



St. Mark "LIONS"  
2023-2024 ATHLETICS PROGRAM HANDBOOK

St. Mark School  
500 Wigwam Lane  
Stratford, CT 06614  
203.375.4291  
[www.stmarkschool.org](http://www.stmarkschool.org)

Dear Parents, Students, and Coaches:

Welcome to St. Mark School!

As part of the St. Mark School community, we all must consider the appropriate role of athletics. This handbook outlines the philosophy and reflects the policies of the St. Mark School Athletics Program for the 2023-2024 school year. Please read this document carefully, sign the attached agreement, and return it to school before attending the first practice date. The agreement states that you intend to abide by the policies of the St. Mark School Athletics Program during the 2023-2024 school year.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melissa M Warner". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Mrs. Melissa Warner, Principal

## **MISSION**

### St. Mark School Mission Statement

St. Mark School is a Christ-centered learning environment that teaches Gospel values and fosters academic excellence. Aware of the dignity and uniqueness of all students, we are committed to the spiritual, intellectual, moral, social, and physical development of each child.

### St. Mark School Athletics Program Mission

The St. Mark School Athletics Program dedicates itself to the pursuit of excellence in athletics within the framework of a Catholic community and in accordance with its primary role as an educator and spiritual guide. The Athletics Program is committed to providing opportunities for each individual student-athlete to reach his/her highest potential while utilizing a Core Gospel Values approach.

As a Catholic school, St. Mark School upholds Christian values and principles. Though our athletic teams strive to win in the sense of having the best score, the primary goal of our athletic programs is to provide a positive, safe environment for all student athletes, to compete and grow as athletes and to be respectful young persons in the image of Christ. Participation on a team is a privilege. With this privilege come responsibilities in the areas of preparation, attitude, sportsmanship, and academics. These responsibilities exist both in and out of school, both in athletic and non-athletic settings.

## **REGISTRATION INFORMATION**

### Nondiscriminatory Policy

St. Mark School Athletics Program admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students of the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its participatory policies, admissions policies, or athletic programs.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### Transportation Policy

In accordance with the policies of the Diocese of Bridgeport, St. Mark School does not provide any transportation to or from athletic events. All transportation is the sole responsibility of the parents/guardians. St. Mark School and the Diocese of Bridgeport assume no liability for accidents that may occur en route to or from any sporting practice or activity.

### Scheduling

It is important to note a long-time tradition that is part of "who" we are as Catholic schools.

1. No practices or regular games may be held before 12 noon on any Sunday.
2. Ordinarily, no practices or regular games may be held on Good Friday. If it is necessary to do so, all practices/games must end by 12 noon.
3. If a school participates in a tournament away from "home," the principal and coach must provide an opportunity for the student athletes to attend Mass at a Roman Catholic Church on a Sunday or Holy Days.

### Prayer

Athletic experiences play an important role in the spiritual formation of students at St. Mark School. Prayer should become an intentional component to a team's culture, not just a rushed event before or after a game or practice.

## **COACHING EXPECTATIONS and REQUIREMENTS**

### Conduct of Coaches

Coaches are first and foremost educators and must serve as role models for student-athletes to emulate. They must embody the Catholic characteristics prevalent at St. Mark School. No coach may coach alone. The

Diocesan Code of Conduct including the “Rule of Two” must be followed at all times, at practices, team conferences as well as at games. All coaches must be Virtus trained and background checked.

### Language

Language should be appropriate and constructive at all times. Coaches are expected to not only monitor their own language, but they should also set and enforce standards of appropriate language for their athletes. This includes, but is not limited to swearing, harassment, exclusionary language, sexual innuendo, personal attacks, and unsportsmanlike gestures. Coaches are also responsible for the conduct of their fans throughout the game. Fans will be removed from the gym for repeated inappropriate conduct during the game. If such conduct continues for subsequent games, the Diocese will instruct the coach and the principal to prohibit the fan from attending any games.

### Treatment of Opponents

Although opponents are not a part of our school community, they are members of the larger body of Christ and should be treated as such. Coaches should model such respect for their athletes and should instruct players on how to welcome their opponents and all visitors in a way that conveys a sense of hospitality and community.

### Coaching Duties

Coaches must meet the following qualifications:

- Acceptance and a clear understanding of the school’s mission and goals
- Ability to constructively teach all participants, regardless of skill level
- Ability to organize, run, and control practices
- Positive attitude and coaching style
- Good communication skills
- Adequate knowledge of the sport and the rules of play
- Ability to provide a safe environment for all

Any coach whose behavior and demeanor is deemed unacceptable may be dismissed by the principal, the athletic director, or the Diocese. Behavior which is unacceptable includes:

- Repeated screaming by a coach or assistant
- Threats or unrealistic punishments
- Inconsistent adherence to rules
- Foul language
- Consistently running up the score against weaker opponents

### **STUDENT EXPECTATIONS and REQUIREMENTS**

Students and parents should recognize that participation in the Athletics Program is not a right of all students, but rather a privilege to those who possess the ability, attitude, disposition, cooperative spirit, and desire to represent the St. Mark School community in a favorable way. By joining the St. Mark School Athletics Program, a student becomes a representative of his/her team and of St. Mark School.

### Sportsmanship

All student-athletes are expected to represent St. Mark School in an exemplary manner. Student-athletes are expected to display the best of Christian courtesy and manners to all officials, coaches, opposing coaches, players, and spectators. At all times good sportsmanship is the rule, not the exception. The penalty for unsportsmanlike behavior during a practice or game will be left to the discretion of the coaches for each sport along with input from the athletic director or principal. This can range from sitting out at practice to a one-game suspension. In extreme cases when an athlete has been ejected from a game, multi-game suspensions and dismissal from the team may be appropriate.

### Attendance

All student-athletes must be marked as present in school on the day of practice or a game in order to participate. All student-athletes must recognize the time commitment made to a team. One is expected to attend all practices and games. If one cannot attend a practice or game, the coach **MUST BE** notified in advance. If a practice is missed during a week without a viable excuse, that player may not participate in the upcoming game.

### Student-Athlete Expectations

A student-athlete is expected to demonstrate and encourage in others behaviors that reflect good sportsmanship. If behavior infractions occur, student-athletes may face both school and athletic consequences. If a student does not meet the expected behaviors in the classroom or school environment, it will be the principal's or coach's decision whether or not the student will be eligible for upcoming games.

Athletes and coaches must conduct themselves in an orderly and sportsmanlike manner.

- If a technical foul is assessed to either a Head coach or Assistant coach, then both coaches lose the ability to walk along the sideline. Both coaches must be seated the remainder of the game.
- If either the Head Coach or Assistant Coach is ejected from a game, a minimum of a 1 game suspension will be enforced in the next game. If warranted, the Diocese reserves the right to replace the offending coach or coaches.
- Player ejection for a flagrant foul will receive a minimum of a 1 game suspension to be enforced for the next game. The offending player's school principal or parish administrator will receive written notification. If such conduct continues, the Diocese reserves the right to remove the offending player from the team roster.

### **EXPECTATIONS of PARENTS and STAKEHOLDERS**

St. Mark School coaches and administrators respect the primacy of the parents as the first teachers of their student-athletes and will partner with parents in the formation of student-athletes. Parents and other members of the community play a vital role in the holistic education of children including students' participation in school sponsored athletics. Together, all stakeholders should actively work to ensure that the Catholic mission and identity of St. Mark School permeates the athletics program.

#### Top Five Ways to Support your Student-Athlete

1. Be present – Show up to games, cheer, and support our teams!
2. Be positive – Children learn from modeling.
3. Encourage independence – Encourage student-athletes to be responsible for the care of their athletic gear, be prepared for practices and games, and to speak directly with their coach about any concerns.
4. Observe the “24 Hour Cushion” –Please allow coaches the time they need to process their decisions on game situations and decisions before approaching them with any questions. Coaches need not discuss playing time, coaching strategies and specific plays, or information pertaining to other athletes.
5. Model behavior expectations for visiting spectators – Take pride in our athletic program and model for visitors how we CHEER for our team rather than against our opponents, RESPECT the integrity and authority of game officials, ALLOW coaches to coach without criticism from the spectators and HELP clean up at the end of athletic events.

### **REVISIONS/MODIFICATIONS TO POLICY**

The principal may make changes to any policies outlined in this handbook as needed and has the final decision with regards to any policy. Changes will be communicated to the public on a timely basis. The principal has the authority to remove a student or cancel a season if student athletes or parents are not adhering to St. Mark School standards.



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**Parent/Student Consent Form**

I have read the 2023-2024 St. Mark Athletics Program Handbook and agree to follow the school policies and procedures as stated. Please note, both parents and students must sign this agreement.

FAMILY NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian #1 Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian #1 Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian #2 Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian #2 Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student #1 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Student #1 Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student #2 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Student #2 Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student #3 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Student #3 Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_