

ST. MARK'S CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

**436 N. OAK AVENUE
CLIFTON HEIGHTS, PA 19018
610-626-6837**

www.thewelcomeplace.net

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2017-2018



the welcome place.

ST. MARK'S CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
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The information on this page points you to specific sections of our Student Handbook that are especially important. Please read these sections, sign the receipt at the bottom of this page and return a copy of this page to Kathy Cosentino by September 10.

Speed Limit - Page 3 - drive no faster than 5 MPH when dropping off or picking up.

Second Set of Clothes - Page 3 - Send a second set of clothes for your child(ren) to School in a large zip-loc bag which should be labeled with her/his name

Call If Your Child Will Be Absent or Late - Page 3 - Please call us as soon as you can if your child will be absent or late.

Lateness Fees - After Care and School -Pages 3 and 7 - Please read these sections of the Handbook very carefully. Also note that we have different lateness policies for the After Care and School programs

Allergies to Food - Page 4 - Please read this section very carefully.

Bathroom Incidents - Page 4 - Please read this section very carefully.

Children Who Receive DCIU or Other Organization Services - Page 5 - Please read this section very carefully.

Immunization - Page 7 - Please read this section very carefully.

School Closings/Snow Procedures - Page 9 - Our Upper Darby School Closing Number is **452**. We follow their guidelines. Please read this section of the Handbook very carefully.

Tuition - Page 10 - Tuition is due the first of the month. Please also read this section of the Handbook very carefully. There will be no exceptions to our due dates and procedures.

Calendar - Our 2015-2016 calendar is the last page in the Handbook. Please record on your personal calendar the dates when we are closing or when something special is happening.

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By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read the above summary and the specific Handbook sections that are referenced.

Name

Date

ST. MARK'S CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

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STUDENT HANDBOOK

St. Mark's Christian School's mission is to provide a quality education that gives children the knowledge and wisdom to pursue future educational and vocational opportunities in God's good creation.

WELCOME

We are delighted to be a part of your child's life by providing a quality, age-appropriate educational program. We are glad that, together, we will share in the progress and growth of your child. We believe that you, the parents/guardians, are the most important people in your child's life. You spend the most time with your child and you are the ones who know the most about your child. It is, therefore, important that we work together cooperatively. Please read this handbook carefully and use it as a guide. It contains all of our policies and procedures pertaining to the children in our care. If you have any questions, please direct them to Kathy Cosentino, our Christian School Director. We appreciate the opportunity to serve you in Christ.

PHILOSOPHY

St. Mark's Christian School recognizes that children are individuals who grow and develop at their own pace. The learning environment should be one that allows each child to feel some measure of success regardless of his/her skill level. When children feel successful, they gain the self-confidence necessary to meet the next challenge. A special emphasis must be placed on developing a positive self-image. Only when children feel good about themselves can they learn to love, respect and appreciate the world around them.

ORGANIZATION

St. Mark's Christian School is a ministry of St. Mark Lutheran Church. The School was founded in 1978. It is a non-profit, interracial and non-political institution where all of the funds earned by the School are reinvested into the School. The responsibility for running the School lies with the Christian School Board which consists of the Pastor and members of the church at large.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

In this section, our handbook lists Parent/Guardian Responsibilities first because we believe that, while it takes a whole village to raise a child, the parental role is of primary importance. All other policies and procedures are listed alphabetically for ease of reference. Please note that we have referred to "child" throughout this handbook. If you have more than one child enrolled in our School, "children" will apply to you.

PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES - PLEASE

- ✓ Dress your child appropriately for active play.
- ✓ Reinforce appropriate play behavior and limits.
- ✓ **Drive slowly in our parking lot (5 MPH)** when dropping off or picking up your child. Please be aware of others that may be around you.
- ✓ **Send a second set of clothes to School that are clearly labeled with your child's name.** These will remain in your child's cubby and will be used if they are needed.
- ✓ Remember that School hours begin at 9 am and end at a time that varies depending on the program in which your child is enrolled (see the **PROGRAMS** section) and make every effort to have your child at School, and picked up from School, on time - late arrivals tend to disturb the flow of the class.
- ✓ Call us if your child will not be attending School on any day. Also, please call if your child will be arriving late, i.e., any time after 9 am.
- ✓ If you need to talk to your child's teacher, call and schedule an appointment. The teacher will make every effort to return your phone call within 24 hours. If you are coming to the School to meet with your child's teacher at the end of the day, please wait until all children have been dismissed before coming up the ramp to the door.
- ✓ **READ ALL CORRESPONDENCE THAT IS SENT HOME WITH YOUR CHILD.**
- ✓ **READ OUR HEALTH POLICY** which is Exhibit A in this handbook.
- ✓ Inform us **IMMEDIATELY** of any changes such as:
 - ✓ Address or telephone number.
 - ✓ Place of employment and/or telephone number.
 - ✓ Person to contact in case of an emergency.
 - ✓ Authorized person(s) designated to pick up your child(ren).
 - ✓ Any changes at home which may affect your child's day at School.



ABSENCE/LATENESS

Call the School before 9 am if your child will be absent or late.

ACCIDENT POLICY

When your child has an accident, the action taken is dependent on the nature of the injury. A minor scrape is washed with antibacterial soap and water. A more serious, but still minor, cut or bump that results in a slight swelling requires the staff member to fill out an accident report and appropriate action is taken, i.e, ice is applied. Any accident that results in an injury more serious than a bump or cut or that involves the child's head or face requires staff to notify parents by phone immediately. All staff are trained in pediatric CPR and have first aid training.

AFTER CARE LATENESS FEES

A fee for late pick up from our After Care Program begins at 6 pm as follows:

You pick up your child between 6:01 and 6:15..... A fee of \$10 is payable
You pick up your child between 6:16 and 6:30..... A fee of \$20 is payable

These fees are due **IMMEDIATELY** at the time of late pickup.

ALLERGIES TO FOOD

St. Mark's Christian School takes very seriously the food allergies of its children. All allergies, food and otherwise, must be reported to us at the time each child is registered to attend our School and at any time when a new allergy is identified for a child. We keep current records of all food and other allergies and a list is posted in each classroom.

Before any food item is purchased, the label is carefully read. We do not purchase food items that contain or are manufactured in a plant which processes nuts, tree nuts and/or eggs.

We do not permit our children to share food that they have brought to School with other children. We do not permit the distribution of unlabeled food items to any of our children on a regular basis. The exceptions are in the case of birthday celebration items which are sent in by parents. Parents of children with food allergies are asked to send a supply of cupcakes or other items which can safely be eaten by their children. These items are placed in our freezer and made available to children with food allergies during celebrations.

We rely on our children's parents to follow prescribed dietary guidelines for their child or children if they have food allergies and we will permit children to eat the food items provided by their parents.

Our children wash their hands before and after they eat lunch and snacks during School hours and we regularly have our children use a hand sanitizer made for children. Our tables are washed down, using products recommended in the 2011 Pennsylvania Guidelines for Management of Food Allergies in Schools, on a regular basis. These procedures are for the purpose of preventing contamination of objects used by our School by food to which some children may be allergic.

ARRIVAL

Walk your child to her/his classroom if you can reasonably do so. Note that the parking lot is **ONE WAY** coming in from Oak Avenue and exiting at Crestwood Drive. The speed limit is **5 MPH**. It is **VERY IMPORTANT** that everyone adhere to these policies.

Any child arriving after the doors are closed at 9 am will be met by a teacher and escorted to her/his class by that teacher. Parents, please give goodbye hugs and kisses at the door when your child is late. In the case of a child who is upset about something on a morning when s/he is late, please tell the teacher who meets you at the door and she will permit you to escort the child to her/his classroom door.

BATHROOM INCIDENTS

We understand that there will be occasional, isolated bathroom accidents. It is our experience that accidents frequently occur during the first month of School or in the first weeks after our Christmas break when children are adapting to a new environment. We are prepared for, and can manage, occasional accidents.

However, some children, who were potty trained, regress when they begin School. In the event this happens, we are forced to contend with numerous instances of cleaning up and clothing changing, which detracts from the learning experience. After October 1 of the School year, if a child experiences more than an isolated, occasional potty training accidents, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be assessed a \$10 per incident charge.

BATHROOM VISITS BY CHILDREN

In order to maintain a safe environment for all children, our School has adopted the following bathroom policies:

Kids Time: Any child attending our Before/After care program known as KidsTime will be escorted with a group upon arriving at School. The teacher will remain until they are done. At any other time, morning or afternoon, the teacher will make sure that the bathroom is clear of all younger children before allowing older children to use the bathroom.

Mom's Morning Out: Children are always escorted to the bathroom by a teacher. The teacher remains with the child/children.

All School students go to the bathroom as a group, with their teachers, before snack, before lunch, before going outside and when coming in from the outside. The children are encouraged to practice proper hygiene and to respect one another's privacy. Once the child/ren are familiar with the School, they are allowed to use the bathroom independently. Only one child goes at a time and the teacher keeps track of the child, making sure that they are all right in the bathroom.

BEFORE/AFTER SCHOOL CARE

We offer a before and after School program for an additional \$4 per hour. There is a requirement of one hour per day in either before or after care. Calendars are sent home at the end of each month. Calendars are due back to the office, filled out, prior to the 1st day of each month. If a child does not have a calendar, they cannot come/stay. You may not "swap" days unless you have spoken to the Director. If you come consistently earlier or later than projected times, you will be rebilled to cover the extra time. **You will be billed based on your projected hours;** payment is due by the 10th of each month. **You will not receive a credit for any unused hours.** The final time for pick-up from after care is 6 pm. If your child is not picked up by 6 pm, our lateness policy (see the **AFTER CARE LATENESS FEE** section of this handbook) will apply. There are atomic clocks hanging over the doors to the 3's and 4's rooms and they will be used to determine the time of arrival for pickup.

CHILDREN WHO RECEIVE SERVICES THROUGH THE DCIU OR OTHER CHILD SERVICES ORGANIZATION

Our registration documents ask if your child has been referred or been seen for any services through the DCIU or other child services or is receiving speech therapy. If your answer to either of these questions is "yes", a copy of your child's IEP or IFSP must be provided to us. Depending on your child's requirement for services, we may request meetings with you and your child's therapists and it may be necessary for us to discuss

with you whether our School is the best place for your child and whether or not we can provide the type of support that your child needs.

COMMUNICATIONS

It is essential, at St. Mark, that we have good communications at all times with all parent(s)/guardian(s). If you believe that there are issues concerning your child, please feel free to schedule a meeting with your child's teacher at any time. You may always ask that our Christian School Director be present at any such meeting. If you believe, after having one or more meetings, that your issues have not been resolved, please follow the procedures in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Parental Grievance Procedures paragraph in this Handbook.

DEPARTURE

Your child's time for departure is set forth in the **PROGRAMS** section of this handbook. If your child is not picked up by the regular departure time set for her/his class, our lateness policy (see the **School LATENESS FEE** section of this handbook) will apply. There are atomic clocks hanging over the doors to the 3's and 4's rooms and they will be used to determine the time of arrival for pickup. All full day children will exit at the doors facing Crestwood Drive. All afternoon half day children will exit the doors facing Oak Avenue, All Mom's Morning Out and half day 3's children will exit at the ramp door. Your child's teacher will explain exiting procedures.

Your child will be released only to you, the parent or guardian, or to another adult who has been authorized, in writing, by you as parent or guardian. In order to ensure the safety of all of the children in our care, we reserve the right to ask for ID at any time.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Our School strives to create a safe and challenging environment where children experience a minimum of stress and frustration. Children who observe teachers behaving with respect will learn to behave respectfully themselves and this helps to diminish the need for "discipline". Our School's rules and expectations are clearly communicated to our children in a positive form and tone. Typically, children are eager to act appropriately and are praised for doing so. We design activities that are age appropriate in both task and duration to maximize positive interactions. Our teachers also carefully monitor the children's activities to anticipate and diffuse problems before they begin.

Our School follows a policy of positive discipline. All of our teachers and aides have been trained in this method. Our approach is one of positive reinforcement of good or right choices. If a child is acting in an inappropriate manner, a staff person will redirect the child by offering two choices, both achieving the same positive result. If redirection is not possible, the teacher will ask the child to sit down for "take a break", and when they are ready to do what the group is doing, they may come back. Most children, if it gets this far, are eager to return and come back within 25 seconds. The teacher then praises the child for an appropriate behavior within one minute of his/her return.

The children are always encouraged to use their words to express themselves, not their hands; to think of a solution that would make both parties happy and, above all, to work cooperatively as a team.

If a child's behavior problem persists (e.g., multiple think times for the same action within a short time span) or becomes dangerous to the other children in the class (e.g., there is punching, kicking, temper tantrums, etc.) or continues to (a) bully other children, (b) use inappropriate language (ie., including, but not limited to, threats, swearing/cursing, racist remarks or sexually-oriented language) or (c) be disruptive to the classroom to which s/he is assigned, the teacher will bring the child to the Director's office for a talk and sometimes a call to the parents. In extraordinary situations, we will call the parent to have the child removed from the School for the rest of the day. Such situations are rare at our School and are always discussed thoroughly with the child, the teacher and the parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine positive steps toward solution.

Our School reserves the right to discharge a child, after such discussions, if a child continues with his/her disruptive behavior.

EATING/FOOD

Please advise us if you want us to provide eating guidelines for your child. For instance, if you want us to limit what your child drinks while s/he is eating his/her solid food, please let us know.

FOOD ALLERGIES - SEE ALLERGIES TO FOOD

ILLNESS

Please carefully read our health policy which appears at the end of this handbook as Exhibit A. In the event that your child becomes ill during the day, we will call the person that you provided as the emergency contact at the time of registration. If we are unable to make contact, we will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s).

IMMUNIZATION

In accordance with the first page of Exhibit A (Health Policy), your child must have a physical examination and be up to date on immunizations no later than 30 days following enrollment and annually thereafter. We do not make exceptions from this policy for religious reasons.

LATENESS FEES -

Please note that we have two different policies concerning lateness fees - one applies to our After Care Program and one applies to our School Program. These policies are listed alphabetically - one is titled After Care Lateness Fees and one is titled School Lateness Fees. Please read the policy that applies to your child/children carefully.

LUNCHES - Your child receives a School-supplied snack in the morning and afternoon. Please provide a healthy lunch for your child that is appropriate in size and quality - one-half of a sandwich and fruit or other dessert is an example. Because of allergies, we do not

permit children to share any food, other than fresh fruit, that they bring from home. Before we allow your child to eat sweets and snack foods, we ask that they eat their healthy food first. We will always send home any food that you provide which your child has not eaten.

PARENTAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Communication between parents and staff is instrumental in assuring the best possible experience for your child and for your family. In the event that other suggestions outlined in this handbook elsewhere are not sufficient in avoiding conflict, the following grievance procedures will be followed:

1. When a problem arises, the parent(s)/guardian(s) have the option of scheduling a meeting (which will be held within two working days of the request) with the child's teacher and Christian School Director.
2. If the problem is not resolved, the parent(s)/guardian(s) may request a meeting with the Christian School Board member who serves as Liaison to/from the Board and School and/or the Pastor.
3. If the problem is not resolved, the parent(s)/guardian(s) may terminate their child's enrollment and our notification of withdrawal requirement will be waived.

POTTY TRAINING (NOT APPLICABLE TO MOM'S MORNING OUT)

All children must be able to be independent in the bathroom prior to entering School. If a child should have a "bathroom accident", the child, with the assistance of a teacher or an aide, will change into clean clothes. When the cleaning/changing process requires more adult assistance than the teacher is able to give, the emergency contact, provided at the time of registration, will be called.

PROGRAMS

St. Mark's Christian School offers programs for children from two to five years of age.

2 years of age Mom's Morning Out - Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9 am to 11:30 am. Must be 2 by March 31st.

3 years of age PreSchool Programs:
Monday through Friday from 9 am to 3 pm. Must be 3 by August 31st.

Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings from 9 am to 11:30 am. Must be 3 by August 31st.

4 years of age Pre-Kindergarten Programs:
Monday through Friday from 9 am to 3 pm. Must be 4 by August 31st.

Monday through Friday from 12:30 to 3 pm. Must be 4 by August 31st.

5 years of age

Kindergarten offered Monday through Friday from 9 am to 3 pm. Must be 5 by August 31st.

SCHOOL ATTIRE

Our School does not have a uniform policy. Activities in School vary from day to day. We often work with paint and glue and we do wear smocks. However, please dress your child with these activities in mind. Most of our supplies are washable and non-toxic. However, we have found that some paint is difficult to remove from fabric. Remember - good clothes are best left to important occasions. Label all jackets, book bags and lunch bags with your child's name. We encourage you to be mindful of the weather as you dress your child. **We do go outside in the winter - hats and gloves are a necessity in cold weather!**

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Our calendar for the current School year is Exhibit B to this handbook.

SCHOOL LATENESS FEES

Please call the School if something happens, while you are enroute, and you know that you will be late to pick up your child. If you do not pick up your child/children from our School at the end of their School day before 3:10 pm (or 11:40 in the case of our half-day programs), you are given a verbal warning and a four-week period is triggered. If there is a late pickup again within that four-week period, you receive a letter reminding you of our pick up procedure. If there is a third late pickup in the four-week period, our lateness fee, which is \$10 for every 15 minute period, applies and is to be paid at the time of pickup. If you continue to be consistently late (as per the above) in picking up your child/children from our School at the end of their School day which ends at 3 pm, your child must be enrolled in our After Care program at \$4 per hour.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

We follow the procedures used by the Upper Darby School District. However, if we are closing our School when Upper Darby School District is not closing because of an emergency situation unique to our School, you will receive an automated telephone call advising you that we are closed or will be closing. It is **very important** that you always listen to these, and other, calls received from our School. In addition, you will receive Remind 101 text messages from your child's teacher whenever we will be closing (whether or not Upper Darby is closing) and all closings will also be posted on Facebook.

When we are forced to close the School due to weather or other emergencies, we do not make up the time by scheduling additional School days.

SNACK/PARTY PROCEDURES

We provide nutritious snacks daily for all children attending School on a full-day basis. Snacks may include, but are not limited to: water, milk, apple juice, any 100% juice, fruit, muffins, crackers and pretzels. **It is important that you let us know if your child has any**

food allergies! Please advise your child's teacher if you would like to bring in a special snack to celebrate their birthday.

SNOW PROCEDURES - SEE SCHOOL CLOSINGS

TUITION

While our tuition is quoted on a monthly basis, it is a yearly agreement which has been divided into nine payments for your convenience. Tuition will be paid monthly as arranged at registration. Along with a non-refundable registration fee of \$50, a deposit of \$100 is required. The \$100 deposit will be applied to September's tuition.

Tuition is due the first of the month. We accept checks and money orders - we do not accept cash. Our returned check fee is \$20.

After the first of the month, if tuition has not been paid, a reminder will be sent to you. After the tenth of the month, tuition is considered late and a fee of \$25 will be added to your bill. **After the 15th of the month, if tuition is not paid, services will not be provided for your child.** If you are having trouble making a monthly payment, please do not ignore the reminder. Please contact Kathy Cosentino, our School Director, at the School so that the two of you may discuss payment arrangements.

WITHDRAWAL

A two-week written notice of withdrawal is required. If two weeks' advance notice is not given, **you will be charged for the period.** We reserve the right to deny, cancel or suspend a child's enrollment (**as per our Discipline Policy set forth earlier in this manual**) if deemed in the best interest of the child and/or the School. In such cases, any unused tuition will be refunded.