

# St. Helen Catholic School

## 2024 NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL

### Family Handbook

Parent/Student Handbook 2024-2025

*Principal: Phyliss Coleman, Ed.D.*

*(July 2024)*

### INTRODUCTION, GOALS, AND MISSION

We are pleased and proud that you have selected St. Helen Catholic School for your child. The vision/mission of St. Helen Catholic School is “to grow the total child in wisdom, age, and grace!” St. Helen Catholic School is a culturally diverse, suburban community composed of the clergy, parishioners, parents, students, families, school personnel, and all who help to fulfill the school mission. St. Helen Catholic School promotes high academic standards within a Christ-centered, spiritual environment. Members of the St. Helen community seek to teach Catholic values, strengthen students in the Catholic faith, focus on the education of the whole person, and witness to the presence of Jesus Christ in the world.

**The St. Helen Community is blessed to have received these recognitions for staff achievements on campus and their service and devotion to students:**

- 2012 Sally Landrum Excellence in Education – Teacher of the Year Award
- 2014 Sally Landrum Excellence in Education – Teacher of the Year Award (the only AGH campus with two such recognitions)
- 2016 School Advisory Board – School Advisory Board of the Year for Leadership
- 2020 AGH Inaugural Leadership Award – Principal Leadership Award
- 2022 ACET (Archdiocesan Catholic Exemplary Teacher) Recognition – JH ELA
- 2024 ACET (Archdiocesan Catholic Exemplary Teacher) Recognition - Music

### GOALS

- Educate and form the total person spiritually, intellectually, personally, socially, and physically while recognizing the dignity of each student as a member of the Catholic educational community.
- Celebrate Catholic traditions through daily prayer, regular liturgical and sacramental experiences, a solid program of Catholic religious studies, and the teaching of Catholic moral standards.
- Promote traditional Catholic educational values by emphasizing high academic standards and achievement.

### OUR MISSION

To grow children in *Wisdom, Age, and Grace (WAG)!*

### HANDBOOK AND POLICIES

A school within the boundaries of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston that wishes to be identified as a Catholic school must obtain the consent of the Archbishop of Galveston-Houston, as required by the Code of Canon Law, and is expected to follow the policies and regulations of the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department (TCCBED). The school shall be bound by the Archdiocesan school policies, as well as be expected to

follow the regulations and procedures established by the Archdiocesan Catholic Schools Office. This Handbook and ensuing policies are based on TCCBED regulations.

In as much as it is true that loopholes may be found in any code, it is the expectation of SHCS that parents/guardians and students will use good judgment in complying with the behavior code, dress code, and/or school policies. Even though we will make every attempt at flexibility through this global pandemic, structure and procedures serve as important factors in maintaining educational excellence. The finding of a loophole and the exploitation of that loophole to avoid compliance with the spirit of the code will not be considered valid; rather, such incidents will be treated as violations of the code. To avoid such a misunderstanding, use the following rule: If you are not sure that it is allowed, do not do it!

Communities are successful to the degree to which the members are knowledgeable and are in accordance with the rules, regulations, and policies that govern them. Parents assist and support the teachers and administration in the implementation and enforcement of the student code of conduct, school policies, and regulations. It is expected that families abide by the policies, procedures, and regulations set forth in this handbook. The school and/or the principal retain the right to amend this handbook at any time. Parents and students are expected to sign the Handbook Acknowledgement Form (at end of handbook, along with the Technology Use Agreement). However, **all handbook policies are in effect immediately, even without your signature.** If you have any questions about the contents of this handbook, please contact the school at 281-485-2845.broi

*The remainder of the St. Helen Catholic School Handbook is organized in alphabetical order. If you are unable to locate a needed item, please consider using other titles/names to find it.*

## **ACADEMICS**

St. Helen Catholic School (SHCS) is accredited by the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops (TCCB-ED) under the auspices of the Texas Education Agency (T.E.A.). Accreditation visits occur every seven (7) years – our next visit will be scheduled in the fall of 2026. Results are released on the TCCBED website and to our parents by typical communication standards.

Our school strives to provide an exemplary learning environment using the English language to educate the whole child: body, mind, and spirit. We attempt to provide students with opportunities for success by fostering a positive learning atmosphere, providing a supportive atmosphere from all members of the school community, nurturing a Christ-like community, and celebrating our Catholic traditions through a solid program of religious studies. Curriculum is enhanced with fine arts, foreign language, and other extra-curricular activities, as well as offering multi-dimensional experiences in physical education, self-esteem building activities, STREAM and culturally diverse programs. All core and most enrichment classes are conducted in English, which requires learners to speak, write, and understand the English language.

Schools in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston (AGH) must have curriculum standards, which at a minimum, utilize the TEKS for instructional planning. Schools must also have a process for assessing and documenting student mastery of curricular objectives. The AGH curriculum standards may be located at this web address:

***Curriculum & Instruction - Choose Catholic Schools - Houston, TX***

### *Academic Progress and Social Promotion*

Any student not maintaining a 77% average or above may be placed on academic probation for a period of time designated by the principal. Lack of improvement may result in withdrawal. The principal and teachers will monitor grades closely. Parents are responsible for monitoring students' progress via FACTS/RenWeb and teacher communications.

Sometimes, in the lower grades, especially in grades PK-K-1-2, report card grades may not accurately reflect student progress in the learning of academic objectives. In the lower grades, much of a student's work is completed with extensive help from the teacher. A great deal of student work is not independently completed, although independent work is one of our goals. **Teachers will communicate with parents when academic progress in grade level objectives is not being met and may recommend retention or extensive summer tutoring, even when report card grades appear to be passing.**

Promotion shall be based upon true academic progress in the curricula at an independent work level. The student's promotion is also based on him/her accomplishing the required essential curriculum elements, as well as his/her progress in social, emotional, and physical growth. Just as the principal reserves the right to place a student, the principal also reserves the right to retain a student who does not show developmentally appropriate social or academic skills for promotion to the next grade. Measurement of academic skills may be done through teacher-made exams, formative/summative assessments, entry/exit exams, benchmark exams, analysis of achievement tests, etc.

Social promotion is prohibited in Catholic schools in Texas. All students (grades PK-1<sup>st</sup>) must be the required age of admission by September 1 of the current school year in order to enter the appropriate grade. For example, first graders must be age 6 by September 1 of the school year they are entering. No exceptions are allowed due to concerns for the needs of social/emotional development in children.

#### *Mastery of Curriculum*

When 70% of the class has achieved passing grades on tests, assignments, or on individual averages, the class is considered to have "mastered" the unit or lesson. If 70% of the class does not have passing grades (70% or higher on assignments), the teacher will re-teach and re-assess the class. Some students may be referred for tutoring in a specific subject area. Tutoring recommendations are not made lightly and are usually necessary for student success.

#### *Promotion and Retention*

A student is promoted to the next grade pending satisfactory completion and mastery of the work of the current grade.

- Promotion shall be based upon the student accomplishing the required essential curriculum elements, as well as his/her progress in social, emotional, and physical growth. Just as the principal reserves the right to place a student, the principal also reserves the right to retain a student who does not show developmentally appropriate social or academic skills for promotion to the next grade. Measurement of academic skills may be done through teacher made exams, formative/summative assessments, entry/exit exams, analysis of the achievement test scores, etc.
- If a student receives a grade of below 70 for the year, the student fails the subject and may not be promoted until approved credit recovery, make-up sessions, or summer programming have been recorded and grades received.
- If a returning student fails one academic subject for the year, he/she must attend an approved credit recovery, make-up session, or summer school to make-up the credit. The parents are responsible for locating a summer school or credit recovery program suitable for the needs of the child. This remediation must be complete by August 1 of the upcoming school year or the student fails the grade. The student's report card will indicate "retention" in the current grade until proof is provided that the failed course has been made up or "recovered."
- If two major subjects are failed, the child will be retained. The major subjects are Religion, Reading, English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.
- If parents of a child, recommended for retention, do not agree with the recommendation of the teacher(s) and administrator(s), they have the option of withdrawing their child and placing them in another educational environment. "Retention" will be documented on the child's report card and final record.

Because St. Helen is accredited with the state of Texas' public school system, public schools and other accredited schools will likely honor our "retention" or "promoted" documentation on report cards.

### *Retesting – Individual Students*

If a student receives a poor grade that is failing, it is at the teacher's discretion to allow the student to "retake" the test. Generally, the highest grade the student may achieve on the "retake" assignment is a 70. However, the final decision to retest is the teacher's.

### *Student Placement*

Advisory Council Policy Effective April 14, 2004:

"Student-to-class placement decisions are made by the administrator/principal of the school. In the case of special needs students, the principal may consult with the parents or guardian before placing the student with a particular teacher who has proficiency in the area of the student's needs. The principal reserves the right to change any student from class to class, also according to the student's needs, if necessary, during the course of the school year." In general, parents may not request specific teachers for their children.

For the placement of twins, parents must notify the principal in the spring of the current school year if they are requesting the same class placement of their children for the following school year. Consideration will be made of the parent's request. In 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, twins will be placed in different homerooms so they may develop individual talents and relationships.

### **ACCELERATED READER (AR)**

Students in grades 1-8 will have AR requirements for grading purposes. In general, the guidelines below will be followed for independent AR assignments in Reading classes. Additional requirements include that AR books must be within the assigned reading level as decided by assessments and the staff. In some grades, a page requirement may be imposed for the categories of fiction or non-fiction books. If questions arise, please check with your child's reading teacher.

- 1<sup>st</sup> grade                      1 AR book per 9 week period
- 2<sup>nd</sup> grade                      2 AR books per 9 week period
- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade                      3 AR books per 9 week period
- 4<sup>th</sup> grade                      4 AR books per 9 week period
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade                      4 AR books per 9 week period
- 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grades              2 AR books per 9 week period (due to other reading requirements in classes)

### **ADMINISTRATOR ON DUTY**

Each Catholic School must have a designated person responsible for decisions/actions that must be made or taken. When the principal is on duty, he/she will be the Administrator on Duty. The principal will designate a person to serve as the Administrator on Duty whenever he/she is off-campus (Second in Command). This designation will be known by the pastor, faculty and staff. In general, when the principal is off-campus, the Administrator on Duty will be the Director of Student Activities or the Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

### **ADMISSIONS**

The Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston admit all students to the rights, privileges, programs, and activities made available to the student body. They shall not discriminate based on race, color, age, national, or ethnic origin in the administration of its admission, financial, athletic, or scholarship programs. However, for acceptance, children must show satisfactory achievement on the admissions/screening exam given to them at time of application. St. Helen Catholic School adheres to the admission policies stipulated by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

Children must meet the age requirements as outlined by the Archdiocese. Students must meet the following age requirements for admission (a policy of TCCB-ED and the Archdiocese). Students entering a:

- PK3 or PK4 classroom must be 3 or 4 years old, respectively, on or before September 1;
- Kindergarten class must be 5 years old, on or before September 1; and
- First (1<sup>st</sup>) grade class must be 6 years old, on or before September 1.

The child's birth certificate must be presented for proof of age. Other documents that must be provided are:

- Application
- Release of Confidential Information form
- Certified birth certificate
- Baptismal certificate, if applicable
- Health and Immunization records
- Student Information Form

The principal reserves the right to contact any former schools the child may have attended. It is a SHCS policy that the principal has the authority to accept or refuse admittance of any individual as a student at this school for any reason. This decision is based on the state and Archdiocesan policies for admittance and on all information received from the applicant at the time the application for admittance is made. All new students are accepted on a probationary basis. A complete immunization record indicating that requirements are met, with a physician's signature, is required at the time of registration. Additionally, pharmacy vaccination records may be accepted from any US pharmacy so long as the records are sent directly to the school from the pharmacy. Archdiocesan policy requires that any new student present written evidence of TB testing and the results. A student who fails to present the required evidence shall not be accepted for enrollment.

*Conscientious Objections* – Catholic schools do not accept students who have received a parental choice or religious exemption from the immunizations required by Texas state law. Conscientious objections or waivers, which may be permissible for attendance in public schools, do not qualify as an exemption in Catholic Schools in Texas. The only exemption to the foregoing requirement is a medical exemption signed by a licensed physician (MD or DO) authorized to practice in the state of Texas.

#### *Admissions Screening/Testing*

All new students (included home schooled and non-accredited school students) are required to take an entrance or screening exam and may have a brief interview with the principal, principal's designee, or a teacher. The CSO requirements for admissions testing (applicable to all enrolling students) will include screening for skills and age-appropriate placement. The final decision for admission is the responsibility of the Principal or his/her designee.

At the time of pre-registration, families will download a registration packet from the school's website. This packet contains a registration form, tuition schedules, payment plans, health record, information sheet, tuition assistance requests, etc. These papers should be filled out completely, signed, and returned by the appropriate date. Test dates and times for new student enrollment are announced before Catholic Schools' Week, which is held the last week of January.

Frequently, students may be asked to participate in a "shadow day" on campus. These students, usually grades 2-8, may be asked to attend campus activities for a half-day. This visit helps the staff to determine if the potential student is a good fit for the student group and also enables the potential student to determine if they are comfortable on our campus.

#### *Home Schools and Non-Accredited Schools*

Home schooling has been a legal alternative to public schooling since 1994. Catholic schools may admit students who transfer from non-accredited schools or home schooling, but these students must also be screened through the same instrument of assessment used for other applicants.

### *Potty-Trained*

All PK3, PK4, and K students must be potty-trained prior to the first day of school. For SHCS purposes, “potty-trained” means that the child identifies his/her need to go to the bathroom, independently removes his/her clothing, cleans/wipes him/herself independently, replaces his/her clothing, and calls for assistance, as needed. Teachers and staff members cannot spend valuable instructional time in the restroom teaching students these skills that are to be taught at home. If the child is not potty-trained, he/she may be withdrawn from school until potty-training occurs. Unfortunately, staff do not have the time, nor does the school have the resources, to change wet children. “Pull-ups” are not permitted as they do not promote independence. Additionally, changing or cleaning a child without another adult in the room is a violation of SAFE HAVEN standards.

### *Re-enrollment and Following Catholic Doctrine*

Re-enrollment for current students is not automatic. Families with outstanding financial obligations will not be issued registration packets until all accounts are clear. Families who consistently violate policies or who do not promote the campus in positive communications will not be issued registration packets. Students who consistently pose discipline or academic concerns or who do not practice Catholic doctrine (for example, receiving ashes during Lent) will not be issued registration packets (or may be asked to leave if Catholic practices are not followed). (If families are unfamiliar with Catholic doctrine, questions should be directed to their child’s religion teacher, the principal, or the pastor. As part of Catholic doctrine, schools are to foster and promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life as well as other states of life, including marriage.)

Student with parents who consistently disregard or question the SHCS Code of Conduct and campus expectations will not be issued registration packets.

SHCS considers the following priorities when setting timelines for accepting admission applications:

1. Students currently enrolled in SHCS and their siblings whose parents follow SHCS policies
2. Parishioners
3. Non-parishioners

### *Legal Surname Used for Official Admission Records*

A student must be identified by the student’s legal surname, as it appears on the student’s birth certificate or other document suitable as proof of the student’s identity, or in a court order changing the student’s name (Education Code 25.0021). Parents may issue a special request for the child to be called by a nickname or be “known” as another surname. However, our responsibility is to teach the child his/her legal surname and given birth name (this includes stating the legal name and spelling it).

### *Legal Sex Identification for Official Admission Records*

A student must be identified in school by the student’s legal sex, as it appears on the student’s birth certificate. (“Sex” means the biological condition of being male or female as based upon physical differences at birth.)

## **ADVANCED PLACEMENT CLASSES (HONORS CLASSES)**

AP classes are available to high achieving junior high students in grades 6, 7, and 8. AP classes are offered in a Literature/Social Studies block and a Science/Math block. Students have to meet high report card (generally, a minimum of 90 or higher averages in all on-level classes) and achievement test standards to be recommended for placement by their teachers. Dependent upon student achievement records, they may be invited to be in all four

AP classes or in just two classes. Students will be invited to join AP classes at the beginning of the new school year or at the end of the previous school year. The 5<sup>th</sup> grade and JH teachers will make the decision to place students in AP classes with input from the principal. In general, newly enrolled students will not be placed in AP classes until they have been monitored for a 6-9 week period. The decision for removal or non-placement in an AP class is non-revocable and may not be appealed. (Please note that for students receiving accommodations due to an identified academic/learning disability, those accommodations will not be provided in advanced classes. Students who have physical disabilities or special needs may receive accommodations, if recommended in the CAP meeting.)

Parents will receive a notice of advanced level placement for their children. In order to remain in the AP classes, an average of 80% or higher must be maintained in AP classes each nine weeks. Placement in the advanced classes is re-evaluated at the end of every nine weeks period. If a child's nine week average in the advanced classes falls below the 80% requirement, he/she will be placed on probation for the advanced classes. Grades in the AP classes will be re-evaluated at the end of either progress report time or the end of the nine-week period. If grades do not improve above the 80% requirement, the child will be removed from AP classes. The decision is non-revocable and may not be appealed.

Please note, if your child is in any of our four AP classes in grades 6-8, he/she will need to plan for additional time to be spent on homework and studying. Also, students who require accommodations in our on-level program are not able to receive them in our AP classes because he/she would miss too much instructional time in the advanced classes.

#### **AFTER SCHOOL (AND BEFORE) CARE PROGRAM**

The After School Care Program is held on campus in various classrooms, as needed. All students attending the After School Care Program must be registered in and attending the Day School. After School Care is not a drop-in program offered without charge. If parents know they will use the services of the After School Care Program occasionally, they must register their children. This registration requirement complies with state law. Due to the large number of students participating in our After School Care program, we no longer accept "drop ins" into the program.

**Due to security concerns, parents will not be allowed to enter the building to drop-off or pick-up their children for Before/After Care.** Parents will come to the clinic portico (smaller school entrance) and ring the buzzer to alert the Before/After Care staff. For arrivals in the morning, children will be "buzzed in" and directed to a classroom. For departures in the afternoon, parents will enter the small vestibule on the side entrance and buzz the speaker to ask for their children. Children will be called out of their after-care classroom and walk to the clinic portico for dismissal. Parents will be asked to wait outside under the small portico.

#### *Registration for Before/After Care*

Registration for entry into After School Care is \$30. Acceptance of students into the program is limited and we generally have a wait list. (Separate tuition rates apply for this program.) If you know your child will be participating in After School Care on a regular basis, your best investment is to pay the \$130 monthly After School Care fee. We no longer offer a drop-in service due to the size of our program. The Business Office must be notified in writing when a change is made to monthly pay status, prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month.

All children in the After School Care Program must be picked up by 6:00 P.M. Staff work hard, have families and other commitments, and want to feel confident that their work day will be over by six o'clock. Arriving late interferes with their family time and previous plans. Any child being picked up after 6:00 P.M. will have a \$5.00 late fee charge, plus a \$1.00 per minute fee assessed (this is non-negotiable.) Three occurrences of being five or more minutes late will be grounds for termination of the privilege to use the After School Care service. After two

late incidents, families will be placed on probation for after care privileges. On the third occurrence, students in after care will be dropped from enrollment. Please pick up your children in After Care by 6:00 p.m.

After school payments can either be made **online** through incidental billing (once invoiced) or sent in to the accounting office. Payments will be billed at the end of each month through FACTS incidental billing. Payments will be considered late after the billing due date. A late fee of \$25.00 will be assessed after the billing due date.

If your child is **not enrolled in After School Care** and you have a late pick-up from the school office, a \$1 fee will be charged for every minute past 3:20 P.M. School begins dismissal at 3:00 P.M. Students should be picked up between 3:00-3:20 P.M. For those students who remain at school beyond their regular school day or their assigned club time (clubs usually end at 3:45, 4:00 P.M. or 4:30 P.M.), a \$1 per minute fee will be charged per student after club dismissal or early/regular dismissal time. This applies also to early release days (**A larger \$35 fee is charged immediately after car line ends on early release days.** Minute charges begin accruing immediately on early release days after car line is over.). This is non-negotiable. Students who are not picked up from the dismissal line on early release days will be charged a \$35.00 fee, plus a dollar each minute until the child is picked up.

Snacks are provided for students in the afternoon after care program. However, no food is provided for early morning care, and no food is allowed to be brought in for morning care. Students should eat breakfast prior to entering the building for morning care.

#### *After/Before School Care Times*

After/Before School Care hours are as follows:

- Monday through Friday 6:30 A.M. - 7:20 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. - 6:00 P.M.
- On early dismissal days: Announced early dismissal time until 6:00 P.M., unless otherwise stated.
- For some early release days, no after-care is provided. Postings/Notices will be provided.
- For parents arriving after 7:20 a.m. in the morning, Before School Care will be closed. These parents must get in the drop-off line to bring children to school.

#### *Discipline in After Care Program, Tutorials, and in After School Clubs*

Students will be under an After School Care Discipline Management Plan that will be based on our Day School discipline plan for their grade level (listed in this handbook under Discipline). The Principal will handle the discipline if there is an emergency or if an After School Care Coordinator is unavailable, or if the behavior is serious. The After School Care staff have the authority to exact consequences in accordance with the Discipline Management Plan. Many disciplinary consequences enacted in After School Care will be served during the regular school day following the infraction. The grade level's discipline plan/consequences for the day school will apply for infractions occurring in after school care. After 3 discipline referrals in Before/After Care, the child may be removed from the program.

#### *Child Care Tax Identification Numbers (TIN)*

St. Helen Catholic School does not need to provide our Tax Identification Number (TIN) in order for people to claim the child care credit on the federal tax returns. Parents/Families may complete a Form W-10, which can be found on the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) website: [www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw10.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw10.pdf). This form has specific instructions for 501(C)3 organizations (charitable groups). In the right-hand column under tax-exempt dependent care provider it states to write "tax exempt" in place of a TIN. This form is for the taxpayers' records only.

If parents are filing a Form 1040A, the taxpayer will need to complete a Form 1040A Schedule 2, which can be found on the IRS website. The instructions state to write "tax exempt" if the provider is tax-exempt.



If parents are filing a Form 1040, the taxpayer will need to complete a Form 2441, which can be found on the IRS website. The instructions also state to write “tax exempt” if the provider is tax-exempt.

### **ANIMALS IN THE CLASSROOM AS TEACHING TOOLS**

Animals have been part of the learning experience for students for many years. The use of animals in the classroom proves to be effective at teaching the positive benefits of bonding and caring. Animals may be incorporated into the classroom environment with the goal of enhancing a variety of learning experiences. Service animals are permitted on campus as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Therapy animals are not permitted.

Prior to bringing an animal or animals into the classroom as part of instruction, the following must occur:

- Development of a long-range curriculum plan to assure the animals are responsibly cared for;
- Approval from the principal for animal incorporation into the classroom; and
- Inquiries of the parents of involved students regarding allergies, etc.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Announcements are usually made twice a day, in the morning and in the afternoon as to limit disruptions within the classroom. All announcements are approved by the principal.

Morning announcements include a morning prayer and recitation of the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance and the Texas Pledge. All students will be attentive, refrain from talking, and stand and participate in the prayers and pledges. No one will be allowed to refrain from standing, except for reasons pertaining to a physical disability.

Afternoon announcements include the St. Helen School Prayer. All students will be attentive and participate in the afternoon prayer.

### **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL TIMES FOR STUDENTS**

#### *Arrival Times and Procedures*

Students may not arrive before 6:30 A.M. because no one is on duty to supervise them. Arrivals between 6:30-7:20 A.M. must be registered in the After/Before School Care program. These students meet in the After School Care classrooms for early morning care. Teachers are not on door duty until 7:25 A.M. and are not ready to receive students; therefore, please park your car and walk your child to the After/Before School Care entry for early morning care, if your child is registered. Students not enrolled in After/Before School Care may not arrive before 7:20 A.M. (unless parents are on morning car pool duty, then a 7:20 arrival is permitted at the main lobby).

The office is open from 7:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. daily. Teachers on morning duty at 7:25 A.M. direct students to their classrooms or another appropriate, designated area. All students, grades PK3-8, will be dropped off in the front of the main campus building or the small clinic-side entrance, where staff are lined up to receive children. To avoid delays and for the safety of all students, all parents must follow carpool line procedures and are not allowed to walk their child up to or into the school building due to the moving traffic line in front of our building (exception: students/families who walk to school AND PK-K students for the first few days of school. Exceptions will be communicated for the first few school days.)

**Due to security precautions, parents will be permitted to walk in students in grades PK-K only for the first few days of school (these days will be designated and communicated to parents). Parents must drop off their child at the homeroom class and vacate the building. No long visits will be permitted.**

**Students have seven (7) plus hours of instruction daily: 7:50 A.M. until 3:00 P.M.** On early dismissal days, all students are dismissed at 12:00 P.M. Students will hear 2 announcements per day, 7:50 A.M. and 2:55 P.M., to keep them abreast of school events.

### *Dismissal Times and Procedures*

Afternoon announcements are made at 2:55 P.M. for all students in PK - 8th grades. In order to help us maintain a safe and orderly dismissal, please schedule your business with the school between 7:30 A.M. and 2:30 P.M. or 3:20 P.M. to 3:30 P.M. If your child will be picked up before the regular dismissal time, please notify the teacher a day in advance or contact the receptionist the morning of your request (this could impact attendance requirements). Due to supervision of students, your child's teacher may not check email during the day and may not read your email about dismissal changes. This also applies to changes in pick-up persons, after-school activities, etc. Please notify the teacher a day in advance, if at all possible, or contact the receptionist the morning of the change to guarantee your message is received.

If you need to pick up your child early, you **MUST** pick him/her up in the office **by 2:30 P.M.** We have limited staff in the office and they are unable to call for children after 2:30 P.M. because it is very busy. Parents/Guardians arriving after 2:30 P.M. will interfere with regular school dismissal, safety procedures, and the smooth operation of the campus. **Please understand that "early" pick up will not be permitted after 2:30 P.M. For parents arriving after 2:30 P.M. for "early pick up," their student must be picked up through the regular carpool line, not in the front lobby. If parents do not wish to re-enter the car line, they will be asked to wait outside until dismissal is finished.** Parents and others are asked to be polite about waiting their turn in the carpool line – please do not break or "cut" in line because this does not model Christian behavior for our students and other families.

Occasionally, parents/families may purchase a "zip line" pass at various school auction events. This special pass allows them to be one of the first six to eight (6-8) families in the front of the car line during dismissal. These families' vehicles have special areas in which they line up. Please accommodate their auction wins!

The staff members in charge of lining up cars and sending them to specific "pick-up stations" provide an extremely valuable service to students and families. Because of numerous safety issues, all drivers must attend to and follow the directions of the traffic directors. Drivers must not be on cell phones (state law) and must be attentive to the directives provided by the traffic directors. Failure to attend to the traffic director's guidance may result in disciplinary actions. Please remember, we want to keep you, your child, and our staff members safe – **SAFETY FIRST!**

**Parents will not be allowed access to the building to pick up their child once dismissal procedures have started – THIS IS FOR THE SAFETY OF YOU AND YOUR CHILD!** It is much faster for parents to remain in their vehicle and wait in line. If parents do walk up to the building, they will be asked to wait outside until carpool duty is completed, then may pick up their child. With almost 400 students, it is very busy in the hallways after school. For this reason, parents and others are not allowed in the building during dismissal to pick up their children because it disrupts the orderly flow of students leaving the building. Your patience and understanding is appreciated because we are watching out for the safety of your children!

All students sit according to grade level in the main lobby and the gym before they are dismissed to their rides. Students awaiting pick-up in our pick-up lines are prohibited to use electronic devices, to read, write, eat or drink. These activities during dismissal cause delays in the dismissal process in the building and in our vehicle lines.

Please hang your family's name card (provided to you at the beginning of school) from your vehicle's rear view mirror so that the name may be seen from a distance. Please keep the name card posted until the child is in the vehicle. Students are dismissed and escorted to the car by a teacher on duty. If you are at the front of the line, and your child is not outside, you may be asked to move to another pick-up location to prevent traffic congestion; your child will be brought to you there. **Please remain in your vehicle; if you approach the building entrance, you will be asked to wait outside the building until after carpool duty is over.**

Students will not be allowed to leave campus with anyone other than their assigned carpool without written permission from a parent or guardian. In order to keep calls to the school office to a minimum, carpool changes must be of an emergency nature only. Notices for early dismissal should be made in writing and submitted to your child's teacher in advance. (Teachers only check email during their planning periods.)

A late charge of \$1 per minute will be billed to parents when students are not picked up within the 20 minute window of time which begins with the dismissal bell (3:00-3:20 P.M.). This late charge policy also applies to dismissal from detention, athletic events, clubs, and after school classes. However, no 20 minute grace period is provided for these "extra" events. For example, if tutoring ends at 4:00 P.M., the child must be picked up at 4:00 P.M. before charges of \$1 per minute ensue. For early release days, there is no "grace time" granted because the \$35 will be applied immediately; the late clock for minute charges begins immediately after car line is over. Students who are not picked up for early dismissal will be charged a \$35.00 fee, plus a dollar each minute thereafter until the child is picked up.

If your child is **not enrolled in After School Care** and you have a late pick-up, a \$1 fee will be charged for every minute past 3:20 P.M. (Same as above.) The exception to this is early release, described above.

#### *Bike Riders and Walkers*

Elementary students walking or riding bikes will be crossed over to the nearest sidewalk and require parent's written permission to walk/ride bikes. At the beginning of the school year, walker's or bikers who reside near the school within a few blocks, who regularly walk home, and who have parental permission to do so, will be escorted to their exit paths and trained on directions. Students who are walking home will be released at 3:20 P.M. (after carpool traffic has ceased) and will be escorted to the nearest sidewalk. All walkers and bicycle riders must have a carpool number on file and alternate plans for inclement weather days. (All other students are to use the carpool line.)

#### *Safety Concerns at Arrival/Dismissal Times*

We respectfully request your cooperation with the staff on duty at arrival and dismissal times. Because safety of our students at SHCS is of utmost concern to us, please do not use this time to engage the teachers in parent-teacher conferences. If you need to talk with a teacher, call the office to request a formal conference.

#### *Visitor/Volunteer Requirements at Arrival/Dismissal Times and Throughout the Day*

All visitors to campus should be prepared to wait outside prior to gaining entry to the building. The receptionist will question you regarding your need to enter the building. If the receptionist admits you, you will be allowed to enter the lobby through a secured door into the main campus entry. You will not have access to the main hallways unless there is a pre-determined need. All visitors entering the campus have the option to wear face coverings.

Visitors will be viewed by both exterior and interior cameras.

- You will be asked to provide ID prior to receiving a visitor's pass.
- A picture ID system called Raptor will be used to screen ALL visitors.
- Each visitor must present a driver's license or a state ID to the receptionist.
- The Raptor system then runs the picture ID and checks the Department of Public Safety's and state police forces' databases for active charges of sexual abuse or for outstanding warrants.
- Visitors who are registered on the sexual offender databases must have contacted the principal and gained approval to enter, prior to gaining access to the building.

Everyone must go through the security door and check with the receptionist. **NO ONE IS ALLOWED TO ENTER THE CAMPUS HALLWAYS OR CLASSROOMS WITHOUT FIRST GETTING A VISITOR PASS FROM THE RECEPTIONIST.** Students will not be released to anyone not on their approved check-out

form or emergency listings. (All visitors who wish to be volunteers MUST have completed an initial SAFE HAVEN training course prior to working with any of our students.)

#### *Dismissal During Early Release Days/Times*

Students who are not picked up in the car line for early dismissal on early release days will be charged a \$35.00 fee, plus a dollar each minute thereafter until the child is picked up. Early release times on early release days are usually scheduled at 12:00 P.M. Lunch will NOT be served on early release days, so parents are encouraged to send a snack with their children. PK3 and PK4 parents are requested to send a sack lunch with their children on early release days since their usual lunch time is 10:30 A.M. (Please refer to the school calendar for availability of after-school care on early release days.)

## **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN SCHOOL**

### *Definitions for the Purpose of This Policy*

- *Artificial Intelligence (AI)*: Refers to the development of computer systems that can perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and language translation.
- *AI Technologies*: Encompasses machine learning, natural language processing, computer vision, and other advanced computational methods used to enable machines to mimic cognitive functions.

### *Artificial Intelligence (AI) Uses*

Catholic teaching on Artificial Intelligence (AI) emphasizes its role in serving the common good and respecting human dignity. AI's potential societal impact, including on education, requires ethical consideration to prevent misuse, inequalities, and injustices. The "Rome Call for AI Ethics" stresses dignity and freedom in AI development, promoting collaboration for human benefit. Pope Francis highlights AI's influence on society and peacebuilding, especially addressing reliability, privacy, and discrimination concerns. Catholic teaching would dictate that AI development should also be guided by the transcendentals of truth, beauty, and goodness. Overall, Catholic teaching urges responsible AI development and use that uphold human dignity, promote the common good, and safeguard human rights. (From the CSO Policy on "AI Use in Schools")

### *General Overview*

This policy outlines the guidelines and principles governing the appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in our Catholic school community. As a faith-based educational institution, we recognize the potential benefits and challenges that AI presents. Our commitment to upholding Catholic values and ethical standards extends to the integration of AI technologies into our learning environment. The primary aim of this policy is to ensure that AI applications are utilized responsibly, ethically, and in alignment with our mission of fostering holistic development, respect for human dignity, all the cultivation of responsible digital citizenship, all while promoting and emphasizing Catholic values.

The purpose of incorporating AI into our educational practices is to enhance teaching and learning experiences, promote academic excellence, foster creativity, and streamline administrative processes.

This policy aims to:

- a) Establish guidelines for the responsible integration of AI technologies in the classroom and school operations.

- b) Promote transparency and open communication about the use of AI among all stakeholders.
- c) Safeguard students' privacy, security, and data protection in compliance with relevant laws and regulations.
- d) Encourage ethical considerations in the development and use of AI applications.
- e) Engage schools and constituents into ongoing review and assessment of AI usage and policies.

*Responsible Use of AI in the Classroom:*

- a) **Educational Enhancement:** AI should be utilized to augment and enhance teaching and learning activities, fostering individualized learning, and supporting students with different learning styles. AI integration aims to enhance education by tailoring learning materials to individual needs, accommodating diverse learning styles, and addressing specific challenges. This fosters inclusivity and maximizes each student's academic potential.
- b) **Ethical AI Curriculum:** The school will offer an educational program to students that promotes understanding and ethical usage of AI technologies, encouraging them to become responsible digital citizens. The Ethical AI Curriculum should educate students on ethical considerations related to AI, fostering awareness of issues like bias, privacy, and transparency. This empowers students to make responsible decisions in their interactions with AI, aligning with the Archdiocese's mission to nurture ethically conscious and moral individuals.
- c) **Training:** Faculty and staff members will receive adequate, and as needed, ongoing training on AI integration, emphasizing the responsible and ethical implementation of AI technologies in the classroom. Comprehensive training for teachers ensures they are proficient in AI integration and prioritizes ethical considerations. This commitment reflects the Archdiocese's dedication to creating a learning environment where students benefit from AI while guided by responsible and ethical principles.
- d) **Student Ethical AI Usage and Academic Integrity:** The school is committed to educating students on the ethical use of AI in academic settings, emphasizing the importance of learning thinking, and problem solving, as well as original work and proper attribution. Schools should create, communicate, and enforce AI acceptable use policies. Students are expected to uphold academic integrity standards and use AI tools responsibly. Faculty members will provide guidance on the acceptable use of AI, emphasizing the importance of independently producing work and citing sources appropriately. In cases where AI tools are integrated into assignments, clear guidelines will be provided to ensure students understand how to leverage these tools ethically, avoiding plagiarism and promoting a culture of academic honesty. Violations of these principles may result in disciplinary actions in accordance with the school's academic integrity policies. This policy aligns with the school's mission to foster a learning environment that values integrity, individual effort, and responsible use of technology.

*Student Data Privacy and Security*

- a) **Data Collection and Consent:** The school will collect and process student data solely for educational purposes, and in compliance with FERPA and data protection laws. The school prioritizes the privacy of student data and ensures compliance with legal requirements by obtaining explicit consent for data collection. This approach underscores the commitment to using student data responsibly, safely, and exclusively for educational purposes. Recognizing parents as the primary educators of their children, with the duty and right to provide for their physical, social, cultural, moral, and religious education, schools will gain consent for AI usage consistent within the Technology Acceptable Use Policy.
- b) **Anonymizing:** Whenever possible, data used for AI applications will be anonymized or pseudonymized to protect student privacy. Anonymizing or pseudonymizing data mitigates privacy risks associated with AI applications, demonstrating the school's commitment to protecting students' sensitive information. All identifiable

information should be removed. This proactive measure aligns with the broader goal of ensuring responsible and secure use of AI technologies.

c) *Data Storage*: Student and school data will be stored securely and protected against unauthorized access, and it will be retained only for the necessary period. The school emphasizes the importance of secure data storage to prevent unauthorized access and protect students' privacy. The commitment to retaining data only for the necessary period reflects a responsible approach to data management, minimizing potential privacy risks and ensuring compliance with data protection standards.

### *Ethical Considerations*

a) *Human Oversight*: While AI can support decision-making processes, important educational and community decisions (e.g., grades, student assessment, policies, communications) will always be made with human oversight, review, intervention, and final say. The school recognizes the importance of human judgment in all educational and other matters. AI, including large language models, is limited in its scope and information, and is known to make errors often. The integration of AI is seen as a supportive tool, not a replacement for human decision-making and expertise, ensuring that key decisions maintain a human-centric approach and uphold the values integral to the educational process. *Ultimately the person supervising programs or students (for example, teachers and the principal) is responsible for the final decision or output.*

b) *Dignity and Respect*: AI applications should be used in a manner that respects human dignity, avoids harmful content, and promotes inclusivity, diversity, and Catholic values. This commitment emphasizes the responsible use of AI to maintain a positive and respectful learning environment. The school aims to harness AI technologies in ways that align with its values.

c) *Bias Mitigation*: The school will strive to ensure that AI algorithms used in educational applications are designed and maintained to minimize biases and stereotypes. The focus on bias mitigation underscores the school's dedication to ensuring fair and equitable educational experiences. By addressing biases in AI algorithms, the school aims to create an environment that promotes unbiased learning opportunities for all students.

### *Transparency and Accountability*

a) *Open Communication*: The school will communicate with parents, students, and staff about the use of AI technologies and their potential impact on the learning environment. Open communication fosters trust and understanding within the school community. By keeping stakeholders informed about the use of AI, and gathering input as needed, the school ensures that everyone is aware of how these technologies contribute to the learning experience and are used within the school, while addressing any concerns or questions that may arise.

b) *Responsible Partnerships*: When collaborating with third-party AI providers, the school will carefully assess their ethics, privacy practices, and alignment with Catholic values. This commitment reflects the school's dedication to responsible decision-making in its partnerships. By thoroughly evaluating third-party AI providers, the school ensures that its collaborations are in line with ethical standards, uphold privacy considerations, and align with the core values of the Catholic faith. This approach aims to safeguard the school community and maintain integrity in its use of AI technologies.

### *Evaluation and Monitoring*

a) *Periodic Review*: The policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure its relevance and compliance with evolving AI technologies and regulations. Regular reviews of the policy demonstrate the school's commitment to staying abreast of advancements in AI and adapting its guidelines to meet changing technological and regulatory landscapes. This review should include representatives of various school stakeholders, including faculty, parents, and leadership. This proactive approach ensures that the policy remains effective, up-to-date, communal, and compliant.

b) *Assessment*: The school will monitor the impact of AI integration on student learning, privacy, and overall well-being. Continuous assessment is crucial to understanding how AI technologies influence various aspects of the educational experience. By monitoring impacts on student learning, privacy, and well-being, the school can make informed decisions, address any challenges that may arise, and refine its AI integration strategy to optimize the educational environment for all students.

### *Sources for the Catholic School Office Policy on AI:*

[rc\\_pont-acd\\_life\\_doc\\_20202228\\_rome-call-for-ai-ethics\\_en.pdf \(vatican.va\)](#)

### LVII World Day of Peace 2024 - Artificial Intelligence and Peace

### *Integrated Policy on AI for SHCS*

SHCS is committed to using AI technologies in an ethical, transparent, and responsible manner. We acknowledge that AI has the potential to significantly enhance student learning and engagement, but we also recognize the importance of protecting student privacy, the fidelity of personal learning and assignment completion, and ensuring that the use of AI technologies is consistent with ethical considerations.

The use of AI technologies in our school aligns with our mission to provide a high-quality education that prepares students for future endeavors. These technologies have the potential to support personalized learning and to help teachers to identify areas where students may need additional support. They can also support research and writing activities and provide opportunities for students to develop skills related to critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy.

School leadership, administration, and teachers are responsible for providing resources and guidance to students to help educate them about plagiarism and AI technologies. Programs that assist staff in identifying student uses of dangerous/questionable websites/sources and the plagiarism of educational resources are already in place at SHCS.

For parents, they are responsible for supporting their children's appropriate and ethical use of AI technologies and resources in compliance with this policy. Students are responsible for using AI technologies in an ethical and responsible manner and not claiming the work of AI as their own. Students should not rely on the "over-use" of AI for their assignments, as this will be considered plagiarism, an offense of academic dishonesty.

### **ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT**

The original campus of St. Helen Catholic School was completed in 1997. No asbestos or material containing asbestos was used in the construction of the main (old) building. The newly constructed building was finished in 2017 and had no asbestos used in the construction. Therefore, it is not necessary for the campus to develop or post an asbestos management plan for the educational building. For additional information, please contact the facility manager at St. Helen Catholic Church.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

In compliance with the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department (TCCB-ED) and the State of Texas Family Code, schools of the Archdiocese of Galveston- Houston follow compulsory attendance laws. Daily school attendance is the only effective way to assure continued academic progress. PK students are expected to attend all five (5) days of the week, every day school is in session. School will be in session according to the number of days required by TCCB ED standards (180 days for students). The school is obliged to keep and maintain an accurate record of daily attendance (absence and tardies) for each student.

All absences are considered absences – they are neither excused nor unexcused. SHCS recognizes the following as valid reasons for an absence:

- Student illness;
- Family emergency, such as death or serious illness.

Planned vacations are not considered valid reasons for absence. The student will be counted absent and may not be able to make up work or have tests administered (teacher discretion). Parents are encouraged to schedule vacations during school break periods.

If a student has been **absent for three days or more** or is under a doctor's care:

- The school needs a "Return to School" form from the doctor.
- Requests for homework are honored for a 3:20 P.M. pickup only if the request is received before 9:00 A.M. on the day of an absence. Teachers must have time to assimilate the necessary papers due to variances in their daily schedules.
- For students who are habitually absent and have accumulated excessive absences, **a doctor's note may be requested for each absence in order to provide him/her with make-up work and other assignments.**

Additionally, please note:

- Unless a child is absent for two or more days or has a difficult time with make-up work, requests for homework for one day's absence are not necessary.
- When a student is absent from school for any reason other than illness or family emergency, parents are usually contacted and the consequences of the absence discussed.
- When a student is absent, the parent/guardian is expected to call the school office by 9:00 A.M. and send a written note or doctor's note upon the student's return to school.
- **One-half day absences count as an absence – the student will not be eligible for a Perfect Attendance award.**
- One-half day absences are accrued when a student misses 3.5 hours in one day, either morning or afternoon. A student who comes in after missing 3.5 hours of school will be counted absent ½ day (11:20 A.M. is the ½ day mark). Likewise, a student who checks out and misses 3.5 hours of school will be counted absent ½ day (checks out before 11:20 A.M.).
- A student who checks out during the day, and does not return for the last class of the day, may not return to campus for any reason– for example, Girl Scout Meeting, clubs, athletics practice or game, or tutoring. **For students who frequently check out early in the afternoon, please be aware this will count against the 90% mandatory attendance guidelines. This will also count against perfect attendance.** Doctor's notes are also required with frequent early check-outs or late arrivals for appointments.
- A dated written request or an authorization signed by the parent or guardian is required for a student to leave the school before the time of dismissal.
- The school staff is not obligated to provide special assignments to a student when a parent opts to schedule activities (i.e. vacations) that warrant student absences on compulsory attendance days as indicated on the school's calendar. It is a teacher decision to provide work in advance, to allow the student to make-up work upon his/her return, or not to offer make-up work at all.



- Students in grades PK3-5<sup>th</sup> are provided with “double time” to make-up missed work from an illness. For example, if a child misses two days of school, the child will have up to four days to turn in his/her missing assignments. To make-up tests, the parents or the child, especially students in grades 3-8, should contact their child’s teacher. However, upon return to school, students will most likely be required to take missed make-up tests, especially if prior notice was given before the absence.
- Students in grades 6-8 are also provided time to make-up missed work or assignments. This time varies, according to teacher policy and student needs. Often, it is a 1:1 day requirement for make-up work for these grade levels.
- A valid reason for absence does not mean a student will not be marked absent. A student not physically present at school is marked absent.
- For students who are habitually absent and have accumulated excessive absences, a doctor’s note may be requested for each absence in order to provide him/her with make-up work and other assignments.
- TCCBED, the governing body for Catholic Schools, requires 90% attendance for students for each semester. Students not in compliance with this rule will be referred to the campus Attendance Committee. The committee will decide on make-up time required for the absences and what other actions are necessary for the child to master necessary grade-level skills. Retention in the current grade may also be recommended. Students may be required to make up “seat time” to achieve the 90% attendance rule.

### *High School Visits*

Students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade may participate in individual high school visits and tours. Although the campus does sponsor visits to 4 campuses (2 for the girls, 2 for the boys), we also allow 2 additional high school visits/tours for 8<sup>th</sup> graders. These individual visits are arranged by the families. Students are asked to make their teachers and the principal aware of the visit and ask for make-up work. These high school visits will be excused and not counted as an absence.

### *P.E. Classes and Absences/Excuses*

- Physical education classes are a required part of the curriculum. Grades for p.e. classes are based upon participation and student’s efforts to improve their gross motor skills. Poor behavior in p.e. class may impact participation grades.
- If a child has a minor injury or concern, the parent may write a note to the p.e. teacher and clinic to excuse the child from p.e. The child will either sit quietly in the gym area or report to the clinic or office when excused from p.e. **The parent note will be valid for only two (2) days.** If there is still a concern, a physician’s note must be brought to school to excuse the student from p.e. for a limited time.
- Because p.e. is part of our core requirements, alternate assignments will be provided for students who miss p.e. for medical reasons. The assignment usually is a writing/research assignment pertinent to physical activity. This assignment will be used as a grade in place of the daily physical participation grade.

Advisory Council Policy dated May 9, 2002:

"Students are required to be in attendance. If a student has 10% or more absences in a semester, the principal and/or the SHCS Attendance Committee may retain the student in his/her grade for another year."

## **BACKPACKS**

**All backpacks must be clear plastic or see-through mesh fabric.** No allowances will be made due to safety and hazard concerns.

Students in grades PK-4<sup>th</sup> grade will not be allowed to use backpacks with wheels. This is due to safety concerns for all students and staff. Because our PK-4<sup>th</sup> graders are not yet "good drivers," they often run over toes, feet, fingers, or knock over items unintentionally. Students in grades 5-8 will be allowed to use wheeled backpacks. Caution should be used when moving up/down stairs.

## **BIRTHDAY CLUB**

### *Birthday Club PK3-PK4*

To ensure that all students are treated special and fairly, individual birthday parties are not held at the school. (Cupcakes, cookies, birthday cakes, etc. will not be accepted from parents for birthday celebrations, other than food the pre-planned Birthday Club celebration.)

Instead, all PK students will participate in a Birthday Club celebration held monthly with their teacher and classmates during his/her birthday month.

- Birthday Club will be held in the classrooms during either snack or lunch time, designated by the teacher.
- Because Birthday Club is one of our designated HSA Committees, it is NOT a room party. It is a club. Volunteers working Birthday Club are not permitted to bring siblings to volunteer. Other parents are not invited to Birthday Club as party attendees. Only approved volunteers are permitted to attend.
- July and August birthdays are celebrated in late August or September, and May and June birthdays are celebrated in May.
- The guests of honor will receive a special birthday “crown.” Celebrants will receive a cupcake and pizza, along with juice/other drink. (Parents are not permitted to bring cakes or other dessert items for their child’s actual birth date or for Birthday Club, unless that is a volunteer responsibility.)
- All other individual birthday parties for students must be conducted off campus.
- Snacks, favors, gifts, will not be distributed on the actual date of the child’s birthday.
- If a child is absent on the date of the Birthday Club celebration, the child may receive his/her special “crown” and treat at the next monthly celebration.

Due to the abbreviated length of time for Birthday Club (30 minutes maximum) and the size of the PK classrooms (in comparison to the cafeteria), volunteers will be limited. The birthday club chair will coordinate with the teacher and not the room parent. Depending upon the size of the class and the number of instructional staff members assigned to the classroom, an additional volunteer may be requested by the room parent, upon approval from the classroom teacher. **Other volunteers may participate ONLY in classroom parties, not in Birthday Club.**

### *Birthday Club K-8*

To ensure that all students are treated special and fairly, individual birthday parties are not held at the school. (Cupcakes, cookies, birthday cakes, etc. will not be accepted from parents for birthday celebrations, other than as food the pre-planned Birthday Club celebration.) Instead, all students participate in a Birthday Club held monthly with the Principal/designee during his/her birthday month. (Volunteers should not bring guests or siblings.)

- July and August birthdays are celebrated in late August and May, and June birthdays are celebrated in May.
- From 11:00-11:30 A.M., the guests of honor participate in a celebration at a specially decorated cafeteria table to mark the month of their birthdays. JH students often choose to sit with their classmates.
- Celebrants receive pizza, a cupcake, a drink, and a special remembrance.
- Parents are not permitted to bring cakes or other dessert items for their child’s actual birth date.
- Because Birthday Club is one of our designated HSA Committees, it is NOT a room party. It is a club. Volunteers working Birthday Club are not permitted to bring siblings to volunteer. Other parents are not invited to Birthday Club as party attendees. Only volunteers are permitted to attend.
- All other individual birthday parties for students must be conducted off campus.
- Snacks, favors, gifts, will not be distributed on the actual date of the child’s birthday.
- If a child is absent on the date of the Birthday Club celebration, the child may join the next monthly celebration.

## **CALENDAR FOR SCHOOL YEAR**

A copy of the current school year calendar may be found at the school's website: [www.SHCSsaints.org](http://www.SHCSsaints.org), then look for the 2024-2025 calendar link/tab. More detailed monthly calendars are also posted on the website and sent home in hard copy. Also, please see the appendix of this handbook for a calendar copy.

### **CAMERA SURVEILLANCE/VIDEO RECORDING**

To enhance your child's safety at school, the campus uses a closed-recording camera surveillance system (no audio recordings are made). Cameras are placed at numerous high-traffic areas in the campus, including stairwells, outdoor areas, and inside the classrooms. These digital recordings are kept for a limited period of time and are kept and viewed, as needed, in a very confidential manner. **Parents are not permitted to view the recordings due to confidentiality issues with other children who may be viewed on the digital pictures.** Cameras are not present where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy – for example, the clinic and restrooms. Parents may request to view the video regarding a concern about their child; however, if other students are present on the video, the request will be denied due to confidentiality for the other child(ren). If a parental concern continues to exist after the administrator explains what is viewed on the camera, the principal may request the pastor and/or a local Pearland PD officer also view the recording to discuss the behavior with the parent. Students are usually permitted to view their actions on the cameras.

### **CAMP KAPPE**

Camp Kappe, School for Environmental Education, is located in Plantersville, Texas, and is mandatory for fifth grade students. The students, their teachers, and chaperones learn about food chains and life cycles. They study botany, wildlife, farm animals and gardening. Students are introduced to environmental issues and concerns. Stewardship principles of God's creation are taught, which encourages the students to protect our God-given resources and to use them wisely.

All 5<sup>th</sup> grade students will be expected to participate in this overnight experience, and absences from camp are unacceptable; students who miss the experience are given zeroes on numerous multi-disciplinary assignments. The costs incurred by the school for this experience is significant; therefore, students and parents should plan to participate in numerous fundraisers and can probably expect to pay from \$150-\$200 (approximately) for the Camp Kappe experience; parents will be automatically billed for Camp Kappe costs. (Scholarships are available, with identified need, if discussed in advance.) Please note, Camp Kappe personnel make every accommodation possible for students to be able to participate in this experience. It is very rare for a waiver to be granted.

In order for a student's absence from Camp Kappe to be allowed, the following must occur:

1. The student's doctor must write a letter to the principal and specifically cite why the outdoor experience would be detrimental to the physical health of the child.
2. The principal or designee will contact Camp Kappe personnel to determine if accommodations might be made for the child's specific health-related needs. The results of this conversation will be relayed to the parent.
3. Consequences which could occur:
  - The principal **gives the student an allowable absence for four days** and alternative assignments are provided. If the principal approves the waiver, the student is given makeup work (due the day the participants return to campus) and is required to pass a comprehensive major test. However, because no written assignment may accurately reflect the experiences Camp Kappe provides, grades may be impacted due to the absence and the type of assignments made. The 4 days of absences are counted in the 10% maximum absence rule (See attendance policies in this handbook.).
  - The principal **does not grant an allowable absence for four days.** Alternative assignments are not provided and grades will be impacted. The 4 days of absences are counted in the 10% maximum absence rule (See attendance policies in this handbook.).

Any other absences from Camp Kappe are not allowed and the student will receive zeroes in the content areas. Fifth grade students not in mandatory attendance at Camp Kappe are not allowed onto St. Helen Catholic School

grounds for the said 4-day period. (The student will receive absences for 4 days and parents must supervise the student at home.)

### **CARPOOL TRAFFIC PATTERN – Arrivals and Dismissals**

#### *Building Procedures - Arrivals for all grades (7:25 -7:50 A.M.)*

- **Arrival** (all grades) will be conducted under the carport of the main building and the gym entry in an orderly fashion, beginning at 7:25 A.M. Monday-Thursday and 7:25 A.M. on Friday or other Mass days. **SCHOOL BEGINS PROMPTLY AT 7:50 A.M. TARDIES WILL BE COUNTED IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER. (Students should be in their seats by 7:50 a.m.)**
- To avoid delays and for the safety of all students, all parents must follow carpool line procedures and **are not allowed to walk their child up to or into the school building** due to the moving traffic line in front of our building (exception: students/families who walk to school **AND PK-K students for the first 3 days of school**. All other grades may have a parent escort the first school day only. Be alert for communication describing procedures for the first few days of school.)
- We will be unloading numerous cars at one time. Please follow the directions of the staff on duty and pull forward as far as you possibly can so that we may successfully help numerous cars at one time. This is especially critical during inclement, rainy weather.
- After dropping off your child under the carport or in the arrival locations, you must exit toward the direction shown to you (the back side of the church and school, closest to the maintenance building).
- For further information, see section entitled ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL TIMES FOR STUDENTS for variances to dismissal procedures.
- PLEASE REFER TO THE ONLINE “BACK TO SCHOOL PACKET” FOR A MAP OF TRAFFIC PATTERNS FOR ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL.

#### *Building Procedures – Dismissals 3:00 P.M.*

- To protect staff, students, and other drivers – you must follow the directions of the traffic coordinators in the parking lot.
- **For dismissal**, all students in **grades PK3-8<sup>th</sup>** will be picked up from campus beginning at 3:00 P.M.
- We will be loading numerous cars (8) at one time. Please pull forward as far as you possibly can so that we may successfully help all cars at one time. Rainy weather will interfere with speedy loading of vehicles.
- If your child is not ready or not listening to his/her name being called while waiting in the main building lobby or gym, the carpool loaders will ask you to go around and get in line again or pull up to another door.
- To avoid delays in the carpool line, please pull out of the car line completely before putting books in the trunk of the car or helping your child adjust his/her seat belt or carrier.
- After picking up your child in the dismissal line, you must exit in the direction you are guided.
- For further information, see section entitled ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL TIMES FOR STUDENTS for variances to dismissal procedures.
- PLEASE REFER TO THE ONLINE “BACK TO SCHOOL PACKET” FOR A MAP OF TRAFFIC PATTERNS FOR ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL.

#### Other important items to note for all students/parents during **dismissal times**:

- If you need to pick up your child early, you **MUST** pick him/her up in the office **by 2:30 P.M.** We have limited staff in the office and they are unable to call for children after 2:30 P.M. because it is very busy. Parents/Guardians arriving after 2:30 P.M. will interfere with regular school dismissal, safety procedures, and the smooth operation of the campus. **Please understand that “early” pick up will not be permitted after 2:30 P.M. For parents arriving after 2:30 P.M. for “early pick up,” their student must be picked up through the regular carpool line, not in the front lobby. If parents do not wish to re-enter the car line, they will be asked to wait outside until dismissal is finished.**

- If students are in After School Care when parents come through the regular dismissal/pick-up line, the parent will need to park and enter through the clinic entrance to check-out their child from after care. **After Care will begin releasing students at 3:20 p.m.**, when traffic has slowed down from dismissal.
- Parents and others are asked to be polite about waiting their turn in the carpool line – please do not break or “cut” in line because this does not model Christian behavior for our students and other families. This includes refraining from passing other cars in line.
- **Zip Line Passes:** Occasionally, parents/families may purchase a “zip line” pass at various school auction events. This special pass allows them to be one of the first eight families in the front of the car line during dismissal. These families’ vehicles have special areas in which they line up. Please accommodate their auction win!

## CELL PHONES/ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Cell phones are not allowed to be used at any time during the school day without staff/teacher permission. Electronic devices should also not be used during before/after school activities (clubs, groups, after care, practices, competitions, etc.) unless the sponsor has given specific permission to do so. A fine of \$50.00 will be imposed if a student is found with a cell phone, iPod, camera, game machine, “smart” watch, or other electronic device on campus that is being used without permission, inappropriately, or is in violation of our technology policy. The \$50.00 fee must be paid in the presence of a parent and the electronic device will be returned only to the parent. Student personal devices are not encouraged and are unnecessary.

For students in all grade levels who are participating in after school events, clubs, practices, competitions, etc., cell phones/other devices will be collected by the sponsoring teacher and stored in a secure area. Students may pick up their phones at the end of the day.

In the case of cell phones, if they are found in the “on” position or in use during the school day without permission, they will be confiscated. Additionally, this confiscation policy also applies to Apple or “smart” watches. (It is recommended that students keep all devices in their backpacks/book bags during the day and carry those backpacks with them. An exception to this may be using an “Apple” watch during p.e., with teacher permission, to track physical activity. During all other classes, **Apple or “smart” watches should NOT be worn or carried into the classrooms.**) In grades 4-8, all cell phones are collected by the homeroom teacher and stored in a secure area. Students may pick up their phones at the end of the day. Students in grades PK-3<sup>rd</sup> should not bring these devices to school with them.

All electronic devices must be used with the permission of the teacher. **Personal electronic devices are discouraged**, unless the teacher has given special permission for use. All devices, school-owned or personal, must only be used for approved instructional purposes, for example – reading, research, or note-taking. Not following teacher directions for use may result in confiscation of the device. Confiscation will also occur when websites are visited without teacher permission. Students are responsible for their own electronic devices. For security purposes, students should NOT leave them in their lockers.

Students in grade 3 have one to one devices, but these devices remain at school. Students in grades 4-8 have school-issued Google Chrome Books (one to one) to facilitate all instructional activities and to assist them during remote learning times. (Students in grades PK-2<sup>nd</sup> utilize campus-owned devices, as needed.) While other devices are allowed with permission, Chrome Books purchased individually by families are not permitted. The campus receives a discount on device bulk purchases, and we have the manufacturer install software specific to our school and safety, filtering requirements. While mobile devices and other tablets are allowed (example: mobile phones, laptops) it is strongly recommended that parents have their children utilize the school-issued devices. The Technology Use Agreement (found in this handbook) must be signed and returned for students to use our “loaner” devices. If a Chrome Book is damaged, a determination will be made by the Technology Director if the damage

was caused by neglect or mis-use. If the damage was caused by neglect/mishandling, the student will be assessed a fee to obtain a loaner device.

When a student's use of electronic communication (on devices either owned by the school or student) jeopardizes the safe environment of the school or is contrary to Gospel values, the student may be subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences, including the revocation of the student's technology use.

### **CHANGE OF ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER, OR EMAIL**

Please immediately notify the school in writing when there is a change of address and/or a change in telephone numbers (home, cell, or business) or email addresses. It is important to keep this information current on FACTS for the student's safety in case of emergencies or for late pick-ups. Also, important information is often delivered via our electronic newsletter and mass emails.

### **CHRISTIAN CODE OF CONDUCT**

Christian behavior and respect shall be observed during any verbal and nonverbal communication at all levels within the school community. The following actions (by students or family members) will be termed in violation of Christian charity and may result in dismissal from the school:

- Public criticism of school personnel, policies, or procedures or ANY behavior which does not promote the school in a positive manner (this includes social media sites).
- Publishing negative comments on blogs or other sites (including Group Me) which complain about or criticize teachers, homework, the administration, or any of the school policies. If parents have a question or concern, please speak or communicate directly to the staff member.
- Threats of any nature (implied or actual) toward personnel or families (this includes social media sites).
- Verbal/nonverbal acts of aggression including yelling, screaming, pushing, threatening pictures or gestures, etc. either on campus/church or in the parking lot areas.
- Public discussion/generation of rumors about students, family matters, staff, faculty, or procedures or ANY behavior which does not promote the school in a positive manner (this includes social media sites).
- Consistent and persistent disagreement with the administration or teacher policies (this includes social media sites). Rules are established to maintain order, provide a faith-based religious education, and teach strong academics.
- Blatant disregard to follow and support the requirements and expectations of all handbook policies.

We acknowledge that we are not the school for all families, and we will exercise the right to ask families to leave when the standards for Christian conduct are not followed.

Advisory Council Policy dated April 13, 2000:

"St. Helen Catholic School reserves the right to enact withdrawal of any student and/or students who they, themselves, or their parents, create situations considered to be detrimental to the welfare and/or learning process of the other students within the school."

### **CLASSROOM VISITS**

We strive to minimize classroom distractions and to increase attentiveness of the child towards a positive, child-centered learning environment.

- All requests for classroom visits must be arranged with the principal and teacher in advance.
- Siblings are not permitted in the classrooms during visits.
- Visitors should come singly (one only) and refrain from conversation with the teacher or students.
- Visits will be restricted to days that will not interfere with regular classroom instruction or assessments and will not exceed 30 minutes. Frequent, repeated visits will not be allowed due to the interruptions they cause to student learning.
- Confidentiality for all students is another factor in limiting visitors and visitor times in the classrooms.
- Visitors will not be permitted in the classroom of the Intervention Specialist.

## **CLINIC AND HEALTH ISSUES**

### *Student/Family Use of Clinic*

As Christian parents, we are responsible for the health and welfare of our children. Please assist us in keeping a healthy environment by refraining from sending children to school with any symptoms of illness. We also ask that you not give your children fever-reducing medications prior to school and then send them to school. This practice causes spread of disease, not just COVID, but all diseases.

### *General Student Health Protocols*

- All parents are responsible for ensuring that a daily self-screening of each student occurs prior to coming to school.
- Parents should not medicate their child to lower a fever prior to coming to school.
- All students will be instructed on methods to protect themselves and others from illnesses at school.
- All students should practice appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- All students should regularly wash their hands for 20 seconds, at least every two hours, or use hand sanitizer regularly if unable to wash their hands.
- All students will be trained on proper handwashing techniques and participate in teacher-scheduled handwashing times throughout the day.
- Students must bring their own water containers for use during the day. All containers left behind will be discarded.

### *Health Screenings*

Vision, hearing, and spinal screenings are conducted each year on students per the State of Texas Health Department requirements. We are also required to conduct a Diabetes Risk Assessment using AN (Acanthosis nigricans) screening methods. Students who do not pass the screenings are referred to their family doctor or specialist.

### *Health Plans*

For students with significant illnesses or injuries, a SHCS Health Plan will be developed. The parents, nurse, teachers, and principal will meet to discuss the student's health needs. At this meeting, doctor recommendations are discussed, as well as campus responsibilities. An example of a student requiring a health plan would be a child with diabetes. Other examples could also be significant surgeries, asthma, mobility issues, etc.

### *Illnesses*

- When the school determines that your child is ill, **we expect you or a representative to arrive within 30 minutes to one hour maximum.** It is paramount that you give us current telephone numbers as well as emergency contact names and telephone numbers. If the parents cannot be reached, then the emergency contacts will be called to pick up your child.

- Any child with a temperature of 100 or above or vomiting is sent home. A student should be fever free and have stopped vomiting, without the aid of medication, for 24 hours before returning to school following an illness.
- Students are to be kept home when they have a cold, sore throat, temperature, eye infection, skin eruptions, swollen glands, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. Any child exhibiting such symptoms is sent home.
- Students should not have vomited within 24 hours to return to school.
- Parents are required to notify the office if a student is ill. Please notify the school if your child has a communicable disease.
- When a child returns to school after having a communicable disease, he/she must present himself/herself to the office with a written note from a doctor saying he/she can be readmitted to class.

If a child is present on campus, but may need to refrain from physical activity for a few days after a brief illness, a parent/doctor note is required to present to the p.e. teacher and the homeroom teacher (for recess). When refraining from p.e. is expected to last 3 days or more, a doctor note is required so that grades are not impacted. For most students, missing more than 3 days of p.e. will result in alternative assignments so as not to negatively impact grades. (Our p.e. classes are designed for students to actively participate; physical or athletic prowess is not required and grades are not based on talent/skill. P.E. grades are generally for participation and good sportsmanship grades.)

| <b>Guidelines for Excluding Students from School</b> |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Exclusion Guidelines</b>                          | <b>Return to School Guidelines</b>                                       |
| Oral temperature of 100 degrees or above             | Fever free for 24 hours  |
| Vomiting, nausea or severe abdominal pain            | Symptom free for 24 hours  |
| Marked drowsiness or malaise                         | Symptom free   |
| Sore throat, acute cold or persistent cough          | Symptom free   |
| Red, inflamed or discharging eyes                    | Written physician release  |
| Wound, skin and soft tissue infections               | Exclude until drainage is contained and covered with a clean dry bandage |
| Swollen glands around jaws, ears or neck             | Written physician release  |
| Suspected scabies or impetigo                        | Written physician release  |
| Any skin lesion in the weeping stage                 | Covered and diagnosed as non-infectious                                  |
| Earache  | Symptom free   |
| Pediculosis  | Lice and nit free  |
| Other symptoms suggestive of acute illness           | Written physician release  |

### *Immunizations*

Each child entering SHCS must have received the basic series of immunizations against:

- whooping cough,
- diphtheria,
- typhoid,
- polio,
- measles,
- mumps,
- and all other diseases as required by state law and Archdiocesan policy.

Students are not required to have received the COVID-19 vaccine in order to attend school.



The state requires that all students entering public or non-public schools have at least 5 doses of DPT, DT, and or TD vaccine, provided that at least one dose of DPT/OPV has been received on or after the fourth birthday. For the health and safety of the entire student body, the required documentation of immunizations, including the doctor's signature must be on file for a student's registration to be complete. All new students and staff entering the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston school system are required to complete a T.B. survey. **Students with incomplete immunization records are not admitted to class until their record is current.** It is the parent's responsibility to keep their child's immunization record current.

This statement was approved by the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Accreditation Commission and endorsed by the Bishops of Texas in January 2009: *“Every student enrolled in a Catholic school in the state of Texas shall be immunized against vaccine preventable diseases caused by infectious agents in accordance with the immunization schedule adopted by the Texas Department of State Health Services. A student who fails to present the required evidence shall not be accepted for enrollment. The only exemption to the foregoing requirement is a medical exemption signed by a licensed physician (M.D. or D.O.) authorized to practice in the state of Texas.”* [The Pontifical Academy for Life, “Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived from Aborted Fetuses,” 2005: +DEF].

#### *Lice*

- Any child sent home with lice may not return until all signs of lice are gone.
- A student sent home with lice may not return to school, including all school activities, until all signs of lice are gone, approximately 48 hours.
- The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston follows the nit-free policy of many local, county health departments, including the Brazoria County Health Department.
- The school nurse or clinic assistant must check the student before he/she is allowed to return to class or participate in school activities.

#### *Medications*

If possible, all medication should be given outside of school hours. "Three times a day" medications should be given before school, after school, and at bedtime by parents. Only medication which is necessary for the child to remain in school will be given during school hours. The parents are responsible for bringing all medications for their child to the clinic and for picking up unused medicines or they will be destroyed. Stock medications are not kept in the clinic. If you have any health-related or medication questions, please contact the clinic office.

A student may take medication at school **ONLY IF:**

- a licensed physician, nurse practitioner, physician assistant or dentist has prescribed the medication or a parent requests the administration of non-prescription medication (over-the-counter drugs);
- the parent/guardian delivers the medication to the school office or nurse (do not send with the child);
- the medication is delivered in its prescription container with a current pharmacy prescription label or, if
- the medication is over the-counter medication, in the original labeled and sealed container (unopened);
- the school office personnel or clinic staff (or other officially designated staff members) administers the medication to the student; and
- the parent guardian completes and returns the appropriate forms to the school clinic authorizing a student to self-carry and self-administer medication through an epi-pen, inhaler, insulin pump, or glucose meter.

The school **MAY NOT** accept or administer any medication:

- that is not in the proper container, as described above;
- from the student or any person other than the parent/guardian;
- designated as experimental medication or dosages;

- designated as herbal, dietary supplements, or other nutritional aids which are not approved as medication by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA);
- with an expiration date that has passed;
- via a central line at school;
- for which the school personnel, in their sole discretion, are not qualified or licensed to administer.

A student **MAY NOT**:

- carry any medication on their person or in their belongings, unless permission has been officially granted by the school for an inhaler, epi-pen, insulin pump, or glucose meter; or
- give any medication to other students (this could result in expulsion).

The school **WILL** destroy or dispose of any medication that:

- a parent/guardian does not timely retrieve after the school has requested the parent/guardian to retrieve;
- is in a vial (for example, insulin) once started (opened) and not used in 30 days; or
- has an expiration date that has passed.

*Pandemic Screening Requirements, Protocols, Mitigation Measures, and General Information*

There are numerous practices we will utilize to prevent a pandemic-scale virus from entering campus. The campus will follow all operational procedures to prevent, mitigate and limit the spread of the Covid virus and other extremely contagious diseases, inside the school, as required by the Archdiocese and TBBCED. Please refer to the “Covid-19 Diagram” at the back of this handbook.

*Cleaning Response to Extremely Contagious Diseases/Pandemic Cases*

Disinfecting will be triggered when an employee or student is identified as lab positive for COVID-19 or any other extremely contagious disease. If more than 3 days have passed since the person was on campus, disinfecting will not be required. (St. Helen will follow the Texas Health and Human Services, Texas Department of State Health Services, for COVID protocols. Please note that protocols for COVID have been lessened considerably.) Please refer to the “Covid-19 Diagram” Addendum in the back of this handbook.

*Prescription Medications*

- Law prohibits the school faculty from administering any kind of medication to the students without authorization.
- The student will need a Request for Medication Administration form signed by the physician and parent. Please obtain this form from the school office or online.
- **The medication is to be brought to the school clinic in the original container. (Students are NOT permitted to carry medications with them.** For inhaler exemptions, please contact the school clinic.)
- Prescription medication must be properly identified with the prescription label from a pharmacy.
- The school will not be held responsible for any medication that is taken by the child. The use of nebulizer treatments in schools for the treatment of asthma should be done with extreme caution. Non-medical personnel should not be responsible for the administration of the nebulizer treatment. The parent is ultimately responsible for the care of their asthmatic child.

*Non-Prescription Medications*

All fever reducers or over-the-counter pain relievers, cough drops, ointment, vitamins, and other over the counter medications are considered medications and may not be given to your child unless a permission slip that has been signed by your physician and a note giving parental consent is on file. A parent's signature alone is not sufficient for the school to administer over-the-counter medications. Non-prescription medications must be labeled with the child's name.

### *Medical and Dental Appointments*

- When possible, medical and dental appointments should be scheduled during non-school hours so as not to interfere with the educational process. If this is not possible, written notification from the parent/guardian must be submitted to the school office and/or teacher (email is sufficient) in ADVANCE to excuse the student from class.
- In addition, the student must present a doctor's note to the office from the doctor or dentist when returning to school. **To avoid being counted tardy or absent, the student who has a medical appointment must bring a doctor's or therapist's excuse/note and arrive to school prior to 9:00 A.M.** (3<sup>rd</sup> period for junior high classes begins at this time on most days) in order NOT to be counted tardy or absent. Please contact the receptionist's office for questions regarding tardies.

### *Suspected Child Abuse*

SHCS abides by the Child Abuse Prevention, Adoption, and Family Services Act. This law mandates that all cases of suspected abuse and/or neglect are reported to Child Protective Services. All reports are handled in a confidential manner. Staff will not reveal, and usually will not know, the details regarding a CPS complaint.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Open, honest, and constructive communication is essential in creating a positive school environment. Various methods of communication exist to communicate school business with families, including school newsletters, HSA e-blasts, administrative letters, schedules, emails, and the school website. Parents are strongly encouraged to read and to be aware of the enclosed information from the principal, teachers, and school/parish groups.

Communications are sent home throughout the week. Please check daily for memos in your child's folders and/or your child's backpack. **If you wish to communicate a question, problem, or concern with a teacher or staff member, you should go directly to that person before going to the principal.** If parents have a complaint about a teacher, they must discuss the difficulty first with the teacher. Parents or teachers may request the principal to be present at a conference.

If parents would like to schedule a conference with the principal, they are invited to contact the school office or email her directly. **If parents wish to discuss their child's progress, the conference should first be scheduled with the teacher.** Parents wishing to log a complaint against their child's teacher should FIRST address the issue with the teacher. To voice a concern against a staff member who does not teach their child, parents should contact the principal. A good rule of thumb is to always go to the source of the issue so to avoid the "middle man" and get the problem resolved faster.

Parents wishing to inquire about the school community's attitudes regarding specific teachers, qualifications, programs, curricula, schedules, etc. should schedule an appointment with the principal. Parents who seek to promote or advocate personal causes, or question school policy and rules, with other parent groups via the calling of "special meetings," sending out personal electronic communications or surveys, establishing group "blogs," etc. will be asked to withdraw their children and relocate to another campus. The appropriate means to gather information is to schedule a meeting with the principal and request information. Seeking to disrupt the school community by promoting a personal agenda is disruptive to the school and, ultimately, impacts your child. Our campus is not a public school and is not suited for all families.

## **CONFERENCES**

**\*Please note - parent conferences may be held virtually – remotely or on phone conference.**

- Your child's progress is important to us; however, due to staff commitments, previously scheduled conferences, professional development sessions, and other school meetings, all appointments with

administration and/or with teachers should be requested in writing/email or by telephone and scheduled in advance.

- Teachers will attempt to return phone calls within 24 hours (or one business day) of receipt of the message.
- Messages left for teachers may not be retrieved by the teachers until the close of the school day or beginning of the next school day due to their schedules. Teachers are available to discuss issues during the regular school day by appointment only.
- Contact the school office to request a conference, make a phone call to request a conference, send an email, or send a note with your child. Please respect the personal life of all staff members and refrain from calling a staff member at home.

Parent conferences should not be audio/video recorded without first asking the other parties' permission. If a recording is made, both parties will be given an opportunity to record the conference. **Legal representation at a parent-teacher conference is not permitted. If a legal representative accompanies the parent, the meeting will be cancelled.**

Report card conferences are held in the fall with the homeroom teacher. These conferences are meant to be positive and constructive in nature, with the intent that of improving the child's academic progress and religious education. All grade levels, PK3-8<sup>th</sup> grade, participate in these conferences. **Parents are strongly encouraged to attend the fall conference, which could be in person or virtual/remote.** The conference provides students an opportunity to discuss their accomplishments and goals for the upcoming academic quarter.

The school establishes one early release day in the fall for scheduling parent conferences. **During the fall conferences, teachers will meet either remotely or in person with all students' parents.** However, a parent may contact a teacher at any time to schedule a conference. Parent conferences should not be audio/video recorded without first asking the other parties' permission. If a recording is made, both parties will be given an opportunity to record the conference.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Each school year a Student Directory is published. Parents must contact the office if they choose not to have their phone numbers and address listed. Please do not call the school to request any phone numbers or addresses for any SHCS family or employee. It is a violation of FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) for us to divulge confidential information.

Confidentiality privileges also apply to the campus' camera surveillance systems. Parents are not permitted to view digital recordings of their children if other children's images are captured on the recording device by the school's camera system.

Staff sign a mandatory Confidentiality Form annually. They are not permitted to discuss your children with other families. If you'd like our staff to discuss your child with another person, we will request a "release of information" document and permission to speak with the other individual.

## **COPYRIGHT RULES**

It is the policy of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston that all employees, volunteers, and students are to abide by the federal copyright laws. Employees, volunteers, and students who willfully disregard copyright laws are in violation of this policy, doing so at their own risk and assuming all liability.

## **COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE**

Catholic schools offer many guidance opportunities for all students. These include value-oriented lessons, individual attention, meaningful liturgical celebrations, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, frequent affirmation, and the consistent application of Catholic principles of social justice. The guidance process is continuing and

developmental; it helps all students to develop wholesome self-concepts, and self-discipline and skills to choose safe and healthy lifestyles. The counseling program utilizes a guidance curriculum to assist the classroom teacher in integrating guidance with other subject areas. *Circle of Grace*, *Friendzy*, and the diocese's *Faith Formation Framework* are utilized as the campus programs. SHCS also utilized the diocese's *Bullying Prevention Framework* to assist students with relational issues.

St. Helen Catholic School employs a part-time, certified school counselor (available on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday). The counselor's role involves interactions with individuals and groups of students in order to respond to educational, career, personal and social and emotional needs. If the counselor is unavailable, the principal or clinic staff will assist with personal and social/emotional issues. Sometimes, counseling referrals to outside agencies will be made by the counselor or the principal.

### **CRITICAL RACE THEORY**

We do not teach "Critical Race Theory" in our Catholic Schools. In 2018, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) published, "Open Wide Our Hearts," a pastoral letter against racism. It states that "racism is a sin that divides the human family and violates the human dignity of those chosen to be children of the same Father". Catholic educators staying true to the teachings of the Catholic Church in regards to social teaching and morality do not need to promote elements of CRT, but instead should confidently utilize our Gospel values to inform their instruction and educate, as well as form young people as disciples of Jesus Christ.

We are called to defend and promote the dignity of every human person, and our schools will continue to teach the greatest commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself," which is found in Luke 10:27. The statement was crafted based on documents from the USCCB, which may be found at this link: <https://www.usccb.org/committees/ad-hoc-committee-against-racism/combating-racism-statements-and-letters>

### **CURRICULUM**

- The Catholic Schools in the AGH shall be distinguished by its unique curriculum which shall be designed to provide instruction not only in human knowledge and skills, but also in religious truths and Gospel values.
- Core curriculum at SHCS is an Archdiocesan curriculum (founded on Christian values and authentic Catholic doctrine) based on the Texas Education Agency (TEA) essential elements as part of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Lead Forward (Lead4Ward) is also a main curriculum product used by the diocese.
- Our campus curricula program is accredited by TCCB ED.
- Master teachers from the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston Catholic schools develop, review and revise the curriculum guides as needed. Other guides used for instruction included the Diocese of Dallas' Lead 4Ward curriculum program.
- Our curriculum includes:
  - English/Language Arts (reading, grammar, phonics, spelling, handwriting, creative expression, and writing), math, science, social studies (history and geography), fine arts, p.e., and religion.
  - These subjects are taught in a self-contained classroom setting (grades PK-2) with departmentalized settings for grades 3-8.
  - There are special classes scheduled, such as physical education, music, speech/theater, art, coding, keyboarding, and Spanish for select grades.
- Resource materials chosen for curriculum implementation is a site-based decision. Each campus in the AGH may decide how best to expend funds on resource materials. Alternate materials will not be approved, except in circumstances described below.
- The AGH curriculum standards may be located at this web address:  
***Curriculum & Instruction - Choose Catholic Schools - Houston, TX***

### *Alternate Assignments*

Alternate assignments may be requested for two assignments/units:

- Camp Kappe participation in 5<sup>th</sup> grade (see section entitled Camp Kappe); and
- Family Life/Sexuality (before requesting an alternate assignment, parents are requested to meet with the Religion teacher or Religion Coordinator and view the materials).

All other requests for alternate assignments will not be entertained. Because all AGH schools are site-based, all decisions on instructional materials are made by the campus administrative team. These assignments are not reviewed by the grievance committee at the Catholic Schools Office.

### *Gifted/Talented*

It is our philosophy and belief that our curriculum demonstrates an excellence in academics, rather than merely the bare essentials of academics, since our curriculum is based on national, Catholic standards. While we do not designate programs as “GT,” we are generally considered a campus for students who would be identified as “gifted and talented” or high achievers in the public school system. Our curricula and programs are generally one grade level ahead of the state curricular objectives, and we have a rigorous course of study in every grade level. When our students transfer to public schools, they are often placed in GT/AP programs and are very successful.

On-level and above-level (AP or Honors) programs are available in grades 6-8. Please keep in mind that our on-level programs are rigorous and considered above-level in the public schools system. According to Church doctrine and Canon Law, the local parish school is to be at a higher level than the neighboring public school.

The designation of “GT” is not a consideration for placement into elite high schools or colleges. Instead, AP or Honors classes are the class designations that counselors seek for class placement decisions in high schools.

### *P.E. Classes*

Physical education classes are a required part of the curriculum. In junior high, students must earn a minimum of 1.5 credits (semesters) of p.e.

Grades for p.e. classes are based upon participation and student’s efforts to improve their gross motor skills. Poor behavior in p.e. class will impact participation grades.

If a child has a minor injury or concern, the parent may write a note to the p.e. teacher and clinic to excuse the child from p.e. The child will either sit quietly in the gym area or report to the clinic/office when excused from p.e. The parent note will be valid for only two (2) days. If there is still a concern, a physician’s note must be brought to school to excuse the student from p.e. for a limited time.

Because p.e. is part of our core requirements, alternate assignments will be provided for students who miss p.e. for medical reasons. The assignment usually is an age-appropriate writing/research assignment pertinent to physical activity. This assignment will be used as a grade in place of the daily physical participation grade.

### *Science Curriculum and TEKS – Middle School*

The AGH and its Catholic Schools have opted to adopt the Streamlined Science TEKS. This requires that science instruction be integrated at each grade level, grades 6-8. All grade levels will eventually receive instruction in integrated physics and chemistry, life and earth science, with each grade level having a major focus in one of the areas. It is planned that all students in middle school will have moved to the new Streamlined Science TEKS in the near future.

## **DELIVERIES**

SHCS will not accept delivery of restaurant food, flowers, balloons, etc. for students.

Deliveries of materials and lunches cause too much disruption for class instruction. The office staff is few in number, and they often cannot deliver items to students. Please be prepared that if you drop-off something for your child, it may not be delivered to them on that day. Please also be aware that lunch deliveries may also be delayed and the staff may not be able to deliver your child's lunch in a timely manner.

## **DIVERSITY AND OPPORTUNITY (NON-DISCRIMINATION)**

### *Student Admission*

Catholic schools within the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston (AGH) shall be operated with profound respect for the equality of all persons before God whether applicants for admission, students, or other participants in their educational endeavors. Catholic schools shall be in compliance with all laws that address unlawful discrimination therefore, they admit students of any race, color, national, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school.

### *Employment*

Catholic schools value the diversity and gifts of all people and therefore commit to equal employment opportunity in all its employment policies and practices. These policies and practices are administered, without regard to race, color, national origin, age, veteran status, or mental or physical disabilities not affecting one's ability to perform the essential functions of one's job.

All employment in the school requires compliance with moral standards acceptable to the Roman Catholic Church. There are certain positions in the school for which it is necessary to be Catholic, and some positions for which preference in hiring shall be given to applicants who are Catholic, who understand Catholic faith and a commitment to living that faith. Such preference is allowed under state and federal law and does not constitute an illegal act of discrimination.

If an employee believes he/she has been treated in a manner that is in violation of this policy, the employee shall promptly submit a complaint to the Pastor as part of the Archdiocesan Employee Grievance procedures, which are located on the Archdiocesan website.

The Archdiocese complies with all applicable federal, state and local equal employment opportunity laws and regulations. Employment decisions will not be made based on race, color, national origin, disability, genetic information, sex, age, pregnancy, military, or veteran status. However, the Archdiocese reserves the right to make employment decisions based on principles of Catholic moral teaching, religious preferences, and other religious, criteria and policies. Children under the age of 18 years old are not eligible for employment by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and/or its schools.

## **DRESS CODE – UNIFORM STANDARDS**

### *General Uniform Guidelines for Grades PK-8 Boys and Girls:*

- Risse Brothers Uniform is the exclusive supplier for uniform items.
- All students (PK-8) must wear the required uniform from the first day of school until the close of the school year. Notices of exceptions to this rule are sent home in advance (for example, "casual dress" days).
- The SHCS emblem must be on the left side of all shirts for the boys, the girls' polo shirts, all sweaters and sweatshirts.
- The Mass uniform is required and is necessary for yearbook pictures (grades K-8).

- Shirttails and blouses must be tucked into pants so the belt loops are visible. Belts must be worn on clothing that has belt loops. Belts are to be black, dark brown, or navy blue.
- All buttons on blouses or shirts (except the collar button) must be buttoned. Collar buttons must be buttoned (with a tie for boys on Mass days). Blouses or shirts are not allowed with missing buttons.
- Girls' hemlines must not be shorter than 2 inches above the knee for culottes, jumpers, or skirts.
- Girls may wear Risse Brother navy pants/slacks on non-mass days.
- Socks are required to be worn, must be white, gray, black or navy. Socks must cover the ankles.
- Holes or rips in uniforms must be repaired, re-stitched, or patched. Students will not be allowed to wear torn clothing items.
- Uniform violation notices will be issued if guidelines are not followed (usually, warnings are given prior to the violation being issued). Uniform violations are billed at \$10 each occurrence.

### ***Socks and Shoes General Guidelines – Grades PK-8 Boys and Girls:***

- Students must wear socks with their school uniforms and they may be white, gray, black or navy socks. Socks must cover the ankles.
- Tennis shoes or other footwear must be predominantly SOLID-COLORED navy blue, black, brown, white, or gray. (For example, blue, yellow, red, pink, or any other BRIGHT colors are a distraction and not permitted, not even as an accent color.)
- **No** bright or neon colors, or other accent colors or glitter may be present on a student's shoe (colors which would make the shoes lack a predominant solid color).
- No lights, wheelies, pictures, cartoon characters, glitter, etc. should be present on any shoes.
- Shoes must be non-skid soles for safety purposes.
- For safety reasons, flip-flops, open-toed, opened-back, high-heeled, or high-top shoes are not permitted (even on “free” or “casual” dress days).
- Heels must be two (2) inches or less. Heels are not allowed on regular school days.
- **Boots are not allowed on regular school days.**
- For Mass service (altar serving), shoes should be dark-colored. Athletic shoes are not recommended for Mass service, but dark, solid-colored athletic shoes will be allowed.
- Not wearing appropriate shoes, socks, or dress will be a dress code/uniform violation.

### ***Girls' Uniforms***

#### *General note for all girls:*

To maintain modesty, all upper body undergarments should be plain and white when white blouses are worn. Undergarments should not be clearly visible under white/pale-colored blouses.

**Girls are not permitted to wear shorts as outerwear to school for any reason**, unless the teacher grants a specific allowance (for example, Field Day).

**Girls may wear ONLY white, black, gray, or navy tights (solid-colored tights – no prints or patterns) during winter months.** Tights are defined as **stockings that have feet in them** – leggings without feet are not classified as tights. Leggings should not be worn as part of the school uniform.

### ***PK3 and PK4 Girls:***

- PK3 and PK4 girls are required to wear a green polo dress and blue modesty shorts, with the SHCS initials on the left side of the collar. (**Shorts are not permitted as outerwear for girls.** If PK girls wear pants/slacks on colder days, it is understood they will not wear the green polo dress, but instead wear a SHCS shirt.)
- Girls also have the option of wearing the Risse Brother plaid skort/navy slacks with the green polo shirt. However, the green polo dress is required and is necessary for yearbook pictures.



- When PK4 begins attending the school mass in October, the girls are required to wear the green polo dress.
- **Girls in PK-8 may wear Risse Brother navy pants/slacks on non-mass days.**
- Please refer to sections entitled *General Uniform Guidelines for Grades PK-8* and to the sections explaining socks, shoes, jackets and coats for additional information.

#### ***K-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Girls:***

- Kindergarten - 3rd grade girls must wear Risse Brother plaid culottes with a required green polo shirt with emblem. (Shorts are never permitted.)
- Official Mass uniforms must be worn for Friday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation. Required Mass uniforms include plaid jumper and white blouse with navy trim and “peter pan” collar, with the SHCS monogram on the collar.
- To maintain modesty, all upper body undergarments should be plain and white when white blouses are worn.
- **Girls in PK-8 may wear Risse Brother navy pants/slacks on non-mass days.**
- Please refer to sections entitled *General Uniform Guidelines for Grades PK-8* and to the sections explaining socks, shoes, jackets and coats for additional information.

#### ***4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls:***

- 4th-8th grade girls may wear a Risse Brother plaid skirt, with a green polo shirt with emblem.
- Girls in grades 4th-5th will now have the option to wear Risse Brother plaid culottes on non-Mass days in lieu of the Risse Brother plaid skirt. If your girl prefers pockets and other conveniences of the culottes, she may choose this option. Please keep in mind, the stated Mass uniform must still be worn on Fridays and all other Mass days.
- The official Mass uniform includes a plaid skirt with white buttoned down blouse with emblem.
- Privacy shorts are required to be worn under the skirt, but must not be visible.
- School sweatshirts may be worn on Mass days (“hoodies” are not permitted to be worn on the head during Mass).
- Girls in **grades 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>** who participate in p.e. or Physical Conditioning must wear the approved Risse Brother gym shorts or the school p.e. uniform to p.e. class.
- To maintain modesty, all upper body undergarments should be plain and white when white blouses are worn.
- **Girls in PK-8 may wear Risse Brother navy pants/slacks on non-mass days.**
- Please refer to sections entitled *General Uniform Guidelines for Grades PK-8* and to the sections explaining socks, shoes, jackets and coats for additional information.

#### ***Boys’ Uniforms***

##### ***PK3 and PK4 Boys:***

- Boys in PK3 and PK4 must wear the Risse Brother navy-blue shorts or pants with the required green Risse Brothers polo. If shorts and/or pants have belt loops, belts must be worn. Belts are to be black, dark brown, or navy blue.
- When PK4 begins attending the school mass in January, the boys are required to wear a green polo shirt with pants. **Shorts are not permitted in church.**
- Please refer to sections entitled *General Uniform Guidelines for Grades PK-8* and to the sections explaining socks, shoes, jackets and coats for additional information.

##### ***K -8<sup>th</sup> Grade Boys:***

- Kindergarten-8th grade boys may wear Risse Brothers blue pants or shorts with a green Risse Brothers polo shirt with emblem. If shorts and/or pants have belt loops, belts must be worn. Belts are to be black, dark brown, or navy blue.

- Official Mass uniforms must be worn for Friday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation. Required Mass uniforms include Risse Brothers blue pants, white buttoned down shirt with emblem, and a Risse Brothers plaid tie. **Shorts are not permitted in church.**
- Pants are required as part of the Mass uniform. If pants have belt loops, belts must be worn. Belts are to be black, dark brown, or navy blue.
- School sweatshirts may be worn on Mass days (“hoodies” are not permitted to be worn on the head during Mass).
- Again, a black, dark brown, or navy blue belt is required if Risse Brothers uniform pants are designed with belt loops.
- Boys in **grades 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>** who participate in p.e. or Physical Conditioning must wear the approved Risse Brother gym shorts or the school p.e. uniform to p.e. class.
- Please refer to sections entitled *General Uniform Guidelines for Grades PK-8* and to the sections explaining socks, shoes, jackets and coats for additional information.

### ***Jackets and Coats***

*General guidelines for all students* - Parents have the option of purchasing the monogrammed navy cardigan and navy fleece jacket through Risse Brothers. In cooler weather, students have the option of wearing long sleeved thermals or undershirts under their uniform shirts, provided they are white, gray, or navy. Optional, non-SHCS jackets/sweaters, **are not permitted to be worn during mass or during class.** These non-uniform items may be worn into school, but may not be worn during classes or during mass.

### ***All PK Students - Outerwear:***

Unlike students in grades K-8, PK students will be allowed to wear any coat/jacket in the classroom over their uniform, **as long as it is predominantly solid-colored** (no pictures, themes, glitter, etc. will be allowed). However, when PK4 students begin attending weekly Mass in the fall, **they will not be permitted to wear optional jackets in the church.**

### ***K-8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students - Outerwear:***

- A Risse Brothers navy blue cardigan, fleece jacket, or sweatshirt with emblem can be worn in the classroom. This is recommended for cold weather when a sweater is needed inside the school. **These Risse Brothers sweaters and sweatshirts are the only outerwear that can be worn at Mass or inside the school building.**
- Students may wear other jackets and sweaters to and from school and on the playground, but NOT inside the school and church buildings.
- The campus’ National Junior Honor Society Chapter also sells approved sweatshirts for student use. In the fall, parents may choose to purchase sweatshirts from NJHS to directly support campus groups.

### ***P.E./Physical Conditioning Uniforms for Grades 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>***

- Students in grades 6-8 need shorts and a t-shirt for p.e. classes.
- **Risse Brothers uniform gym shorts or school/athletic shorts are required for grades 6-8** (strongly suggested for 5<sup>th</sup> graders who choose to change into p.e. clothes and remain in p.e. shorts Monday-Thursday from p.e. until the end of the day for dismissal).
- P.E. shorts must be fingertip length (approx. 4 inches above the knee.) **Form-fitting or spandex shorts and workout clothing are not permitted.**
- Students must wear an approved St. Helen PE uniform in grades 6-8, which can be purchased through the school.
- Sweatpants approved by the coaches are allowed during cold weather.
- Cargo pants and pants with large pockets are not allowed.
- No jewelry should be worn during p.e. class.

- Not wearing appropriate shoes, socks, or p.e. clothing will be a dress code/uniform violation.
- **\*Special Note** – If Junior High students are scheduled for a p.e. or physical conditioning class during first or second periods, they may wear appropriate p.e. uniforms to school. This saves time in clothing changes before class. However, students must be prepared to change into their school uniforms prior to third period class.
- **P.E. shorts must be Risse Brothers gym shorts or school/athletic shorts to maintain modesty. For other morning classes, students must wear appropriate clothing OVER their shorts until they report to p.e. class in the gym.**

### ***P.E. Dressing Requirements for 5<sup>th</sup> Grade***

Fifth graders will not be expected to purchase the official p.e. uniform or change clothes on a daily basis for p.e. However, to preserve their Mass uniforms on Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> graders will be permitted to change into gym clothes after lunch and prior to p.e. class. They will be able to remain in their p.e. clothes through the remainder of the day until dismissal (only one period). This will save instructional time. (The option may be provided for them to change into p.e. clothes daily, should time allow.)

- It is strongly suggested that 5<sup>th</sup> grade student gym clothes be the approved Risse Brothers p.e. uniform shorts or the school's athletic shorts to maintain modesty.
- Shirts may be any school, spirit, or religious-themed t-shirt.
- Shorts must be fingertip length. Form-fitting or spandex shorts and workout clothing are not permitted.
- Tennis shoes are expected for p.e. every day, including Fridays.
- Not wearing appropriate shoes, socks, or dress will be a dress code/uniform violation.

### ***General Exceptions to Uniform Dress for ALL Grades (PK-8)***

#### *Spirit Days - Wednesdays*

Spirit Day is on Wednesday, unless it is a Holy Day or special occasion. Spirit shirts may be worn on these days.

- Spirit shirts are St. Helen Catholic School t-shirts, a Christian t-shirt, such as one that may have a scripture on it, or a t-shirt from a high school in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.
- Shirts from other Catholic schools (unless they are high school shirts) are not allowed unless the Principal gives special permission to wear them.
- During Catholic Schools Week, only St. Helen Catholic School Spirit Shirts are allowed (no high school t-shirts) so that we promote our campus. We are to promote St. Helen Catholic School specifically that week.
- Student athletes may wear their St. Helen athletic uniform on spirit days during the appropriate sport season.
- On spirit days, the appropriate bottoms (skirt, culottes, or slacks) must be worn with the t-shirt (exceptions are Denim Dollar Days – for jeans).

#### *Denim Dollar Days*

As determined by the school calendar, students may choose to donate \$1.00 to the Athletic Department on Denim Dollar Day so that they may wear blue jean pants. Jean skirts, capris, and jean shorts are not allowed to be worn. Pants/slacks should not have “exposure” holes. All rips and tears must be repaired and skin should not be evident in the hole. **An exception to denim shorts is to be made for PK3 and PK4 male students – boys may wear denim shorts in these grades, but only on Denim Dollar Days.**

#### *Scout Uniforms*

Students actively participating in scouts are allowed to wear scout uniforms on meeting days (girls or boys).

### ***General Grooming Guidelines for ALL Grades (PK-8)***

The way a student dresses affects the way the student behaves and learns. To maintain an atmosphere that is conducive to learning, we expect our students to be neat, clean, tidy, and modest in appearance. Hairstyles for boys and girls should meet the standards of good taste for the classroom.

- Boys' hair length must be above the collar, must not cover the ears, and may be just above the ears. Hair on top of the head, and overall, must be “tidy” and not excessively “bushy.” Also, for boys, devices to pull back or pull up hair are not permitted.
- Facial hair is not permitted and must be shaven.
- All students' bangs must be above the eyes.
- Severe haircuts and styles that are disruptive to the learning environment are not allowed (examples – “Mohawk” or extreme cut-in designs).
- Hair color must be of a natural color. (Girls may “highlight” their hair if the highlights are not an unusual color – for example, unusual colors might be pink, purple, green, orange, etc.)
- The teacher and/or principal will contact parents regarding their child's hairstyle when it is not approved or is inappropriate. Students may be sent home to remedy the situation.

Girls with pierced ears may wear a single stud, small ball earrings, or small religious earrings. Earrings may only be worn in the ear lobe. One earring per lobe is allowed. Boys are not allowed to wear earrings of any kind.

Body piercing and tattoos of any type are not allowed. Students may be asked to remove any jewelry that might be disruptive to the learning environment. Makeup, *nail polish, overly long or unique nail shapings/filings or artificial nails are not allowed*; however, minimal makeup in good taste is allowed with parent and staff approval *ONLY for girls in grades 6 - 8*. The principal is the final authority of what is appropriate. (*Girls may sometimes be allowed to wear “natural” or buff-colored nail polish.* Please ask the principal prior to doing so.)

#### **Jewelry should be minimal:**

- Religious jewelry is preferable.
- Large jewelry items (big earrings or hoops, excessive length or stone size) are not permitted due to safety concerns. Over-sized jewelry of any type is not allowed. Students should not wear “dangly” earrings due to safety concerns when playing.
- Small stones and jewels are permitted for bracelets, necklaces, earrings, and rings.

#### *Personal Grooming Requirements*

When girls reach a certain stage of development, modesty requires they should wear undergarments, no matter the age. Parents are asked to monitor their child's development and buy undergarments and bras for their female child so that classroom disruptions do not occur and embarrass the student or the class.

Both boys and girls, at certain times in their development, may need to be conscious of body odor. Usually by third grade, we begin discussing with students the need for deodorant. Please be mindful of your child's personal hygiene needs to avoid embarrassment and help him/her to remember to use specific products for different body odors that are natural to their bodies.

#### *Casual Dress Days*

Casual Dress days are announced in advance via email or Facebook and through separate handouts sent home. These particular days are usually reserved for Spring Picture Day or as rewards determined by the Principal. Casual Dress days are not wild, “free choice” days, but a more “casual dress” day. Parents should use caution when allowing their children to dress for Casual Dress Days. Not wearing appropriate shoes, socks, or clothing will be a dress code/uniform violation, even on these special days. Tennis shoes are a requirement for P.E.

Expectations for “Casual Dress Day” are as follows:

- **Not Permitted:** Tank tops, t-shirts with distasteful slogan/pictures, see-through tops, crop tops, halter tops, leggings as slacks, spandex, high heels, flip flops, and mini-skirts.
- Skirts are to be only 2 inches above the knee.
- **Boys and girls in PK3-PK4 ONLY** are permitted to wear shorts.
- **Girls in K-8 are not permitted to wear shorts of any kind (except p.e.),** but may wear capris that reach below the knee. Denim capris are acceptable on casual dress days **ONLY**.
- Shoes and socks must be worn (i.e., bobby socks, knee socks, ankle socks) and be visible above the ankle.
- Sandals are acceptable only on casual dress days, but must not be flip-flops and must have a back strap. (For students in grades PK-K, athletic shoes must be brought to school for p.e. and recess. If the student does not bring athletic shoes, he/she will not be permitted to play due to safety issues.)
- Clothes are to be in good taste. This includes no tight or see-through blouses, tight-fitting pants or skinny jeans, spandex, spaghetti straps, etc.
- Leggings may be worn on casual dress days, but also must be accompanied with an appropriate-length skirt or dress. Leggings may not be worn as slacks for a long t-shirt. Modesty is key.
- Pants/slacks should not have “exposure” holes. All rips and tears must be repaired and skin should not be evident in the hole or opening.
- Pajamas are not allowed on casual dress days. They will be allowed on special “PJ Days” only.
- For students in **PK3-4<sup>th</sup> grades**, “wedges” and heels are not appropriate or safe – these shoes are not permitted.

### *Dress Code Violations*

Parents are responsible for student compliance with the dress code of SHCS. Faculty members share the responsibility for enforcement. The school reserves the right to decide whether a student's grooming is in accordance with the school's high standards. Because the campus values tradition and high ideals, those students in violation of the uniform and personal appearance code are given notice of the violation. Generally, warnings will be given to offending students. Then consequences to uniform violations will be earned. The consequences of a violation to the dress code are as follows:

- Written notice of violation will be sent home and the parent/student pays the required \$10.00 fee. Parents may be required to pick their child up from school so that the student can change into the appropriate uniform for school.
- For junior high students, each subsequent uniform violation after the second one will result in a discipline referral.

## **EMERGENCIES AND EMERGENCY DRILLS: CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY**

### *General Crisis Management Guidelines*

Catholic Schools within the Archdiocese are required to have a written comprehensive Crisis Management Plan (CMP) on file. It is updated annually. Each faculty and staff member receives a copy of the CMP and should be familiar with it. Evacuation drills and lock-down procedures should be practiced at least twice per semester in the day school. Drills are also practiced in the after-care program and in the church.

When an emergency occurs and the teacher/faculty member is the only adult present, he/she should call 9-1-1 as soon as possible. Health emergencies should be handled quickly and calmly.

Should an emergency necessitate the closing of school, the school day will need to be “made up.” Notification of this make-up day will be provided to parents, staff and students prior to the day. (Because we count “days” for school attendance, SHCS usually has to make up a day of school if it is closed. Other campuses who count “minutes” fall under different guidelines.)

### *Local Emergency Call System*

The school has an emergency call system by which parents and staff can be notified in the event of any emergency (if updated phone numbers and emails are on file). The Immediate Response Information System (IRIS), a high-speed notification and response service, electronically sends routine, priority and emergency messages from school officials to school contacts.

#### *Release of Students During Disasters*

In the event of a major disaster, (chemical leak or hazardous material situation, SWAT team presence, weapons on campus, etc.) **school will not be dismissed** and children will remain under the supervision of school authorities until the campus is deemed ready to release students. Students are to be released only according to a predetermined plan and only to persons authorized by parents.

#### *Emergency Drills: Fire/Disaster/Severe Weather*

##### *Fire Drills*

Fire drills are held in accordance with the Pearland Fire Department regulations. These drills are worked out with the faculty and the Fire Department to ensure safe and orderly evacuation and precautionary measures.

We are required to conduct fire drills as often as required from the Fire Marshall (usually one per semester). Each teacher must have posted in his/her room the planned evacuation route. In the case that the classroom exit is obstructed, classes must leave by an alternate exit. Students are instructed in the proper procedures for fire and all drills, including leaving in an orderly manner, silence, and speediness. Warning alarms are accompanied by a voice directing inhabitants to vacate the building.

##### *Lock Down or Intruder Drills*

We have periodic lock down drills or other crisis management drills to ensure safe and orderly procedures in case of a crisis. These drills are not intended to frighten children, but to prepare them for emergency situations. Occasionally, intruder drills will also be conducted in the church after mass.

##### *Posted Emergency Routes*

Every classroom and office area used by staff or students should have a visible floor plan indicating the exit route to be used for emergencies.

##### *Severe Weather, Hurricanes, Pandemic Closures and Other School Closures*

SHCS will follow Pearland I.S.D. inclement weather decisions. If Pearland closes, SHCS will close. However, if PISD is delayed in making a decision, SHCS will broadcast our campus weather-related decision on local media outlets, including social media. Also, we will consider that we are not a “neighborhood” school and realize that many families drive in from other areas to reach us. Safety will be our primary consideration.

The closing of school due to a pandemic outbreak will be determined by the local public health agency, the Archdiocese and state government mandates. Closures will be broadcast to parents.

##### *Severe/Inclement Weather Drills*

Drills for severe/inclement weather are also held periodically. In case of severe or dangerous weather conditions, SHCS will follow Pearland Independent School District closings. Parents should listen to local news stations for any school closings. Also, check our campus web page or Facebook page. An IRIS alert may also be sent.

If a tornado warning is in effect in the locality of our school, students will be moved to a safe place, preferably away from exterior doors and windows. Students will be kept inside, away from windows/glass and in an interior hallway on the lowest floor. Students will be directed to sit on the floor facing a wall, in a “duck and cover” position – head between raised knees, clasped hands covering the head and neck area.

When the Pearland ISD remains closed for an extended period of time, our school office will attempt to advise these news stations about closings and re-openings:

- Channel 2 – NBC
- Channel 9 - FOX
- Channel 11 – CBS
- Channel 13 – ABC
- Radio 740AM - KTRH

### **ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

SHCS students have many opportunities for enrichment including the following:

- Academic Electives and Academic Competitions/Tournaments (grades 5-8)
- Accelerated Reader (grades 1-8)
- After school classes (with certified teachers)
- Archdiocesan Spelling Bee (grades 3-8)
- Art Club (grades K-8)
- Athletics (grades 5-8)
- Camp Kappe School for Environmental Education (5th graders)
- Cheer (grades 2-5)
- Chess Club (grades 3-8)
- Choir (grades 3-8)
- National Junior Honor Society
- Robotics/STREAM classes (after school and during specials for PK-5th)
- STREAM nights

### **EXTRA- AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

*Eligibility to Participate in Clubs or Sports*

Only those students enrolled in our in-person, day school are eligible to participate in school clubs or the athletic program.

*Athletics and Athletic Booster Clubs*

Students are only eligible to participate on our school's sport teams consistent with their biological sex (as stated on the birth certificate).

Students in the upper grades (**grades 5-8**) may choose to participate in our athletic programs, where a variety of sports are optional. If students choose to participate, parent permission and a health exam are required.

Transportation to competitive events is not provided by SHCS. Students will participate in after-school practices approximately two times per week, in addition to game days one time per week (usually).

At this level, students are taught proper game skills and team-building skills. The goal of athletics in the middle school is not to "showcase" extraordinary athletes, but to allow all students an opportunity to play sports and participate. More competitive athletic competitions are expected at the high school level.

For girls in **grades 2-3-4-5**, a "Spirit Squad" (Saint-sations) may be offered. Students are taught by a certified teacher to respect competition, learn team-building skills, and also learn basic pep squad routines for cheering. Please note that staff volunteers are needed for this activity.

We encourage parents to support their children in both their academic, spiritual, and athletic endeavors. Athletic booster clubs are volunteer parent organizations established to support students in athletic programs. Typically, booster clubs raise funds for student athletes and the school. Middle school booster club funds are managed differently from high school booster club funds. If any booster clubs are established at SHCS, all booster club

funds will be deposited into a school account and managed by the principal or Athletic Director. While booster club parents are encouraged to make suggestions regarding the expenditure of these funds, the discretion for spending relies totally with the school principal and event sponsors. Booster parents are expected to model the highest ideals of the Christian Code of Conduct.

**From the Archdiocesan Handbook:**

“All funds raised by local parent/teacher groups shall be approved by the Principal or Pastor and used only for the benefit of the school community and for the reasonable and necessary operating expenses of the groups. The operation of all auxiliary programs including, but not limited to, booster clubs and parent groups remain under the jurisdiction of the school. Funds will be deposited with the school. Expenditures of these funds must be approved by the Principal or Pastor.”

*Academic Activities/Competitions*

Generally, beginning in grade 3, students have an option to join and participate in several academic competitions. For the elementary students, they may have the choice of Spelling Bee, Chess Club, Art Club, and Elementary Robotics. Students in grades 5-8 have more rigorous competitions, which may include Quiz Bowl or other academic activities. All activities are optional and may necessitate an additional participation fee. Transportation will not be provided for Saturday or after-school practices and/or events.

**FIELD DAY**

Field Day events incorporate team-building skills for all students. All students may participate in this fun-filled day if they have earned the right to do so. Because safety is the utmost concern for all students, and due to the physical activities of Field Day events, we ask parent volunteers not to bring younger siblings. Volunteers are welcome to work the concession stand. Students must have appropriate behavior during the school year (less than 5 discipline referrals) to participate in Field Day (a one half day event).

This year, our field day for all students will be scheduled on the same day. The morning will be devoted for PK3 – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, while the afternoon will be dedicated for 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grades.

Only pre-approved volunteers will be permitted on campus grounds for Field Day. Walk-up volunteers will not be accepted. Interested parents should sign up for the Field Day Committee when the opportunity is presented, if that is an interest.

**FIELD TRIPS**

- Field trips are taken to enrich the instructional program by taking advantage of the educational resources of the community and supplement classroom work.
- The campus will follow the 6:1 student/adult ratio for all field trip events requiring transportation to off-campus activities. The school accepts no liability or responsibility for accidents or events that may occur during the course of the field trip, including transporting of students to and from the event.
- No student has an absolute right to a field trip; excessive disciplinary referrals or major behavior infractions may result in a child losing his/her right to a field trip.
- A child who is not allowed by the school to attend the field trip must attend school that day; supervision will be provided by a substitute teacher and parents must pay the necessary fee for the substitute teacher.
- Parents will be requested to sign a field trip permission slip to indicate their willingness for their child to participate in class trips (forms will be sent home prior to the trip and include a statement removing the school from liability).
- According to state law and TCCB ED requirements, children are not allowed to attend a field trip without the completed field trip permission form from the parents or guardians. No exceptions will be made. Permission cannot be given over the telephone.



- Some field trips may require payment of an additional fee. Financial restraints should not keep a child from attending a field trip and should be discussed with the administration (scholarships can be granted, dependent upon need).
- Teachers shall coordinate field trip plans and arrange for additional parent chaperones. Chaperones are not permitted to bring siblings on field trips. All chaperones must be trained in SAFE HAVEN.
- Student attire will be specified for each trip.

Parents/Chaperones who participate on field trips:

- Must have attended a SAFE HAVEN workshop and have a current Criminal History Check on file.
- Chaperones must be able to devote their full attention to the supervision of students. For this reason, designated chaperones are not permitted to bring other children on field trips. Generally, the policy is that the younger children (siblings) are chronologically and mentally in requirement of a greater standard of care.
- Often, **parents who choose to visit at the location of the field trip may not be included in the group if they have purchased pre-paid tickets.** Visiting parents not serving as chaperones should also ensure that their presence and/or inclusion in the school group does not interfere with planned activities for the school group.
- Visiting parents not serving as chaperones are asked not to bring siblings because this often becomes a disruption to the trip.

### **FIRST FRIDAY BREAKFAST**

It has been a tradition that all students receive a breakfast snack and milk in the school as part of our First Friday Breakfast (donuts). The students receive this breakfast after the First Friday Mass each month. During Lent, an alternate food to the usual First Friday Breakfast snack may be served. First Friday Breakfast is not a party, it is an HSA Volunteer Committee. Therefore, volunteers will be limited and should not bring siblings.

### **FUNDRAISING**

To provide a quality Catholic education for children, the school must have the necessary funds to provide the best-qualified teachers possible, as well as current technology and textbooks. Tuition does not cover the cost per pupil to educate our students. SHCS respectfully requests positive parental participation in required school fundraising activities and in serving the school. The school holds fundraisers such as a “Movie Night,” Catholic Mutual Raffle sale, and the annual gala. Parents are expected to contribute by buying, selling, or contributing at least \$300 net for one child or \$400 net per family per school year. **One half of this net obligation is due on or before December 31 and the other one half is due after gala, NO EXCEPTIONS).** Parents may opt for a buy out of their fundraising responsibilities. To buy out, parents should contact the business office to pay the required fundraising amount at one time. Since St. Helen Catholic Church has been generous in investing in our school, we ask that prior to gala, each family buy or sell \$50.00 of raffle tickets per family for the St. Helen Bazaar in June (if held). This is not in addition to the tickets the parish mails each family. This \$50.00 does not count towards the fundraising obligation for the school.

Fundraisers are approved in advance by the principal. A fundraising calendar is maintained in the administrative offices and posted annually on the school’s website.

Should the school be mandated to close due to unforeseen circumstances, any funds paid to the school for potential fundraisers might not be reimbursed to the parents. For example, the cost of a Casual Dress Week pass may not be reimbursed to the family due to the time spent in recording payments and reimbursements.

### **FUNERALS**

Sometimes, the school is asked to provide altar servers for funerals in the church. Parents will be asked for permission and students will be supervised moving back and forth to the church. Students may count this time as a service hour/work of mercy, but may not accept remuneration if they choose to use the time as service.

Families, like our school family, sometimes experience the grief of death and losing a loved one. When family members or staff pass away, our practice is not to bring entire classes to funeral services. However, if parents wish to have their children attend funeral services, they may check the children out from class and accompany them to services.

## **GRADING/REPORT CARDS**

**Special Note:** During an ongoing pandemic/epidemic and possible remote learning, grades will be earned in the typical manner. All current policies in effect for in-person learning will apply to remote learners, per the Catholic Schools Office and TCCBED. Individual teachers will explain assessment procedures.

**Students (grades 1-8)** receive Report Cards quarterly (every nine weeks). The teacher is the determinant of student grades based upon student work; the principal may not require a teacher to change a grade, as long as the teacher entered and computed the grade according to policy. **Students in grades PK3-4 and K** will not receive their first report card until the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> 9-week period (January 2025). Progress reports will be given, as needed.

### *Report Card Conferences*

- Parents are encouraged to participate in the scheduled fall report card conference, usually after an early release day, from 1-4:00 P.M. (Parent conferences may be held virtually, as necessary.)
- Report cards are issued, beginning the first 9-week period, for grades 1-8.
- For PK3-4 and Kinder, parents will be invited to progress report conferences. A conference is scheduled (at the end of the first 9-weeks) for parents of students in PK and K when a verbal explanation of the student's progress is provided instead of a formal report card at this time.
- A formal, written report is issued for the remaining quarters for PK and K students, beginning with the 18<sup>th</sup> week or the end of the second 9-week reporting period.
- Please see below for the marking code related to report cards.

### *Weighted grades*

**In grades 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>, grade weighting and grade computation occurs in this manner:**

- 10% Homework/Participation
- 40% Tests/Projects
- 50% Daily Grades/Quiz Grades (quizzes are limited)
- Students will earn at least 2 test grades per subject per 9-week period.
- Most subject areas will have 2 grades per week. Exceptions to this policy may occur with Science, Social Studies, and Technology due to the variable nature of instructional requirements.

**In grades 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, grade weighting and grade computation occurs in this manner:**

- 10% Class Participation
- 20% Homework
- 30% Daily Grades/Quiz Grades (worksheets, labs, puzzles, quizzes; quizzes are limited in 4<sup>th</sup> grade)
- 40% Tests/Projects
- Students will earn at least 2 test grades per subject per 9-week period.
- Most subject areas will have 2 grades per week. Exceptions may occur; for example, English/Writing will most likely not have 2 grades per week.

### *Elective grades and grade weighting*

**In grades 6-8, students participate in electives classes. For most elective classes, grade computation occurs in the manner listed below. Some specialized classes (for example, Engineering) will have a different grade computation method and the teacher will apprise parents of the procedures at the beginning of each semester.**

- 40% Tests/Projects
- 60% Participation/In-Class Assignments
- In most electives, students will have 2 grades per week posted, although exceptions may occur (PE, for example).
- Students will earn at least 2 test/project grades per subject per 9-week period.

### *Test Definitions*

- **Especially for students in grades 3-8**, the terms “pop quiz” and “major/unit/chapter test” are used frequently.
- **Pop quizzes** are used to measure a student’s attention to and immediate acquisition and progressive learning of the concepts presented in the classroom, notes, materials read, homework completed, etc.
  - Pop quizzes **do not require** lengthy test review and studying, but may need a simple review of notes or textbook materials.
  - Pop quizzes count as daily grades and can indicate if students are attentive in class and are completing classwork and homework. They are NOT considered a major test grade.
  - Because pop quizzes are not considered major tests, students with accommodations will be expected to take the quiz in their usual classrooms.
- **Major tests or unit/chapter tests** are used to measure a student’s cumulative learning of major concepts and units of study.
  - In general, students should study for major tests by reviewing materials from class, notes, textbook selections, etc.
  - Studying for a major test requires more time than a brief study/review for a pop quiz.
  - Major tests are weighted differently (see percentages provided above in “weighted grades.”)

***The marking code on the Report Cards for grades PK-8th grade is as follows:***

### ***PK3 and PK4 Academics***

|    |              |
|----|--------------|
| NT | Not Yet      |
| S  | Sometimes    |
| C  | Consistently |
| NA | Not Assessed |

### ***Kindergarten Academics***

|    |              |
|----|--------------|
| NT | Not Yet      |
| S  | Sometimes    |
| C  | Consistently |

### ***1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade Academics***

|          |                   |
|----------|-------------------|
| 100-93   | A = Outstanding   |
| 92-85    | B = Above Average |
| 84-77    | C = Average       |
| 76-70    | D = Below Average |
| Below 70 | F = Failing       |

### ***Conduct Grades PK3 - 8th***

|   |               |                   |
|---|---------------|-------------------|
| E | (93-100)      | Excellent         |
| S | (77-92)       | Satisfactory      |
| N | (70-76)       | Needs Improvement |
| U | (69 or below) | Unsatisfactory    |

### *Conduct Grading*

Conduct is to be marked using an E-U system (see above). All classrooms must have classroom rules and consequences for behavior. ***Each grade level will send home a description of how conduct grades are calculated for parent information. (Students should respond appropriately to redirection from the teacher during periods of remote learning – if necessary – or conduct grades will be impacted.)***

*Discipline Grading (the below standards are for students in **grades 3-8 only**; students in grades PK3-2nd grade have another discipline grading policy communicated by their teacher, appropriate for each grade level):*

- 0-1 referrals                                      **E** on report card
- 2-3 referrals                                      **S** on report card
- 4 referrals                                        **N** on report card
- 5 or more                                         **U** on report card

(Additional referrals may result in the student’s withdrawal from campus. For more information, see section entitled, “Discipline of Students.”)

### *FACTS – Electronic Gradebook*

St. Helen Catholic School uses a version of an electronic parent communication and student management system called FACTS. FACTS allows you, as parents, to view your child’s grades after they are entered by the teacher. ALL families will be given new enrollment information for FACTS access either prior to or soon after the start of the new school year. It is the expectation of the campus and each teacher that parents are responsible for monitoring student grades on FACTS. For many students, parents allow them access to the system for them to build responsibility for their grades and actions.

FACTS will be Internet based. If you are unable to access it, you may need to check your computer settings because the school is unable to assist you with this issue.

- Students in grades 1-8 will have their grades and attendance posted on FACTS.
- Students in PK3-PK4 and Kindergarten will only have attendance posted. **No grades will be posted there.**
- Attendance will be posted by teachers daily, even during remote instruction, if necessary.

### *Grade Postings*

- In most instances, teachers should post grades within one week of receiving the assignment. An exception to this one-week recommendation is with major projects or reports. These assignments could take longer to grade.
- Grades will be posted at least once per week by teachers (except for elementary p.e. and music, some middle school electives, and PK-K classes).
- Teachers should post a minimum of two (2) grades per week in each subject area taught. There are some exceptions noted above. Other exceptions, for example, could be the middle school English/Composition classes. Due to the nature of grading student writing samples, it could take longer

for the writing samples to be graded and posted. Another exception to the two grades per week policy would be the category of major grades/projects.

- The two (2) grades per week requirement may be posted in the participation, homework, or daily grades/quizzes categories. Except for the category of major grades/projects/tests, all other categories will have more than two grades posted by the end of the 9-week period.
- The category of major grades/projects/tests will have a minimum of two (2) grades per 9-week period entered for grade averages.

**The principal does not have the right to ask teachers to change grades.** If the teacher has followed all grading policies, his/her grade assignment of what a student has earned will stand.

## GRADUATION CEREMONIES

- Students in grade 8, who have passed all required courses, are in good standing with disciplinary issues and with the Business Office, and/or who are being promoted to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, will participate in the school's graduation ceremony.
- The grade 8 graduation ceremony is held in the morning in the church (usually a 10:00 A.M. special baccalaureate mass).
- The 8<sup>th</sup> grade homeroom teacher and/or class sponsor will provide families with additional information regarding graduation during the Spring semester.
- Parents will be billed a **minimum of \$150** in the fall to assist with the costs of graduation and the reception. (If a scholarship is needed, please contact the 8<sup>th</sup> grade sponsor and/or the principal immediately.)
- Students who are not being promoted to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade will not be permitted to participate in the graduation ceremony as a graduate.
- Students who have been suspended, expelled, or assigned to home study may not be able to participate in the graduation ceremony as a graduate.
- **The graduation reception will be sponsored by the current 7<sup>th</sup> grade class, the incoming 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Expenses will be limited to reasonable amounts. Because the reception is mid-morning, no meal will be expected or offered on campus or on the church grounds. Light refreshments (cake/punch) may be expected.**
- Students in Pre-K or Kindergarten do not participate in a graduation ceremony because they are just beginning their career at SHCS, not "graduating" or moving on to another phase of their education.

## GRADUATION TRIP

- SHCS participates in an annual tradition of taking the 8<sup>th</sup> graders to Washington, DC, for their graduation trip.
- In an effort to be inclusive and have every student participate, HSA donates funds and students are also expected to fundraise.
- **Families are expected to "earn points" towards the HSA donated monies.** Those stipulations include earning service points, participating in fundraising activities, and being the sole member of the family who attends the trip if you request a "scholarship" (i.e. if your child needs a scholarship due to financial hardship, other family members would not be expected to attend due to the same financial hardship).
- Scholarships may be available to those who need assistance, with stipulations for that assistance.
- All families, whether they are receiving scholarships or not, will be required to earn service/donation points in order to receive any fundraising monies or HSA funds toward their trip.
- In summary, even students needing financial assistance may need to raise some of their trip costs themselves.

## HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATION (HSA)

When a student's registration is accepted, parents automatically become members of the Home and School Association (HSA). This organization consists of parents, teachers, clergy, and any parishioners interested in SHCS and the enhancement of our students' potential. We encourage all parents to become active participants in the HSA to provide the necessary link between home and school. The HSA also provides valuable opportunities to earn the required 25-hour service hours (see this Handbook for Service Hours/Works of Mercy).

### *HSA Fees*

Each year, HSA Room Parents organize parties and refreshments for students. All classes also participate in class fundraising efforts by preparing a Class Project (PK3 – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and 8<sup>th</sup> grade) or a Class Sponsored Experience (3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> grades) and themed baskets for auction at the annual gala. The gala is the school's premiere fundraising event and will be held in the spring semester each year.

To help cover expenses associated with the class fundraising efforts, as well as the class parties and Field Day, each child will contribute \$40. The funds collected for HSA will go directly to the Class Project (\$10), the Class Basket (\$10), Field Day Snacks (\$5), and Class Parties (\$15). Each family will be billed directly through FACTS. Please contact the school office if you have any questions or concerns regarding payment.

From the Archdiocesan Handbook:

“All funds raised by local parent/teacher groups shall be approved by the Principal or Pastor and used only for the benefit of the school community and for the reasonable and necessary operating expenses of the groups. The operation of all auxiliary programs including, but not limited to, booster clubs and parent groups remain under the jurisdiction of the school. Funds will be deposited with the school. Expenditures of these funds must be approved by the Principal or Pastor.”

## **HOMEWORK**

Homework assignments are given to reinforce the material taught to the students during the day and to foster a habit of independent study. (In general, homework is student practice of previously taught material.) The student is responsible for written and study assignments. Parents cooperate by providing the necessary quiet time and a designated location for homework. It is especially important for parents to encourage their children to put forth their best effort and together examine assignments. But it is equally important to allow the child to complete his/her own work and build stamina and independence.

Assignment/student planner notebooks are used in grades 3-8 to record class work and homework assignments. These notebooks encourage students to learn responsibility and organizational skills. In many grades, they are to be signed by the parents. It is essential that parents allow students to be responsible for their own homework assignments and consider the consequences when assignments are not done. Grades PK-2 use “Peek of the Week” or some other form of communication to inform parents of upcoming assignments, events, and projects.

**Parents are strongly discouraged from returning to school to collect forgotten student assignments.** Please allow the student to accept responsibility for his/her own behavior and actions by allowing them to experience natural consequences for their own behaviors. By allowing the child to accept responsibility, parents are not only teaching a valuable “life skill,” they will effectively eliminate the need to return to school for forgotten items in the future. The campus is not open for parents or students to enter after 3:30 p.m.

The following times reflect the **AVERAGE** timeframe for homework at each grade level. If your child is experiencing difficulty completing homework assignments in the recommended time allotments, please contact the teacher immediately for problem-solving. It is critical that parents alert the teachers when their child is unable to complete work in the allotted time frame so that adjustments might be made and problem-solving occur.

*Homework Time Allotment:* Please note, if your child is in any of our four AP/Honors classes in grades 6-8, he/she will most likely need to plan for additional time to be spent on homework, including studying.

**The following homework times are approximations only:**

- Grade PK                    5-10 minutes
- Grade K                    15-30 minutes
- Grades 1-2                30 minutes
- Grades 3-4                45 minutes
- Grades 5                    60 minutes
- Grades 6-8                90 minutes (more for AP/Honors classes)

*Late Work Policy – Homework and Special Projects*

- When students do not complete an assignment in class, it may be assigned for homework.
- Homework, and all other assignments, is to be submitted on time. This generally means the beginning of the class period. However, homework assignments will be accepted until the end of the class period, or as noted by the teacher. Homework is either submitted on the day it is due or the student earns a 0.
- Homework will be weighted as:
  - 10% of the student's 9-week grade in grades 1-3;
  - 20% of the student's 9-week grade in grades 4-8:
- For special or long-term projects, it is expected that some of the completion work will be done as homework.
- For each day late on most other assignments, each individual teacher will determine the points deducted from the final grade. (This policy will be communicated to parents at the beginning of the year.)
- Variances to this policy may occur in some middle school classes, but the teacher will communicate "late work" policies to families at the beginning of the year.
- ***Many teachers do not accept "late work" at all; it is their discretion to do so or not.***

**HONOR ROLL**

- The Honor Roll is awarded to students in grades 3-8 who maintain their academic grades in **all subject** categories (including p.e. and other electives). A student receiving an N or U conduct grade in any class, including extracurricular and elective classes, is not eligible for any Honor Roll.
- Honor Roll is not awarded to students in PK-2<sup>nd</sup> grade due to the nature of student work at those levels (it is generally dependent on teacher assistance and guidance). Much of the work conducted in these grades is not independent work – but is dependent upon the teacher.
- Parents should note that disciplinary/conduct grades do not impact academic grades. However, **conduct grades could impact the recognition of academic grades** – for example, Honor Roll recognition.
- The **Highest Honor Roll** is awarded to students who maintain all A's in all academic subjects, and all E's in conduct, p.e., music, and other electives.
  - For example, for students who have all A's in core subjects, but an S in p.e. or conduct, they will not qualify for Highest Honor Roll. They will instead qualify for High Honor Roll.
  - For each 9-week Highest Honor Roll designation, the previous 9-week period is reviewed.
  - For the end of year Highest Honor Roll award, the student is eligible only if he/she has been on the Highest Honor Roll **all four of the 9-week periods**.
  - Students achieving Highest Honor Roll for each 9-week period are not automatically included in the National Junior Honor Society. Many other factors for induction are considered besides academic prowess.
- The **High Honor Roll** is awarded to students who maintain all A's and B's in all academic subjects and either an E or a S in conduct for all four of the 9-week periods.

- For each 9-week High Honor Roll designation, the previous 9-week period is reviewed.
- For the end of year High Honor Roll award, the student is eligible only if he/she has been on the High Honor Roll all four of the 9-week periods.
- Students achieving High Honor Roll for each 9-week period are not automatically included in the National Junior Honor Society. Other factors for induction are considered besides academic prowess.

## HONOR SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

- To be admitted into and remain *active members* of the St. Helen Chapter of the National Junior Honor Society, students in grades 6-8 must exemplify all of the expected criteria for admittance:
  - Scholarship
  - Service
  - Leadership
  - Citizenship
  - Character
- For consideration of membership and to maintain membership, students must also meet certain grade requirements and complete an application packet. Grades and academic achievement are only one part of the qualifications for NJHS membership. Simply meeting the basic grade and conduct requirements does not automatically provide induction into NJHS. All of the criteria for NJHS admittance is considered. **Of special interest are the Service, Leadership, Citizenship, and Character qualities.**
- St. Helen's, our patron saint, charism is Service, and this category is critical for consideration into NJHS.
- Teacher sponsors are responsible for disseminating information about NJHS to students and for conducting monthly meetings.
- Induction ceremonies are held each spring.
- Lack of induction into NJHS is not open for grievances. The decisions of the sponsors and junior high team is final.
- More information is in the letters provided to students and parents at time of acceptance.

## HOT LUNCH PROGRAM

The school provides a nutritious hot lunch every day that meets general nutrition requirements of the state of Texas.

- The Cafeteria Manager and her staff cook meals on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. The school has contracts with local restaurants for Wednesdays and Fridays.
- If you choose not to participate in the school's lunch program, please provide your child an alternative meal for lunch. "Fast food" meals for your child may only be brought on Wednesdays or Fridays, the same day that purchasing students have this type of meal.
- If a student forgets his/her lunch, the school will immediately provide a sack lunch to your child and a lunch voucher will be sent home for payment (\$6 fee). Once a lunch is handed to your child, parents are obligated to pay the voucher. Additionally, **lunches brought to school for a child will not be delivered to the classroom due to limited office personnel to do so.** Students in grades K-8 will need to come to the office to pick up lunches, if forgotten.
- **Due to the increase in food costs, "hot lunch" meals and vendor meals will now cost \$6 each.**
- Lunch menus are emailed monthly to parents. Lunches are ordered and paid in advance online by the pre-determined deadline. **Late orders are not accepted.**
- Refunds for purchased pre-ordered meals cannot be given because menu items are ordered and purchased in advance. If a student is absent due to health reasons for a minimum of five days and misses at least five consecutive days of hot lunch, a credit is issued; however, a request must be made in writing.



If parents provide a sack lunch or vendor-purchased lunch for their children, **please note that carbonated or highly caffeinated beverages are not allowed.** Parents are also reminded that sugar-intake impacts student attention, behavior, and learning. Please refrain from sending too much of these items with your child to school.

**If you wish to send fast food to your child, please do so on Wednesday or Friday, when other students are eating this type of food.** (The school contracts with outside vendors on these days.) If students do bring a sack lunch from home, only milk, juice, or water is permitted.

There is a quick turnaround on receiving lunch orders so that the Cafeteria may order the correct amount of food. Most parents comply with the timeline on ordering lunches; however, some students do not order hot lunch through the lunch menu and pose additional issues for the cafeteria and for accounting. **On the issuance of ANY lunch voucher, the amount charged will now be \$6.** Students will not go hungry – a lunch will be provided for them.

Hot lunches will now be available on the first day of school. This is enabled because of the new online ordering system for lunch. Due to increases in food products, **lunch prices will now be \$6 per day.**

- Students may not bring glass containers or any carbonated or highly caffeinated beverages in their lunches.
- Also, the campus has a policy regarding the delivery of sack lunches to students. Often, students forget their sack lunches at home and a parent delivers lunch and leaves it in the school office. We have only a small office crew and we can get very busy during the day. **Lunches brought to school for a child will not be delivered to the classroom.** Students (K-8) will need to come to the reception desk to inquire about their lunches.
- Please be prepared to receive a lunch voucher if your child forgets his/her lunch at home, even if you deliver a lunch. Our recommendation would be to keep it simple and allow your child to purchase a lunch at school that day - it will save you a trip, also, and teach a valuable lesson!
- If your child forgets his/her lunch, please encourage him/her to tell the teacher, then go to the office to look for a possible lunch delivery from home. This will prevent a lunch voucher charge if parents have dropped off a lunch.
- If permitted on campus, lunch visitors are not permitted to “feed” the child he/she is visiting because we are promoting age-appropriate independence in all areas.

Lunch will NOT be served on early release days, so parents are encouraged to send a snack with their children. PK3, PK4, and Kinder parents are requested to send a sack lunch with their children on early release days since their usual lunch time is 10:30 A.M.

#### *Visitors/Guests at Lunch*

Visitors are welcomed to eat lunch in the cafeteria with grades K-8. PK3-PK4 eat their lunches in the classrooms, and parents are not permitted due to lack of space. **Two volunteers will be requested for lunch times in the cafeteria.**

#### **LIBRARY/RESOURCE CENTER**

The library is central to the campus’ total educational mission. As such, the library program is fully integrated into the curriculum, serving the school’s educational goals and objectives. The library program contributes fully to the educational process of the school and meets the library standards of the Texas Catholic Education Department and Cognia (accreditation agencies). The library offers both traditional resources and new technologies as teaching and learning tools. Resources in the library are consistent with Catholic traditions and values. Library services are available to students and staff throughout the instructional day. It is also accessible before and after school, with the schedule being established by the Library Manager. Grades K-8 students will have a library class experience at least one time per week. Students in grades PK will participate in a “library class” in their classrooms, with a mobile library. The Library Manager will instruct students on proper use and maintenance of the Library system.

## **PARENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM**

The SHCS Parent Ambassador Program is an HSA sponsored initiative. It was implemented to provide initial and ongoing guidance and support to new St. Helen families and their students. Through this program, new families are able to more easily access and gain understanding of school processes and procedures with support from their ambassador.

Parent ambassadors who volunteer in this program are seasoned families who volunteer to assist our new families with integrating into and joining our mission of growing students in “wisdom, age and grace.” The “veteran” family is paired with a new family and assists them with questions and solutions to common first year issues. This program is critical in merging new families with existing families, so as to create an advantageous environment for all within the school community.

## **PARENTAL RIGHTS AND NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS**

### *Buckley Amendment*

St. Helen Catholic School abides by Buckley Amendment provisions with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, the school will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the academic records and to other school-related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the school with an official copy of the court order and/or copy of the custody section of the divorce decree.

### *In Loco Parentis*

The Latin term “in loco parentis” means “in the place of a parent.” It refers to the legal responsibility of a person or organization (school, for example) to take on some of the functions and responsibilities of a parent. Legally, it allows schools to act in the best interests of the students as they see fit. All staff at St. Helen assume “in loco parentis” for students enrolled here. **By enrolling their children on campus, parents grant "in loco parentis" rights to the staff.** Parents will not be permitted to selectively remove “in loco parentis” rights from some staff members when the parents disagree with the staff member’s decisions regarding their child.

## **PARKING**

No child is to be left in an unattended car. Children are unsafe left in a parked car that is running. Park your car in designated spaces, not under the carport/portico. When it is raining, you may drive under the portico to pick up or drop off students at times not designated as drop off or pick up for the student body. Unattended and “running” cars are a serious safety concern.

## **PARTIES**

- Classroom parties are allowed only for four (4) occasions during the year.
- The permissible parties are for All Saints' Day, Christmas, St. Valentine's Day, and the year-end party. The Principal will announce any other parties in advance.
- Siblings may not come to parties with parents who are volunteering. Parent volunteers are needed for supervision and will not be able to effectively supervise both siblings and classroom students.
- If parents come to classroom parties as visitors ONLY, siblings may come.

### *Party Invitations – Private Events*

- Party invitations may not be given out at school unless all students in the class or all students of the same gender in the class are included. If that is impossible, then invitations must be mailed or distributed off campus.
- This includes not handing out invitations before or after school, unless all students in the classroom are invited.

- Christian behavior and proper etiquette, as well as good manners, requires that those children/adults hosting or attending the party refrain from discussing those parties at school. Not only is it hurtful to those who were not included, it is considered un-Christian and ill-mannered.

### **PERFECT ATTENDANCE AWARDS**

- Perfect attendance awards, along with all other school awards, are provided at the end of the school year.
- To qualify for a perfect attendance award, students must have NO tardies and NO absences.
- Parents should carefully monitor FACTS for accuracy in the reporting of tardies and absences, and notify the school immediately if an error is suspected.
- When a child leaves early for a doctor's appointment, the doctor's note should be presented to the school the very next day so as not to be counted against attendance.
- **Perfect attendance awards will not be granted to students who check out of school early for trips, vacations, etc. Seven (7) hours+ of instruction is required in order to have a full day of school counted.**
- Attendance will be counted for "in person" school and all remote learning models, if necessary.

### **PETITIONS**

All petitions and requests (students or parents) are to be pre-approved through the Principal's office. No petition is permitted to be circulated without prior approval. Doing so may result in withdrawal.

### **PICTURES FOR SCHOOL**

- Individual school pictures are taken in the fall for all grades.
- Mass uniforms are required for fall individual yearbook pictures.
- Christmas and Easter pictures are also offered to students who desire to take them (these are optional).
- Class pictures (of students in their homeroom classes) and club pictures, including sports, are taken in the spring.
- Only PK3, PK4, and K students will have a casual dress day for spring pictures (although school uniforms may be worn).
- Eighth (8<sup>th</sup>) graders will also take graduation pictures in early spring. More information on appropriate dress for graduation wear and pictures for graduates will be sent home later in the school year.

### **PROBATION - ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIORAL**

- All newly enrolled students are **conditionally accepted with a status of academic and behavioral probation** for the first nine-week quarter.
- At the end of the first quarter, the administration may send a parent letter indicating the conclusion or extension of the probationary period. This procedure is also followed for students enrolling mid-year. Any student may be put on probation at any time during the school year for academic or behavioral reasons.
- A student may be placed on probation for conduct that, in the principal's judgment, warrants such action. Such conduct may take place on or off campus and may include, but is not limited to, relatively serious violations of school rules and continued misconduct. The school is not required to place a student on probation prior to a more severe disciplinary action being taken, up to and including expulsion.
- If a child or parent is placed on probation or home-study, the decision is final and families may not partake in the grievance policy.
- The principal reserves the right to put the student on probation or to suspend, place on home-study, expel or withdraw, as deemed appropriate to the circumstances.

- The pastor and Superintendent of Schools will be consulted in cases of expulsion. Their decision in all of these cases will be final.

## **PROBLEM AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION; GRIEVANCE PROCESS**

### *Scope and Statement of Non-Discrimination*

No person shall be discriminated against because of filing or participating in this grievance process, and no reprisals of any kind shall be taken against any person because of participation in this complaint process.

### *Archdiocesan Appeals Process and Grievance Policy*

The purpose of this process is to provide parents/guardians of students enrolled in any parish or regional school within the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston (AGH) with an orderly procedure or the equitable and prompt resolution of complaints. This process is intended to resolve disputes through subsidiarity, at the lowest possible level, in a cooperative, conciliatory Christian atmosphere.

Although the Archdiocese endeavors to establish a harmonious Christian atmosphere within its schools, it recognizes that misunderstandings or differences of opinion sometimes occur. Ideally, such matters can be resolved informally by a parent or guardian meeting with the immediate authoritative person to discuss the matter. If, however, the matter is not then settled to the parent or guardian's satisfaction, the parent or guardian may institute a formal grievance.

Every effort shall be made to resolve situations so that the education process can continue. Before differences become formalized grievances, both parties shall make every effort to resolve problems through open communication. If a parent seeks resolution of a situation relating to a student, the following steps should be taken:

- The parents should request a conference with the teacher to check their understanding and try to resolve the problem.
- If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved with the teacher, the parent may then discuss the issue with the teacher and principal jointly.
- After discussion with the teacher and principal, if the case is still unresolved, the complainant may then schedule an appointment and meet with the pastor. If no resolution is found, the individual should present the grievance in accordance with the Archdiocesan Appeals Process (Contact the Catholic Schools Office for appropriate forms).
- The grievance process is not intended to be adversarial in nature and **neither party to the grievance shall be represented by legal counsel during any phase of the process.** This process replaces all previous processes and statements regarding the institution and processing of complaints at both the local and AGH levels.

### *Exclusions from the Grievance Policy*

- A parent who has withdrawn their student from the school may not avail themselves of this grievance process.
- Students or parents who are placed on “probation” for academic or disciplinary concerns may not avail themselves of the grievance process.
- During a behavioral/conduct review by school, local, state, or federal officials, a student may be placed on Home Study/Extended Leave. A student who is accused of serious wrongdoing may be placed in this home-study/extended leave program (under the direction of the parent/guardian), pending adjudication or an investigation into the matter. The length of time of the home-study/extended leave program may vary for each child/offense, depending upon the amount of time remaining in the school year, the type of infraction, and other factors. These absences will be excused, and the student will have an opportunity to complete assignments without reduced credit during the leave. The parent/guardian will be responsible for the education of the student. A parent/guardian may not avail themselves of the grievance process when a student is placed on Home Study/Extended Leave.

## *Grievance Process*

### *Level One – Informal Resolution/Conciliation (Campus Level)*

- Prior to following a formal grievance process, the parent/guardian shall meet with the person with whom he/she is having a dispute.
- If the concern is not resolved, he/she should move to the person's direct supervisor in an effort to find resolution.
- If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved with the person's direct supervisor, the parent/guardian should request a meeting with the principal.
- If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved with the principal, the parent/guardian should request a meeting with the pastor and principal.
- If the pastor agrees with the principal's decision, the pastor may decline to meet.
- If the pastor agrees to meet, but the matter is not then settled satisfactorily, the parent/guardian may appeal the decision to Level Two after the parent/guardian has informed the pastor and principal of their intent to do so.
- **Parents should note that Pastors make the final decision in grievance matters, no matter the recommendation of the Catholic Schools Office.**

### *Level Two – Grievance Committee (Catholic Schools Office/AGH)*

- If a satisfactory resolution is not reached at Level One, the parent/guardian may appeal, in writing, to the Level Two Grievance Committee.
- To begin the Level Two process, the parent/guardian shall contact the CSO at 713-741-8704 to request the Level Two Appeal/Grievance Form.
- The parent/guardian has five (5) working days following the receipt of the Level Two form to complete it and return it to the Catholic Schools Office via an email addressed to [csogeneral@archgh.org](mailto:csogeneral@archgh.org), along with any additional materials or documentation the parent/guardian would like reviewed by the committee.
- The CSO for the AGH has established a Parent/Guardian Grievance committee for the purpose of hearing complaint appeals from Level One of the process. The committee reviewing the complaint will consist of an assistant superintendent from the CSO and two AGH principals.
- Other steps, the complete process, and the appeal/review functions of this grievance policy will be explained in the documents sent by the CSO to the parent/guardian requesting a Level Two grievance.

## *Procedural Issues*

While the grievance process is designed to accommodate all parent/student disputes that may arise within the AGH, it is understood that some situations require flexibility. Any issues regarding the use of Level One or Two forms and processes, or the appropriate administrator at those levels, shall be resolved by the Archdiocesan Superintendent of Catholic Schools.

## *Computation of Time for Complaints*

The time limits of the complaint process shall be based on working days, i.e., Monday through Friday. If any of the timeline falls on school holidays or breaks, the timeline shall be extended to add the corresponding number of working days to the timeline. Time limits may require flexibility and, if necessary, may be modified at the discretion of the CSO. Legal representation is not permitted by any party for any step of the grievance.

## **RECESS PERIODS/SOCIAL TIME**

Research has shown that short, frequent breaks improve academic retention. Besides the short breaks provided during the school day during typical transitions, students also have an assigned recess period in grades PK-8. PK3 students sometimes have two (2) recess periods per day – one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Students in grades PK4-8 usually have one recess period/social time per day, at the time scheduled by the teacher. Also,

students in PK-5 have assigned p.e. periods during the regular school day. All recess periods are supervised by adult employees.

## **RECORDS RETENTION**

The Records Retention Schedule is provided to SHCS by the AGH and TCCBED. The purpose of the schedule is to assist administrators by identifying and describing some of the generic types of records created by Catholic elementary schools and by providing suggested retention periods. In general, this schedule sets minimum retention periods for records series commonly found in Texas Catholic Schools. Administrators may decide to keep some records series for longer retention periods. The Records Retention Schedule is managed by the school's Records Management Coordinator. Please contact the school office for specific questions.

## **RELEASE OF REPORT CARD, RECORDS REQUESTS, SUBPOENAS, AND SCHOOL RECORDS**

- To receive school records, students and parents need to reconcile all obligations before the end of each nine weeks, as well as the end of the school year; i.e., discipline, financial, make-up work, library fines, return of all library books, textbooks, equipment and/or media materials.
- The report card is not issued to parents (either party with custody rights), nor is it forwarded to another school, until all obligations are fulfilled, including, but not limited to, discipline and/or financial obligations. (This includes access to FACTS.)
- **Students' records are not released before all tuition, fees, and fines owed to the school are paid in full.** Parents are obligated through their signed contracts for the fulfillment of the year's tuition. The school's budget is based on the commitment of each family fulfilling their tuition payments for the entire school year.

### *Records Requests*

- Parents are responsible for printing and storing their child's school records each year, including report cards, achievement and other test scores, honor roll certificates and other awards, etc.
- **Due to the overwhelming number of requests we frequently receive for additional copies of records, a fee of \$10 per request, per student, will now be charged.**
- If you are experiencing financial hardship, please notify the principal that a delayed payment may be needed.
- Please submit your records requests in writing, detailing what records are needed and the reason, along with your \$10 payment.
- Address your request to our Records Custodian, Raquel Wood, and submit it and the payment to the front office. Please expect 3-5 business days before your request can be processed.
- As always, your accounts must be in good standing for the school to release records. If we are unable to process your request due to a delinquent balance, your records payment will be returned to you.

### *Subpoenas for Records in Child Custody Matters*

Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston attempt to conform to appropriate court orders governing rights and duties of parents/guardians in regard to their child(ren). If there are Court orders regarding their children, parents/guardians must provide certified copies of such orders with the School. Parents/guardians are to ensure that the school has a complete and unaltered set of certified copies of the applicable court orders. Failure to follow this policy may result in the involuntary withdrawal of the child(ren) from the school. When parents/guardians choose to litigate their disputes in Court, both the Catholic Schools Office and the Archdiocesan Legal Department will attempt to minimize the involvement of the school, its teachers and personnel. School administrators should inform the Legal Department immediately in the event the school or any of its employees are served with subpoenas. School administrators should contact the Archdiocesan Legal Department with questions regarding interpretations of the court orders and other questions that arise.

The school will endeavor not to take sides in disputes between parents/guardians, in recognition of the crucial role of both parents in the lives of their children. Continued strife between the parents/guardians is harmful to the children and does not set a good example for them. It is expected that parents and guardians will treat one another with Christian charity. Ongoing parental disputes can be counterproductive to the mission of the school and when appropriate, the Pastor will be contacted to discuss whether continued enrollment of the child(ren) is a viable option.

The parent/guardian initiating the subpoena must reimburse the school for reasonable costs of production. The school shall charge the parent initiating a subpoena a fee for the time and resources spent on obtaining and copying records. Photocopy costs will be billed at a rate of \$1.00 per page. An additional fee will be charged to the parent/guardians issuing a subpoena for a personal appearance by a school employee. The parent/guardian will be charged for the cost of hiring a substitute or the daily rate for the subpoenaed employee. Accordingly, each person who acknowledges his or her agreement to the contents of this Handbook, either by written or electronic signature or by enrolling a student in the school, agrees that he or she shall pay a fee to the school.

## **RELIGION PROGRAM**

Central to SHCS's curricular goals, and to the mission of the school, is the teaching of religion. The religion curriculum stresses the catechetical and moral dimensions consistent with the developmental stages of students. Religion is taught on a daily basis to all students regardless of religious affiliation. Other methods of integrating religion into the curriculum include:

- Participation in weekly Mass all students regardless of religious affiliation (grades PK4-8 in late fall for PK4 and Spring for PK4-8);
- Participation in classroom or grade level para-liturgies;
- Scheduled opportunities for Sacramental Reconciliation for Catholic students (junior high);
- Reflection and/or retreat for students;
- Stations of the Cross during Lent;
- Participation in Adoration at the church (Grades 5-8 weekly; grades 2-4 monthly)
- "Saints Pray" the rosary on Wednesday mornings in the gym;
- Service field trips, and
- Junior High students (grades 6-8) are required to attend retreats and/or days of prayer

All school Masses are celebrated in the Church. As on other days, students are tardy at 7:50 A.M. on Mass days (usually Friday) since Mass begins at 8:00 A.M. Students must be in full dress uniform for Mass. Shorts are not allowed in the Church or Chapel. Students not properly attired are in violation of the dress code.

### **For enhanced security and safety, Mass attendance has changed for school visitors.**

- Visitors will be able to participate in the school mass, but will not be permitted to sit with our students and/or classes.
- Visitors may sit behind student groups or any other location in the church that does not contain school classes.
- Summary: Visitors will not be permitted to sit next to their children in pews during mass. This is for both ongoing instruction from the teacher about mass behavior and the physical safety of all students.

Sacramental preparation for First Reconciliation/First Eucharist is provided for students in second grade with parental assistance. Mandatory parent formation/information meetings are provided by your family's home parish to assist families in these sacraments. **To be eligible, students must be attending the day school regularly. For additional information, contact the C.C.E. office: 281-485-5457.**

As part of our Religion curriculum, students are taught about human sexuality through an Archdiocesan-approved curriculum program called “Family Life” and “Circle of Grace.” Parents are encouraged to preview this program and talk with their child's teacher if there are any questions about the program.

## **SAFETY**

Safety concerns and needs have been addressed in various sections of this handbook. Our primary responsibility, beyond spiritual and academic needs, is to maintain the safety and security of both our students and the staff. Should you see or hear anything which concerns you about the safety of our St. Helen community, please report it immediately to the school office, the principal, and/or the appropriate authorities if it is an emergency situation.

Staff have access to the campus’ Crisis Management Plan for information and directions regarding possible crisis or critical incidents. Students and staff frequently practice drills for fire, weather safety, intruders on campus, lockdowns, etc. to keep us prepared for emergencies. The camera system on campus also provides us with needed safety information.

**When events occur beyond our control, you will receive an alert/text/email as soon as we can provide you with necessary information about the event.** We request that all parents and students follow all safety warnings from our staff to keep everyone free from harm.

Families pay a \$100 fee, beginning for the school year 2024-2025, as a “security fee.” This fee is solely used to hire police officers to protect our students. Schools have permission to employ or contract with a peace officer or third-party resource officer for the safety of the school community. On occasion, armed, off-duty police officers may be present on campus. They will assist in supervising/observing groups on campus for various events – Christmas program, Open House, etc. Please cooperate with their requests.

Mass attendance will change for visitors due to concerns for physical safety. While parents are encouraged to participate in mass, the school will attempt to maintain our protective “safety bubble” around our students. Visitors will be able to participate in the school mass, but will not be permitted to sit with our students and/or classes. We will ask parents/family to please sit behind any of our classes during Mass.

## **SCHOOL HOURS AND SCHOOL DAY**

The school is open at 6:30 A.M. daily for drop-off for students enrolled in After School Care. Staff duty hours are from 7:25 A.M. – 3:30 P.M. (Some staff members have alternate schedules: 7:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M. or 7:15 A.M. – 3:15 P.M.) Students may enter the building at 7:25 A.M. **The seven-plus hour school day runs from 7:50 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.** Dismissal and pick-up of most students is usually finished by 3:20 P.M. After School Care enrollees may remain on campus until 6:00 P.M. The campus does not count “minutes” for school attendance; we count days and students must attend 180 days for school year credit.

## **SERVICE HOURS/WORKS OF MERCY**

Students and families earn service hours by donating the gift of time and stewardship according to the Works of Mercy identified by Catholic doctrine. **25 hours of service are required for families.**

*Corporal Works of Mercy (of the body):*

- Give drink to the thirsty
- Feed the hungry
- Shelter the homeless
- Clothe the naked
- Visit the sick
- Visit the imprisoned
- Bury the dead



### *Spiritual Works of Mercy (of the spirit):*

- Instruct the ignorant
- Counsel the doubtful
- Admonish the sinner
- Forgive offenses
- Comfort the afflicted
- Bear wrongs patiently
- Pray for the living and the dead

Most service hours earned by students and families fall into the category for Corporal Works of Mercy.

### *Student Service Hour Requirement*

In keeping with the mission of St. Helen Catholic School: "to provide a well- rounded education emphasizing Catholic ideals of academic excellence, personal integrity, Christian service and enduring faith," the guidelines below must be followed:

- 6th-8th graders must complete **10 hours of service** within the school or community. Of these 10 hours, at least 5 of them must be performed outside of the school.
- 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students must turn in proof of completion of a minimum number of hours, according to teacher requests and assignments. The documents usually count as a test grade for that quarter.
- 5th graders must complete **8 hours of service** within the school or community (at least 4 hours must be in the community).
- 4<sup>th</sup> graders must complete **6 hours of service** within the school or community (at least 3 hours must be in the community).
- **The student's religion teacher is the person who collects and monitors hourly requirements.**

These student service hours are independent and in addition to the Family Service Requirement. **Only student service hours served on campus may count for Family Service Hours (maximum of 5 hours allowed).** These student hours **MUST** be recorded in the Family Service Hour binder (or electronically) by the parent by the designated April date to count for the current school year. **The religion teacher or the receptionist are not responsible for recording these hours.**

### *Service Hour Guidelines- Students*

- Service hours accrued during the summer months (after the end of the spring semester) prior to the beginning of school will be accepted.
- At least one-half of the hours are generally due at the end of the 1st semester.
- Altar serving for funerals/weddings outside the school day will be accepted as service hours. If a student takes a financial blessing for this service, he/she cannot "double dip" by taking both the gratuity and claiming service hours.
- Choir practice outside of the school day will count for student service hours. Choir singing during the school masses does not count; however, singing during church service that are not school-related does count for days.
- The signature of the person supervising the work/service being done is required.
- Service opportunities will be posted or relayed by teachers as they arise.
- Service hours will be counted as a major test grade in Religion at the end of each semester. All hours earned and verified should be turned in to the student's Religion teacher as soon as they are completed. Please direct questions about service hours to your child's religion teacher.

A few acceptable examples of service for students:

- Altar serving/choir (outside of the school day: Sunday, for example; school masses do not count)
- **Choir practice for the SHCS Choir DOES NOT count for school/community service hours; it does count if you are working towards the Presidential Service Award**
- St. Vincent de Paul (helping stock/organize shelves), **approved for students only.**
- Helping with the set-up/clean-up of the gala or other school functions
- Helping in any aspect of the church bazaar/Family Day/church picnic
- Helping with Vacation Bible School
- Helping as an aide in any of the CCE classes

#### *Family Service Hour Requirement*

- Each family must complete **25 mandatory service hours** for work within or regarding the school within the given school year or must pay the equivalent of \$20.00 per service hour that they are unable to complete.
- Designated family members may work for the parents – for example, a grandfather or aunt may work for the school to gain service hours for the family (if SAFE HAVEN-approved).
- Families may work at the annual Church Bazaar/Picnic and gain service hours for the school year. No other church hours are permitted, except as approved by the Principal (if you desire to work directly with the church, there are several church committees you may join but they do not count for school service hours). Parent service hours must directly benefit the school.
- The due date for completion of service hours for the family requirement is a day in **April (one week after gala; the date will be sent out to parents)**. Late service hours are not accepted due to the problems it poses for accounting. **NO EXCEPTIONS!** (Please refer to the Volunteer tab on the school's website for directions on how to record the hours and see this section for additional information.)

**To avoid confusion, please do not rely on another person to record any donated hours. If your family is receiving donated hours, it is your responsibility to record them under your family name; it is NOT the donating family's responsibility. Additionally, the donor family should report how many hours they are donating and to which family.**

**The office staff is not responsible for recording your family service hours. NO FAXES OR EMAILS WILL BE ACCEPTED for a record of your service hours.** There is only one means of recording service hours:

- Electronically, via the Volunteer Link on the webpage.
- Contact Deb Garza, receptionist, for assistance.

#### **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

It is the policy of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston that all students should attend school in an environment free of gender discrimination that encompasses freedom from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is immoral and reprehensible and will not be tolerated in the Catholic schools. In both obvious and subtle ways, the very possibility of sexual harassment is destructive to individuals and to the Church/School community as a whole.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly as a term or condition of a student's education;
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for academic decisions affecting the student;
- Such conduct has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or demeaning educational environment; or
- Such conduct directly impacts the student's physical or mental health or welfare.

*Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to the following behaviors:*

- Unwelcome sexual advances, including advances or inappropriate comments via social media;
- Physical contact, such as attempted or actual assault, unwanted touching, including pinching or brushing against another's body; blocking normal movements or interfering with work, study, or play because of sex;
- Verbal conduct such as sexually-oriented kidding, teasing, joking or flirting;
- Verbal abuse of sexual nature;
- Leering, whistling, sexually suggestive gestures or sounds; or
- Displaying pictures that are sexual in nature.

As a side note, public displays of affection (PDS's) may often be construed as sexual harassment and are not permitted on campus or at campus events. This includes embracing, kissing, hand holding, etc.

In addition, retaliation against students who report sexual harassment or who assist the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston in an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint is strictly prohibited. Acts of retaliation will result in disciplinary action. If the alleged sexual harassment occurs off-campus, and has no impact on the school, it may be difficult to pursue disciplinary actions. In that case, families are encouraged to pursue further actions through the police.

## **SEXUALITY**

The learning environment and religious nature of Catholic schools are guided by the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). The Catechism of the Catholic Church can be found at the website for the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops. Among other things, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "By creating the human being man and woman, God gives personal dignity equally to the one and the other. Each of them man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his/her sexual identity." (CCC)

- If a student's expression of gender, sexual identity or sexuality should cause confusion or disruption at school, if it should mislead others, cause scandal or have the potential for causing scandal, then the matter will be discussed with the student, his/her parents, the principal, and the pastor.
- **If not resolved to the satisfaction of the school and pastor, seeking to uphold Catholic principles, then the student will be dismissed from the school AFTER the parents are first given the option to immediately withdraw the student from the school.**
- As in the case of students, if serious concerns arise as to a parent's or guardian's (herein "parent's") position or action with respect to the tenets of the Catholic faith regarding sexuality, then he/she will be counselled by the school and pastor.
- If the matter involving the parents/student(s) is not resolved to the satisfaction of the school and pastor, seeking to uphold Catholic principles, then the parent will be asked to withdraw the child(ren) from the school and they must agree to do so immediately. If they fail to do so, the child(ren) will be dismissed immediately from the school.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS AND REFERRALS**

### *Introductory Statement*

Consistent with the contents of the Church document, *To Teach as Jesus Did*, and the Pastoral Statement of the U.S. Bishops, *Persons with Disabilities*, the Archdiocese seeks to include students with special needs in our schools **to the extent that the needs of such students can be met within the scope of the programs and resources offered**. The Catholic Schools Office is aware that it is unrealistic to serve all categories of special need students. However, St. Helen Catholic School and the other Catholic Schools are cognizant of the fact that admission of special needs students must be considered and reviewed on an individual basis.

### *Legal References to Special Services*

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that local school districts locate, identify, and evaluate all private school students suspected of having a disability.
- For St. Helen Catholic School, the local district is Pearland ISD (PISD). The “Child Find” process must be conducted in consultation with private schools’ representatives to ensure equitable access for private school students. In IDEA, these children are often referred to as “parentally placed private school children with disabilities,” and the benefits available to them differ from the benefits for children with disabilities enrolled in public schools.
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 educational section (frequently called “Section 504”), provides that no otherwise qualified individual with a disability shall, solely by reason of his/her disability, be excluded from the participation in any program receiving federal assistance.
- Catholic educators strive to recognize and address the needs of all those who seek a Catholic education.
- **Within our resources**, St. Helen and other Catholic schools will offer services to eligible students with special needs, when possible.
- However, private schools are not required to significantly alter their programs, lower or substantially modify their standards to accommodate a child with special needs. Private educational institutions are only required to make minor adjustments to accommodate eligible students.

#### *Records for Special Needs Learners*

All psychological and educational evaluations/reports regarding testing of special needs students, received from local public schools, persons, or agencies, are forwarded to St. Helen Catholic School, upon request. These records are kept on file at the school for a period of seven (7) years after the exit of the student. These records are kept in a secure file and are accessible only to the principal, the Intervention Specialist, the Counselor, and any other appropriate personnel working with the student.

#### *Criteria for Acceptance of Students with Special Needs*

In making a determination regarding the admittance of a particular student, the school will review the child’s ability to meet the school’s academic, behavioral, and physical qualifications. Each Catholic school determines its ability to meet the needs of the student applicant. The process is not intended to be adversarial in nature and neither party shall be represented by legal counsel during any phase of the process. Consideration will be given to the following:

- Student’s demonstrated ability to meet grade level requirements;
- Record of student’s ability to follow school rules and regulations;
- Student’s ability to meet socially acceptable behaviors; and
- Students’ ability to meet the physical requirements of attendance.

#### *St. Helen’s Services for Learners with Special Needs*

*New Students* – Parents must complete a Special Needs Information Disclosure Form and an Authorization for Release of Confidential Information/Records Form. When the Admissions Office or the principal is notified that an incoming student may have special learning needs, the principal and other appropriate school staff review current academic, social, medical, and psychological evaluations to determine if the applicant is qualified to enroll, with or without his/her disability. If the applicant is qualified for enrollment, the principal and Intervention Specialist will then determine if reasonable adjustments can be made to the educational program which will accommodate the student’s needs. If an admission is determined appropriate, the school will begin procedures with parents to discuss a Catholic Accommodation Plan (CAP). **(Note: modifications to the curriculum will not be permitted. Accommodations to instructional strategies are approved.)**

*Currently Enrolled Students* - If a teacher (or parent) is concerned about a child’s academic, behavioral, or emotional progress and feels that diagnostic testing may be needed, he/she will discuss concerns with the parent/family and the principal, and then meet with the Intervention Specialist as soon as possible. Our aim is

always to work as a team to do what is best for the child. Because this is a critically important and individualized process, the team (appointed by the principal) will review and discuss:

- The student's current educational status, including attendance records, grades, assessment/achievement data, and classroom observations;
- Previous educational efforts and strategies provided for the student and the results;
- Documentation of recent vision and hearing screenings;
- Updated general health history inventory; and
- Other information provided by the parents or teachers.

Parents will be expected to disclose any pertinent information that may assist St. Helen Catholic School in educating the student. The principal and staff are responsible for recommending educational alternatives and/or referrals to the local school district and/or private agency of the parent's choice for further diagnostic evaluation. Parents are responsible for acquiring further diagnostic evaluations to assist the school in determining if the student's needs may be met within the limits of our resources.

St. Helen will keep documentation for all learning/behavioral referrals on file. This documentation must include a full educational evaluation, in addition to any physician's medical diagnosis, as applicable. The documentation will be included in the student's records. If an evaluation determines the student requires minor accommodations, the school will begin the procedures with parents to discuss a CAP. If, upon review of a diagnostic evaluation, it is determined that the student cannot be served through minor accommodations, the principal or Intervention Specialist may assist the parent in locating educational alternatives and another campus. In some cases, the campus may not have the resources necessary to help the child be successful. The process is not intended to be adversarial in nature and neither party shall be represented by legal counsel during any phase of the process.

Accommodations for a student will be noted on the progress report and report card, but not on the permanent school record. **For students receiving accommodations due to an identified disability, please note that those accommodations will not be provided in advanced or Honors classes (AP).**

#### *Student Success Expectations for Special Needs Learners*

St. Helen Catholic School will deploy all available school resources to promote student success. We are committed to keeping the lines of communication open and informing parents of student progress in all areas. The classroom teacher and parent will first discuss any concerns about a student's progress. School success is the outcome of a strong academic partnership between parents and faculty, and St. Helen strives to maintain strong collaborative ties with all our families. In order to provide the greatest educational benefit to our students, parents are expected to disclose any pertinent information from private resources (diagnoses and recommendations) that would be of specific educational value in St. Helen's efforts to adequately support their children. If it is determined that the school's resources cannot meet the needs of a student, or if parent(s)/guardian(s) fail to act on the school's recommendations for remediation or diagnostic evaluation, the principal may request withdrawal of the student or deny admission for the following year. This process is not intended to be adversarial in nature and neither party shall be represented by legal counsel during any phase of the process.

#### *Accommodations for Special Needs Learners*

- The purpose of an accommodation of any type is to provide the appropriate instruction according to the individual student's special needs.
- As a result of a diagnostic evaluation, a student meets certain criteria to qualify for accommodations to his/her schoolwork.
- In many instances, **accommodations** (changes in methods of instruction) can be made in the classroom for students with special needs or for struggling students. **(At SHCS, accommodations are provided for academic needs and are not provided for behavioral needs.)**

- For students receiving academic accommodations due to an identified disability, please note that those accommodations will not be provided in advanced classes (AP).

Students who are diagnosed with a learning difference or who are diagnosed with a special need through the public school system, private doctors, or through special agencies may be referred for special assistance with the campus Intervention Specialist after the administration has verification of the student's recommended accommodations.

- Curricular modifications are not provided because **modifications** require alterations of curricular objectives.
- The number of intervention sessions per week, length of sessions, and goals will be determined by the Intervention Specialist, principal, and classroom teacher after all available information has been reviewed.
- This process is not intended to be adversarial in nature and neither party shall be represented by legal counsel during any phase of the process.

#### *Modifications for Special Needs Learners*

As defined above, modifications require alterations of curricular objectives.

- Modifications are changes in what a student is expected to learn.
- Modifications include changes in instructional level, content, and performance criteria.
- While Catholic schools in the Archdiocese are cognizant of the fact that admission of students with special needs must be considered and reviewed on an individual basis, St. Helen Catholic School is not required to significantly alter its programs, or lower or substantially modify its standards to accommodate a child with special needs.
- Catholic schools are only required to make minor adjustments to accommodate eligible students.
- **St. Helen Catholic School does not modify curriculum for learners with special needs.**

#### *Standardized Testing for Students with Special Needs*

Standardized assessments are one of several means of evaluating student performance.

- All students (grades 1-8 in SHCS) participate in the Archdiocese standardized assessment program.
- Accommodations are provided to students who have been diagnosed with a disability and have provided the school with a diagnostic and/or psycho-educational evaluation.
- A student must have a Catholic Accommodation Plan on file with documented testing recommendations from the local school district or private agency to receive accommodations.
- These special testing arrangements must be planned for in advance through a meeting with the Intervention Specialist.
- Any adjustment made on the standardized assessment must be requested from the Catholic Schools Office via special request on the appropriate form.

#### *Re-Evaluation for Students with Accommodations*

It is required that psychological/diagnostic evaluations are updated every three years by the local school district and/or private agency.

- It may be conducted more often if the parent or school requests a more thorough comprehensive evaluation. This three-year timeframe is an IDEA and Archdiocesan requisite in order to assess current accommodations to identify any changes that need to be made to meet the needs of the student.
- If the child is not meeting the academic objectives and/or exhibiting new challenging behaviors in their educational setting, then a re-evaluation is required to re-assess specific areas of concern.
- If a parent refuses to have a re-evaluation completed for their student, the school is not required to accommodate for the student and the student may be asked to leave the school.
- In order to have formal accommodations in place, an updated evaluation is required. A re-evaluation may be in areas of demonstrated need or concern and is not required to be a full psychological evaluation.

- Updated re-evaluations are also required if a student is scheduled to take College Council exams (SAT, SAT subject tests, PSAT/NMSQT, PSAT 10, or AP Exams) and is requesting accommodations.

### *Waiver of Accommodations*

If a student is exhibiting success in their educational program and the parents, principal, and educational team decide that accommodations are no longer necessary, this must be documented on a Waiver of Accommodations form.

- After the waiver is signed, the student will then continue his/her educational program without any accommodations.
- Documentation of the release must be on file at the school and parents, principal, and educational team will meet after each grading period to determine the student's academic, behavioral, emotional and social progress without accommodations.
- If the student is successful without accommodations after two full school years, then no further waiver reviews are required.
- If the student is not successful without accommodations, then the Catholic School will meet with the parents to decide on the appropriate procedures to take regarding the educational program of the student.
- The process is not intended to be adversarial in nature and neither party shall be represented by legal counsel during any phase of the process.

## **STANDARDIZED TESTING AND OTHER ASSESSMENTS**

Achievement testing is one of several means of assessing pupil performance. All students in the Archdiocese participate in the testing program (at St. Helen Catholic School, students in grades 1-8 are tested). Each school, as directed by the CSO, shall administer a standardized assessment yearly for grades 1-8. The achievement test utilized in the AGH is the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), also known as MAP.

This assessment has been adopted by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and is administered to students each year, throughout the year. (The NWEA is administered three times during the year – fall, mid-year, late spring.) The tests are a means to give teachers and the administrator a certain amount of information regarding the educational growth of the students. A majority of all SHCS students score in the high average or above average ranges of the testing, when compared to regional and state achievement scores.

**The ARK exams** (Assessment of Religion Knowledge; a required test for measuring religious knowledge) are given to students in grades 2,5, and 8 in the spring of each year.

**Other assessments** include regularly scheduled classroom tests, quizzes, benchmarks, formative assessments, etc. The teachers strive to provide a secure testing environment, even if tests are given remotely. They also attempt to plan tests so that students are not overwhelmed with more than two tests on the same day.

### *Requests for Special Needs Student Evaluations/Assessments of School Performance*

Occasionally, school personnel will be asked to complete specialized assessments to help determine if a student may have a learning or behavioral disability. Per Archdiocesan (AGH) policy, the school may not return a finished assessment of this type to the parent. All documents will be handled in a confidential manner by the Intervention Specialist or Principal and submitted to a physician or other medical personnel who are requesting the assessment. For parents requesting to review the school's completed documents, they must direct their requests to the referring physician or other medical professional(s).

## **SUMMER PROGRAM**

St. Helen operates a summer program with the Pastor's consent. The licensing exemption is on file with the Texas Health and Human Services Department, the Catholic Schools Office, and the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department. The program complies with all TCCB ED policies. Payments for the program are made by the parents.

Individual teachers will contact parents regarding the need for students to attend the program. It is not a credit recovery program, but serves more as a skills retention/acceleration program. SHCS teachers work in the program, offered through the month of June.

## **TARDINESS POLICY**

Tardiness has a direct impact on self-discipline and the overall discipline of the school. Habitual tardiness seriously affects school performance. **To ensure an orderly, disciplined environment, school begins promptly at 7:50 A.M. on Monday through Friday.** Tardiness is neither excused nor unexcused. **Students must be in their classroom when the bell rings, so they should arrive by 7:45 a.m.** in order to get to their classroom on time. Teachers will also count tardies during periods of remote learning.

In addition, accreditation depends on adhering to a "Bell to Bell" schedule and requires a specific number of minutes per day for instruction. **Please be supportive of the 7:50 A.M. daily start of school so that we may provide your child with an exemplary education.** Students, especially in grades 3-8, may experience even more disruption of their schedules if they are tardy because of their classroom locations (upstairs, a distance from the entry door).

- **The first bell rings promptly at 7:45 A.M. and the student is tardy if he/she is not seated in his/her classroom at 7:50 A.M. (Monday – Thursday).**
- Students may not be in the halls, at lockers, etc. when the bell rings. They should be in their seats.
- A student is tardy if he/she arrives after the designated time set by the school schedule. **Tardies will be issued beginning at 7:50 A.M. for all students, including PK.**
- On most Fridays, and any Mass days, students should also arrive promptly before 7:45 A.M. so they may arrive on time for 8:00 A.M. Mass. (On Friday, students are also tardy at 7:50 A.M. due to Friday Mass. On Holy Days of Obligation, Mass is required and tardies will also be counted at 7:50 A.M.). **If tardy on Mass days, parents should bring their children to the receptionist office so that the children may be checked in and escorted to the church. Parents should not drop off their children at church.**
- A student who is late is required to report to the school office, with their parent, before being admitted to class. This includes being tardy on Mass days.
- On the fifth and subsequent tardy in a nine-week period, a student's parents may select one of the following:
  - One hour student after-school detention, or
  - \$10.00 administrative fee charged to parent.
  - We encourage parents to make the decision on whether the tardy is the child's fault or the parent's fault and choose the consequence accordingly. A parent-principal conference may be called each nine weeks for excessive tardies of ten or more.

Exceptions to the tardy/absence policy are physicians' appointments. If a student has a doctor's or therapist's appointment in the morning, he/she must bring a doctor's or therapist's excuse/note and **arrive to school prior to 9:00 A.M.** (3<sup>rd</sup> period for junior high classes for most days) in order NOT to be counted tardy or absent. Please contact the receptionist's office for questions regarding tardies.

### *Junior High Tardies*

Any student entering the building after the 7:50 A.M. bell will be counted tardy. If a junior high student is tardy during the school day or during the change of classes, the student's homeroom teacher is responsible for tallying tardies and assigning consequences. Parents will be notified of the consequences. Students have very little traveling to do from class to class. Tardiness is not necessary, nor expected.



## TECHNOLOGY USAGE

Access to the technology resources of St. Helen Catholic School by its faculty, staff, volunteers, and students is for purposes of instruction, research, assignment completion, and school administration. Technology resources for students may include computer hardware and software licensed to the school. These resources are not to be used for personal or non-school related communications.

The servers, desktop PC's, printers, and all other school technology equipment are the property of St. Helen Catholic School. The school retains the right to search any and all equipment at any time. Appropriate language and etiquette are essential in using any aspect of the school's technology program. Facebook/MySpace, Instagram, Snapchat, or any other social networking sites, are not appropriate for use at school. Students must refrain from accessing them or their access to technology may be revoked.

When a student's use of electronic communication (on devices either owned by the school or student) jeopardizes the safe environment of the school or is contrary to Gospel values, the student may be subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences, including the revocation of the student's technology use.

A Catholic school administrator can impose consequences for conduct involving technology use occurring outside school that detrimentally affects the school. Whether occurring within or outside of school, when a student's, staff member's, parent's, or volunteer's use of electronic communication jeopardizes the safe environment of the school, detrimentally affects the school's reputation, disrupts regular school communications, or is intended to promote or advocate a certain cause, or is contrary to Gospel values, the staff member may be discharged or the volunteer may lose his/her privileges of volunteering at the school. The parent may be asked to withdraw their students and relocate to another campus. Below are the guidelines to follow when using technology.

### *Use of Technology Resources/Mobile Phones/E-devices*

- Respecting the rights and property of others is paramount. No improper access or misuse of files, memory storage, data, or information, or improper use and waste of technology resources, such as disk space or printing supplies will be tolerated.
- Students all have the responsibility to respect their own, others', and the school's technology resources. This includes being responsible for any school-owned device issued in the student's name – these devices should not be shared with others, just as passwords should not be shared.
- Students may use personal electronic devices under the direction of the teacher, only for the purposes of reading appropriate materials or engaging in classroom instruction/assignments. Bringing personal devices to school is unnecessary and strongly discouraged.
- **Devices such as watches or other jewelry, etc. with the ability to access the Internet or message others are not permitted to be worn.**
- If a student is discovered using a personal electronic device or other electronic equipment without permission or using it for inappropriate measures, the technology will be collected and held in the principal's office for parent pick-up. A discipline referral will ensue. Additionally, a **\$50 fine will be assessed** and the parent/guardian will be required to personally collect the device from the office (this policy also applies to cell phones or communication devices that are found in the "on" position during the school day).
- Junior high and other students are expected to "check in" their mobile phones every morning in homeroom class. They may collect them in the afternoon prior to the end of the school day. Students in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and below are not permitted to bring electronic devices to school without the express permission of the teacher/administrator.
- Additionally, students are not permitted to use electronic devices during their wait time for dismissal or during after school activities.

### *School-Issued Devices*

- Students in grades 4-8 will be issued a Google Chrome Book for ease in accessing assignments and for use during both traditional and remote learning instruction.
- Students and parents must sign the Acceptable Use Agreement found at the end of this handbook to be issued the loaner device (\$150 fee annually, beginning in 4<sup>th</sup> grade), which will be theirs to use throughout their middle school career on campus. We do not encourage parental purchase of the device because we order it pre-loaded with licenses and filters designed for school use.
- Any inappropriate material found on either a school-issued device is the responsibility of the parent/student and may result in loss of use of the device.
- Damage caused by irresponsibility or mistreatment of the device will be billed to the parent as a replacement cost for the device. This includes being responsible for any school-owned device issued in the student's name – these devices should not be shared with others, just as passwords should not be shared. **Hard-covers are required for all Chrome books, carried in another case or bag.**
- Students in other grades who require a device for remote learning must alert their homeroom teachers. We will provide a loaner device to assist in instruction and learning during periods of remote learning.

### *Software*

Both operating systems and program applications must be approved by the school administration and Technology Consultant and installed by the appropriate, designated Technology staff. The illegal installation of copyrighted software or files for use on school computers is prohibited. The school's Technology Consultant is to install any software on school computers following the licensing agreement. The Technology Consultant or office staff will secure all license agreements and keep them on file.

### *Copyright*

It is the policy of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston that all employees, volunteers, and students are to abide by the federal copyright laws. Employees, volunteers, and students who willfully disregard copyright laws are in violation of this policy, doing so at their own risk and assuming all liability. This includes technology and other materials.

### **TELEPHONE USE AND MESSAGES**

Students may not use the school's telephones unless it is an emergency. Forgetting one's homework, P.E. uniform, lunch, etc., is not considered an emergency. Students and parents must arrange after school rides ahead of time. The office staff is available to serve you in an emergency, but they are not responsible for non-emergency messages. Unless it is an emergency, please limit your requests for messages to be delivered to your child.

### **TEXTBOOKS AND OTHER TOOLS**

Textbooks are selected from the State of Texas Adopted Textbook List or from other publishers with Archdiocesan approval (see the Internet for "Texas Instructional Materials Adoption Bulletin" which includes multiple publishers in each subject area). Many of our textbooks are now online – please inquire of your teacher about optional textbook resources. Textbook and resource selections are a function of the local Catholic school. Selections are based upon teacher input, and teachers are directed to choose what is best for their students' needs and the curriculum objectives.

It is generally expected that textbooks, traditional or online, are used in all major subject areas. Textbooks are provided on a rental basis and are distributed to students at the beginning of the school year. Students will be fined for damages beyond the normal wear or asked to pay full replacement cost for lost books. Supplementary material is also used to enrich and expand the curriculum. In general, textbook adoptions are made every 8-10 years, depending upon recommendations from the state of Texas and financial obligations of the school.

## TRANSFERS

When a student transfers to another school (withdraw from SHCS), the parents should notify the front office prior to withdrawal. All textbooks are returned to the teacher. If fines or fees are not due, transcripts and other school records are sent to the child's new school by post office mail or fax, as requested by the new school. Records are released to the new school's registrar after all previously required SHCS tuition and fees are paid. Parents wishing to view student records must submit a written request twenty-four hours (minimum) in advance so that time is allotted to prepare the records for your viewing.

## TUITION, REGISTRATION, AND FEES

We do not charge families the actual cost of educating a child, therefore, every tuition dollar and fundraising dollar is critical in maintaining the operational vitality of our campus. Please understand that a reduced rate for tuition is not financially prudent as a possibility for our campus, unless there is an urgent financial need from a family and presented to the principal.

### *Refund Issues and Reduced Rates/Fees*

- **All tuition and all fees are non-refundable.** This is clearly stated on parent enrollment contracts.
- Signing the enrollment contract indicates acceptance and obligates the parent to tuition payments for the academic school year.
- Refund requests for tuition, based upon financial hardships, are to be directed to the principal. (Refunds are not issued for registration and other fees.)
- Families needing tuition assistance are urged to contact the principal or the Business Manager so that we can attempt to provide assistance.
- *Remote Learning Times and Tuition:*
  - Refunds or reduced tuition requests during periods of remote learning will not be honored. The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and our superintendent have directed us not to grant refunds or allow reduced tuition for our services. As a non-profit entity, Catholic schools are dependent upon tuition to meet their contractual obligations for salaries and benefits to staff, as well as balancing campus budgets.
  - Additionally, besides requiring the fulfillment of your contractual obligations, your tuition continues to pay for the acquisition of curriculum and your child's teachers, who have to work much longer hours with a harder schedule during periods of remote learning than during traditional school.

### *Fees*

- Fees are established annually and are posted on our website.
- Generally, an increase of 3-4% is enacted each year for fee increases.
- St. Helen and the Archdiocese offer tuition assistance for payment of fees, but assistance must be requested as early as possible (December- January of the previous year is preferable), prior to the upcoming school year.
- Contact the Business Office to determine how your family may apply for tuition assistance, which can help with fees, also.

### *Registration*

All previous school records and recommendations must be on file for the registration process to be considered complete. Registration fees are non-refundable. Registration is complete when:

- the principal has approved the applicant and an acceptance letter is sent,
- all forms have been returned, and
- the registration, books, lab, and other fees have been paid.

## *Tuition*

- Tuition payments can be paid annually, semi-annually, or in 10 equal installments.
- St. Helen School has partnered with FACTS/RenWeb Tuition Management to automatically withdraw tuition payments according to the scheduled payment dates beginning in July through the month of April.
- If the installment option is selected, payments must be automatically withdrawn through FACTS.
- The accounting office does not accept tuition payments except to clear delinquencies.
- To learn more about FACTS or to sign up for tuition payments, visit their website at: <https://ecashierk12.factstuition.com/ecashierk12/Controller?&query=83434/77581>
- Tuition payments and unpaid balances:
  - Tuition payments not posted by FACTS on or before the 20th of the month are assessed a \$25.00 late charge by the SHCS accounting office.
  - Re-admission for the following school year is not allowed for the children of families who are not current with any obligations and fees.
  - School records of students who have any unpaid balances are not released. Report Cards and all school records are held until accounts are current.
  - **Students are placed on financial suspension if tuition is 10 days delinquent.** It is the parent's responsibility to contact the principal and/or accounting office for acceptable payment arrangements.
  - If tuition payments are not made regularly, the student will be declared financially delinquent and **will be asked to withdraw.**
  - Checks for tuition/fees that are returned for insufficient funds are subject to a penalty charge of \$25.00. Issuance of three insufficient checks requires that all future payments be made in cash or by money order.
  - Invoices are not sent home for tuition payments. Invoices are only sent home for After School Care drop-ins.

New students enrolling during the current school year will pay full month tuition if they enroll from the 1st through the 15th. If they enroll from the 16th through the end of the month, a half-month tuition payment will apply.

### **Advisory Council Policy dated June 14, 2001:**

"All fees, including but not limited to registration and book fees, are non-refundable and nontransferable to any other accounts or fees due. The principal reserves the right to refund or withhold any fees according to his/her discretion as the particular situation warrants. If the principal sends a letter of non-admission, funds are refunded."

### **Advisory Council Policy dated May 9, 2002:**

"If a family's tuition and/or any fees are ten days or more late, three times during the school year, the family must agree to prepay the year's balance of said tuition and/or fees. If a student's/students' family(ies) does not agree to prepay the balance of the tuition and/or fees, the child/children will be immediately withdrawn."

## *Parishioner vs Open Tuition Status*

- Parishioner tuition status is offered to contributing and tithing members of St. Helen Catholic Church, and we wish to offer this rate to as many families as possible.
- Active membership in St. Helen Catholic Church is defined as a stewardship commitment of time, talent, and treasure. A calendar year must show a consistent, monthly (at a minimum) stewardship contributions to qualify for the parishioner tuition rate (tithing amounts are not specified).
- In addition, qualifying parishioners must be registered for at least twelve months of the church's calendar year and show active participation in service to the ministries of St. Helen Catholic School.
- Parishioner tuition status is granted annually and reviewed at registration.
- Tithing statements are prepared and issued by the parish, evaluated annually by the parish, and used to determine parishioner tuition status for tuition purposes.

- Parishioner tuition status is granted annually to those families who meet and/or exceed stewardship requirements for the school year.
- To make tithings, one must make verifiable, monthly (at a minimum) contributions by check or envelopes. Loose cash is not verifiable by the Church office.
- Those families not meeting the contribution requirements are classified with the higher Catholic tuition rate (“open rate”) for the school year.
- Because parishioner tuition status is evaluated every year at registration, a change in parishioner tuition status may result in a change in registration priority and tuition rate.
- All families are eligible for sibling discounts.

## **USE OF FACILITIES - PARISH MINISTRIES AND THE EDUCATIONAL BUILDING**

SHCS is an integral part of the St. Helen parish ministries. However, we are not the only ministry that uses the school building. Currently, C.C.E, the youth group, and the Spanish Ministry are the ministries that predominantly share school facilities with the Catholic School. Students and teachers are encouraged to keep rooms neat and clean for others to use during the evening hours or on the weekend.

If the need arises for an outside group to use the school facility after school hours, a request for use of school facilities is subject to the approval and permission of the Principal and Pastor. Permission must be obtained in advance. Due to the frequent after-school and evening use of the campus, we typically do not permit outside agencies/vendors to utilize the facilities.

Any use of parish grounds by outside organizations including non-parish-based organizations, non-profit community organizations, and any other organization or individual must be conditioned on review of contract agreements by the Archdiocesan Legal Department. Requests for school campus use should be directed to Raquel Wood, [rwood@sthelencatholicschool.org](mailto:rwood@sthelencatholicschool.org).

## **VISITORS**

### *General Visitor and Volunteer Campus Guidelines*

- **Please note: These guidelines were developed pre-pandemic. If the campus must again operate in “pandemic mode,” visitors will not be permitted.**
- All visitors entering the campus must enter through the main entrance. Please do not attempt to gain initial access through other campus doors. Visitors will be asked the purpose for their visit.
- Visitors will be viewed by both exterior and interior cameras. Cameras are also in use at every entry/exit, in each classroom, in large areas such as the cafeteria, gym, and lobby, and in the hallways/stairways to monitor for safety.
- To insure the safety of all children, staff, visitors, and volunteers of SHCS, all visitors must check in through the Raptor system at the receptionist's desk. Everyone must state their purpose for visiting at the security buzzer and then check in with the receptionist.
- Again, for safety, **NO ONE IS ALLOWED TO ENTER BEYOND THE LOBBY WITHOUT FIRST GETTING A VISITOR PASS FROM THE RECEPTIONIST**, which requires Raptor screening prior to receiving a pass. You will be asked to provide picture ID prior to receiving a visitor's pass through Raptor. Raptor is a picture ID system used to screen ALL visitors. The Raptor system runs your picture ID through its system and checks the Department of Public Safety's and state police forces' databases for active charges of sexual abuse or for outstanding warrants.
- All visitors who wish to be volunteers **MUST** have completed an initial SAFE HAVEN training course prior to working with any of our students. Volunteers must sign in, and their SAFE HAVEN status will be checked prior to working with children.

- After following procedures to check in, a visitor's pass must be worn and be visible at all times while on campus. The staff has been instructed to send anyone without a visitor's pass to the Receptionist's office to obtain a pass. This is a safety issue that must be observed for the sake of our students and staff.
- Visitors will not be permitted to deliver items to their children during drop-off times or during the school day. Deliveries cause too much disruption for class instruction; the office will not deliver items to students. Students in grades K-8 will need to check with the receptionist for needed items.
- **Visitors are not permitted to interrupt classes.** While on campus for other meetings, visitors should not be looking for their children, knocking on or entering classroom doors, attempting to conference with staff, walking the hallways (except to move from one location to another). These behaviors are a violation of our safety protocols.
- Visitors will not be permitted to check student lockers or look for books during the school day. Prior to the 3:30 P.M. office closure and after dismissal, visitors may check in with the receptionist and be granted permission to check his/her child's lockers, lost and found, etc. Please do not make this request of the After Care staff.
- **Visitors may bring children to campus if they are attending parties, pep rallies, and programs ("the 3 P's").** These are the only events in which siblings are allowed. This holds true UNLESS a visitor is working as a volunteer. **NO SIBLINGS are permitted when visitors are working as volunteers.**
- Visitors are expected to dress appropriately. Extremely low-cut and revealing clothing and short-shorts or skirts should not be worn to campus as they pose a distraction to the learning process. Additionally, spandex and other clothing that allow undergarments to be seen are not appropriate for visitors or volunteers. In general, volunteers and visitors should follow the dress guidelines cues established by staff.
- **Visitors should NOT use the students' restrooms.** Please request to use the office/lounge facilities.
- Visitors should be SAFE HAVEN trained in order to videotape or record students. Taking a picture of a single student or small classroom group is permitted, if the student(s) is/are engaged in an activity related to classwork. However, due to confidentiality issues and privacy requests of many students, videotapes and recordings are not permitted by non-SAFE HAVEN trained visitors.
- At no time should visitors or volunteers post pictures, recordings, video, etc. of students who are not their children on public social media sites. If the school posts pictures on social media sites, then those children are cleared with parental permission to post.
- Visitors are expected to comply with fire/safety drills and follow the evacuation procedures of the campus. We respectfully request visitor cooperation with all of our safety procedures while on campus, including "shelter in place" or other drills.
- Mass attendance for visitors changed during the pandemic and enabled us to use another safety measure with our students and staff. While parents are encouraged to participate in mass, the school will attempt to maintain our "safety bubble" for physical safety and security. **Visitors will be able to participate in the school mass, but will not be permitted to sit with our students and/or classes.** Visitors may sit behind their child's class.

## **VOLUNTEERING**

### *General SAFE HAVEN Information*

All prospective school volunteers (when frequent, ongoing, recurring contact is expected) must attend the SAFE HAVEN training program offered by the Archdiocese, free of charge. In compliance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (USCCB June 2002), volunteers must comply with the Safe Environment training requirements, which include a criminal background check, agreeing to volunteer requirements, participating in Safe Environment child abuse training, and signing a volunteer code of conduct.

- Safe Haven is a workshop on child sexual abuse prevention. Applicants must register for this training online.

- As part of the SAFE HAVEN training process, volunteers must sign an Ethics Code of Conduct and submit an authorization form for a background check. All parts of the process must be completed in order to be fully certified by SAFE HAVEN.
- The campus SAFE HAVEN Coordinator and Safe Environment Coordinator (SEC) is Debra Garza, [dgarza@sthelencatholicsschool.org](mailto:dgarza@sthelencatholicsschool.org).
- ALL VOLUNTEERS MUST BE SAFE HAVEN CERTIFIED PRIOR TO WORKING ON CAMPUS – NO EXCEPTIONS! (Please allow 1-2 weeks for your SAFE HAVEN certification to be processed and for you to be able to volunteer on campus.)
- Please keep your certification current. By not doing so, you will not be able to volunteer for campus events.

If the prospective school volunteer has attended training previously, the SAFE HAVEN Coordinator will verify the “active” status of the volunteer. If it has been 5 or more years since the volunteer has taken the initial training, the volunteer must renew his/her training. If it has been less than 5 years since the prospective volunteer has taken the first training, the SAFE HAVEN Coordinator will alert the volunteer as to when their initial volunteer approval will expire. If a SAFE HAVEN trained volunteer has lost or forgotten his/her user name and/or password for the SAFE HAVEN site, please email the SEC, Debra Garza, [dgarza@sthelencatholicsschool.org](mailto:dgarza@sthelencatholicsschool.org).

#### *General Volunteer Issues at St. Helen Catholic School*

**Please note: Most of these guidelines were developed pre-pandemic. They will be effective for the current school year, unless we have another pandemic arrive and then new protocols will be issued.**

- Catholic schools depend on the consistent and loyal services of volunteers. Volunteers serve the school in many capacities, such as in the clinic, office area, cafeteria, or as room parents, etc.
- All SHCS volunteers must sign the Volunteer Handbook Acknowledgment sheet, pass a criminal background check, and attend SAFE HAVEN training.
- Volunteers sign a “confidentiality agreement” prior to serving. They should not request information on certain students (not their own) and should not spread information about any student or staff, based upon incidents viewed while volunteering.
- Another way to serve is to volunteer on committees. This includes, but is not limited to, the Gala Committee and its subcommittees, Field Day Committee, Catholic Identity, Home and School (HSA) Committees, and making phone calls or assisting from your home.
- Other ways of volunteering are to chaperone field trips or work at the church bazaar/picnic.
- Anyone in the family, including students, siblings, grandparents, aunts, and uncles may assist in earning the family's service hours.
- Please contact the front office or our volunteer parent coordinator to volunteer service to your child's school.
- Volunteers will also be requested to present their valid picture ID for the Raptor system each time they come to campus.
- Volunteers may not take younger siblings along on field trips or other school sponsored activities. **Due to liability and supervision concerns, siblings are never allowed to accompany a parent who is volunteering service to the school.**
- As with visitors, all SHCS volunteers are expected to be dressed appropriately. For volunteers, no shorts are allowed, unless you are landscaping, working Field Day, coaching, or helping with P.E. classes. Volunteers are expected to have the same standard dress code as teachers and staff.

Volunteering does not include walking your child to class or trying to get a chance to speak with the teacher prior to class starting. Teachers are all on duty supervising students at 7:25 A.M. and are not able to meet with you. We would like to maintain open communication with all parents and families, so **please call in advance to request a parent meeting**. Parents are not permitted to interrupt classes or walk the building to observe their child, clean

lockers, find lost supplies, etc. because of the possible disruptions caused (and it violates our safety protocol). If you would like to visit your child's classroom, please schedule an appropriate time with your child's teacher.

If volunteering in a classroom, this means spending quality time on work assignments requested by the classroom teacher. We request the volunteer attends to the teachers'/students' needs, without undue distractions (for example, constant e-device use). The expectation is that our volunteers will confidently work with our students to improve their classroom experiences. **It is also expected the volunteer maintain strict confidentiality about what is observed in the classroom or other areas on campus.** There is a Volunteer Handbook for each volunteer to read and then sign an agreement about their responsibilities.

#### *Media Issues*

All approved volunteers are permitted to take pictures or videos at school functions. However, the posting of pictures and videos to public social media sites could be a violation of students' confidentiality and privacy. (Please research FERPA – Family Education Rights and Privacy Act to better understand privacy violations.) It is recommended that parents do not use other children's pictures to post on personal social media sites.

#### *Room Parent Volunteers*

The Room Parents are volunteers whose duties are to assist the Principal, teachers, and students in various ways. Please contact the classroom teacher or an HSA representative to volunteer as a Room Parent. Room Parents may not bring siblings to school while they are volunteering.

#### *Student Volunteers*

All junior high students (6th - 8th graders) have a 10-hour required yearly service hour commitment for volunteering. Fifth graders have an 8-hour required yearly service hour commitment. Students in grades four have a 6-hour required yearly service hour commitment.



**PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM  
2024-2025**

*(you may print the following 2 forms and **return ONLY them to the campus**; entire handbook returned is not required)*

*The school and/or the principal retain the right to amend the school handbook at any time. Parents will be given prompt notification via the website if changes are made and the new version will be posted. Families are encouraged to be familiar with this handbook and to learn school policies. Questions should be directed to the principal.*

Dear Parents:

Please view our school handbook online at [www.SHCSsaints.org](http://www.SHCSsaints.org) and click on Parent Resources, Family Handbook. If you want to request a paper copy of the handbook, please contact the front office. Please sign, date, and **return the following 2 (two) forms** to your child's teacher. (You do not need to return the entire handbook.) Your signature and that of your child/children indicate that you have read the online version or a hard copy version of the school handbook. It also means that you have discussed with your child/children the appropriate items from the handbook, and that you and your child/children agree to abide by the school procedures, regulations and policies discussed in this handbook. Ignorance of the policies is not an excuse for not following them. All enrolled families are given a copy of or have access to the Parent/Student Handbook for the school year. Thank you for your cooperation.

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We have read and discussed the St. Helen Catholic School Handbook. We agree to follow the school procedures, regulations, and policies covered in this handbook. **Parent, please initial each line below:**

\_\_\_\_\_ I have received a copy or have online access to the Parent/Student Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will read and refer to the Parent/Student Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will follow the policies and procedures in the Parent/Student Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will seek clarification from the Principal for any policies and procedures if unclear.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*(The signed, returned form will be maintained in the school office.)*

**St. Helen Catholic School**

*The Twelve Commandments of Student Computer Use; Acceptable Use of Technology 2024-2025*

**(for all personal/school devices in grades PK-8 and for Chrome Book loaners in grades 4-8)**

*(you may print this form and return ONLY this form to the campus; entire handbook return is not required)*

Before a student will be allowed to take an electronic device out of his/her backpack or use a school-issued device, parents and students must agree and sign below. **This form must be returned prior to students using their school-issued devices. Classroom teachers will keep this agreement filed in their classrooms. Parents:** I understand the classroom teacher will designate appropriate times and uses for the utilization of all electronic devices. By signing this acknowledgement, you are indicating you understand the Technology Acceptable Use Policy (found in handbook), and the Commandments of Computer Use. You agree to the terms of use of these devices (including a \$50 confiscation fine for unacceptable usage whether it is a personal or school device). You agree not to hold the school responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal devices. As a parent/guardian, you are allowing your student to bring and/or use personal (highly discouraged) and school devices at school for the current school year. **Parents should also note they are legally responsible for their children’s actions on technology, including cyberbullying and inappropriate media usage.**

**SECTION I AGREEMENT (all students):** As a St. Helen Catholic School Student, I will ...

1. Respect the computer equipment and my teachers’ directions for use or non-use.
2. Avoid eating and drinking at the computer stations or with my school-issued device.
3. **Keep my school-issued device covered by a protective, hard cover case.**
4. Not change settings on the computer.
5. Not make changes to or delete from the school website.
6. Respect files or passwords and not share them.
7. Respect other people’s files and only work with my own (including the use of AI technologies).
8. Not share my computer with others.
9. Not create any websites against the school.
10. Avoid email, instant message, chat, and other forms of communication on the school computers.
11. Only play games on the computer with a teacher’s permission.
12. Turn off the screen and get a teacher if something “bad” appears on my computer.

**SECTION II AGREEMENT:** As a student in grades 4-5-6-7-8 and a parent of that student, I understand I am responsible for my school-owned and issued Google Chrome Book or another device. Any inappropriate material found on the device is the responsibility of the parent/student and may result in loss of use of the device. **Damage caused by irresponsibility or mistreatment of the school device will be billed to the parent as a replacement cost for the device. Devices MUST be covered by a protective, hard cover case, and carried in another case or bag.** If a Chrome Book is damaged, a determination will be made by the Technology Director if the damage was caused by neglect or mis-use. If the damage was caused by neglect/mishandling, the student will be assessed a fee to obtain a loaner device. By signing below, parents of students in grades 4-5-6-7-8 agree to both sections of this arrangement. (Beginning in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, students will pay a \$150 fee each year for a Chrome Book, then keep the device when graduating after 8<sup>th</sup> grade).

**FOR ALL STUDENTS:** As a student, I agree to abide by these rules when using school-owned electronics or while using personal devices at school. As a parent, I agree to be held responsible for the behavior of my child when they damage a school device, or access technology on school-owned devices or on personal devices while on campus. Both of us understand that personal devices are discouraged unless the teacher permits it on special occasions.

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

*(The signed, returned form will be maintained in the school office.)*

# St. Helen Catholic School

2213 Old Alvin Rd., Pearland, TX 77581

# ACADEMIC CALENDAR

☎ 281-485-2845 📠 281-485-7607

# 2024-2025

[www.SHCSSaints.org](http://www.SHCSSaints.org)

| Aug 2024 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S        | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|          |    |    |    | 1  | 2  | 3  |
| 4        | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 |
| 11       | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18       | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25       | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

| Sep 2024 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S        | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
| 1        | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 8        | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15       | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22       | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29       | 30 |    |    |    |    |    |

| Oct 2024 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S        | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|          |    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  |
| 6        | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13       | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20       | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27       | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |    |

| Nov 2024 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S        | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|          |    |    |    |    | 1  | 2  |
| 3        | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  |
| 10       | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17       | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24       | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |

| Dec 2024 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S        | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
| 1        | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 8        | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15       | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22       | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29       | 30 | 31 |    |    |    |    |

Notes:

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| Jan 2025 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S        | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|          |    |    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  |
| 5        | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 |
| 12       | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19       | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26       | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |    |    |

| Feb 2025 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S        | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|          |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |
| 2        | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  |
| 9        | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16       | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23       | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |    |

| March 2025 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S          | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|            |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |
| 2          | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  |
| 9          | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16         | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23         | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30         | 31 |    |    |    |    |    |

| Apr 2025 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S        | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|          |    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  |
| 6        | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13       | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20       | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27       | 28 | 29 | 30 |    |    |    |

| May 2025 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S        | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|          |    |    |    | 1  | 2  | 3  |
| 4        | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 |
| 11       | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18       | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25       | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |



### IMPORTANT DATES

First Day of School: 8/7; Weather Make-up Days: 1/6 & 4/21; Graduation: 5/16; Last day of School: 5/23

1<sup>st</sup> Nine Weeks: 8/7-10/11 2<sup>nd</sup> Nine Weeks: 10/15-12/20 3<sup>rd</sup> Nine Weeks: 1/6-3/7 4<sup>th</sup> Nine Weeks: 3/10-5/23

### HOLIDAYS

Labor Day- 9/2; Student Holiday 10/11; Thanksgiving- 11/25-11/29; Christmas- 12/23-1/3; MLK- 1/20; President's Day- 2/17; Spring Break- 3/17-3/21 Easter- 4/18-4/20; Memorial Day- 5/26

### INSERVICE DAYS

8/1-6; 8/9; 10/11; 1/6; 1/26; 2/8; 2/17; 5/27

### EARLY RELEASE DAYS

After Care Open: 8/30; 10/18; 3/14 After Care Closed: 11/22; 12/20; 1/31; 4/17; 5/23

## Guidelines for Illness

### SYMPTOM GUIDELINES



If an individual has any of the following symptoms or is not feeling well, he/she should stay home until he/she feels better. Individuals are recommended to seek a medical provider to review symptoms. Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department (TCCB ED) <sup>1</sup>has specified guidelines for fever, vomiting/nausea, and diarrhea.

#### Symptoms:

|                       |                 |                     |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Fever                 | Nausea/Vomiting | Headache            |
| Body aches            | Chills          | Fatigue             |
| Congestion/Runny nose | Sore throat     | Shortness of breath |
| Diarrhea              |                 |                     |

### TCCB ED GUIDELINES:

| SYMPTOM         | RETURN TO SCHOOL GUIDELINE  |
|-----------------|---|
| FEVER           | Fever-free for 24 hours without fever-suppressing medication.       |
| VOMITING/NAUSEA | No Vomiting for 24 hours without nausea-suppressing medication.     |
| DIARRHEA        | Diarrhea-free for 24 hours without diarrhea-suppressing medication. |

After respiratory illnesses such as flu, RSV, or COVID:  
It is strongly recommended to wear a mask to work/school for the next 5 days.

### CDC<sup>2</sup> AND TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES<sup>3</sup> RESPIRATORY VIRUS RECOMMENDATIONS:

When you go back to your normal activities, take added precautions over the next 5 days, such as taking additional steps for cleaner air, hygiene, masks, physical distancing, and/or testing when you will be around other people. Keep in mind that you may still be able to spread the virus that made you sick, even if you are feeling better. You are likely to be less contagious at this time, depending on factors like how long you were sick or how sick you were.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in the trash. If you do not have a tissue, cough, or sneeze into your elbow, not your hands.
- Learn and use proper handwashing techniques.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces, such as countertops, handrails, and doorknobs regularly.

<sup>1</sup> TCC BED [Choose Catholic Schools - Houston, TX](#) TCCB ED Health Manual for Catholic Schools in Texas

<sup>2</sup> Center for Disease Control [CDC updates and simplifies respiratory virus recommendations](#) | [CDC Online Newsroom](#) | [CDC](#)

<sup>3</sup> Texas Department of Health and Human Services [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus Disease 2019\)](#) | [Texas DSHS](#)