

# **ST. STEPHEN'S ACADEMY**



## **UPPER SCHOOL HANDBOOK**

**2025-26**

## WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?

The short answer is we are becoming mature Christian adults.

We often think of adulthood as something bestowed upon us when we reach a certain age or accomplish a certain task. The truth is that being an adult is more about **growing in maturity** than it is a status in a community. Some teenagers are more adultlike than middle aged “adults.” Becoming a mature Christian adult means growing in **knowledge**: coming to know, love, and enjoy the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. It also means growing in **wisdom** and freedom: being able to recognize the good and act on it. Further, it means growing in **eloquence**: being able to lead and influence others to choose the good through our words and actions. Finally, it means growing in **godly character** (virtue): ordering our lives and affections to honor God and please him in all things.

The reality is that you are not an adult yet, and for a time you remain under the godly authority of your parents, and by extension, your teachers. In fact, it's probably safe to say that most of you did not choose St. Stephen's Academy as your school. At some point, your parents decided they wanted what this school offered – the mission of this school fit with your family's values and goals – and you were enrolled. You probably had minimal say in the process, especially if you entered the school as a young child. This is as it should be; parents are responsible to make decisions they believe are best for their children, and they do this even if their children do not fully understand the reasons behind those decisions.

If you were a student at St. Stephen's in the Lower School, it was enough that your parents and your teachers were aligned in what they wanted for your education. By high school that is not the case. High school students must start embracing their own education in order to thrive. We assume that if you are a high school student at St. Stephen's, you have largely “bought in” to the education being offered here, even if on a given day or in a particular class you wish things were different. If you are in 6th or 7th grade, we assume that you are starting to take responsibility for your experience as a student and that by 9th or 10th grade you will fully embrace your St. Stephen's education.

Therefore, all of our conversations and practices in the Upper School are based on the following assumptions:

1. That you genuinely want to be a student at St. Stephen's Academy.
2. That you desire to understand and live the way God calls you to live.
3. That you believe God has put your parents, your church, and the adults at St. Stephen's in your life to help you become the person God created and called you to be.
4. That teachers and students respect one another and desire to build healthy relationships based on trust and care.
5. That you want to become a mature Christian adult and are eager for your teachers to help you grow into a godly man or woman.
6. That you want St. Stephen's to be a peaceful, harmonious place where wrongdoing is corrected and forgiveness and reconciliation are pursued.

If these assumptions describe you, then you will find the following expectations agreeable, and even encouraging. This handbook will lay out the common ground upon which we can build a learning community whose collective

goal is to honor God in our individual and corporate lives. Our desire is to provide clear expectations and protocols that will help you understand why we do what we do so that we can remain focused on our common pursuit of a well-functioning community rather than a list of rules. Any of us – teachers or staff – would be happy to discuss specific portions of this handbook with you at any time.

## CULTIVATING VIRTUE

Virtue is excellence in fulfilling one's purpose. The virtue of a knife is found in sharp cutting. Although a knife could be used as a hammer, its virtue is not in doing so, because its purpose is to cut. The virtue of a person is found in enjoying and glorifying God by bearing His image and representing Him well in the world. Jesus, therefore, is the most virtuous human who ever lived – in behavior, motivation, and thought. Because Jesus defeated the power of sin and death through his death and resurrection, we are able, through faith, to become like him, enjoying and glorifying God in our lives.

Virtue is to be found both in what we do and who we are. Our behavior and our character do not operate independently. Being virtuous and acting virtuously go hand in hand. Our character shapes our actions and our actions shape our character. Your parents and teachers are concerned not only with how you behave, but also with the kind of person you are becoming. Are you moving toward your primary purpose as a person – to enjoy and glorify God by bearing His image in the world?

Since virtue formation involves outward behavior and inward character, St. Stephen's teachers and staff will take every opportunity to address both actions and attitudes in every area of school life – in the classroom, in the curriculum, in the hallways, and in all of the activities you participate in.

## HABITS OF VIRTUE

Although there are many virtues that we want to grow in, St. Stephen's Academy has chosen to focus on the historic theological virtues (faith, hope, and love) which we describe in our community using the qualities of devotion, sacrifice, and wonder, and the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, courage, and temperance). Teachers will continually call students to develop habits in these areas.

- **Devotion** (Faith): Acting in light of spiritual realities and trust in God
  - Show proper reverence for God and the things of God
  - Striving to love the right things
  - Take personal spiritual growth seriously
- **Sacrifice** (Love): Acting for the good of others
  - Show care and compassion for classmates
  - Serve enthusiastically
  - Put the needs of others before their own

- **Wonder (Hope):** Living with long-term/eternal perspective
  - Living in joyful amazement of God and His world
  - Engage in learning with expectation and anticipation
  - Recognize learning as more important than grades
- **Prudence:** Considering the past and the future when acting in the present
  - Demonstrate a teachable spirit
  - Ask purposeful questions
  - Consider consequences of actions
  - Apply biblical principles to situations
  - Make connections between ideas and experience
  - Learn from mistakes
- **Justice:** Giving others their due, whether in care or consequence
  - Seek the truth over being right
  - Show consideration for peers and teachers
  - Defend and protect classmates
  - Care for the property of others
- **Courage:** Choosing to act virtuously when afraid
  - Be willing to step out of comfort zone to include others
  - Be willing to try new things
  - Persevere through difficult tasks
- **Temperance:** Governing yourself in order to serve something greater
  - Take care to follow directions
  - Enjoy good things in moderation
  - Resist temptation to distract from learning activities
  - Listen attentively
  - Use class time well, particularly during group or independent work
  - Complete work in a timely manner – not delaying or rushing

## ST. STEPHEN'S ACADEMY MISSION AND GOALS

This section of the handbook is not specific to Upper School students. The Board of Directors has defined the reason why St. Stephen's exists (our mission) and the results that will be increasingly evident as students become mature Christian adults (Portrait of a Graduate). We include these statements because they represent the features that attracted families to St. Stephen's and they are central to every decision about what we learn, how we use our resources, and who we hire. As students continue to grow into adulthood and increasingly take responsibility for their own education, we want students to understand more about what it means to be part of a classical Christian school. Therefore, we have included these foundational statements.

**Mission:** St. Stephen's Academy exists to support parents and churches by providing an academically excellent classical Christian education that cultivates knowledge, wisdom, eloquence, and godly character, and equips students with the tools of learning that will last a lifetime.

**Statement of Faith:** The philosophical framework for everything at St. Stephen's Academy is the historic Christian faith that is revealed in the Bible, as well as the system of doctrine that has been summarized in the confessions of the Reformed tradition. The school recognizes and teaches [The Westminster Confession of Faith](#), along with its Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as an accurate and reliable summary of Christian doctrine. St. Stephen's Academy admits students and families from any Christian tradition and from outside the Christian faith. However, we expect all members of the school community to respect and support that we are a Protestant, confessionally reformed school established by a confessional church.

**Portrait of a Graduate:** Every student at St. Stephen's Academy is unique, with his or her own personality, gifts, and calling. So in one sense it is impossible to paint a single portrait of the typical St. Stephen's graduate.<sup>1</sup> That said, our curriculum and culture are purposefully designed to cultivate particular affections, habits, and skills in students who embrace the education offered to them, so that families who invest in a St. Stephen's education can expect their graduate to demonstrate:

**Knowledge:** Through rigorous study and practice, St. Stephen's Academy graduates have developed an appreciation for great works of literature, art, and music, as well as conversancy in mathematics, science, languages, logic, history, and theology.<sup>2</sup> They are equipped to think, evaluate, and problem solve so that they can study and learn any subject in their life-long pursuit to better know, love, and enjoy God and his world.

**Wisdom:** St. Stephen's Academy graduates have studied the order in creation so that they can humbly adapt themselves to it, understanding their position as created beings in need of the redemption God has provided in Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> They have acquired discernment and the ability to dissect and critically analyze what they think, feel, see, and hear, so that they are not swayed by weak or superficial arguments, but are able to magnify and enjoy the True, the Good, and the Beautiful.<sup>4</sup> Like Stephen, they desire that their affections, ideas, speech, and behavior will be guided by the Spirit of God in obedience to the will of God revealed in the Word of God.<sup>5</sup>

**Eloquence:** Understanding that God designed us to live in communion with Him and one another,<sup>6</sup> St Stephen's Academy graduates value the gift of language and use it to accomplish God's purposes for written and verbal communication.<sup>7</sup> They are able to logically and persuasively express their convictions in submission to truth, and graciously engage in discourse by listening carefully, asking thoughtful questions, and speaking the truth in love.<sup>8</sup>

**Godly Character:** Knowledge without love breeds arrogance.<sup>9</sup> Alongside knowledge, wisdom, and eloquence, St. Stephen's Academy graduates will grow in virtue, characterized by rightly ordered affections towards God and man, honoring and promoting that which God loves,<sup>10</sup> in submission to Jesus Christ, modeling integrity, humility, perseverance, and reverence for authorities established by God.<sup>11</sup> They will strive to honor God and please Him in all things, using the gifts He has given them to sacrificially serve others in their homes, churches, vocations, and communities.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor 12:4-31 Eph 4:15-16; <sup>2</sup> Ezr 7:10; 2 Tim 2:15; 2 Chron 12:32; <sup>3</sup> Rom 3:23-26; <sup>4</sup> Prov 2; Psa 1; Rom 12:12; 2 Cor 10:4-5; 1 Cor

1:20-25; Eph 1:17; 4:14; Col 2:4; <sup>5</sup> Acts 6-7; <sup>6</sup> Rom 1:19-20; Acts 17:28; Matt 22:37-38; <sup>7</sup> Prov 12:18; 16:24; 17:27; 2 Cor 10:5; Rom 10:14-15; <sup>8</sup> Eph 4:15-16; Prov 1:5; <sup>9</sup> 1 Cor 8:1; 13:1-3; <sup>10</sup> Gal 5:22-26; Rom 12:9; Phil 4:8; 1 Cor 13; <sup>11</sup> Ex 20:12; 1 Tim 5:1-2; <sup>12</sup> 1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17; Phl 1:27; 1 Pet 2:12; Matt 22:38; Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 4:11; Rom 12:10; 14:9.

## ACADEMICS

Classical Christian education aims to restore the glory of God's image in students by encouraging them toward knowledge, wisdom, eloquence, and godly character. It does this by training students according to the liberal arts within the Christian tradition. Like the fine arts, the liberal arts are skills that must be acquired through practice. They are called "liberal" because they lead to freedom – they are valuable in themselves because they are fundamental to what it means to be human, and when they are mastered they free the student to think, learn, and decide wisely for themselves.

The historic liberal arts are divided into the three verbal arts of grammar, logic, and rhetoric (the trivium) and the four mathematical arts (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy). Some classes are named after the art they are designed to cultivate, such as Logic and Rhetoric. Other arts do not appear in any class titles. Whether explicitly named or not, the curriculum at St. Stephen's Academy seeks to train students in each of the liberal arts. While each of these arts can be understood and taught in various ways, they can be summed up in the following manner:

- **Grammar** is the skill of reading and interpreting meaning
- **Logic** is the skill of reasoning
- **Rhetoric** is the skill of truthful persuasion
- **Arithmetic** is the skill of perceiving and relating discrete numbers
- **Geometry** is the skill of perceiving and relating continuous magnitudes, as in lines and shapes
- **Music** is the skill of perceiving and relating discrete numbers changing in time in harmonious proportion
- **Astronomy** is the skill of perceiving and relating magnitudes in time, primarily regarding the movements of the heavenly bodies

In addition to the historic liberal arts, a classical Christian education includes the study of philosophy under several headings:

- **Natural Philosophy** is the study of the physical order under the headings of biology, chemistry, and physics (what we now call science)
- **Moral Philosophy** is the study of ethics and politics that explores how people ought to live their lives in relation to others
- **Rational Philosophy** (Metaphysics and Epistemology) is the study of the nature of reality and the sources and limits of human knowledge
- **Theology** is the study of God as He has revealed Himself through His words and works, governs every other area of study

## COMMUNITY LIFE

The goal of community life is harmony, which is a consequence of treating others the way we would want to be treated. To find practical examples of what harmony looks like, we study the Biblical principles for how God's people ought to relate to "one another" (Jn 13:14, 34-35; 15:12; Rom 12:10, 16; 14:13; 15:7; 1Cor 12:25; 2Cor 13:11; Gal 5:13, 26; 6:1-2; Eph 4:2, 32; 5:19, 21; Col 3:13, 16; 1Thess 5:11, 15; Heb 10:24; Jas 4:11; 1Pet 1:22; 4:8-10; 5:5; 1Jn 4:11). At St. Stephen's Academy, we commonly sum up our aspirational goals for community life through the virtues of devotion, sacrifice, and wonder.

We do not (nor could we) create an exhaustive list of how virtue applies to every situation. We must depend on the Spirit of God to help us apply biblical principles to our daily lives. "That's not in the handbook" is not, therefore, a viable defense for foolish behavior. Students who are not seeking wisdom and virtue should not be surprised to find themselves in situations that require correction, with repentance, forgiveness, and restoration of fellowship as the goal.

That said, we can offer some concrete examples of how biblical principles should be lived out in the community life of the school. These are the characteristics that make St. Stephen's different (and possibly a bit strange) compared to other schools. We care about whether our words, attitudes, and actions are bringing glory to God, and we believe that students should care too.

We also care about self-governance, which is a sign of maturity. If we are seeking wisdom, we will strive to gain control over impulsive and self-serving attitudes and behavior. Students must govern themselves before they can rightly govern things outside of themselves. Students in 6th, 7th, or 8th grade should take some time to imagine scenarios where the following guidelines can be put into action. High school students should be ready to help younger students to grow in their understanding and application of these principles.

The following principles are commonly referred to as our school rules. These rules are meant to provide some concrete boundaries for what is expected of each student. However, please note that these rules serve as a floor, or basic standard, to our community standards, not the ceiling or highest aspirations.

1. **Obedience:** Obey all requests from a teacher, administrator, staff member, or volunteer promptly and cheerfully.
2. **Stewardship:** Treat school property, school facilities, and the property of others with care. Do not take or use items that do not belong to them without permission of the owner. When using the property of others, including textbooks, treat those items with respect and care. Staff and students will strive to keep the school's campus neat and clean.
3. **Respect:** Be respectful, patient, and gracious to other students, teachers, administrators, staff members, and guests. Scripture exhorts us to use our words to build one another up. Insults, careless joking, complaining, gossip, and unkind, vulgar, obscene, and profane speech have no place in the St. Stephen's community.

4. **Preparation:** Arrive to class promptly and ready to learn. This means not only being on-time to class, but coming to class having the necessary materials and completed pre-work.
5. **Participation:** Joyfully participate in all class and school activities. Because the classroom is a community of learners, refrain from behavior that distracts classmates from their learning. Demonstrate honesty in your school work and dealings with one another and staff.

Upper School students are expected to embrace the Bible's high standards and pursue obedience in the context of God's love and forgiveness. Teachers and staff, alongside parents, will strive to train, encourage, strengthen, correct, and reconcile – not condemn – all students, especially in those areas where they are struggling. Temptation is not, in itself, sinful, although our disordered affections point to our need for salvation and training in godliness. In contrast, glorification of sin, refusal to repent or seek reconciliation, and repeated, deliberate practice of sinful attitudes and behaviors are demonstrations of a lack of desire to participate in community life that will ultimately lead to formal separation.

## DISCIPLINE

Discipline helps us do what we ought to do when it is not currently what we want to do. Self-discipline is the ability to direct one's own emotions and desires in obedience to God, for the good of others. As we continue to grow from children into adults, we need the presence and actions of others to help us know and do what we ought to do.

Some things we ought to do because they are morally right. An example of this is telling the truth. Other things we ought to do because they make for a healthy community. An example would be greeting one another. Still other things we do because our future selves will be grateful that we did them. An example is learning Latin.

It's helpful to recognize that, in a very real sense, parents, teachers, and administrators serve as voices for a student's future self. Parents might make their child practice a sport or learn a musical instrument because they are confident that they will someday be glad they did (in addition to the other benefits received along the way). Teachers require students to pay attention in class and not disturb their classmates because they know someday students will regret wasting the learning opportunities of high school. Teachers are fully aware that students may currently want to waste their opportunity to learn, which is why discipline is necessary.

Discipline has many parts. Instruction is one part – in order to do the right things, we need to know what they are. Scripture is full of instructions on living in accordance with God's design. Similarly, this handbook contains instructions for how to enjoy and benefit from participation in the community of St. Stephen's Academy. Some of these instructions relate to things we do because they are morally right, others are for the good of the community, and others are for the good of one's future self.

It would be nice if all we needed was instructions, but sadly our fallen nature needs more. We need to pray that God's Word and Spirit will change our hearts so that we will desire what is true, good, and beautiful. We need to build habits of virtue that incline us toward good and away from evil. We sometimes need painful consequences to help us recognize the danger of our current direction. All discipline at St. Stephen's falls into these categories:



instruction in what is right, building good habits, and correction (usually unpleasant) when someone is going the wrong way.

Teachers are expected to maintain an orderly and virtuous atmosphere in the classroom, for the good of all students. When a student's behavior impedes his or her own learning or that of other classmates, teachers will address it and will communicate with parents. For serious, complicated, or repeated offenses, students will be sent to the office to talk with an administrator who will seek to understand what is happening, communicate with parents, and determine appropriate consequences.

It is possible for a student to communicate through attitudes or actions that he or she no longer desires to participate in or contribute to the community of learning at St. Stephen's Academy. In these cases the Headmaster may make a decision to exclude the student for a time, until they are able to show that they really do want to continue their education at this school. Expulsion – the formal, permanent removal of a student from participating in the life of the school – is an option for students who make it clear they do not want to participate in what is happening at school.

Serious misconduct – in or out of school – may result in immediate dismissal from St. Stephen's Academy. This includes, but is not limited to, electronic communications that damage the school community, sexual immorality, or violation of the law.

## STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

We want students to experience rich friendships that grow among schoolmates who enjoy common interests while celebrating diverse personalities and gifts within the Christian community. Our closest neighbors, whom Jesus tells us to love as ourselves, are our classmates, teachers, and other students on campus. The Bible often uses the family metaphor of “brothers and sisters” to describe the closeness and permanence of Christian relationships; we cannot stop being siblings, no matter how difficult our relationships are.

The nature of our relationships to one another has implications for living in community. For example, flaunting tight-knit friendships that exclude others, touching one another in hurtful or sensual ways, and speaking unkindly to or about one another have no place in a Christian community. Rather, hospitably inviting others into our circle of friends, respecting one another's bodies, and encouraging one another are fitting ways for brothers and sisters to relate. Students whose parents allow them to date outside school may not relate as couples during school days or at school events. If a casual observer would be able to tell that two students are in a relationship, their behavior needs to change.

As in any community, conflict will arise here at St. Stephen's Academy. This is normal, and God uses it to help us grow. Given this reality, we want to help students learn to resolve conflict in a biblical manner. First, this requires us to refrain from any gossip with other students. It is crucial that everyone speaks directly to the person with whom they are having a conflict. Enlisting the help of a parent or teacher can be helpful. If someone struggles with a

relationship on campus, whether with a fellow student or a teacher, and needs help to know how to proceed, an administrator will be glad to help.

The term “bullying” is often used to describe a pattern of intentional and repeated unkindness by someone with greater physical strength or influence toward another person whose requests for the treatment to stop are ignored. While all “bullying” is unkind, we are careful not to apply such language to every incident of unkindness. The Bible’s portrayal of love and justice makes clear that our strength and resources are to be used to protect those who are weaker than us and provide for those who don’t have what they need. Thus, any unkind treatment, and especially patterns of unkind treatment, whether in words or actions, are the exact opposite of the way God calls us to care for one another. Such treatment is even worse when it is accompanied by a threat of retaliation if either the recipient or a witness brings the situation to the attention of an authority. St. Stephen’s expects any student who experiences or witnesses intentional or repeated unkindness to speak to their parents and/or a teacher or administrator.

## **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

Nothing works against the goals of a St. Stephen’s education like shallow, sloppy, and addictive social media and group texts. Parents pay tuition and teachers work hard to provide a classical education that is designed to help students become people of intellectual and spiritual strength – thoughtful, kind, virtuous, discerning, etc. TikTok, social media, short-form media content, gossip-filled group texts, and their many electronic cousins push in exactly the opposite direction.

If we think of education like filling a bucket, these kinds of online activities are busy poking holes in the bucket, draining out the things that are being put in. Not only that, but they make us into the sort of people who put holes in the buckets of our classmates. If one student becomes shallow, they make fewer valuable contributions to classroom discussions. If one student gossips on a group chat, they damage the relationships of their classmates and distract from their learning. For these reasons and others, what a student does online is connected with their life as a St. Stephen’s student.

St. Stephen’s teachers and administrators do not go hunting for electronic communications (and we don’t monitor school email accounts), but concerned students and parents sometimes bring them to our attention. Because of their damaging effects on the school community, we do not take lightly online activities that are not aligned with the virtues we should all hold dear. Students who participate in unhealthy communication online will be subject to the same discipline process that would take place if they said the same things out loud at school. Our advice: for the good of each student and their classmates, students should avoid these forms of communication and flee the temptation.

## **DAILY SCHOOL LIFE**

### **SCHOOL FACILITY, FURNITURE, AND EQUIPMENT**

All students are expected to be good stewards of all school property by using it for its intended purpose. Failure to do so may result in restrictions of privileges and include the remuneration of any cost associated with carelessness or disrespect.

Examples (Students are expected to think similarly about other items that are not on this list):

- Tables are provided to provide a comfortable workspace during class. They are not made to bear a body's weight and should not be scratched or written on.
- Bathroom stall walls are there to provide privacy, not for a surface on which to write.
- Whiteboards and markers are aids for teaching and learning, not canvases for student art or projectiles for student games.
- Lockers are for securely storing belongings so students don't have to carry them around all day. Locker doors should not be slammed, altered, or hung on, and interiors should not be defaced. Locker interiors may be decorated with non-permanent items.
  - Lockers do not have locks to reduce the time needed to use a locker. If a student wishes to add a lock to a locker, they may do so, but bear in mind that school administration will not be able to help with opening it should a combo be forgotten or key lost.

As guests of Sunset Church, we also are only allowed access to certain locations and at certain times. Students are expected to be good representatives of the school by respecting these boundaries and expectations:

- We may use the Outside Parking Lot and Green Space when an SSA teacher or staff member is supervising. We exit the building through the back stairway off the Great Hall. Anything past the green space (towards the South entry to the building) is out-of-bounds.
- We may use the Gym when an SSA teacher or staff member is supervising. We enter through the back stairway off the Great Hall.
- The Play Structures out front, the Kitchen, Narthex (straight through the entrance lobby) and Fellowship Hall (connected to the Gym), downstairs classrooms beneath the Academic Wing, and all other areas of Sunset Church are out-of-bounds to SSA students.
- Teachers, staff, and student drivers should park North of the SSA entrance to leave the spaces South open for Break and Lunch use.

Please report any problems with any part of the facility or furniture to the office.

## UNIFORM AND DRESS CODE

School uniforms offer freedom from the tyranny of fashion and self-consciousness, and from the pressure of economic status. St. Stephen's students don't spend their mornings trying to find just the right look in order to meet their classmates' approval. They don't wonder whether their choice of clothing will reveal their families' ability or inability to afford expensive brands. This freedom is unknown in many other schools. The conserved energy and attention is available for learning together, for serving one another, and for knowing others by their character and ideas rather than their appearance.

Students sometimes experience anxiety around uniform infractions. This anxiety is almost entirely avoidable. Except for occasionally forgetting about a special uniform day, wearing the right clothing is a conscious choice and is well within each student's ability. Those who want to avoid worrying about being corrected should simply choose to set up their laundry schedules, dresser drawers, and daily routines such that uniform compliance is easier than non-compliance. Students who wear the right clothes are largely free from anxiety about uniforms, and teachers want all students to experience that same freedom.

A common misconception is that teachers' inconsistency in noticing uniform infractions indicates a lack of concern about compliance. No parent or teacher or any authority should – or could – hunt down and point out every instance of not holding to the standard. No home, no school, no community would be a healthy place if inspection of that degree were the norm. Instead, students should think of the times that infractions are missed as opportunities for self-correction and growth in taking responsibility. Each student's reputation of being careful and dependable is established through things like following the uniform guidelines. Furthermore, complying with uniform expectations is a seemingly small decision that can help establish a habit of laying aside one's own interest in the pursuit of those of others, in this case the school community.

Complaining about school uniforms is a favorite pastime on campuses around the world. But St. Stephen's isn't just any school. We assume, as stated earlier, that we are here to glorify God by loving one another and learning together. We assume that we all want to follow the command of Christ to do all things – even wearing uniforms – without complaining or arguing. We expect students to consistently and cheerfully wear the uniform because we believe that God calls us to be thankful, to live joyfully, and to avoid complaining, just as Jesus did. Our belief is that every student is interested in following Jesus by doing the same.

In addition to the grade and gender lists of uniform items, the St. Stephen's Uniform Policy includes the following:

- Apparel
  - Uniforms are to be worn while at school (from the moment students walk in the doors until the end of the school day)
  - Students are to dress neatly (clean clothes with no holes or tears, shirts tucked in, shoes tied, clothing appropriately sized for the wearer, only top-most shirt button may be unfastened)
  - All clothing is to be purchased through approved vendors, Lands' End and Tommy Hilfiger, or be identical in color, style, and fit
  - Undershirts are to be white and no logos or decorations may be visible
  - Shoes may not extend above the ankle
- Hair
  - No unkempt or unnatural look in hairstyles or hair color, including shaved designs in hair
- Jewelry
  - Jewelry is to be simple and non-distracting
- Markings
  - No visible tattoos or temporary markings/drawings are allowed
- Special Dress Days
  - The Dress Uniform is required every Monday, for special occasions, and as otherwise directed. Regular Uniform attire may be worn for other school days

- For girls:
  - 9th - 12th grade girls may wear their blouses untucked when wearing their skirt
  - Skirt hem must be within 3 inches of the crease in the back of the knee
  - Makeup and nail polish must be simple and non-distracting
  - Navy blue leggings may only be worn under skirt
  - Hair accessories are to be simple, non-distracting, and in uniform/neutral colors (white, black, brown, navy blue, green, or gray)
  - No piercings other than ear lobes
  - Heels must be less than two inches tall
- For boys:
  - Hair must be out of the eyes and off the ears and collar
  - Must be clean shaven
  - No piercings

If out of uniform, students will be directed to get a uniform slip from the office, the instance will be recorded and an email will be sent home. Repeated infractions or delayed corrections will be dealt with as a discipline issue, with appropriate training and consequences.

## PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES ON CAMPUS

“Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity” (Simone Weil). St. Stephen’s Academy is committed to a campus where people are generous with their attention, to the benefit of each student, their teachers, and their classmates. We want each student’s attention available for face-to-face conversations, sustained contemplation, and fruitful focus. Every person in our community – administrators, faculty, parents, and students – feels the attraction of screens. To serve the higher mission of the school, we place firm boundaries around the use of electronic devices that pull our attention away from the people around us.

Students may not use network-connected devices with the ability to receive notifications unless they have specific permission from a teacher or administrator. Such devices include cell phones, smart watches, cameras, and any other internet-connected or data sending/receiving item. Parents and students are free to communicate with one another through the school office during the day. Student devices may be used outside the building before or after school to text or call their parents. Any other use is not permitted while students are on campus.

The use of headphones sends a message to others that that person does not want to be engaged. Headphones are not to be used on campus without specific permission of an administrator.

If a device is brought to school, it must be powered off and out of sight, preferably stored in a locker, throughout the entire school day (from entering in the doors until walking out). Some students want to keep their phones in their pockets or backpacks. However, we all know that the more accessible something is, the more tempting it is to check it when no one is watching. In fact, cell phones and smart watches were designed to be checked frequently, which makes them uniquely difficult to resist. For this reason phones may not be stored in pockets and it would be best to keep them out of the classrooms. If a student is tempted by a phone in their locker, that student should leave

it in the office or at home. In other words, students should find the place to store their phone where it is least likely to draw attention away from the good things that are happening at school.

If a student ignores this advice and that student is found giving their attention to their device at school, we will put it in the office until an administrator can follow-up with parents. This is a warning to the student (and their parents) that the appropriate steps to resist a known temptation have not been taken. Repeated use of phones or other devices at school will result in further discipline, including suspension. Focused attention is required for us to learn anything.

## **COMPUTERS AND TABLETS**

Computers are occasionally needed for Upper School students either during the school day or after school. Students may use a laptop/tablet as directed by their teachers, and only with the permission of their teachers, solely for purposes consistent with the school's curriculum.

8th-12th students must have an internet capable device (laptop/tablet) that they can bring to school. 6th-7th students need to have computer and printer access *at home*, but are not expected to have a device they can bring to school.

## **FOOD AND DRINK**

The following guidelines provide the parameters for consuming food and drinks during the school day. The purpose of these rules is to minimize distractions in the classroom and maintain care for the facilities.

- Food is only permitted in the classroom when it is for the entire class and approved by the teacher
- Chewing gum is not allowed during the school day

## **LUNCH**

### **LOCATIONS**

In an effort to be good stewards of the building and teachers' classrooms, we eat lunch in specified areas and practice good habits of cleanliness.

All students may eat outside when the weather permits and when a teacher/staff member is supervising the area. Inside the building, all students will eat in the Great Hall. We do not use classrooms for lunch. No food is allowed in the gym.

### **OPEN CAMPUS LUNCH**

Open campus lunch is an option for 11th and 12th grade students on Tuesday and Thursdays. In order to enjoy this privilege, two things are expected: faithful representation of St. Stephen's while off campus and a timely return to campus. If a student is representing the school inconsistent with the school's values and/or is tardy to class three times after lunch, the student may lose open campus privileges for the remainder of the term.

## **ATHLETIC TEAMS AND PROGRAMS**

Athletics at St. Stephen's, together with Academics and the Arts, serve to cultivate wisdom, eloquence, and virtue. Rather than sitting tangentially alongside the school culture, athletics are an integral part of our pursuit to form flourishing young adults who possess the qualities listed in our Portrait of a Graduate.

We believe that athletics serve the following purposes in the lives of our students:

- Moral formation
- Physical well-being
- Skill development
- Christian community
- Competition

Details about the Athletic programs and expectations can be found in the Athletic Handbook.

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

St. Stephen's assumes the honor and integrity of its students. We include under "plagiarism" any academic misbehavior usually described as "cheating" – that is, the giving or receiving of illegitimate assistance. Plagiarism describes any work that is submitted as if it were your own when it is not your own. Plagiarism violates all principles of good scholarship, damages the learning community, and dishonors Christ. St. Stephen's seeks to nurture virtue in issues surrounding academic honesty.

- Plagiarism is deception – of the teacher, obviously, but also of the student who plagiarizes. Cheating hides individuals from encountering who they really are, what they actually can do, or what they can be.
- Plagiarism is theft – of the materials and credit that do not belong to the student, but no less of the right of the cheater's fellow students to equal consideration. In effect, the plagiarized paper throws all other papers into comparison with work that likely has already been judged superior.
- Plagiarism breeds an atmosphere that denies all students the dignity and trust that is due them. Inevitably, one cheater casts a shadow of suspicion on all, the entire climate is poisoned, and mutual respect is endangered.
- Plagiarism stymies humane education when the instructor is forced to give extraordinary attention to the source of the material and the integrity of the material and can no longer assume the integrity of the student.
- Plagiarism circumvents the learning process, robbing students of the opportunity to actually develop their skill and understanding. It is akin to a professional baseball player hiring someone to do batting practice for them.

- Plagiarism is a sin, a violation of the Eighth Commandment.

Plagiarism in student papers and assignments involves quoting, paraphrasing, or in other ways using sources without proper acknowledgement. Proper acknowledgement includes identifying the author and source of any material and indicating clearly (with the appropriate use of quotation marks) whether the passage is a direct quote or a paraphrase.

Students plagiarize if they submit as their own work, without appropriate citation or quotation marks:

- Any work copied from another person's paper
- Any work copied or paraphrased from a book, magazine, or internet site
- Any sequence of ideas, arrangement of material, or pattern of thought from someone else, even though they express them in their own words
- Any material or outline generated by or adapted from a computer program or AI

Students are accomplices in plagiarism if they:

- Allow another student to copy an assignment, in rough or finished form, to submit as their own
- Prepare an assignment for another student and allow them to submit it as their own

Students should take the following steps to avoid plagiarism:

- Any direct quotation must be enclosed in quotation marks or, if more than four lines, indented as a block quote. Acknowledgement must be given to the correct author and source.
- In any paraphrase, the wording must be distinctly different from the original source. If the writer of the paper maintains any word order, distinctive phrasing, or grammatical structure original to the author of the source, the student is guilty of plagiarism unless he/she uses quotation marks and gives proper acknowledgement of the author and source.

If a student breaks the trust of a teacher and classmates by plagiarizing, the following steps will be taken:

- The assignment or assessment will be regarded as unsubmitted and graded with a zero. The teacher may still require that the assignment be completed for no credit, as assignments have purpose beyond the grade.
- A second instance of plagiarism will result in additional disciplinary consequences that may include the assignment of alternative work, suspension, or expulsion.
- Because plagiarism is also an offense against classmates, offenders may need to confess and apologize to the other students in the class before fellowship is restored.

Note on Artificial Intelligence (AI)/Language Learning Models (LLMs): Blatant copying and pasting of AI/LLM generated content is considered plagiarism based on the definition above. Furthermore, at St. Stephen's Academy, the assignments and questions presented to students by teachers are intended to take time and be difficult. Skills and understanding come through patient and persistent effort, often involving struggle. Using AI/LLM to circumvent the learning process robs students of further opportunities to grow. For example, using an AI tool to summarize a reading assignment removes the opportunity to grow in reading comprehension and interpretation.



All assignments are intended to be completed *without the use of AI*, and the expectation is that students will complete them as such. This includes the use of AI tools such as Grammarly. Use of AI for supplementary research, study, and review may be appropriate, but students must discuss and disclose such uses with/to their teachers prior to use.

## **LATE WORK**

As part of our school commitment and expectation to be prepared and ready to learn each day, teachers expect that students will come to class with assigned work completed. Learning to manage time and meet deadlines is an important part of becoming a self-disciplined and free adult. In an effort to help develop this skill through corrective discipline, all St. Stephen's teachers issue a consequence of a 20% grade reduction for late work. Obviously work that is never completed cannot receive any feedback or grade and will receive a zero.

## **ABSENCES**

Our educational model at St. Stephen's Academy prioritizes face-to-face interaction and frequently uses classroom discussion to help students learn with and through their classmates. When a student is absent from class, the student and the class as a whole learn less. As such, we expect students will be at school and in class whenever it is within their power to do so. Occasionally students will be unable to attend school for reasons outside of their control such as for an illness. In those instances, teachers will work to help get students caught up in a timely fashion. Further information about our absence policies can be found in our Parent/Student Handbook. High school students should pay particular heed to our Finals Week absence policy.

## **CLASS ACTIVITIES AND TRIPS**

St. Stephen's has an established tradition of high school activities and trips: 9th grade students participate in the annual Homerathon; 9th and 10th grade classes enjoy ETC., a three-day course of enriching Experiences, Teamwork activities, and group Challenges around Portland; 11th grade students spend four days together exploring central Oregon; and seniors travel to the East Coast for a week of learning and culture-building at the start of their final year.

The privilege of participating in these activities is granted to students who have shown themselves trustworthy with the sorts of freedoms that accompany activities outside the school. By their very nature, these trips involve less supervision. St. Stephen's administrators must be confident that students who participate in these activities will demonstrate wisdom and virtue when away from the routines of school.