playground during the outside recess. Only students with medical excuses will be allowed to remain in the building during outside breaks and under the supervision of a faculty member or staff member. Students are not allowed to remain inside the classrooms alone.

Students will have supervised free time in the classroom on the days when bad weather prevents outside recess. Quiet games, talking with friends, working on puzzles, etc. are usually allowed by the teacher in charge.

### **REPORT CARDS**

The report card is one of the school's most important forms of evaluation. It indicates a student's academic progress and evaluates general, personal and social traits and work study habits. Report cards are distributed at the end of each marking period (three times per year), usually during the months of December, March, and June.

### **HONOR ROLL**

Those students who excel in their studies are recognized by inclusion on the Principal's Honors list with a grade point average (GPA) of 95 or higher and no individual class average below 90. The High Honors list recognizes students with a GPA of 90 or higher and no individual class average below 85. The Honors list recognizes students with a GPA of at least 85 and no individual class average below



80. Grade point averages will include all academic and special subject areas.  
In Grades 3-8, an honor roll will be released for each of the marking periods.

### **RETENTION**

Any student who fails two or more terms in any major subject may face retention at the end of the year. Such a decision is made after consultation with the parents and teachers of the child being considered for retention and with the full knowledge and thorough discussion with the Principal.

A student failing a major subject for the year will be required to attend summer sessions of private tutoring in order that he/she may advance to the next grade level.

Retention is always viewed as a growth process.

### **SCHOOL HOURS**

School hours are Monday through Friday from 8:15 AM to 2:40 PM throughout the school year for Preschool through Grade 8.

Student may begin entering the school building at 8:00 AM. **THERE IS NO SUPERVISION** by any member of the Sacred Heart St. Francis staff before 8:00 AM or after 3:00 PM. Parents must assume responsibility for their children outside of school hours.

### **SCHOOL PROPERTY**

Parents of students who destroy or lose textbooks, library books, etc., or who destroy or vandalize school property will be notified by the Principal and will pay to the school the replacement cost of the property that was destroyed or lost. If a debt is owed to the school, final report cards will be held until the debt is paid in full.

No students are to be on school property after school hours unless they are involved with after-school activities such as an athletic team, chorus, club, science fair, or other activities supervised by a staff member.

### **SCHOOL EVENTS**

A list of school events is published in year in the Family Commitment Handbook. We encourage active participation by our school families; however, express written permission of the Principal is required to put photos of school functions on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, or any other social networks.

### **SCHOOL COLORS**

The school colors for Sacred Heart St. Francis are green and gold. Students are encouraged to identify with these colors as a representation of our school pride and spirit. School Color Day may be held on occasion, and all students are asked to participate. We are the **SAINTS of The School of Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales!** When we speak of our school, we speak of it with pride and wear our school colors feeling that way too.

## **STUDENTS STARTING PRESCHOOL**

Students entering pre-kindergarten must be at least three years of age by the start of school. There are no exceptions to this policy.

## **TEXTBOOKS**

All hardbound textbooks are to be covered at all times and should be carried to and from school in book bags or backpacks. Proper care should be given to all books and materials provided by the school.

*Consumable book fees are due at the beginning of the school year. The book fees are as follows: **Preschool—\$75; Kindergarten—\$100; Grade 1—\$115; Grade 2—\$115; Grade 3—\$120; Grade 4—\$120; Grade 5—\$135; Grade 6—\$135; Grade 7—\$135; Grade 8—\$135.** Students will not be given their consumable books until the fees have been paid in full.*

## **TELEPHONE**

Students are **not** permitted to use the telephone except in emergency situations. The Principal or office personnel will grant necessary permission to use the telephone in these situations.

## **TUITION**

Timely payment of tuition is critical for the effective and efficient operation of Sacred Heart St. Francis School. The school tuition policy is as follows:

-The tuition for Preschool-8 for the **2020-2021 school year is \$5180 (for 1<sup>st</sup> child)/\$4980 (for 2<sup>nd</sup> child) /\$4780 (for 3<sup>rd</sup> child).**

- Families will be assessed the tuition cost to educate each child at Sacred Heart St. Francis and if there is a need for scholarship assistance, a financial aid package is available.

- Payment is either paid in full at the beginning of the school year or monthly payments can be electronically transferred from a checking or savings account through FACTS Management. A \$75 or \$125 **per family (if using FACTS)** non-refundable deposit is required to assure enrollment for the next school year.

- The process to determine a family's need for assistance will be through a third party evaluation done by the FACTS Grant and Scholarship Assistance Program. To keep confidence and honor a family's privacy, only the Principal will know what each family will be paying for tuition.

- Financial aid from our school is not available for any student attending our Pre-K program, but some families may be eligible for the Vermont Childcare subsidy.

- Catholics who are registered in other parishes are also eligible to apply for scholarship assistance. These sending parishes provide assistance to Sacred Heart St. Francis for the children of families that they have registered in their respective parishes.

- All new non-Catholics and non-registered Catholics enrolling are assessed the full tuition cost, but when funds are available, may apply for tuition assistance as well.

- All families must sign an Enrollment Contract prior to admission at the beginning of each school year. This is a binding contract between parents and the school.
- Tuition payments are also non-refundable.
- Families who are delinquent in paying will be required to develop a plan for payment.

### **HANDICAP ACCESSIBILITY**

Our building will soon be fully accessible to any of our school programs for which federal funding assistance is received. Disabled persons seeking entrance to our building should let the Principal or office staff aware of this need.

### **SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS**

Different kinds of knowledge, skills, interests, and experiences are necessary to provide a well-rounded education. **All Sacred Heart St. Francis parents are required to volunteer 5 hours of their time at school, at a school related activity, or helping on a school project at home and 1 hour at the school bazaar held in the fall.** Parents will be able to participate in various instructional and enrichment experiences. At the beginning of the school year parents will be asked to make a commitment of time, energy, and talent. A parent volunteer coordinator will assist the teachers, staff, and school community in the placing of volunteers for various tasks.

All parents will be required to comply with the school's request for a Criminal Record Check. This is in accordance with Diocesan policies and is required for parents who volunteer to work with our students in any capacity. Fingerprinting is not necessary and there is no cost to parents.

Volunteers who work directly with children (including field trip chaperones) must also complete an on-line certification entitled "Safe and Sacred" on a yearly basis. There is no cost for this program as well.

### **CRISIS PLAN**

Procedures are in place in the event of an emergency situation.  
OFF-SITE EVACUATIONS - Off-site evacuation is recommended only for serious reasons when it is concluded that the school building is not a safe place to be. Threats, fire, chemical incidents, neighborhood conditions, and the like constitute such conditions. In the event of an off-site evacuation, all students and staff will follow Gage Street south to North Street, cross North Street and proceed to the Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales Parish Center on West Main Street. School officials will contact parents after the building has been evacuated.

LOCK DOWN - In the event that an armed intruder has entered the school building, or for any other reason necessary, our school will move into what is called a "lock-down" mode. Rooms will be secured and students and staff will remain in their classrooms until the situation has been resolved.

The school staff has also been trained in the ALICE protocol. **ALICE** stands for **Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate**. In the event that a LOCKDOWN is not the safest measure, ALICE procedures will be set in place.

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

The School of Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales, located in the Diocese of Burlington, admits students of any religion, race, color, national and ethnic origin, handicap and age, to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students in the school. Catholic schools seek, however, primarily to serve any parents who want a Catholic education for any of their children.

## **PARENT/STUDENT/SCHOOL AGREEMENT**

This Parent/Student Handbook contains policies and information. We feel these are necessary for you and your child(ren) to understand the basic procedures used to operate our school. It should be read carefully and then placed in a convenient location in your home for quick and easy reference.

The Parent/Student Handbook is an agreement between school, parent, and child, in which we endeavor to provide your child(ren) an outstanding academic and religious education, and to ensure they are provided every opportunity to achieve their maximum potential. You are requested to personally read this handbook and discuss it with your child(ren) each and every year with the intent of ensuring he/she/they, and you, understand the school's policies and procedures in order to avoid problems or conflicts.

We consider School to be a partnership. If in the opinion of the Principal that the partnership is any way compromised or broken, parents may be required to withdraw their children from our school.

## **VERMONT LAW - INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**

### **Accreditation, Registration, Licensing, and Approval**

- *Accreditation*: no requirements
- *Registration*: no requirements
- *Licensing*: no requirements
- *Approval or Recognition*: one of the two is mandatory
  - An independent school is defined by statute as "a school other than a public school, which provides a program of elementary or secondary education, or both." 16 *Vermont Statutes Annotated (VSA)* §11(8).
  - The compulsory attendance requirement for a child between six and 16 is met by attendance at an approved or recognized independent school. 16 VSA §1121.
  - The state board of education is charged with adopting rules for approved independent schools. 16 VSA §164(14).
  - The state board of education approves independent schools if the school provides a minimum course of study pursuant to 16 VSA §906 and substantially complies with the board's rules for approved independent schools. The board's rules require at a minimum (1)

adequate resources to meet the school's objectives, including financial capacity; (2) faculty qualified by training and experience in the areas assigned; and (3) physical facilities and special services in accordance with state and federal law. Approval may be granted without state board evaluation if the school is accredited by a private, state, or regional agency recognized by the state board. Approval may be revoked or suspended, after opportunity for a hearing, for failure to comply with state requirements. 16 VSA §166(b).

- Independent schools may apply for approval by the state board of education or file an enrollment notice as a recognized independent school. Tutorial programs, providing education to a pupil who is placed in a short-term program for evaluation and/or treatment, may also apply for state board of education approval. Per 16 VSA §828, approved schools are in the position to receive public tuition monies.
- Distance learning schools located in Vermont may apply for approval but are not eligible to receive tuition from public funds. For approval, distance learning schools must meet the standards of the state board of education that can be applied to that type of school and any rules created specifically for this type of school. 16 VSA §166 (b)(6).
- Independent schools that offer kindergarten, but no other graded education, may be approved by the state if the school substantially complies with the board's rules for approved independent kindergartens. 16 VSA §166(b)(1).
- A recognized independent school may operate in Vermont upon filing an enrollment notice with the state secretary of education. The notice must include a statement that the school will be in session an amount of time substantially equivalent to that provided in public schools; and a detailed description of the minimum course of study for each grade level and how the annual assessment will be performed. In addition, assurances are needed that the school will (1) maintain attendance records; (2), maintain annual assessments of each pupil's progress that are reported to parents or guardians; (3) provide the minimum course of study as provided by 16 VSA § 906; (4) employ teachers and have materials sufficient to carry out the educational program; and (5), meet applicable state and federal laws concerning physical facilities and health and safety matters. An enrollment notice must be renewed annually unless the school has been recognized or accredited by an organization that the state has approved to conduct these functions. If a school is unable to comply with any requirement due to a deep religious conviction shared by an organized group, the secretary may waive the requirement if the educational purposes are being met. 16 VSA §166(c). See Curriculum.
- If the Secretary has information that creates significant doubt about whether the school would be able to meet the recognition

requirements, or once in operation is meeting the requirements, the secretary may call a hearing for a determination on the matter. If a school fails to establish that it can meet or has met the requirements, the secretary will require specific action to come into compliance, require the students to attend another recognized or approved school or course of study. 16 VSA §166(c)(2).

- Religious schools may apply to be either approved or recognized independent schools and follow the state board of education rules and the Vermont Statute for Independent Schools. However, the schools are not eligible to receive tuition from public funds per *Chittenden Town School District v. Vermont Department of Education*, (1999), 169 Vt. 310, 738 A.2d 539.
- The state board of education may approve tutorial programs if the program substantially complies with the board's rules for approved tutorial programs. The board's rules require, at a minimum, that the program meet general and special education requirements as described in the following areas: (1) instruction and methods of instruction must be age and ability appropriate and coordinate with those in the responsible school district; (2) sufficient financial capacity must exist to cover facilities, materials, and a professionally qualified staff; (3) teachers who provide or supervise special education instruction must have licensure and endorsement equivalent to that needed for the same work in a Vermont public school; (4) facilities and operations must comply with local, state and federal health and safety laws and requirements; (5) attendance must be registered daily and reported to the responsible school district; and (6) instruction must be provided for a minimum of 10 hours per week, unless inconsistent with medical and/or educational recommendations. State Board Manual of Rules and Practices 2230.3
- Vermont has a council of independent schools to advise the secretary on policies and procedures with respect to independent schools. The secretary appoints the 11-member board. Nine members come from within the independent school's community and two members from the community at large. At least three members must be representatives of recognized independent schools. 16 VSA §166(d).

### **Teacher Certification**

- Teachers at approved schools need to hold “a minimum of a bachelor's degree in their field of instruction or substantially equivalent time in training and experience in their field of instruction.” State Board Manual of Rules and Practices 2226.5.1.
- An approved independent school providing special education services must satisfy the state licensure requirements for personnel who are responsible for the provision or supervision of special education and related services.

State Board Manual of Rules and Practices 2228.3.2.

- Superintendents, principals, and teachers must subscribe to an oath prior to discharging their duties. The oath affirms their support for the constitutions and the laws of the United States and Vermont. Foreign citizens serving as superintendents, principals, or teachers are not required to take the oath. 16 VSA §12.
- Quasi-public or private elementary or secondary schools that directly or indirectly receive support from public funds are considered municipal employers under the Vermont Municipal Labor Relations Act. 21 VSA §1735.

### **Length of School Year and Days**

- Recognized independent schools must be in session an amount of time substantially equivalent to that required for public schools. 16 VSA §166(c)(1)(A).
  - Per 16 VSA §1071, the minimum number of days for public school is 175.
- School year is defined under Vermont's general provisions as beginning July 1 and ending the next June 30. 16 VSA §11(a)12.

### **Curriculum**

- Approved and recognized nonpublic schools must provide a minimum course of study in the following fields: basic communication, including reading, writing, and the use of numbers; citizenship, history, and government in Vermont and the United States; physical education and comprehensive health education; English, American, and other literature; the natural sciences; and the fine arts. 16 VSA §906.
- Independent schools must annually conduct exercises in commemoration of the birth, life, and services of Abraham Lincoln on the last school day before February 12. 16 VSA §907.
- It is the secretary of education's duty to distribute, at his or her discretion and upon request, forms and materials relating to the Vermont state basic competency program for elementary and secondary pupils to approved independent schools. 16 VSA §212(12).
- Subject to the approval of the secretary, local school superintendents must arrange for the establishment of a driver education and training course for approved independent schools located within his or her supervisory jurisdiction if an independent school requests such a course. 16 VSA §1046.

### **Recordkeeping and Reports**

- An approved independent school must provide to parents or guardians a statement of its status under Vermont's approval requirements and a copy of 16 VSA §166 prior to accepting any tuition payments. 16 VSA §166(b)(3).
- A recognized independent school must provide to parents or guardians a copy of its currently filed statement of objectives and a copy of 16 VSA §166 upon enrollment or by September 1, whichever comes later. Failure to do so

may create a permissible inference of false advertising. 16 VSA §166(c)(3).

- Recognized independent schools and approved independent schools must provide the names and addresses of enrolled pupils to the secretary on October 1 of each year. The school must also notify the commissioner of the names and addresses of any pupils withdrawing from the school within seven days of their withdrawal. 16 VSA §166(b)(4) and (c)(6).

### **Health and Safety Requirements**

- No student may enroll in a Vermont school unless the appropriate person has received a record of certificate of immunization issued by a licensed physician or health clinic that the student has received immunizations appropriate to age as specified by the Vermont Department of Health. Exemptions to this requirement are allowed if the immunizations are in process, would be detrimental to the person's health or are not appropriate, or if the immunizations are contrary to the person's or parent or guardian's religious beliefs. 18 VSA §§1121(a) and 1122 (a)(1) and (a)(2).
- Approval for independent residential schools is contingent upon proof of the school's satisfactory completion of an annual fire safety inspection by the department of public safety or its designee pursuant to 20 VSA §§2728 through 2767. 16 VSA §166(b)(7).
- A certificate executed by the inspecting entity, declaring satisfactory completion of the inspection and identifying the date by which a new inspection must occur, must be posted at the school in a public location. The school must provide a copy of the certificate to the secretary of education after each annual inspection. The school must pay the actual cost of the inspection unless the amount is waived or reduced by the inspecting entity. 16 VSA §166(b)(7).
- Independent schools must drill the pupils once each month during the school year so that students are able to leave the school building and clear the halls in the shortest possible time and without panic or confusion. A record of the date and time of the drill, as well as the time consumed in vacating the building must be kept in the official school register and be open at all times for inspection by the department of labor and industry or the Vermont Agency of Education. A principal who willfully neglects to comply will be fined not more than \$500.00. 16 VSA §1481.
- Independent schools must request a fingerprint-supported criminal record check on the person(s) recommended for any full-time, part-time, or temporary employment. The request must be conducted through the Vermont Crime Information Center (VCIC). A notice of any criminal record must be reported by VCIC to the independent school, except for a record relating to any crimes of a sexual nature involving children. Such a record is sent to the secretary of education who must notify the headmaster in writing, with a copy to the person about whom the request was made. Any information sent to a person by a headmaster or the secretary of education must be accompanied



by a written notice of the person's rights enumerated under the statute. 16 VSA §251-260.

- The board of trustees of an independent school must adopt harassment-, hazing-, and bullying-prevention policies and establish procedures for carrying out these policies. 16 VSA §166(e)
- Independent schools must adopt a gun-free school policy. 16 VSA §1166 and 18 U.S.C. §921.
- Persons knowingly and unlawfully delivering or selling a regulated drug on a school bus or on real property comprising a private elementary, secondary, or vocational school will, in addition to any other penalty, be sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not more than ten years. 18 VSA §4237.

### **Transportation**

- Each legal pupil, as defined in 16 VSA §1073, entitled or required to attend an elementary or a secondary school may be furnished with total or partial transportation to school if the board of school directors decides it is reasonable and necessary to enable him or her to attend school. Each board must adopt a transportation policy for pupils required to attend school in accordance with the procedure specified in 16 VSA §563(1). 16 VSA §1222.

### **Textbooks**

- The state librarian will deliver a published copy of the state papers of Vermont to the library of a private high school acting as a public high school, upon request. 3 VSA §117(i).

### **Testing**

- An approved independent school accepting students for whom the district of residence pays tuition under chapter 21 of this title must use the assessment or assessments required under 16 VSA §164(9) to measure attainment standards for student performance of those pupils. In addition, the school must provide data related to the assessment or assessments as required by the secretary. 16 VSA §166(g).

### **Special Education**

- The secretary of education establishes (1) minimum standards of services for students receiving special education in independent schools; and (2) maximum rates to be paid by the agency of education and school districts for tuition, room, and board after consultation with Vermont independent schools, based on the level of services. The secretary may also advise independent schools as to the need to provide for certain special education services in Vermont. 16 VSA §2973.

## **Nursing and Health**

- Independent schools may participate in Vermont's school lunch program operating under federal programs. 16 VSA §1261a; 1946-48 Op. Atty. Gen. 92.

## **Technology**

- No state policy pertaining to technology currently exists.

## **Professional Development**

- An approved independent school must have an adequate professional development program for its staff. State Board Manual of Rules and Practices 2226.6.

## **Reimbursement for Performing State and Local Functions**

- No state policy pertaining to reimbursements for performing state and local

## **Tax Exemption**

- No state policy pertaining to tax exemption currently exists.

## **Public Aid for Private Education**

- **Constitutional Provisions:** The Vermont Supreme Court has held that a reimbursement of tuition to a sectarian high school under this provision is not prohibited by the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. *Campbell v. Manchester Bd. of School Directors*, (Vt. 1994), 641 A.2d 352. However, the Vermont Supreme Court has held that Chapter I, Article 3 of the Vermont Constitution renders unconstitutional tuition reimbursement to sectarian schools without appropriate restrictions to safeguard against the use of the funds for religious worship. *Chittenden Town School District v. Vermont Department of Education*, (1999), 169 Vt. 310, 738 A.2d 539.
- **Programs for financial assistance for attendance at private schools:** Tuition assistance began with an 1869 law that allowed for tuition support of students to attend private school when the local Vermont school district does not have available public schooling.
  - The electorate of a school district that does not maintain an elementary school may grant authority to the school board to pay tuition for elementary pupils at approved independent nonresidential elementary schools upon request of the parent or guardian if, in the board's judgment, the pupil's educational interests can be better served there than in another public school district. 16 VSA §821.
  - The electorate of a school district that does not maintain an approved high school may provide for the high school education of its pupils by paying tuition to an approved public or independent high school

- selected by the parents or guardians of the pupil, within or outside the state. 16 VSA §822.
- School districts must pay high school tuition charged its resident pupils who attend an independent school in Vermont that functions as an approved area career technical center or an independent school meeting public school standards. 16 VSA §824. Vermont school districts that do not maintain an approved public high school may designate an approved independent school as the public school of the district and pay the tuition charges to the independent school. If a parent or guardian is dissatisfied with the instruction, cannot obtain a course or instruction desired, or whose child can be better accommodated in an approved high school nearer to his home, he or she may request that the school board pay tuition to another approved high school. 16 VSA §827.
  - Religious schools may not be designated by school districts as the approved public school of the district, and tuition charges cannot be paid to the religious school. *Chittenden Town School District v. Vermont Department of Education*, (1999), 169 Vt. 310, 738 A.2d 539.
  - Persons aggrieved by a school board's decision relating to tuition payments may appeal to the state board, and its decision is final. 16 VSA §828.
  - An independent school serving publicly placed students must notify the sending school board and the secretary of any proposed tuition increases on or before January 15 in any year. The increase will not become effective without the notice and not until the following school year. 16 VSA §826.

The state treasurer may issue bonds to assist independent schools meeting public school standards which serve as public high schools. These independent schools must receive their principal support from public funds; and are supervised by a board of trustees; two-thirds of the membership being appointed by the selectmen of a town or by the city council or both. 16 VSA §3447. These independent schools may also apply to the state board for construction aid for additions, alterations, and acquisition of facilities. 16 VSA §§3447 and 3448.

### **ACCREDITATION**

The School of Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales is fully accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and in accordance with the Vermont State Board of Education.

### **RIGHT TO AMEND**

The School of Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales reserves the right to amend this Handbook. Amendments will be available for viewing on the school's website.

**SCHOOL DIRECTORY OF FACULTY AND STAFF**

2019-2020

Rev. Robert Wiseman, CSC, Pastor  
Mr. David Estes, Principal  
Mrs. Marcia Hendery, Assistant to the Principal  
Mrs. Susan Paustian, School Secretary  
Mrs. Kristi Segura, Receptionist & Safe Environment Coordinator  
Mrs. Christine Becker, Pre-School  
Mr. Matthew Bersaw, Kindergarten  
Ms. Alyssa Barry, Grade 1  
Miss Jessica LaPorte, Grade 2  
Mrs. Rebecca Greenslet, Grade 3  
Mrs. Maria Gorry, Grade 4  
Mrs. Jenn Moore, Grade 5 Homeroom  
Mrs. Kristi Knapp Steere, Grade 6 Homeroom  
Ms. Abigail Adams, Grade 7 Homeroom  
Mrs. Patricia Dailey, Grade 8 Homeroom  
Mrs. Christine Morrissey, Grade 8 Homeroom  
Mrs. Judi Estes, Technology  
Mrs. Karen Webster, Music Education  
Mrs. Diane Dowgiewicz, School Nurse  
Mrs. Jennie Hogan, Art Education and Physical Education  
Mrs. Crystal Harris, Art Education  
Ms. Rose Santarcangelo, Bookkeeper  
Mrs. Nancy Hopkins, School Aide and After School Director  
Ms. Chelsea Tifft, School Aide  
Mrs. Sara Sokolowski, School Aide  
Mrs. Carol Schwartz, After School Aide  
Mr. Greg Spiak, Custodian

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*After you have read this handbook we ask that you sign and return the acknowledgment **within one week.***

*Enrolling your children in this school indicates that you are agreeing to abide by the terms stated within.*