

Saint Sylvester School

Student / Parent Handbook

ABOUT US

As the mission of our patron, Saint Sylvester, was to offer charity and hospitality to others, the children of Saint Sylvester School are also encouraged to call upon the fruits of the Spirit to invoke charity, hospitality, love, and service to others.

Each child is seen as a precious gift, unique in intelligence, talents and strengths; deserving of love, sympathy, and guidance. Our mission is to recognize and nurture the unique potential of each child and actively live the Christian faith.

WE BELIEVE THAT:

- Children learn and grow in God's love through faith and education.
- Teachers provide the structure for a positive learning environment that allows students to grow spiritually, emotionally, socially, and academically.
- Teachers are to be living examples of the Catholic faith.
- Teachers inspire students to love learning and in the process foster self-motivation, creativity, responsibility, and lifelong learning.
- Children are unique individuals created by God and are respected for their gifts and talents.
- Parents are an integral part of the educational process.
- Moral and social conscience formation is as important as academic development.
- Our school provides a safe and secure environment for students and teachers.
- Students take ownership of their part in the educational process.

MIDDLE STATES ACCREDITATION

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools accredits Saint Sylvester School. Middle States accreditation is an expression of confidence in Saint Sylvester's mission, goals and objectives, performance and resources and validates publicly the excellence in education.

The Middle States Evaluation is an ongoing process requiring the submission of updated plans every three years. After ten years the school is re-evaluated for continued accreditation. We are up for re-accreditation in the 2018 – 2019

ASBESTOS NOTICE

Pursuant to the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Act (AHERA), our school was inspected by a certified AHERA Inspector. A Management Plan was developed and submitted to the PA Department of Education. A copy of our Asbestos Inspection Report and Management Plan is on file in the school office.

The school is re-inspected by a certified AHERA Inspector every three (3) years. The maintenance and custodial staff have received two (2) hours of Awareness Training and conduct a periodic surveillance twice a year, in December and June.

ADMISSIONS/REGISTRATION POLICIES

Saint Sylvester School admits students of any race or national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to all students formally accepted into the school. We do not discriminate on the basis of race or national or ethnic origin in the administration of our educational policies, admission policies, athletic or other school administered programs. Children who are not Catholic will participate in religion classes and will attend all religious functions of the school/church.

A student entering the Pre Kindergarten 3, 4, and Kindergarten Programs needs to meet the age requirements by September 1 of that school year **and** be skill ready.

Official certificates of birth and baptism are required at the time of registration.. Those registering for grades 1-6 must fulfill the age requirement for the desired grade and present a copy of their school records from the previous school. A mini-battery of tests may be administered to all new students to verify placement. Grade level and academic group determinations are made on the basis of school records.

The priority of acceptance:

- Saint Sylvester parishioners
- Siblings of those already in school
- Catholics of other parishes without a school. (Pastor Verification Form required)
- Families not affiliated with another parish

Transfer students are accepted on a probationary basis to assure their ability to adjust to the school and school policies. No registration is final until all records have been received and reviewed by the Principal

Students already enrolled at Saint Sylvester School will need to go through a re-registration process each year at the designated time. Acceptance is based on adherence to all school policies during the previous year, the current status of the tuition account and fees or agreement with the Pastor when needed), and full participation in the fund raising policies.

Immunization records must be complete before any child may enter school. The requirements at present are as follows:

- 1 dose of chicken pox vaccine
- 4 doses of diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (one dose must be after the fourth birthday)
- 3 doses of oral polio vaccine
- 2 doses of measles vaccine after the first birthday (or proof by blood test of having had measles)
- 1 doses of mumps vaccine after the first birthday (or proof by physician's letter of having had mumps)
- 1 dose of rubella vaccine after the first birthday (or proof by blood test of having had German measles)
- 3 properly spaced doses of hepatitis B vaccine (K-4)

ARRIVALS / DISMISSALS

In the morning, all students enter the building through the Main Entrance (Door 1). **by 8:00 AM.** The area on the church parking lot near the Orange Cones blocking the entrance to the school area is DROP OFF ONLY – NO PARKING ALLOWED.

Parents of Pre-school students who need to get their children out of the car seat etc., and walk their children to the door need to park in the church parking spaces and walk their child to the Main Entrance (Door 1).

Late arriving students (after 8:10 AM) must use the Main Entrance (Door 1) check in the front office for a late pass.

At dismissal time students will be brought to the front of the school yard by teachers starting with the children who ride a school bus. When the buses have exited the parking lot the children who are car riders and walkers will be brought to the front of the school yard. Cars are to be parked in a designated parking space in the church lot when parents are picking up their children. Do not park in the DROP OFF ONLY – NO PARKING ALLOWED Lane. This is very important because this is also a Fire Lane for the School / Rectory / Convent.

Extended Day students (K – 8) are dismissed to the Extended Day Room when the ED Staff member comes to their class to take them to the room...

ATTENDANCE - ABSENCES/TARDINESS

Absences from school are defined as either Excused or Unexcused according to the guidelines set forth in the Pennsylvania School Code.

- **Excused Absences:** Excused absences include illness (with a doctor's excuse), quarantine, impassable roads, recognized religious holidays, and urgent reasons such as a death in the family or court appearance. The state guidelines also permit an Excused Absence for Educational Trips, if a request is sent to the school prior to the dates of the trip. If no prior notice is received, the absence is classified as unexcused.
- Family trips are discouraged while school is in session. Since the yearly calendar is sent out at the end of the school year, there is sufficient time to plan vacations when your children are not in school. Making up assignments and work upon the child's return to school does not begin to touch the rich exchanges that occur constantly while the lessons are presented. •
- **Unexcused Absences:** Absences which do not comply with the guidelines above or for which a written excuse is not received within three days is classified as unexcused. **Parents must report their child's absence EACH DAY by contacting the school office (412-882- 9900) prior to 9:00 AM.** (Please note that the school office opens at 7:45 AM.)
- Upon returning to school from an absence, a student must submit a written excuse to his/her homeroom teacher as required by state law. This excuse, which must state the reasons for the absence, is maintained "on file" for the academic year.
- After 10 absences, a doctor's excuse is required for each additional absence in order for the absence to be marked as excused. Truancy According to the

Pennsylvania School Code, Section 1332, "The absence of any pupil who remains out of school with or without his parent's permission, and is not absent because of illness or for other urgent reasons, as defined in the School Code, shall be unexcused. Such absence will be recorded as 'unlawful-unexcused' for a pupil who is under the compulsory attendance age." Section 1333, "

- Any such child who has been absent three days, or their equivalent, during the term of compulsory attendance, without lawful excuse... shall be given written notice. If, after such notice is given... attendance is again violated by the person, such person shall be liable... for referral to the 2017-18 magistrate."
- Thus, when a child accumulates 10 days of absence, truancy will be investigated. In view of this, parents/guardians of students who acquire 10 absences will be required to provide documentation from a physician, for each additional absence, indicating that the absences are related to an existing medical condition. This action reflects the responsibility of the school and the parent to ensure that students fulfill the state requirement of 180 instructional days each year.
- **Tardiness Tardiness** is absence for part of a day. Students arriving after 8:10 AM will be marked tardy by the homeroom teacher. Children arriving after 8:10 AM are to report to the School Office before going to the classroom. A parent should accompany the child in to sign the child in. When time tardy contributes to a truant situation, it will be tallied as partial days absent.

CAFETERIA / LUNCHROOM

Our school lunch program is part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program-nslp>)

Hot lunches are prepared and served daily at St. Sylvester School in our cafeteria which is located in the St Sylvester Church Hall..

- Lunch menus are published monthly. They are also available daily by going to www.optionc.com and log in with the school code 9022.
- Students may purchase a lunch or bring a packed lunch from home each day.
- We have applications for free or reduced lunches and eligible families are encouraged to apply for this program.
- If a child forgets his / her lunch, please bring it to the school office with the name and grade printed on it. We will then deliver it to the classroom at the appropriate time.

Hot meals are available daily for students who choose the lunch program. Meals cost \$2.75 per day and include milk. Children who bring their lunch may also purchase milk or water for \$0.50 cents. Cost of lunch for an adult is \$3.75

The monthly menu is sent home in the last Friday of the month envelope. The menu is also available in the file library on Option C. (For the online menu go to optionc.com and then enter 9022 for St Sylvester School)

- Please review the menu and choose the days your children would like to purchase lunch. Students report to their homeroom teacher each morning if they are buying a hot lunch or have packed a lunch.
- Lunch money should be sent to school every Thursday for the following week's lunches. Make checks payable to St. Sylvester School Cafeteria or send cash if you prefer.

Lunch / Recess Volunteer Duty.

Each family is obligated to volunteer a minimum of two times a month (11:20 until 12:30 on 2 separate days) for Lunch / Recess Duty. Having proper supervision for students in the cafeteria and at recess usually requires 4 volunteers.

- Parent volunteers can sign up for the days they are available through SignUpGenius an online scheduling service.
- The school office sends home a Lunch /' Recess Volunteer Calendar at the end of each month for the following month.
- Using the days requested online first, the remaining spaces are filled in with the names of families who have not requested a specific date. The school's office is to be notified at the beginning of the school year if a family chooses to volunteer or to pay the \$15 per month fee in lieu of being assigned 2 days per month to volunteer.
- Volunteers must have all of the clearances needed (see www.diopitt.org and then click on Safe Environment Program. Look for School Volunteer) This includes people who sub for someone who cannot make their assigned day to volunteer.

If you have a conflict, please arrange to have a substitute volunteer take your place. This could be a relative, friend or another parent. It is important to remember that all school families are required to volunteer for the Lunch / Recess duty even if they do not participate in the hot lunch program (NSLP) provided by the school.

On your day for lunch duty volunteers are on duty between 11:20 am and 12:20 pm.

- At the cafeteria there will be a volunteer sign in sheet. If you forget to sign in, please call Mrs. Long so that you will get credit for helping.
- If you can't make it on your scheduled day, please switch with someone assigned on a day when you are available or try to get someone to take your place.

Special Note:

If you are scheduled to work in the cafeteria on a day with a 2-hour delay, please report to the Cafeteria at 11:45 instead of 11:20. The lunch period will run from 11:45 until 12:30 pm.

DETENTION/SUSPENSIONS (In-school/Out-of-school)

Discipline is the key to good conduct and to respecting the rights of others and is essential to learning. A list of expectations for catholic school students is distributed to parents and students on the first day of school each year. It is available in the Option C file library.

1. Using the list provided at the beginning of the year, the individual teacher determines classroom standards and expectations for student behavior which may vary according to age.
2. A discipline code and incident report lists the consequences when a violation is determined. The code lists when a detention is warranted, a student may be issued an incident report by any member of the faculty. Depending on the severity, detentions may be served either during recess or after school hours. If the detention is after school, parents are responsible for transportation.

In the event of a serious act of misbehavior or repeated acts of misbehavior, a student may serve either an in-school or out-of-school suspension. The discipline policy outlines the conditions when a student may be asked to leave the school. Diocesan policy is followed throughout the process leading up to and including expulsion. These decisions rest with the administration and may be necessary for the benefit of the total program.

EARLY DISMISSALS

- **Early Dismissals for Students** Parents should make every effort to schedule appointments at a time that school is not in session. However, if a child must have an early dismissal, he/she must have a written note that states the time and the reason for the early dismissal, as well as the name of the person picking up the child if it is not a parent, for the principal's approval.
 1. For these dismissals, parents or an authorized adult named in the note must meet the child at the office and sign him/her out at the authorized time.

2. Students who arrive later than 10:00 AM will be marked as absent for the morning; students who leave before 12:30 PM will be marked as absent for the afternoon.
- **Scheduled Early Dismissals** Faculty meetings, which provide opportunity for the professional growth of every faculty member, are regularly scheduled at St. Sylvester School. On these days (as indicated on the yearly school calendar), dismissal of students will begin at 11:30...

Transportation It is important that school staff know the ordinary means by which each student arrives and departs each day. It is also important that a written note be sent to the homeroom teacher when a change in transportation is necessary

EMERGENCIES

Emergency Cards

At the beginning of each school year, parents are required to complete a Student Emergency Card. It is imperative that the school be able to reach you to inform you of illness or an emergency situation. It is also important to list the names of others who can be contacted should you be unavailable. Please keep the card updated by notifying the office. Also notify any adult substitute that they may be called to come to school should you be unavailable to do so.

Emergency Closings and Delays

Saint Sylvester School resides in the Brentwood School District which is a walking community. If inclement weather or some other emergency requires that the school be delayed or closed, this **information will be announced on KDKA, WTAE, and WPIX.** It is important that you listen / watch for an announcement that identifies **Saint Sylvester School**". Parents are encouraged to sign up for text message alerts from the above TV stations so once our school is posted they will be notified. This can be done through the internet. A Parent can also sign up for email alerts through the above news stations.

If you are traveling a distance or just like to get an earlier start because of the weather sometimes the notice goes from delayed opening to closing. This usually happens somewhere in between 7:00AM and 7:30AM. Before you leave the house, call the school after 7:45AM to see if there was a change in status. Please be sure the school has the best phone number for our Option C text and voice mail emergency messages to reach you especially at this time.

In the event of a **two-hour delay, all children should report to school by 10:00 AM**. This includes the preschool... Half Day preschool dismissal will be at 11:50 on 2 hour delay days. All other dismissals will take place at the regular time.

PLEASE NOTE: Because our attendance registers are legal indicators of a child's presence at the times we are in session, children who arrive late or are absent because of busing when school is in session will be marked as Excused Tardy or Excused Absence.

Emergency Dismissals

In the event that we would be required to dismiss school early, that information will be announced on the same stations noted above. So when weather predictions are not looking good you need to check the website during your work day. Children will be dismissed as parents are notified and transportation is arranged. We will do our best to get a voice mail message or text through the Option C system as well.

Sign up for: Alerts from the TV Stations: This comes in handy when there is a non-weather closing due to building emergency or an unscheduled early dismissal

KDKA: Users can sign up for text alerts. If you, your staff, or students want to sign up to receive text alerts when there's a closing or delay we have it on our website. The address is: <http://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/school-closings/>

There you can register your phone number, and search for your school or organization to receive text alerts.

WTAE:

<http://www.wtae.com/Sign-Up-for-Email-Newsletters-Alerts/30886906>

WPXI:

Sign Up For School Closings, Severe Weather Text Alerts

<http://www.wpxi.com/news/weather/sign-email-text-alerts/nFSKC/>

Description: Just tell us your wireless phone number and your phone carrier.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are a privilege not a right. Every class is permitted field trips during the year. Each student must have a signed permission slip before he/she is permitted to participate. Transportation, in accordance with diocesan directives, is provided by bus, and a fee may be charged to cover costs.

Guidelines for both students and chaperones are in effect for each field trip. A copy of the student guidelines will be sent home by the teacher so that the parent may help reinforce the guidelines presented.

Any adult wishing to chaperone a field trip needs to be processed through the Diocesan Safe Environment Program which requires a criminal history background check and the Protecting God's Children seminar certification. (See Appendix)

FUNDRAISING

The Diocesan policy for funding elementary Catholic schools calls for each school to have fundraising activities to generate a minimum of 10% of their total operating budget. This enables us to keep tuition rates at 60% of the total cost. School parents are expected to participate in these fundraising activities according to the stipulations of the tuition agreement.

HOMEWORK

A reasonable amount of homework, according to grade level, is of great educational value and so is assigned **every day**. Assignments are not always written. Study and memory work are frequently assigned. Homework is assigned on a regular basis to:

- enrich school experiences
- provide practice and review
- develop good study habits
- teach responsibility, and
- foster originality.

Parents can assist students with home assignments in the following ways:

1. Provide a quiet spot away from the television, telephone, or other distracting elements.
2. Check to see what was accomplished during the designated study time regarding completeness, neatness, and correctness. What it looks like is just as important as what it contains.

3. Be willing to listen to reading, spelling, and math facts and to explain procedures, but never do the assignment.
4. Consult the teacher if the child uses the excuse "no homework" too often.
5. If for some reason the child cannot complete an assignment, the parent should inform the teacher by written note stating the reason. Arrangements should be made as soon as possible to make up incomplete assignments. **The Diocese recommends the following minimum time schedule for home study:**

Primary (levels 1-3)	30 minutes
Intermediate (levels 4-5)	45 minutes
Upper Elementary (levels 6-8)	1 – 1-1/2 hours

REVIEW OF STUDENT RECORDS

Parents requesting to review their child's school file need to put that request in writing. The request will ask for an appointment to review files. The file will be reviewed in the presence of the Principal or designee. The file cannot leave the office area. The parent may ask for copies to be made of the contents at the convenience of the office staff.

Teachers and Ancillary teaching staff have access to student files for the purposes of educational information and filing. The teacher must sign off when reviewing student files.

Parents have access to current grades through OPTIONC. A user ID and password will be given to the parent so his/her child's grades can be seen. Each parent and student in a family have their own individual username and password for Option C. The parent page is different from the student page so parents should log in under their own username and password.

RIGHTS OF NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act gives full rights to each parent, unless the school has been provided with evidence that there is a court order, States' statute or legally binding document relating to such matters as divorce, separation or custody that specifically revokes these rights. Such an order is to be on file in the school and those persons responsible for the child (ren) are to be informed of the circumstances. Every effort is made to keep the non-custodial parent apprised of the progress of the child (ren) through reports, report cards and parent/teacher conferences.

Unless stipulated in support documentation, in matters of financial concern the parent

whose name is on the tuition agreement is responsible for all debts to the school. It is up to the parents to settle how school payments of any kind are to be made.

At no time will the school be placed in the middle of any custodial obligations.

SCHOLARSHIP MONIES

Scholarship monies are available for eligible families. FACTS, the tuition management company used for tuition collection in our school, has the application used when requesting tuition assistance. They are the independent evaluator for eligibility according to the financial guidelines for each fund. The results indicating eligible and ineligible families are then forwarded to the Diocesan EITC office. The one FACTS Tuition Assistance application is used for determining eligibility for the SOS, OSTC, BEF, as well as the Parish Angel Fund and must be filed by March 15th.

When requesting BEF funding a pastor signature sheet must be uploaded with the application to FACTS. . The BEF is the only fund that requires proof that the student is catholic. This fund is the Bishop's Education Fund and was established by the Bishop of the Diocese specifically to assist catholic families.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

For the convenience of families, supply lists are available each June for the following year. Each homeroom list is posted on the website. It is also located in the File Library under School Supply List. The updated list will be uploaded every June. Students provide their own school supplies but are expected to comply with individual teacher requirements. School supplies must be ready and in school for the first day.

TRANSFER OF STUDENT AND RECORDS

When a student is about to move out of the school, it is the responsibility of the Parents to:

- 1) Give the school a minimum of 2 weeks notice of the transfer
- 2) Notify the School Office as soon as possible the last day for the student.
- 3) Sign off on a "request of Records" at the receiving school**
- 4) Return all books to the school

5) Clear all debts owed to the school

When the above is 100% complete records and necessary paperwork will be mailed to the new school.