

**St. Michael Catholic High School**  
**Athletic Guidelines**  
**Students & Families** (updated 7/2021)

- A) **Mission Statement:** St. Michael Catholic High School, a college preparatory school of the Archdiocese of Mobile, aspires for its students to become scholars, leaders and disciples of Jesus Christ.
- B) **Athletic Philosophy:** The athletic department of St. Michael Catholic High School believes we can truly see the life lessons our students are learning in action through athletic competition. The athletic program is an extension of what takes place inside our halls and our classrooms. Our students are first and foremost members of the Body of Christ; their actions should always reveal this fact to the community at large. Competition and training for competition can build integrity, leadership, decision making, compassion, and fairness in our student-athletes. Participating in athletics is a privilege. Administrators, coaches, student/athletes, parents, and other spectators all represent St. Michael Catholic High School with their actions. We are all visible examples of the teachings of the Church and Jesus Christ.
- C) **Eligibility for Sports:** St. Michael Catholic High School admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students of the school as allowed under the by-laws of the Alabama High School Athletic Association. St. Michael does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its participatory policies, admissions policies, or athletic policies.
- D) **Athletic Participation:** All student-athletes must be fully enrolled in one of our three partner schools (Christ the King, St. Patrick or St. Benedict) or fully enrolled at St. Michael, to participate in any athletic competition. Incoming students who are fully registered (including acceptance and payment of registration fee) may participate in try-outs and practices for the coming year.
- E) **Required Paperwork for Athletic Participation:** Prior to participating the student-athlete must also have the following paperwork completed and filed with the athletic department:
- Dragonfly account (AHSAA document storage)
  - AHSAA physical form (completed annually)
  - AHSAA concussion form (completed annually)
  - AHSAA consent to participate form (completed annually)
  - St. Michael Catholic High School consent form (completed once)
  - NFHS Sportsmanship certificate (completed once)
  - Copy of the student/athlete's birth certificate

**F. Academic Requirements and Maintaining Eligibility:** Student-athletes must understand themselves as students first, and maintain certain academic standards. At St. Michael, in grades 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12, if a student athlete fails two or more classes at any quarter or semester report card, he or she loses athletic eligibility until grades are corrected at the next quarter report card. This means in most cases the student is off the team.

We find that freshman year is often a huge adjustment for some students. For this reason, for the first semester only, a freshman who fails two classes in the first or second quarter is put on academic probation, yet retains his or her place on the team, if the following conditions are met: he or she must attend tutorial four days/week, have a good attendance record, turn in all homework, and receive a favorable weekly report from all of his or her teachers. A freshman on probation also may not check out of school early for athletic contests.

Freshman failing more than two classes, or two classes in each of the first and second quarter, lose athletic eligibility. Beginning the third quarter, freshmen are treated the same as all other grade levels.

Middle school principals are free to require additional academic or disciplinary consequences for their student-athletes.

**G. Disciplinary Requirements:** Students who are suspended from school are ineligible to practice or play during their suspension. Principals may further restrict eligibility for sports based on the unique disciplinary record of the student.

**H. School Policy for Practice or Playing in Games:** Students must be enrolled a minimum of half the school day, absent for an excused reason, to be eligible for practicing or playing in an athletic contest. If a child has been excessively absent or is faltering academically, the principal may preclude a child from checking out for athletic contests.

**I. Transferring Students and Eligibility:** AHSAA transfer rules are complex. Student-athletes who transfer into St. Michael from outside of the Baldwin Catholic school system may or may not be immediately eligible for athletic participation depending on the circumstances of their transfer. Though many have “opinions” about eligibility, the only authoritative source is the St. Michael athletic director, who will ask for a ruling from the AHSAA in complex cases. Contact the athletic director ([PKnapstein@Stmichaelchs.org](mailto:PKnapstein@Stmichaelchs.org)) if you have questions.

A student may be ineligible to participate in contests per AHSAA rules, but this doesn't mean he or she cannot become a member of the team, practicing with the team, and

traveling. Many of our transfer athletes have done this, developing their skill sets even while meeting new people and developing friendships with team mates.

**J. Expectations of Sportsmanship and Decorum:** Student-Athletes will be held to a high standard as part of the St. Michael Catholic High School athletic department. All rules set forth in the student handbook will be followed by our coaches and athletes alike. Coaches will also have policies that must be followed to participate with a team. Flagrant displays of poor sportsmanship may result in disciplinary actions by the athletic program or school administration, or both. Athletic participation is a privilege, not a right.

**K. St. Michael Athletic Teams Offered (for 2021-22):** Here is a current list of the sports we will offer:

- Fall: Boys - cross country, football, & swim/dive Girls - cheer, cross country, swim/dive, & volleyball
- Winter: Boys - basketball & bowling Girls - basketball, bowling, & cheer
- Spring: Boys - baseball, golf, soccer, tennis, & track Girls - golf, soccer, softball, tennis, & track

**L) Selecting Teams and “Cuts”:** How many students a team can field often depends on the sport itself. In some cases, such as football or cross country, “cuts” are not necessary. In other cases, the number of students a team can field is determined by the AHSAA, which imposes roster limitations, or by the number of coaches available to each team, or the ability to give students adequate instruction, or the coaches’ assessment, based on rosters and individual skill sets, what level is best for the student.

In some cases, for example, a student will not “make” a varsity team because the coach has determined he or she will get more playing time or develop more effectively at the junior varsity or freshman levels. In other cases, it may be the case that a student is not selected for any of the available teams in the school. Though this is difficult for a student to absorb, we believe in the long run, it can help the student readjust and pursue other extracurricular activities.

All our teams will follow the AHSAA guidelines while holding evaluation periods to determine which student/athletes will make the squads. Each coach will host a pre-evaluation meeting with the parents to hand out schedules for the evaluation period and share general information and expectations for the team.

It is worth remembering that choosing a team is an art, not a science, and people of good will may disagree with each other. Part of the evaluation is a coach’s assessment of talent and potential. Part of it is work ethic, attitude, leadership and the chemistry of the team. Part of it is team “fit”--assessing a student’s skill set vs. the needs of the team. Every team needs a complementary set of skills.

Families will be notified in a timely manner after the evaluation period has ended to let them know who made the team. The head coach, with the approval of the athletic director, has final say in who is selected to participate on a team.

**M) Playing “Up”**--In some cases, a younger player is so talented that a coach may wish that student to play “above” his or her age level. Should a talented freshman basketball player, for example, play at the varsity level? St. Michael asks each coach to consider the following before making this decision:

First, in general, a player will not be asked to play up a level unless that student is good enough to start on that team.

Second, a consideration of the impact the move up will have on that student with his or peer group. Being a teammate is a great way to build friendships. If we move that child out of their peer group, it becomes harder for that child to make friends and exercise leadership;. In some cases, it’s much better for that child, and the long term interest of the program, to keep a kid at his or her own age level so as to bond with classmates and develop leadership skills that will help the program in future years.

Third, a student’s maturity level, both in terms of commitment to the sport and his or her studies. There is a big difference between committing to a varsity sport, which may include away games with the student getting home at 11 p.m. on a weekday night, vs. a 4:30 p.m. game locally. Can a student keep up his or her studies?

Fourth, the parent’s perspective--No one knows a child better than his or her parents! If a coach believes a student should “play up,” we’d like the parent to sign off on that, too, weighing all the concerns above, so that we act in the child’s best interest. A parent may request to keep a child within that child’s age group despite that child’s athletic ability.

Finally, the coach must receive the approval of the athletic director to move a player up.

**N) Pre-Year Meeting:** At the beginning of each season the teams will host a parent meeting to help organize for each sport. The meeting will be co-hosted by the athletic director and the head coaches of the teams. We will also discuss the travel policies for the teams at this time. The coaches will also discuss their expectations for the upcoming season. This will include setting up a procedure for having parent/coach meetings if necessary.

**O) Booster Club:** The St. Michael athletic booster club (the “Cardinal Club”) is set up to directly support our athletic department and teams. Club members can support our teams financially, in prayer, by advertising in our media guides, & by volunteering. Families and other stakeholders in our community are encouraged to join the Cardinal

Club. We ask that you support this club, both through your volunteer hours and through your giving, to help boost our athletes and programs. It's a fun way to meet people and get involved.