

**ST. STEPHENS LUTHERAN SCHOOL**  
**Home of the Warriors**



“Led by the Spirit to  
Love, Hope, Serve, and Achieve.”

Romans 8:1-4

SCHOOL HANDBOOK: 2024-25 SCHOOL YEAR

# ST. STEPHENS LUTHERAN SCHOOL

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our school and a year of education, growth, and learning for your child. For many of you this means a new grade, a new teacher and new assignments, while for others everything is new for the first time. Whatever the case, we are blessed to have you as part of the St. Stephens Lutheran School family.

We are dedicated to creating an atmosphere in which every child will feel valued, successful, and motivated to learn in order to reach his/her God-given potential. We see that happening best when parents, teachers, and administrators work together in an atmosphere of caring, trust, cooperation and open communication.

This handbook has been prepared to help you in establishing a closer relationship between home and school. In these pages you will find objectives, policies, and other information that will be of value to you during the school year. Please know that some policies or procedures may change during the course of the year; changes will be announced in the school newsletter.

In following the principles outlined in Matthew 18, parents with questions or concerns are encouraged to first contact the classroom teacher or person with whom there is a question or concern.

Additional questions can then be directed to the school principal.

Please take some time to read this handbook with your child and retain it for reference throughout the school year.

## ABOUT OUR SCHOOL

**SCHOOL MISSION:** St. Stephens Lutheran School, in partnership with parents, glorifies God by nurturing and training students to develop their God-given gifts, to excel academically, and to live their faith with others.

Our school faces many challenges today. Christian values and morals are rapidly disappearing. New family structures demand increased time and effort for teachers to minister to children and parents. Classroom education is not the same each year ... it is constantly changing, ever evolving. The amount of critical knowledge students are expected to retain is increasing faster than we can imagine. Educational innovations and expectations are happening at such a frantic pace that neither teacher nor student can really keep up.

In the midst of the many changes in our schools and in our world, St. Stephens Lutheran School can offer a constant that does not change. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Our school teaches the love of Jesus Christ; we

teach a changeless Christ to a changing world.

To effectively provide a quality Christian education that meets the ever-changing needs of students, St. Stephens Lutheran School will focus on these core values: faith, excellence, partnership and opportunities.

**SCHOOL VISION:** Our vision as a school ministry is to provide a quality, Christ-centered education that also provides a strong academic foundation to prepare all students for the demands of living in the 21st century.

To reach our vision, our students will develop into responsible, Christ-centered citizens, who make good decisions and witness their faith to others. We want our professional educators to be well-prepared to teach students in a digital age and have a great understanding of Christian doctrine and practice; the School Board and administration share in the responsibility to ensure that adequate staff development is provided to help keep teachers current and professionally prepared. And our commitment to a quality education program allows SSLS to be a “school of choice” for many students and families, providing opportunities for every child in our school to grow, learn, and find success in school.

Developing a spirit of trust, partnership, and collaboration with parents plays a vital role in the education of students and within our entire school community. Teachers must show love and respect for the many different family situations, accepting the various learning needs of students and appreciating that not all students will have the same talents,

skills, or aptitudes. Being flexible and adapting to meet the individual needs of students is critical to the academic success and spiritual development of all students. Parents must also be cooperative and supportive of the efforts of our faculty and staff and handle conflicts and all situations with Christ-like love.

As partners, it is important that all stakeholders within the SSLS community (parents, students, faculty, and congregation) display a positive attitude toward our school ministry. Concerns and opportunities for improvement should be addressed in productive ways through the proper channels. All members of the school community play the role of "advocate for the school" and should share our common mission, core values, purpose, and vision. They are responsible for sharing the strengths and positive components of our school ministry to the people of Hickory and beyond.

The end desire for St. Stephens Lutheran School is to be "a great school for teaching and learning", providing students with a meaningful, quality preparation for life in a caring and passionate way, producing children who live productive Christian lives of service to our Lord and mankind.

**OUR SCHOOL:** St. Stephens Lutheran School was started in 1943 in order to offer a Christian education to the children of St. Stephens Lutheran Church. Over the years, many changes have occurred in curriculum, personnel, and facilities ... however, the initial goal remains the same: we offer a quality, well-rounded, Christian education to the children of the congregation and to the children of the Hickory community.

Our school is one of over 2500 Lutheran schools in the United States. Lutheran schools range from preschool programs to colleges and seminaries. Many teachers in Lutheran schools, as well as here at St. Stephens, were trained in colleges operated by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

St. Stephens Lutheran School is a faith-based school affiliated with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Our educational program supports instruction for students in Kindergarten-Grade 8, along with a Five Star rated preschool program serving three and four-year-olds.

## **SCHOOL AND HOME PARTNERSHIP**

**SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY:** St. Stephens Lutheran School offers up-to-date learning and teaching materials. Students receive support, encouragement, and instruction to live in service to Christ, family, community and the world. The educational program offers a balanced, comprehensive and success-oriented curriculum. The program supports a sensitive, caring and supportive learning environment, which aids students in developing positive self-esteem and self-worth.

**PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY:** The home is and always will be the chief agency for the Christian training of a child. A Christian School does not relieve parents of their God-given obligation and responsibility. The family is encouraged to evidence a Christian lifestyle, which includes regular church and Bible class attendance and a devotional prayer life. It is important that the school and the home work together to achieve this Christ-centeredness.

**OUR PARTNERSHIP:** Our school works with children and parents who are willing to walk with us in ONENESS of spirit and purpose. The home is and always will be the chief agency for the Christian education of the child. The purpose of our school is to serve as an important aid to and extension of the home in the vital work of Christian education. If the home and school are both CHRIST-CENTERED, the child is receiving the best education he or she can receive anywhere.

To maintain open communication and deal with concerns, parents and students are encouraged to:

1. First, contact the teacher to discuss the concerns.
2. If the concern is not resolved with the teacher, then contact the principal for assistance.
3. Should the previous steps fail to produce open communication and resolution; the principal will arrange a meeting with a pastor or School Board of all persons involved.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

St. Stephens Lutheran School is operated by St. Stephens Lutheran Church as an educational arm of the congregation. A School Board oversees the policies and personnel of the school; the school principal is responsible for the day-to-day management and administration of the school.

**ACCREDITATION:** Our school maintains accreditation by the National

Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) and Cognia programs.

**ENROLLMENT:** Re-enrolment of current students typically begins in February.

New students may be enrolled after consultation with the Admissions Department and principal and completion of the enrollment procedures.

Our school follows the North Carolina Department of Education guidelines regarding age requirements for school. Students entering Kindergarten of the current year must be five years old on or before August 31; other grade-level age requirements follow state guidelines. Early entrance requests may be granted upon fulfilment of the North Carolina Department of Education guidelines.

**NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY:** St. Stephens Lutheran School admits students of any race to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at St. Stephens Lutheran School, and St. Stephens Lutheran School does not discriminate on the basis of race in the administration of its educational, admission, scholarship or other school administered programs.

**POLICIES NOT COVERED:** Any school or classroom procedure not specifically discussed in this handbook shall be left to the discretion of the teacher or principal.

**POLICY MANUAL:** The school's operating policies are collated for easy reference and are available upon re-

quest. The School Board assists the principal in developing, evaluating and revising policies as needed.

**SCHOOL BOARD:** The school board meets monthly on the second Monday. The board serves to provide review and oversight of school policies and ensure such policies support the school, staff and students in accordance with the scriptures, doctrines and confessions of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and the congregation of St. Stephens Lutheran Church.

School Board meetings are open. If you plan to attend please follow the school board meeting norms below.

**Meeting Norms** – Concerns from parents and other interested parties should be submitted to the SB for inclusion on the agenda by the first Monday of each month and will be considered in the Executive Session after regularly scheduled agenda items.

The school board's authority is corporate. Individual board members have authority to act only when the board is convened in regular or special session. Duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to praying for the administration, faculty, staff, parents, and children of the school overseeing the school's business affairs, reviewing and approving school policy, setting policies and general boundaries within which the principal administers the school.

**AWARDS:** Several academic, attendance, and activity honors and awards are available per pre-determined guidelines. Students are also recognized for their various achievements both in school and out of school. Students are typically recognized at chapel services and/or at school assemblies.

**CURRICULUM:** The courses of study that make up the curriculum of the St. Stephens Lutheran School comply with the standards of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the Southeastern District, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Our faith is actively integrated in each course of study at each grade level. The areas of learning are:

- Religion: Bible stories, Bible teachings, memory work, worship, service
- Computer Education
- Fine Arts: Spanish (online), art, and music
- Health: Sex education, nutrition, health
- Language Arts: Reading, literature, creative writing, grammar, spelling, handwriting
- Mathematics: Arithmetic, problem-solving, pre-algebra and algebra
- Physical Education: Fitness, exercise and movement, basic games, team sports
- Science: General science, biological science, earth science, physical sciences
- Social Studies: Citizenship, history, NC history, geography, government, cultures, current events
- Character-building curriculum

**GRADING SCALE:** Our school will assess student performance based on the following scales:

Grades K-2	Grades 3 - 8
O Outstanding	A 100 – 90
S Satisfactory	B 89 - 80
N Needs Improvement	C 79 - 70
U Unsatisfactory	D 69 - 60

**REPORT CARDS and MID-QUARTER REPORTS:** Report cards are issued quarterly (available online for students in Grades 1-8). Parents should review the report cards carefully and are encouraged to contact their child's teacher if concerns arise. Mid-quarter reports are available online for students in Grades 3-8.

Parents are encouraged to monitor student achievement and progress at regular intervals through our online gradebook; this service is available throughout the year (not just at mid-quarter or end-of-quarter) and it serves as a communication tool between home and school regarding student achievement.

**HOMEWORK:** Children are expected to prepare their work neatly, accurately, completely, and to submit their assignments on time. Parents should show an interest and concern in their child's work by frequently discussing it with the child and by assisting them as needed with their work.

Children are given opportunities to complete many of their assignments in school. Grade levels will determine their individual consequences for incomplete or late homework. In general, late and incomplete homework will receive partial

credit; missing assignments may be counted as a zero (0). Additionally, recess time may be removed from students who have difficulty completing homework assignments on time. All make-up work must be done as prescribed by the teacher. Parents can monitor missing or incomplete assignments through our online gradebook.

Typically, homework may be assigned at 10-15 minutes per grade level. For example, a second grade student may have 20-30 minutes of homework and a seventh grade student may have 70-105 minutes of homework. Keep in mind, this is only a guide and may vary from day to day and from student to student. In cases where a child seems to frequently bring home a large amount of work, parents should arrange to discuss this condition with the classroom teacher.

From time to time, parents may need to assist their child with work. However, this does not mean that parents are to do their child's work. Should a question arise in any given area of schoolwork, parents are urged to consult with their child's teacher.

**PROMOTION AND RETENTION:** Students will progress or be retained in each grade level upon the following criteria:

1. Successful completion of the curriculum for the particular grade level based upon:
  - a. Assigned work
  - b. Teacher made and publisher-supplied tests
  - c. Participation in classroom work
2. Results of standardized achievement tests.

3. Results of specialized testing, if deemed necessary.

4. Conference with the student's teacher and parents.

Our school follows the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction guidelines regarding any requests for early entrance at any grade level or advanced promotion.

**STANDARDIZED TESTING:** We administer a national-normed standardized test annually to students in Grades 1-8 to determine their progress, as well as scholastic strengths and weaknesses. Ability tests and a writing test are administered at selected grade levels. We also participate in any required North Carolina educational testing programs.

## ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is a vital factor in any student's academic progress; the responsibility for such attendance rests with the parent.

School administration records and monitors student attendance patterns throughout the school year, noting full-day and partial-day absences, as well as any late arrival (tardy) or early departure. Such attendance is recorded on the student's official attendance records.

School administration shall assume leadership for all matters relating to school attendance. As the school's "attendance officer", the principal is obligated to report on and follow-up on suspected cases of habitually absent, tardy, or truant students. Such administrative action will be based on the available evidence and facts for each individual case. A high absenteeism

rate will result in administrative action through the school office.

**SCHOOL HOURS:** The school day begins at 8:00am and ends at 3:10pm.

The school opens at 7:00am; children in Grades K-8 who arrive before 7:50am go to the lunchroom where a supervisor is on duty. Children are dismissed from the lunchroom at 7:50am to go to their classrooms; classes start at 8:00am.

Dismissal for Grades K-8 is at 3:10pm. At 3:20pm, all children remaining are taken to Extended Day Care.

Parents will have to provide three written authorized individuals to pick up their student.

Preschool operating hours are from 7:00 until 6:00. Your package plan determines your pick up time. There is no extended care for preschool.

### **ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES:**

1. **Absences:** If the child is absent from school, a written note from the parent is to be sent to the teacher on the day the child returns to class. Parents are asked to notify the school office (256-2166) by 9:00am on the day of absence stating the reason for the absence.
2. Arriving after 9:00am or leaving before 2:45pm constitutes a partial-day absence.
3. Due to the heavy schedule commitments of teachers, homework cannot be given immediately for students who are absent. Homework assignments for absent children will be sent home with siblings or left in school office after 3:00pm.

4. **Tardy:** Our school day starts at 8:00am; children arriving after 8:10am are considered tardy. The child is to report to the school office before going to the classroom. Students that are frequently tardy are subject to administrative action. Excused late arrivals include doctor's appointments or severe weather conditions.

5. **Early Departure:** Students may leave school before the regular dismissal time in cases of illness, doctor's appointments, and emergency or planned school related activities. Parents should notify the school office or teacher and come to the office for the child in person to sign the child out. A designated person must provide proper identification, if requested. If a child is returned from a doctor's appointment, a doctor's excuse should be presented in the school office

6. **Vacations:** Learning is not solely confined to the classroom. Absence from school for some types of vacations offers unique cultural advantages to the students. However, any extended absence from school may lead to an academic loss to the absentee. This loss is much greater with some students than with others, so vacation absences must be treated with attention to the needs of the individual student. During the school year there are days with no classes. Families are encouraged to use these times for vacations. However, should extended vacations occur during the school year, parents must assume full responsibility for the academic progress of their children. Parents should fully understand that lower grades and a lower academic standing are real



possibilities in case of extended absence from school.

7. **Make-Up Work:** For every day a child is absent, two days will be given to make up work up to one week. For extended illness, the teacher and parents will need to coordinate their efforts. Students leaving school for a vacation will be given their missed assignments on their return.

## DISCIPLINE AND CONDUCT

Our school recognizes each student is an individual child of God and as such, each student must be dealt with on an individual basis. Those in authority are to approach each child with Christian concern and respect; aware of individual personalities, needs and emotions. The school also recognizes the worth and value of various means and methods of discipline, and therefore, trusts the discretion of the individual teacher in the employment of such means and methods within the framework of Christian love.

The importance of our principles on discipline cannot be over-emphasized. Our staff and School Board expect the full cooperation of parents regarding the matter of corrective discipline in our school. The goal of our discipline is self-discipline, a discipline motivated by the love of Jesus Christ. This does not exclude the use of the Law, but assures the erring sinners of God's grace in Christ as the constraining factor in their lives. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we seek to teach the children to lead Christ-centered lives. Each teacher, therefore, is permitted to use age-appropriate discipline (with the exception of corporal punishment) when necessary to achieve these ends. Prob-

lems that need further attention are referred to the parent(s) and principal for adjudication, and if necessary, to the School Board

Students have the responsibility of avoiding any behavior that is detrimental to their own or other students' achievement of educational goals. Students must cooperate in maintaining reasonable orderliness in the school and classroom, take reasonable care of books and other instructional aids, and encourage a climate where learning is cherished.

Students have the responsibility of showing respect for the knowledge and authority of the teaching and support staff. Students must obey reasonable directions, use acceptable and courteous language, avoid actions that show contempt, and appeal decisions only through appropriate channels. This includes social media, verbal and written form.

In agreement with the School Board's recognition of the need to make and enforce rules and regulations as are necessary to insure efficient operation of the school. The members of the administrative and teaching staff of the school are authorized to administer necessary corrective discipline, excluding corporal punishment, so that such rules and regulations are adhered to by the students and to do as would reasonable and prudent Christian parents. Parents and non-parents are to respect the decision of school personnel in handling such matters. Understanding the need for confidentiality, not all information can be shared regarding the handling of certain situations.

**MINOR OFFENSES:** Teachers and staff members of SSLS are encouraged to handle minor discipline infractions lovingly and quietly, making a record of them and referring them to the school office only if they become repetitive or seem deliberate. Parents are contacted if the child is not able to contribute to its resolution, the offense continues, or if the offense endangers others.

**MAJOR OFFENSES:** The school principal may enact administrative action in cases when student misbehaviors consist of multiple infractions which violate the discipline code (especially repetitive violations) or where the offense jeopardizes the safety of any person or property. The level of administrative action for any violation will depend on a variety of circumstances. The school reserves the right to suspend or expel any student for a major violation or persistent disregard of the school rules.

**BULLYING:** Our school defines bullying as overt, repeated acts or gestures, including: verbal or written communications transmitted; physical acts committed; or any other behaviors committed by a student or group of students against another student with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate, or harm the other student.

St. Stephens Lutheran School is committed to providing a learning and teaching environment that is free from bullying. Our school atmosphere should be such that all individuals and groups are treated with respect and dignity. It shall be a violation of this policy for a staff member, volunteer, parent, or student to bully another person physically, verbally, or relationally. The school will take preventative steps to discourage

bullying from occurring. The school will treat allegations of bullying seriously and will review and investigate such allegations in a prompt, confidential, and thorough manner.

A charge of bullying shall not, in and of itself, create the presumption of wrongdoing. However, substantiated acts of bullying will result in disciplinary action being brought against the alleged offender.

## DRESS CODE

There is a positive relation between a neat, appropriate appearance and a good learning environment. All students are encouraged to take pride in self and in their school work. To create the optimal setting for students, the following guidelines reflect the concern of St. Stephens Lutheran School for student dress and they emphasize neatness, modesty, good grooming and good taste. We ask both parents and students to support the school in our attempt to create a positive learning environment. **Please see the back of the handbook for full dress code guideline**

### GENERAL DRESS CODE GUIDELINES

1. The style and type of student attire should be God-pleasing.
2. The students' personal grooming should reflect respect and care for their bodies.
3. Clothing that is both modest and sensible is required.
4. Any article of apparel or the manner in which that apparel is worn should not provide a threat to the health or safety of the students.

5. Any article of apparel or the manner in which that apparel is worn should not cause a disruption of the educational process.
6. Clothing should be clean, free of holes, not torn or frayed, sized to fit appropriately, and worn properly on the body (ex: waistline for pants, shorts, etc.).
7. Respectful dress is encouraged for chapel.
8. The examples listed in the Dress Code Guidelines are acceptable attire (and some unacceptable attire). The list does not cover every possible situation; clothing styles and fashion change often. The school reserves the right to determine what is acceptable and what is not acceptable beyond the scope of the list.

## **SUMMARY**

In our partnership between home and school, each of us has a role in complying with our dress code. Students are asked to consider their appearance before leaving for school in the morning. Parents are asked to support the school in our attempt to promote a positive and appropriate learning environment. Teachers and staff are asked to enforce the dress code guidelines consistently and fairly. The school is asked to amend the dress code as needed to reflect fashion or styles.

When the home and school work together in our dress code, we know that school time is focused more on teaching and learning, rather than dealing with the distractions and frustrations of inappropriate dress attire.

## **DRESS CODE ENFORCEMENT**

1. Parents are requested to monitor what their children wear to school and should help their children develop pride in their appearance.
2. Enforcement of the dress code guidelines may vary as per grade level, nature of infraction, and number of occurrences. Consequences for infractions may include, but are not limited to, written notice, phone call, change of clothing, and suspension.
3. The faculty shall assume responsibility for enforcing this policy, under the direction and guidance of the principal. Each teacher has the authority to approach any student whose dress is considered in violation of the dress code, regardless of student grade level.
4. The school reserves the right to make final determination on the validity of student dress; the classroom teacher and/or principal may handle special circumstances on an individual basis.

**DISCLAIMER:** The administration and faculty of SSLS reserve the right to make judgments concerning proper and improper dress for the school. If necessary, we will inform students and their parents of revisions to the dress code policy that are made during the school year. Failure of a teacher or staff member to make a dress code correction does not mean the attire is acceptable the next time.

## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

Members of St. Stephens Lutheran Church recognize the vital importance of Christian education in the lives of chil-

dren, and therefore support the school as part of the church's overall mission program.

The combined costs of salaries and benefits, supplies, books, materials, equipment, maintenance, insurance, and facilities are a considerable commitment made by the congregation. St. Stephens Lutheran Church provides financial support through scholarships and subsidies to keep fees as low as possible, enabling more families to enroll in the school.

We strongly believe that tuition is not simply a fee for educational instruction; it is an investment in your child's future and his eternal life.

### **TUITION AND FEES (Applies to In-class or At-home Learning)**

1. Registration fees are due upon a child's acceptance to St. Stephens Lutheran School; the registration fee ensures a child's enrollment in school and secures placement in a grade level. Registration fees are non-refundable.
2. Tuition is billed in 10 equal payments; payments are due in July-April for K-8 and August-May for Pre-school of each school year. The tuition payment is due on the 1st day of the month; a \$25.00 late fee is assessed to accounts not paid by the 10th day of each month. Bank charges will be assessed for all returned checks.
3. The annual tuition rate will be prorated for any student enrolling after September 1.
4. Extended care fees are billed and due with the statement (see above). Failure to pay extended care fees will result in a temporary suspension from the extended care program until payment is made.
5. All fees are due by the last day of each semester unless prior arrangements have been made. Should a family have an unpaid financial balance at the end of the 1st semester, the child will be involuntarily suspended from school attendance due to non-payment of fees.
6. All school fees must be current before the first day of school for a child to be re-enrolled for the next school year.
7. All tuition and fees (extended care, lunch, library fees, damaged or lost textbooks, etc.) for the current school year must be paid in full before report cards are issued, records transferred, diplomas given out at graduation, or registration accepted for next school year.
8. In the event a student withdraws from school, there is no registration fee refund. Tuition will not be refunded for the current month the student leaves. Advance payments will be refunded. All fees for a transferring student must be current and all textbooks and library books returned in order to release a report card or permanent records.
9. Please contact the school office should your family face an instance where it may be necessary to delay or fall behind in tuition payments. In our partnership, we pledge to work with you to find new payment arrangements to fulfill your financial obligation to the school.
10. A St. Stephens Lutheran Church member who has children in our school must attend worship services in our church at least two Sundays per month on average to qualify for the church member discount; the

member parent(s) and child(ren) must attend the worship service. If the member family attendance record does not meet the requirements during the 1st semester, the family will be assessed the full tuition rate for the throughout the succeeding 2nd semester. If poor attendance occurs during the 2nd semester, then the full tuition rate will apply for the succeeding 1st semester.”

**FINANCIAL AID:** It is our goal that all families desiring a Christian education for their children would have the opportunity to bring them to St. Stephens Lutheran School regardless of their income, financial situation, or ability to pay ... while at the same time our school must maintain the funding levels necessary to accomplish the ministry of the school and the mission of the church.

To that end, we offer financial aid to families on a financial-need basis as funds allow; the assistance is applicable to students enrolled in Grades K-8. Parents must submit a financial aid request form for each semester (as financial situations may change). A financial aid committee evaluates each request and determines the amount of financial assistance. SSLS also accepts the North Carolina Opportunity Scholarship. Contact the school office for financial aid information.

## HEALTH AND HEALTH SERVICES

**DISEASE:** Our school strives to guard the health of the pupils. To minimize the danger of spreading disease, a child showing signs of illness (sore throat, rash, etc.) should be kept at home until the condition is corrected. The same

applies to children who have a severe cold or cough.

When returning to school from a contagious disease or illness, there must be a doctor's note given to the child's teacher stating that the child is now non-contagious and able to return to school.

**FIRST AID AND INJURY:** The teacher or school office personnel will administer first aid in cases of minor injuries. In the case of major injuries or what is thought to be a serious injury, an ambulance will be called and the parents will be notified.

**ILLNESS:** Children who do not feel well at home before school are requested to stay home for the entire school day. Students who vomit over the night or morning should not attend school. Students must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school. Should signs of a serious illness arise while children are at school or an accident occurs, parents or guardians will be contacted for further direction. Parents are encouraged to update their emergency card if there is a change in phone number, address, or contact person, etc.

**IMMUNIZATION:** State law prescribes certain immunizations to be given at various ages. When children enroll in a school for the first time or any subsequent time and at any level, their parents must show either that they have been immunized or that a current medical or religious objection is on file. Parents are requested to provide the school with complete immunization records prior to the beginning of the school year.

**MEDICATION AND ASPIRIN:** Any student needing to take any type of medication or aspirin during school hours must present a written note from their parents to the homeroom teacher requesting that the medication be administered. All medication is to be turned in to the school office personnel who will be responsible for distribution and records.

**PHYSICAL EXAMINATION:** Kindergarten students must complete the North Carolina health assessment, administered by the family physician.

## SCHOOL INFORMATION

**ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL:** Our school day begins at 8:00am and ends at 3:10pm. There are two designated drop off and pick up areas for students. Please follow the procedures and traffic patterns to ensure the safety of our students.

**BIRTHDAY:** Do not send flowers, balloons, or other items to be delivered to the child at school for birthdays or other special occasions.

**CANCELATION, DELAY, OR EARLY DISMISSAL:** In the event that inclement weather or other emergency situation may warrant a cancellation, delay, or early dismissal, we make such announcements by:

- Phone. Call 256-2166, press "1" when you hear the greeting.
- Website. [www.sslswarriors.org](http://www.sslswarriors.org)
- TV. WBTV Channel 3 (Charlotte), WSOC Channel 9 (Charlotte), WCNC Channel 36 (Charlotte)
- Radio. WHKY AM1290, WAIZ AM630

We try to make our cancellation or delay announcements as early as possible (by 6:30am) or the night before. If you do not see or hear an announcement, school starts at our regular time ... 8:00am.

NOTE: We do not always follow the Hickory and Catawba County School closings or delays; listen and watch for our school.

**CELL PHONES AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES:** We encourage students to use electronic devices for learning purposes, and to help provide a positive school learning setting we have some general school guidelines regarding their use:

### CELL PHONES & OTHER DEVICES

1. The school is not responsible for any lost, broken, or stolen device; the student is solely responsible for their cell phone.
2. Students may not use or carry a cell phone from 8:00-3:30 during the school day; the cell phone should be stored in a student locker during the day. Students may use the school office phone (with permission) during the day.
3. If a student uses a cell phone without permission during the school day, the phone will be confiscated and a parent may pick it up in the school office (and other consequences per star card policy apply).
4. Students may not use or carry a cell phone in extended care programs.

## **ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

### **(iPad & laptop)**

1. The school is not responsible for any lost, broken, or stolen device; the student is solely responsible for their electronic device.
2. The electronic device should have a protective cover and the student's name should be on both the cover and device.
3. With teacher permission, students may use an electronic device for the sole purpose of "learning" during school; students may not use the device to use play games or use the device as a "toy" during school hours. If a device is used for any purpose other than "learning" during school, then the device will be confiscated and the student will no longer be able to bring it to school.
4. A teacher may authorize device use for other purposes during the school day.

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS, PHONE, EMAIL, FAMILY STATUS, AND HEALTH RECORDS:** Parents are asked to notify the school office immediately when a change of address, phone number, and/or email occurs, enabling our school administration to keep our roster and mailing list up-to-date. Notifying the school office of any changes in email addresses is also helpful. Also, parents are asked to notify the school office if there is a change of family relationship, health-related items, immunizations, sickness, etc.

**CHAPEL SERVICES:** Chapel services are usually held Wednesday afternoons in the church sanctuary at 2:30pm; times may vary for special services. The

purpose of this service is to offer students an opportunity to worship and praise God as a school family. Each class will have an opportunity to lead service. Parents, relatives, and friends are invited and encouraged to attend. Chapel offerings are designated for various mission projects.

**CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING:** Child abuse and neglect are complex problems that are not confined to any race, social, economic, or religious group. Various forms of abuse are physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and emotional abuse. State law mandates teachers to report suspected cases of child abuse to the Child Protection Services; procedures and guidelines will be followed, as able, to ensure a prompt, professional treatment of the reported case.

**CLASSROOM PARTIES:** Classroom and holiday parties are scheduled at the discretion of the teacher. Participation in parties other than students is at the discretion of the teacher. As privileges, these can be removed or individuals removed from participation.

**CODE OF CONDUCT:** Students attending the St. Stephens Lutheran School are expected to project a positive image of themselves, their school, and most importantly, our Lord. Student conduct is also expected to show consideration for fellow students and staff, creating a harmonious and Christian atmosphere for learning. Whether offline or online, you are representing St. Stephens at all times. Please keep this in mind as you interact, create, and share in the digital world. These rules and regulations apply to all students attending school or

school-sponsored activities. Students, too, have a responsibility to report to school authorities their knowledge of other students' possession of weapons, drugs, alcohol, or other items that pose a potential danger to students, as well as bullying, harassing or verbal abuse incidents.

Any behavior not conducive to a healthy school environment will be dealt with at the discretion of the school administration, applying those actions necessary to control behavior. Each case shall be handled on an individual basis, and the resulting disciplinary action shall be based on the available evidence and facts of each incident.

### **COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION:**

Active cooperation and communication between parents, teachers, students and principal is necessary for the proper development of the child. Parents are invited and encouraged to visit the school for conferences on matters pertaining to their child's progress and welfare. Proper communication encourages positive relationships and reduces misunderstandings. Parents seeking clarification on classroom activities should contact the respective classroom teacher immediately.

Parents are urged to communicate to the teacher incidents occurring in or out of school that may cause the child's attention or learning attitude to be negatively affected.

**CONTACTING A TEACHER:** Teachers may be contacted in person or by telephone or through fast direct. When meeting in person, always ask the teacher if she has time to talk at that

moment, or better yet, when it might be convenient for her to do so. Don't expect to have an extended conversation during drop off and pick up; consider 8:00am-3:30pm to be "sacred time" for the teacher. Mornings, recess, lunch, and after school can actually be quite hectic times; the teacher may appear free but she's not. Ask the teacher for the best time to contact her.

**CUSTODY NOTIFICATION:** Please inform the school office and teacher(s) concerning any special parental rights and privileges.

**DAMAGES AND VANDALISM:** The St. Stephens Lutheran School materials, equipment, facilities, etc., belong to the members of St. Stephens Lutheran Church. Misuse or abuse of these facilities creates greater expense in maintenance and upkeep for everyone. This expense is eventually passed on to the owners (parents). It is hoped that a feeling of ownership would develop where all students would take greater pride in their school and would treat these facilities and materials with great respect and care. Any unnecessary usage or damage to books, desks, chairs, or any school property or equipment will not be tolerated; replacement or repair of any item and the cost of labor applicable is the responsibility of the parent and/or the child. The principal in consultation with teacher will make judgment in all such matters. Failure to pay for damage may result in a suspension from school. Bathroom behavior is closely monitored; failure to follow appropriate bathroom conduct will result in disciplinary action.



**DRUGS, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO:**

Students who intentionally sell, give, use, or are under the influence of illicit drugs, narcotics, alcohol, or tobacco products at school or any school-sponsored activity shall be subject to guidance counseling and appropriate disciplinary action, including suspension and expulsion.

**EXTENDED CARE:** In order to help working families, we have extended care available for children in Kindergarten-Grade 8. We open at 7:00am for before school care and are open until 6:00pm for after school care.

We close each day at 6:00pm. In the event you are running late, please call ahead so arrangements can be made for the children; there is an additional charge of \$1.00 per five minutes after 6:00pm.

Parents of preschoolers must sign children both in the morning and when they are picked up. Students in Grades K-8 may sign themselves in to extended care; we ask parents to sign out children when they are picked up.

Students coming into extended care are under the supervision of the leaders and will be expected to follow the rules and procedures of the program, which are a continuation of the school rules. Students receive a snack and are given time to work on homework and play.

Preschool students are billed in a chosen package plan for extended care; students in Grades K-8 are billed monthly.

**FIELD TRIPS:** Field trips are scheduled by the teacher to provide educational

experiences and learning activities outside of the structured classroom. Students must have a signed permission form by the parent or guardian to attend the trip. Unless otherwise stated, siblings are not allowed on field trips.

All students are expected to participate in field trips and class trips. Such trips are considered part of our curriculum and a regular activity of the day. Parents that attend field trips may not bring other children.

**FIRE, TORNADO, AND LOCKDOWN**

**DRILLS:** Fire drills, tornado drills, and school lockdown drills are required by state law and should be taken seriously. Students are expected to cooperate and follow teacher directions. SLS follows all state requirements regarding the frequency of these drills.

**FOOD, CANDY, GUM, SODA AND**

**OTHER:** Healthy snacks may be brought to school for consumption during appropriate times as indicated by classroom teachers. Gum chewing is not allowed on school premises during school hours. Candy should not be brought to school (exceptions will be made in the case of birthdays and special events). Food and snacks consumed on the playground area is monitored by the teachers. Only water bottles with water are acceptable in classrooms and extended care.

**HARASSMENT:** Our school will not tolerate any harassment of any person relating to the person's race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, or disability. The term "harassment" includes, but is not necessarily limited to slurs, jokes, or other verbal, graphic, or physi-

cal conduct relating to an individual's race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, or disability. It is also the policy of St. Stephens Lutheran School that any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment.

Harassment of any nature is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. Retaliation against an individual who make charges of harassment will not be tolerated. Those accused of harassment or discrimination should talk immediately with the teacher or principal.

**INSURANCE:** St. Stephens Lutheran School provides accident insurance for students as secondary insurance. It is advisable and beneficial for students to have some type of primary accident coverage through a parent's home or occupational medical (or accident) insurance.

**LIBRARY:** Our library is open for use by all of the students. Students are responsible for the checked-out library books and a charge will be made for the loss of books; such charge will be paid before a report card is issued at the end of the school year.

Individual classes have a scheduled library time each week. Students also work on their own on projects, which require the materials found in the library. Teachers will accompany their students to the library on their assigned period for the week.

Our library is growing, thanks to the efforts and generosity of our PTL and many donations. Books for the library may be purchased for special occasions

or to honor a student, parent or friend. The chosen book will be appropriately inscribed and placed on the library shelf to be checked out by students. For further information, please contact the school office.

**LOST AND FOUND:** Any articles of value, which are found, should be brought to the school office. These items may be claimed in the school office. If not claimed, they will be donated to charity monthly. Please write your child's name in sweatshirts, sweaters, jackets, etc., for easy return if found.

**LUNCH:** The purpose of the lunch program is to provide well-balanced meals at a reasonable cost and to promote healthy eating patterns involving nutritious foods. Monthly lunch menus are posted for parent and student reference.

Our lunch program operates on a pre-payment basis; meals are deducted from the student's account balance. Parents are expected to pre-pay for lunches on a regular basis.

Children may bring bag lunches to school. We ask that home-prepared lunches follow healthy, nutritional guidelines to comply with our school wellness guidelines (no "fast food" is allowed). Parents should not cater lunch for individual students or small groups.

Lunch must either be purchased in the cafeteria or brought by the student on an individual basis. Students purchasing school lunch can take milk, water, or juice as a part of the cost of the lunch.

Children may bring a thermos with hot foods. Carbonated drinks or drinks in glass bottles or cans are not to be

brought. Milk, water, or juice may be purchased through the school office.

Parents are invited and encouraged to eat lunch with their child. Adult lunches are sold on an a la carte basis. Please notify the office by 9:30am so we can prepare enough food for students and visitors.

**NUISANCE ITEMS AND WEAPONS:**

Items brought to school that are not part of the necessary or required school supplies or material shall be considered a "nuisance" and will be confiscated by the teacher (examples: water guns, radios, toys, etc). Students possessing items which may pose a danger to students and staff (guns, knives, matches, fireworks, etc) will be referred for administrative action. Consequences may include suspension or expulsion.

**PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES:**

Parent-Teacher Conferences are required at the mid-point of the first quarter. Schedules will be arranged for these conferences. Other conferences may be scheduled as needed throughout the year by either the parents or the teacher. Parents are asked to come to the school and discuss with the child's teacher the progress the child is making. The objectives of these conferences are to:

1. Promote understanding in the home/school relationship.
2. Strengthen the mutual interest of the parent and teacher in the child's welfare.
3. Give the parent information about the child's progress.
4. Assist the parent and teacher in finding ways to work together for the good of the child.

**PARENT-TEACHER LEAGUE (PTL):**

The purpose of this group is to help the home and school work together for the welfare of the students. Additionally, our PTL provides fundraisers and family activities to enhance our school ministry. Parents of students enrolled at St. Stephens Lutheran School are included in the PTL membership and are encouraged to participate through attendance and input.

**PLAYGROUND AND RECESS:**

Students are provided with at least one recess period per day, supervised by staff members. Students are encouraged to use this time to visit and play with friends and classmates, practicing Christian sportsmanship on the playground. Students are encouraged to treat fellow playmates with respect.

**PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION:**

In order to maintain a professional atmosphere of learning, mutual respect and safety in school, students should refrain from inappropriate, intimate behaviors on campus or at school-related events & activities

**RESOURCE SERVICES:**

Some students need special services to reach their full academic potential. Our school resource teacher is available to help students as time and need allows. Our resource teacher may work with the classroom teacher to use an inclusion model of instruction or use pull-out instruction for students when deemed necessary.

**SEARCH AND SEIZURE:**

Schools may conduct reasonable searches that are

motivated by reasonable suspicion; such search may be targeted toward a specific student or group of students. School officials may search student lockers and desks since lockers and desks are the exclusive property of the school. School officials, too, may search student clothing and book bags if “reasonable suspicion” exists.

**SOCIAL MEDIA USE:** Whether offline or online, you are representing St. Stephens at all times. Please keep this in mind as you interact, create, and share in the digital world.

**TELEPHONE USE:** Students may not use the phone unless they have permission from their teacher. Arrangements for after-school pick-up and activities should be made before children leave home in the morning.

Students are not allowed to use personal cell phones to call or text-message during the school day.

**VOLUNTEERS:** Volunteers are involved in many aspects of our school program. We encourage involvement with the school whenever possible; please contact the classroom teacher for information. Volunteers may not bring other children.

**WORSHIP LIFE:** Every school day begins and ends with an act of worship. A brief devotion or prayer is held in each classroom at the beginning of the day. Prayers are also spoken at lunch time.

In keeping with the program of Christian education and training in the church, families are encouraged to attend worship services regularly. Teachers keep a

record of student church attendance to help monitor and encourage regular church attendance.

## SCHOOL ATHLETICS

**PHILOSOPHY:** St. Stephens Lutheran School trains students for a life of service to God and man. Our athletic program is Christ-centered and is an important part of the school's educational philosophy. As an extension of the school day, the program provides experiences that will help athletes grow spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 6:19-20) and therefore we strive to develop and maintain these temples to the fullest by using our God-given talents for excellence and competence in our area of participation. Such participation is a privilege that carries a great responsibility to the school, the team, the student body, the community, the individual and most importantly to Christ.

**CHRISTIAN SPORTSMANSHIP:** The ideals of good sportsmanship, Christian behavior, and integrity permeate our culture. The values of good citizenship and high behavioral standards apply equally to all activity disciplines. In perception and practice, good sportsmanship shall be defined as those qualities of behavior which are characterized by Christian generosity and genuine concern for others. Further, awareness is expected of the impact of an individual's influence on the behavior of others. Good sportsmanship is viewed by SSLS as a concrete measure of the understanding and commitment to fair play, Christian behavior, and integrity.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Student academic eligibility is determined by mid-quarter and end-of-quarter reports; ineligibility begins on the report issue date. Students who participate in extramural sports are expected to maintain a minimum 77 GPA for the reporting period and no "F" in any class; special cases handled on an individual basis.

Attendance eligibility: In order to participate in a practice or game, a student must be in school a full day of the practice or game; special cases handled on an individual basis.

## UNIVERSITY CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

Our classes end at 8th grade at SSLS, but our education continues at University Christian High School. UCHS is "our" high school ... it's not on our campus, but it is located on the campus of Lenoir-Rhyne University.

UCHS offers students in the Hickory area the opportunity to receive a strong academic education in a Christian environment. UCHS is a high school where Christian values are taught, modeled and expected.

Students in ninth and tenth grades take all of the classes that have NC End-of-Course tests. They also have the opportunity to take a wide variety of online elective classes. We offer a SAT Prep class in tenth grade that is designed to help students achieve higher SAT test scores. Sophomores have two AP class opportunities.

University Christian High School is in partnership with Lenoir-Rhyne University. The school's location on the LRU campus allows students to use the university's athletic facilities, cafeteria, library, and science labs. Qualified juniors and seniors have the opportunity to take most of their classes as college classes that count as both high school and college credit. Any of the entry-level classes offered at LRU are available to UCHS students providing a selection of classes more extensive than any other high school in the area. Students may graduate from high school with over 30 hours of college credit.

## **DRESS CODE GUIDELINES**

There is a positive relation between a neat, appropriate appearance and a good learning environment. All students are encouraged to take pride in self and in their school work. To craft the optimal setting for students, the following guidelines reflect the concern of St. Stephens Lutheran School for student dress and they emphasize neatness, modesty, good grooming and good taste. We ask both parents and students to support the school in our attempt to create a positive learning environment.

### **General Dress Code Guidelines**

1. The style and type of student attire should be God-pleasing.
2. The students' personal grooming should reflect respect and care for their bodies.
3. Clothing that is both modest and sensible is required.
4. Any article of apparel or the manner in which that apparel is worn should not provide a threat to the health or safety of the students.
5. Any article of apparel or the manner in which that apparel is worn should not cause a disruption of the educational process.
6. Clothing should be clean, free of holes, not torn or frayed, sized to fit appropriately (not excessively loose nor too tight) and worn properly on the body (ex: waistline for pants, shorts, etc). Attire should be comfortable and modest, ensuring a respectful and scholastic appearance suitable for a learning environment.
7. Respectful dress is encouraged for chapel.
8. The examples listed are acceptable attire (and some unacceptable attire). The list does not cover every possible situation; clothing styles and fashion change often. The school reserves the right to determine what is acceptable and what is not acceptable beyond the scope of the list.

### **Specific Dress Code Guidelines** **(Grades K-8)**

- All clothing worn must be solid color and solid pattern.

#### **Shirts and Blouses**

- Any solid color including heather fabric; logo may not exceed 2" square (exception: SSLS logos)
- Must be a collared polo shirt or collared button up shirt; short or long-sleeve
- Shirt must be tucked in; no exposed midriff
- Solid neutral colored shirts may be worn underneath and may show at the neck or have long sleeves

#### **Pants, shorts, skorts, capris, skirts, jumpers**

- Khaki (tans), navy, black, dark blue denim (no stone wash or light denim); solid only
- Approved material: Denim, cotton-twill, corduroy, knit materials or polyester blend uniform styles
- Shorts and skorts hems must be fingertip-length or longer
- May have front and back pockets; no pockets on legs
- No overalls and no overall jumpers
- No cargo, carpenter, yoga, leggings or stretch pants; nothing tight fitting
- No frayed hems; must be a straight hem
- Pants with belt loops must have a belt worn with them

- No athletic wear (pants, shorts, skorts, skirts, or capris)

### **Collared Polo Dresses**

- Any solid color including heather; logo may not exceed 2" square (exception: SSLS logos)
- All hems must be fingertip-length or longer

### **Sweaters, sweatshirts, and vests (indoor wear)**

- Dress code shirts must be worn underneath
- Any solid color including heather fabric; logo may not exceed 2" square (exception: SSLS logo)
- Button up cardigan, round or V-neck sweaters; crew neck sweatshirt; sweater vest or fleece vest; ¼ zip pullover
- Solid fabric

### **Coats, jackets, and sweatshirts (outdoor wear)**

- Outdoor wear can be of any style or color; logo must be appropriate for a Christian school
- Outdoor wear cannot be worn in the classroom

### **Footwear**

- Tennis shoes are strongly encouraged
- Closed-toe, closed-heel and appropriate for school activities
- Socks or footies worn with shoes
- Shoes with laces or velcro must be fastened
- Heels not to exceed 2"
- No noise making shoes
- No Crocs

### **Hair Styles**

- Coloring or spiking hair beyond what is natural is not acceptable
- Hair should be kept out of the eyes
- Hair should not be a distraction to students

### **Accessories**

- Exposed body piercings (other than earrings for girls)
- Hats and sunglasses may not be worn indoors
- Undergarments must not be visible
- Girls may wear tights, pantyhose, or leggings under a skirt, skort or dress; must be solid white, navy or black only
- Only Grades 6-8 may wear scarves, jewelry, or other accessory; must align with the "spirit" of our dress code
- Smart watches are not to be worn

### **Fridays (Casual Day)**

Students may wear the following attire on Fridays as an alternative to the standard dress code (all other guidelines apply):

- Shirts: stripes or patterns (polo-style, oxford dress style, blouse), logo not to exceed 2" square
- Christian T-shirt, SSLS T-shirt or affiliation attire
- Christian hoodies are allowed on Friday ONLY

### **Sports and Academic Teams**

- Team members may wear team attire (as determined by the coach) on specified days

### **Spirit Days**

- SSLS schedules "spirit days" so that students can display school pride and have fun with alternate dress styles.

### **Field Trips and/or Special Classroom Days**

- Students may wear attire (as determined by the teacher) on specified days

## Dress Down Days

- Yoga pants and leggings can be worn as long as a shirt covers student's bottom and bottom remains covered.
- No Pajama Bottoms unless specified by your teacher.
- No Crocs.
- All shirts must have sleeves and cover shoulders.
- Jeans with holes must be below knees
- Hoodies will be allowed

## **Summary**

In our partnership between home and school, each of us has a role in complying with our dress code. Students are asked to consider their appearance before leaving for school in the morning. Parents are asked to support the school in our attempt to promote a positive and appropriate learning environment. Teachers and staff are asked to enforce the dress code guidelines consistently and fairly. The school is asked to amend the dress code as needed to reflect fashion or styles.

When the home and school work together in our dress code, we know that school time is focused more on teaching and learning, rather than dealing with the distractions and frustrations of inappropriate dress attire.

## Dress Code Enforcement

1. Parents are requested to monitor what their children wear to school and should help their children develop pride in their appearance.
2. **Enforcement of the dress code guidelines may vary as per grade level, nature of infraction, and number of occurrences. Consequences for infractions may include, but are not limited to, written notice, phone call, change of clothing, and suspension.**
3. The faculty shall assume responsibility for enforcing this policy, under the direction and guidance of the principal. Each teacher has the authority to approach any student whose dress is considered in violation of the dress code, regardless of student grade level.
4. The school reserves the right to make final determination on the validity of student dress; the classroom teacher and/or principal may handle special circumstances on an individual basis.

Approved: June 3, 2024