

Athletic Handbook



St. Stephen School Athletic Association

740 Gladstone SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49506

(616) 243-8998

www.ststephenschoolgr.com

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INTRODUCTION TO ST. STEPHEN ATHLETICS

This athletic handbook has been prepared for the benefit of all parents/guardians, students and coaches involved in the athletic programs at St. Stephen School. The sports programs at St. Stephen start in the fifth grade and continue through the eighth grade. Please read through the information carefully with your son or daughter. Make sure that you understand the purpose, philosophy and responsibilities of participating in our sports programs. By working together, we hope to make your young athlete's experience in the sports program at St. Stephen School a positive and enjoyable one. Below is a listing of all of the sports available and the season in which they occur.

| <u>SEASON</u> | <u>BOYS</u> | <u>CO-ED</u> | <u>GIRLS</u> |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Fall | Football <i>or</i> Soccer | Cross Country | Volleyball Sideline Cheer |
| Winter | Basketball | | Basketball <i>or</i> Competitive Cheer (7/8th only) and Sideline Cheer |
| Spring | Baseball Lacrosse | Track Tennis | Softball Soccer Lacrosse |

League

We participate in a league coordinated by GRACEAC (Grand Rapids Area Catholic Elementary Athletic Council – www.graceac.com) and adhere to their season/game schedules and rules.

Practice

Fall sports may start practices the Monday closest to August 15th.

Winter sports may start practices the Monday closest to November 15th (5th/6th Grade) and December 15th (7th/8th Grade).

Spring sports may start practices the Monday closest to March 15th.

The actual practice days/times are determined by the coach.

Games

Games are played throughout the week and weekends, depending on the sport, and are held at St. Stephen (5th and 6th basketball only), and the various other member schools. While most games are in the greater Grand Rapids area, there are some games held in Holland, Spring Lake and Rockford. Member schools and maps are available at www.graceac.com.

Teams

Depending on the sport and number of players, we form teams by individual grades, and/or by combining grades (players can not play on a team that is more than one grade up or down from theirs). If we don't have enough players to form a team, we merge with other (nearby) GRACEAC member schools to form a team.

Mascot

Our mascot is the Trojan, historically known as courageous, determined and energetic warriors. Our colors are red and white, with black as an accent color.

Athletic Philosophy

The purpose of athletics at St. Stephen is to complement the school, church and home in the development of the whole person – mind, body and spirit. Activities of the program are for the benefit of the students, and are suited to their age and physical growth. The program is competitive, yet developmental in its approach, and encourages participation regardless of skill level.

Excellent Sportsmanship

Sportsmanship is an important component of sports at St. Stephen. It means playing fair, following the rules of the game, respecting the judgment of referees and officials, and treating opponents with respect. In other words, exemplifying true Christian behavior. And, it not only applies to players, but coaches and spectators as well. Each of us has a role and responsibility to model and teach excellent sportsmanship. We teach that at the core of sportsmanship is respect for oneself and for all other people involved in a game or practice.

Family Responsibilities

The success of our programs takes more than the efforts of the Association. Each family is to share the responsibilities involved with our sports programming to help keep costs as low as possible and to enhance the experiences of all involved. The responsibilities include to:

- Volunteer for at least two events per family for the Athletic Association.
- Pay the \$25 participation fee (per child/per year/per sport) to the St. Stephen School Athletic Association.* (Due prior to the start of the first program in which your child participates: 9/1 for Fall; 12/1 for Winter; 3/1 for Spring). There is a \$25.00 fee for all checks returned.
- Submit a completed physical form to the Athletic Association that is dated after April 15th prior to the school year (i.e. for 14/15 school year, it must be dated after April 15, 2014). Your child can not practice or play without this! For your convenience, the Athletic Association will normally offer free physicals prior to the end of the school year. Form is available in the school office and on the web site.
- Submit a completed participation permission form to the Athletic Association prior to each school year. Form is available in the school office and on the web site.
- Cover the child(ren) with valid medical insurance. If you do not have insurance, accident insurance can be obtained through the Michigan Catholic Conference. Contact the Athletic Association for more information.
- Ensure that your child's uniform(s) from prior sports seasons has been returned to the Athletic Association or payment in full to replace missing uniforms has been made.
- Follow GRACEAC (Grand Rapids Area Catholic Elementary Athletic Council) guidelines for proper conduct during games and practices. See GRACEAC policy details on the next page.

*For financial assistance, contact the school principal or athletic director – we do not want this fee to be a barrier to participation.

GRACEAC Policy

The following page addresses sanctions for players, coaches, officials and spectators. These are minimum sanctions. Individual schools may choose to increase severity of sanction and/or time limits.

GRACEAC Policy Infractions, Circumstances and Consequences

1. Use of alcohol, tobacco or other illegal substances. During game, practice, or other league/team events or parties where players are present. This is directed to adults (parents, spectators, coaches and officials). Individual school policy regarding student violation takes precedent.
 - 1st Offense: Ejection/removal from event and one game suspension
 - 2nd Offense: One year suspension
 - 3rd Offense: Lifetime suspension
2. Any bodily assault/contact – a player, coach, official or spectator.
 - 1st Offense: Ejection from the game and one year suspension
 - 2nd Offense: Lifetime suspension
3. Foul, abusive, harassing or threatening language or gestures – a player, coach, official or spectator.
 - 1st Offense: Ejection from the game and one game suspension
 - 2nd Offense: Ejection from the game and one-year suspension
 - 3rd Offense: Lifetime suspension
4. Conduct that interferes with the game – a player, coach, official or spectator.
 - 1st Offense: Ejection from the game and one game suspension
 - 2nd Offense: Ejection from the game and two game suspension
 - 3rd Offense: One year suspension
5. Allowing or encouraging foul, abusive, harassing or threatening language, gestures or behavior by players – a player, coach, official or spectator.
 - 1st Offense: Ejection from the game and two game suspension
 - 2nd Offense: Ejection from the game and one year suspension
 - 3rd Offense: Lifetime suspension
6. Violating or failing to adhere to GRACEAC and/or School Athletic Policies (i.e. – player below minimum playing time, exceeding maximum practice time, etc...) A player, coach, official or spectator.
 - 1st Offense: One game suspension
 - 2nd Offense: Two game suspension
 - 3rd Offense: One year suspension

Note: Suspension is defined as prohibiting any verbal and/or physical attendance, contact or involvement in any GRACEAC directed or sponsored activity. Individuals suspended may not be in, or near, the building or field in which a GRACEAC activity is practiced or played. Consequences are cumulative, and will be on file for 5 years. Reviewed: June 2013.

Eligibility

1. Students participating in athletics and representing St. Stephen School must exemplify true Christian behavior and excellent sportsmanship.
2. Students may participate in a sport at St. Stephen and a non-GRACEAC sports program simultaneously, at the discretion of the coach and athletic director. However, we highly encourage families to make participation in St. Stephen practices and games the priority.
3. Students may participate in two GRACEAC sports simultaneously (except football *and* soccer for boys, and softball *and* soccer for girls).
4. Students may not participate in games or practices if he/she is not in school on the day of a weeknight game or practice, except in unusual circumstances and with prior approval from the athletic director,
5. Students may be ineligible to participate in a game(s) if poor behavior and/or lack of participation/attendance in a practice(s) occurs, at the discretion of the coach, and as approved by the athletic director.
6. Students may be ineligible to participate in athletics if academic difficulties/poor grades are the result, at the discretion of the teacher(s), principal and athletic director.
7. Students may be ineligible if any of the items listed under “Family Responsibilities” or under “GRACEAC Policy” (see previous two pages).
8. Parishioner students may participate in St. Stephen sports.

Coaches

All athletes and parents/guardians must show respect to all coaches. The coaches set their own guidelines on tardiness and absences under the supervision of the athletic director. If a problem arises between a coach and a player, or parent/guardian of a player, the problem must first be addressed by the parties involved. During, or immediately following, a competition is not the arena for any dispute. We ask that contact be made by phone (no

sooner than 24 hours later) to set up a time to discuss any problem. If the problem remains unsolved, either party may contact the athletic director for resolution. If the problem still persists, an appeal may be made to the principal for resolution.

Coaching Responsibilities

The Athletic Association understands that coaching takes a considerable amount of time and we appreciate these efforts. As a coach, you can expect the following from the Athletic Association:

1. Training to aid in coaching the sport.
2. All league fees and tournament fees paid promptly.
3. Quality uniforms/equipment for all of your athletes.
4. Appropriate equipment for your practices/games.
5. Coaching shirt or hat.
6. Schedules for games/tournaments as soon as they are published.
7. Photographer coordinated for team/individual photos.
8. Regular contact, communication and overall support.

The Athletic Association needs the cooperation of all coaches on following:

1. To exemplify true Christian behavior and excellent sportsmanship.
2. Profanity is not allowed in any circumstances.
3. Do not allow any student who is not on your team to participate in practices/games.
4. Do not allow any student to participate unless a current physical is on file with the Athletic Association.
5. Do not allow any student to participate unless a participation form has been signed by a parent and a participation fee has been paid to the Athletic Association.
6. To adhere to the preseason and season practice limits per GRACEAC.
7. No student should be in the gym before or after practice without a coach present.
8. Do not leave school property after a practice/game unless all of the team members have been picked up.
9. Any equipment or special uniform needs must be presented to the Athletic Association in writing, or at an Athletic Association meeting.
10. Communicate any concerns/needs to the Athletic Association or the athletic director.

11. To abide by the GRACEAC league rules and policies of the St. Stephen School Athletic Association.
12. To set discipline, tardiness and absence policies under the supervision of the athletic director.
13. To attend VIRTUS training and register with the Diocese.
14. To attend at least one Athletic Association meeting per year.
15. To participate in the online Concussion Training.

The following is a letter that coaches have used to give parents/guardians an idea of what to expect for a season. Note this is for example only – specifics will vary for different teams and sports.

Dear Parents:

We are happy to have your son as a member of the 5th-6th Grade Boys Basketball team. Below is some information about the team and the upcoming season.

Practices

Your son should be dressed for practice (shorts, tee-shirt, and basketball shoes) and be ready to begin practice at the starting time. If your son has to miss a practice or will be late, please call (*coach name*) ahead of time. Attendance at practice is very important. A player who misses a practice and as a result does not know the plays may not be able to suit up for the week's game. Coaches need the attention and cooperation of all team members at practice. Also, a player who has to sit out during practice because of discipline problems may not be able to suit up for that week's game.

Games

Games are played on Saturdays in the morning and early afternoon. The league will issue its schedule sometime prior to our first game, but you can count on our first game being on Saturday, (*date here*). We will forward you a copy of the schedule as soon as we receive it. Beyond the league's schedule, the team will also participate in a tournament. When arrangements for the tournaments are made, we will let you know about schedules.

Players should arrive at the scheduled gym 30 minutes before game time for warm-ups. If for some reason a player cannot make it to a game, please contact (*coach name*). However, please make every effort for players to be at games. In games (and at practice) players may not wear any jewelry or other items apart from their uniforms.

With a large team there is less playing time to distribute among players, and some players will play more than others. We will strive to balance being competitive with maximizing playing time for all.

As in all organized basketball, our team will run set plays. Each player has responsibilities on every play, and the plays only work when every player is doing his job. We hope parents and fans will cheer our players and encourage them to do their best

and play their hardest, but we ask parents and fans to please refrain from coaching players from the stands - such as directing them where to go and what to do - since they already have set positions and responsibilities.

Goals

- Learn and improve his basketball skills, and learn the rules of basketball
- Learn teamwork and develop good sportsmanship
- Have fun, compete at his highest level and win games

We are looking forward to a great season! Contact us with any questions.

Summary

By being involved with athletics, your family is a part of a great tradition at St. Stephen. Keep in mind that sometimes the only way others get a glimpse of our fine school is through sporting events, whether home or away. So, we expect all of you to do your part to reflect and uphold the excellence and reputation of the St. Stephen community. Just remember the words of Jesus, "...Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:39), and we'll see you at the game!

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Principal: Cindy Thomas

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