



**ST. MARK CATHOLIC SCHOOL**  
WHERE FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE MEET

# ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

**2021-22**

## **St. Mark Catholic School**

1201 Alma Drive Plano, Texas 75075  
Phone: 972-578-0610 ECC: 972-423-7926  
FAX: 972-423-3299

[www.stmcs.net](http://www.stmcs.net)

*This handbook contains information needed by both students and parents during the school year.  
The information in the Handbook outlines the philosophy and policies of the St. Mark Catholic  
Athletic Program.*

*(Updated January 2021)*

Dear Parents, Students, and Coaches,

*"[I] consider sports as an instrument of education when it fosters high human and spiritual ideals; when it forms youth in an integral way in values such as loyalty, perseverance, friendship, solidarity, and peace. Surmounting differences of cultures and ideologies, sports offer an ideal occasion for dialogue and understanding among peoples, for building the desired civilization of love. To put into practice these values, based on the dignity of the human person, in face of possible interests that might darken the nobility of sports itself." - Pope John Paul II (September 16, 2002)*

As a school community, we must consider the appropriate role of athletics at St. Mark Catholic School. A core characteristic of Catholic Christianity and Catholic schools is the concept of relationship and community and the conviction that humankind is "made for each other" (*Educating for Life*, Thomas Groome, p. 60). Pope John Paul II says that, as manifestations of the communal Body of Christ, athletics serve to unify all individuals, including coaches, student-athletes, and families in a spirit of peace.

This Athletics Program Handbook outlines the philosophy and policies of the St. Mark Catholic School Athletics Program for the school year. Please read this document carefully, sign the attached agreement, and return it to the school office before attending the first practice date. The agreement states that you intend to abide by the policies of the St. Mark Catholic School Athletics Program during the school year.

St. Mark Athletics extends the work of St. Mark Catholic School by offering another environment which can foster high human and spiritual ideals to help children grow towards a deeper understanding of themselves and their roles in God's wonderful world.

Thank you for doing your part to help positively affect and develop the lives of all children by building a peaceful environment within our sports program, school, parish, and in our larger community.

-St. Mark Catholic School Athletics Program

## **St. Mark Catholic School Athletics Policy**

The athletic program dedicates itself to the pursuit of excellence in athletics within the framework of a Catholic community and in accordance with its primary role as an educator and spiritual guide. The athletics program is committed to providing opportunities for each individual student-athlete to reach his/her highest potential, while developing the qualities and spirit of a Catholic Christian.

### **Philosophy**

"Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we, an imperishable one." - Corinthians 9:24-25

We recognize that the imperishable crown offered by Jesus Christ far exceeds any of the perishable crowns or trophies offered by this world. As a Catholic school, St. Mark upholds values and principles. Though our athletic teams strive to win in the sense of having the best score, we recognize that the real value of Catholic school athletics is realized only if it fosters the development of the human person, both in spirit and in body, by cultivating Christian character, strengthening personal integrity and responsibility, and promoting the pursuit of excellence in all endeavors.

Participation on a team is a privilege. With this privilege comes responsibilities in the areas of preparation, attitude, sportsmanship, and academics. These responsibilities exist both in and out of school, and in both athletic and non-athletic settings. We recognize the need for God's support and guidance in meeting these responsibilities.

"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." - Philippians 4:13

## REGISTRATION INFORMATION

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**Registration Procedures** A student can become a full, participating member of a St. Mark athletic team once the following requirements are met:

### 1) Complete Sports Registration Form

Parents/guardians of St. Mark students wishing to participate in a sport, must complete the online [Sports Registration Form](#) for the specific sport during the appropriate registration dates (refer to the "Weekly School Bulletin" and the specific sport web pages on the [school website](#) for all registration dates). Important Note: Deadlines are not intended to prevent a student from participating on a sports team, but they are necessary to ensure that team sizes do not become too large to allow for proper instruction of participants.

### 2) St. Mark Athletic Handbook

Student and parent/guardian read the St. Mark Athletic Handbook and acknowledge they have read and agree to abide by the policies, procedures, and code of conduct outlined in the handbook.

### 3) Submit Sports Physical Forms

Sports Physical Forms must be completed, returned, and confirmed by the Athletic Director immediately following submission of the online Sports Registration Form.

### Uniform Deposits

Student-Athletes will be issued a loaner uniform at the start of their sports season. Uniforms must be returned within 30 days of the last game played. Uniforms must be returned in good condition (a parent must inspect all areas of each garment for stains and spot- treat prior to washing; no stains present; no bleach discoloration marks, no tears snags).

During the season, it is the responsibility of the student-athlete/parent/guardian to professionally mend the garment, if needed, before returning it to the Athletic Director.

If a uniform is not returned, or is delivered in poor condition (determined at the sole discretion of the Athletic Director), a uniform replacement fee will be charged based on the following schedule:

- \$100: football, baseball, softball, basketball
- \$50: soccer, volleyball, cross country, track
- \$0: cheer, tennis, swim, golf (parent purchased).

### Registration Fees

All sports offered at St. Mark Catholic School have different operation costs associated with them. Fees for each sport are posted on the individual sport web pages at [stmcs.net/athletics](http://stmcs.net/athletics). After registration closes, families will be invoiced the fee assessed for that specific sport prior to the first league game/ tournament. Please note, all school financial obligations must be current.

### School Sport Team Orientation Meeting

In April, prior to the beginning of the following school year, the Athletic Director will hold a mandatory meeting for all potential rising 5<sup>th</sup> grade student-athletes and their parents. During this meeting, the St. Mark Athletic Handbook will be reviewed. Parents should contact the Athletic Director prior to the meeting if they are unable to attend.

## **ATHLETIC TEAM FORMATION AND GENERAL INFORMATION**

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### **Team Selection**

Team formations are conducted by the Athletic Director after an evaluation process by an outside coaching source for volleyball and basketball. Football, Cross Country, Swimming, Track, Soccer, and Golf teams are exempt from skills evaluations. Attendance at the evaluation process will be limited to registered athletes, the St. Mark Athletic Director, and the outside evaluation team.

The St. Mark Athletic Director will determine the number of teams per grade based upon the number of registered students. Once teams have been decided, coach availability will allow completion of the team selection process. The St. Mark Athletic Director will place injured students on a team accordingly. Injury acknowledgement consists of a physician's note restricting a student from taking part in scheduled player evaluations.

### **Coaching Selection**

Coach assignments are decided after the completion of the evaluation process.

### **Levels of Competition**

Development of the skills pertaining to each sport is the primary emphasis on each athletic team offered at St. Mark. Each team experience, however, may be slightly different, depending on the level at which the team is competing.

#### Grade 5

Junior Varsity level with an emphasis on education, participation, and development.

Team placement: All registered students are divided as evenly as possible regarding skill level to form a designated number of teams using the evaluation process described in the "Team Selection" paragraph above.

#### Grade 6

Junior Varsity level with an emphasis on education, participation, and development through competition.

Team placement: All registered students are divided by skill level and placed accordingly to form a designated number of teams using the evaluation process described in the "Team Selection" paragraph above. If the outside coaching source determines all registered students should participate within the same division level, all registered students are divided equally by ability to form a designated number of teams using the evaluation process.

#### Grades 7 and 8

Varsity level with an emphasis on development through competition.

Team placement: All registered students are divided by skill level and placed accordingly to form a designated number of teams using the evaluation process described in the "Team Selection" paragraph above. If the outside coaching source determines all registered students should participate within the same division level, all registered students are divided equally by ability to form a designated number of teams using the evaluation process.

## **League Placement**

Skill-based leagues are designed to allow the best opportunity for students to play at a comparable level with their peers. In all skill-based leagues, the school Athletic Director has the preliminary responsibility of selecting the division that he/she feels best suits each school team's ability level.

Division 1 - Applies to all 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade teams

Division 2 - Applies to all 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade teams

If there is a need to place multiple teams in Division 2, the evaluation staff will split players evenly into teams by skill level.

Division 3 - 8<sup>th</sup> grade leagues only

## **All-Star Selections**

Candidates from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Division 1, and if applicable Division 2, must meet the following criteria:

Skills - Represents the best skill level among their teammates

Leadership - Leads the team by example of Christian principle and good sportsmanship, and enables their teammates to achieve success

Team Ethic - Must be displayed with sincere dedication and commitment to the team

Participation - Must have played the majority of the games during the season

Selection Process - The team members will vote for their choice based upon the above criteria. The Athletic Director organizes All-Star voting.

## Exceptions to Criteria

- If St. Mark has no Division 1 team, then a player from Division 2 is selected.
- If the student-athlete does not satisfy the academic and disciplinary requirements, he/she will be removed from the ballot after voting.
- Student-athletes with two detentions in a grading period are ineligible to play in the All-Star game and removed from the ballot.
- Students suspended or ejected from a game within the season are ineligible for ballot placement.
- Upon completion of the review, the Athletic Director will release the final selections.
- The Athletic Director has the final decision regarding criteria and policy, and if a tiebreaker is required.

## **Transportation Policy**

Following the policies of the Dallas Diocese, St. Mark Catholic School does not provide transportation to/from athletic events. All transportation must be privately arranged by parents/guardians. If a student is transported by a non-family member from the St. Mark campus, communication must be submitted to the team coach and school Athletic Director prior to pick up. St. Mark Catholic School and the Diocese of Dallas assume no liability for accidents that may occur en route to any sporting activity.

## COACHING EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

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Coaches act first as educators, and must work in coordination with the parents who are the primary educators of children. At all times, coaches must be examples of Christ the Teacher, and serve as role models for the student-athlete to emulate. They must be messengers of the school mission and ensure that athletic programs embody the Catholic characteristics prevalent at St. Mark Catholic School.

### Clearance Requirements

- All Head Coaches must be at least 18 years of age, and/or approved by the Athletic Director. Paid staff members and volunteers are under the supervision of the Principal and the Athletic Director.
- All coaches must be screened and trained through the [Safe Environment Program](#) and follow the guidelines of the program.
- All coaches must attend the DPL "Play Like A Champion" workshop.
- It is strongly recommended that all coaches attend a CPR/First Aid course.
- All coaches will be required to be in support of, and in compliance with, all aspects of the St. Mark Athletic Handbook.
- All coaches must read the [Coaching Agreement](#) found on the school website, initial all statements, sign, and submit the completed document to the Athletic Director annually.
- All coaches must know and understand the rules and regulations of the sport prior to the first league game.

### Goal Setting

When working with St. Mark student-athletes, a successful coach will work towards goals in the following three areas: team, personal, and school.

#### Team Goals

1. Creating a positive and memorable experience that will be cherished by the student-athlete for the rest of his/her life.
2. Teaching the specific and unique skills of the sport to the absolute best of his/her abilities by using all means, methods, and resources available.
3. Teaching the skills of healthy competition will prepare athletes and the team to succeed.

#### Personal Goals

1. Modeling character, sportsmanship, communication, self-discipline, and a lived faith.
2. Appreciating the moments of grace throughout a season, at times of winning and losing.
3. Becoming a lifelong learner of their sport.
4. Maintaining perspective in and throughout all athletic endeavors, realizing teachable moments exist in all experiences.
5. Fostering positive relationships with all community stakeholders.

#### School Goals

St. Mark coaches contribute to the school community by:

1. Infusing the school mission in all athletic activities.
2. Promoting academic excellence as an essential component in the development of student-athletes.

3. Committing to effective communication with the school Athletic Director, teachers, parents, and athletes.
4. Creating a culture of school unity and spirit as exemplified through sportsmanship, positive fan participation, and respect for all.

### **Conduct of Coaches**

- Always set a good example for others to follow.
- The use of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, is prohibited when in service as a coach.
- Teach Christian values, such as respect, discipline, honesty, and hard work.
- Abide by the Athletic Handbook Policies.
- Abide by Safe Environment guidelines.
- Discipline those student-athletes who display unsportsmanlike behavior in a setting that is away from other team members, and if necessary, forfeit their privilege of representing their school.
- Remain with the athletes until each has been released to their parent/guardian, whether at a game or practice.
- Be a perfect host to opponents, treating them as guests.
- At every opportunity, remind the team that the opposing team needs their respect and courtesy as fellow athletes.
- At every opportunity, remind the spectators that the opposing team needs their respect and courtesy.
- Respect the officials' judgment and interpretation of the rules.
- Publicly shake hands with the officials and opposing coach before and after the contest.
- Require your team to publicly shake hands with the opposing team, coaches, and officials before and after the contest.

### **Treatment of Opponents**

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

### **Prayer**

Team prayer is an essential component prior to the start of every contest.

### **Coaching Duties**

In addition to serving as witnesses and models of faith, St. Mark coaches are expected to fulfill the following duties:

- Plan out practices and games
- Always supervise athletes until they are picked up from practices/games
- Condition of athletes properly and appropriately
- Instruct athletes properly on what to do and what not to do
- Maintain safe playing conditions
- Ensure cleanliness of facilities
- Communicate practice and game schedules to athletes and parents

- Agree that both coaches will be present prior to the scheduled practice start time to meet the athletes upon their arrival. Students may not enter a practice facility without two Safe Environment trained adults present.

### **Communication with Athletes and Parents**

St. Mark coaches should establish clear procedures and guidelines for communication with athletes and parents that align with the philosophy and mission of St. Mark Catholic School. Email should be used only to communicate basic information, such as the time and location of games and practices. Discussions of concerns should be conducted in person. If a face-to-face meeting is not possible, a phone call is acceptable. Before meetings, establish clear agendas and communicate that certain topics will not be discussed. Coaches do not have to discuss playing time, coaching strategies and specific plays, or information pertaining to other athletes.

## **STUDENT EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS**

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Students and parents should recognize that participation in the athletic program is not a right of all students, but a privilege to those selected individuals who possess the ability, attitude, disposition, cooperative spirit, and desire to represent St. Mark in a favorable way. By joining the school's athletic program, which includes cheerleading, a student becomes a representative of his/her team and of St. Mark Catholic School.

### **Academic and Conduct Qualifications for Participation**

St. Mark Catholic School expects student-athletes to maintain academic and general conduct standards in keeping with the St. Mark Catholic School Parent-Student Handbook and the teachings of the Catholic Church. These regulations and procedures apply while on school premises, during practices and competitions, social media, and in the public arena.

The following qualification procedure applies to all extracurricular activities. Parents and student cooperative implementation of this procedure is expected. When certain academic and/or general conduct standards are not met, certain consequences are applied to extracurricular activity. However, the intent is to encourage students to re-qualify for such activities after a reasonable amount of time.

**Qualifications:** A student will be considered *ELIGIBLE* to participate in extracurricular activities, including pep rallies, at St. Mark Catholic School if their most recent academic report card matches the following criteria. This same criterion applies even if a student is playing as part of another Diocesan school team which has different criteria.

1. A 76% or above average in each academic subject.
2. A *Satisfactory* grade or better in general conduct. Refer to the St. Mark Parent-Student Handbook to review conduct grade policy.

**Procedure:** When report cards are issued, all students (even those who do not receive a warning notice) will be considered *INELIGIBLE* to participate for a two-week period if he/she:

1. Receive below a 76% average in any academic subject.
2. A general conduct grade below *Satisfactory*. Refer to the St. Mark Parent-Student Handbook to review conduct grade policy.

**Requalification:** After a two-week period, parents or students may request a review of the students' grades and/or general conduct marks. Requests must be made in writing to the Assistant Principal. If a student's grades and/or general conduct marks comply with qualification standards, he/she will be eligible to re-enter activities. If not, the student's participation will be suspended for another two-week period, and the process for re-qualification will begin again.

**Exception:** If a student receives two detentions within a quarter, that student is immediately considered *INELIGIBLE* for the remainder of the quarter. Ineligible students may not dress out and sit on the bench with other players. They may, however, attend games as part of the audience.

Notification of eligibility or requalification will be communicated by school administration and the Athletic Director to the parents. The Athletic Director will then notify the coach. Constant encouragement for every student-athlete is essential.

### **Student-Athlete Expectations**

A student-athlete's behavior is governed by the same rules, regulations, and procedures that apply to all students, per the St. Mark Parent-Student Handbook. Each student-athlete is expected to demonstrate and encourage others' behaviors that reflect good sportsmanship. If behavior infractions occur, student-athletes may face both a school and an athletic consequence.

#### **Attendance**

All student-athletes must be marked as "present" in school on the day of a practice or a game to participate. Please see the Parent-Student Handbook for clarification.

#### **Dress Code/ Uniforms**

Student-athletes are highly visible representatives of the school and as such, are responsible for using good judgment in their overall appearance. All teams, regardless of level, have a responsibility to ensure that their game attire reflects excellence. Treat uniforms with respect and modifications to the uniform are not allowed.

Teams that treat their uniforms with respect project class.

- Basketball, baseball, softball, and football team jerseys must be tucked in.
- Volleyball compression shorts must have a 4-inch hem minimum.

## **SPORTSMANSHIP**

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### **Expectations of Players**

All student-athletes are expected to represent St. Mark Catholic School in an exemplary manner. This behavior is expected both on and off the court or field. Student-athletes are expected to display Christian courtesy and manners to all officials, coaches, opposing coaches, players, and spectators. At all times, good sportsmanship is the rule, not the exception. Penalty for unsportsmanlike behavior during a practice or game is left to the discretion of the coaches for each sport, along with input from the Athletic Director. This can range from sitting out at practice to a one-game suspension. For extreme cases, if an athlete has been ejected from a game by an official, disciplinary guidelines and policies will be followed from the Dallas Parochial League Handbook available online at [dallasparochialleague.com/pdfs/DPL\\_Handbook.pdf](http://dallasparochialleague.com/pdfs/DPL_Handbook.pdf).

### **Expectations of Parents and Stakeholders**

“It is incumbent upon parents to cooperate closely with the school teachers to whom they entrust their children to be educated; in fulfilling their duty, teachers are to collaborate closely with parents who are willingly heard and for whom associations or meetings are to be inaugurated and held in great esteem.”  
-Code of Canon Law 796

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

## 5 Ways to Support your Student-Athlete

1. **Be present-** Show up to games, cheer, and support our teams!
2. **Be positive-** Children learn from modeling. When talking about the game, season, performances and decision-making, please share the gift of a positive outlook.
  - ↳ Stay positive in a winning and losing environment.
  - ↳ Do not applaud errors made by opponents or penalties assessed against them.
  - ↳ Refrain from sideline coaching, allowing your student-athlete to focus on his/her game, the coach, and his/her teammates.
  - ↳ Avoid profane language and obnoxious behavior that are contrary to the values of Christian behavior and good sportsmanship.
  - ↳ Communicate appropriately and respectfully with coaches on an individual basis. Mass emails voicing displeasure are neither productive nor respectful.
3. **Encourage independence-** Encourage student-athletes to be responsible for the care of their athletic gear and to prepare for practices and games.
4. **Observe the “24 Hour Cushion”** – Please allow coaches the time they need to process their decisions before approaching them with any questions.
5. **Model St. Mark’s behavior expectations for visiting spectators-** Take pride in our athletic program and model for visitors how we:
  - ↳ Welcome our opponents and cheer for our team rather than against our opponents.
  - ↳ Respect the integrity and authority of game officials.
  - ↳ Allow coaches to coach without criticism from the spectators.
  - ↳ Help clean up at the end of athletic events.

All parents of student-athletes are expected to represent St. Mark Catholic School in an exemplary manner. This behavior is expected both at practices and games. Parents of student athletes are expected to display the best of Christian courtesy and manners to all officials, coaches, and opposing coaches, players, and spectators. At all times, good sportsmanship is the rule, not the exception. The penalty for unsportsmanlike behavior during a practice or game will be left to the discretion of the

coaches of each sport with the input of the Athletic Director and the Principal. We must put the situation in perspective and once again be aware of what we are teaching our youth.

- All parents must read, sign, and agree to the [Parent Code of Conduct Agreement](#) – This should be in the registration procedures at the top

### **Transfer Students/ Injured Students**

Transfer students or injured students will be eligible to participate on a team until the first three weeks after the season has begun.

### **GUIDELINES FOR ATHLETIC PRACTICES DURING HOT WEATHER**

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Incorporate the following guidelines during outdoor athletic practices to help prevent heatstroke and exhaustion in hot weather:

1. Each athlete must have a complete physical examination with a medical history and annual health history update.
2. Athletes will be acclimated to the heat by taking part in graduated practice sessions for the first seven days.
3. Water will be always on the field and readily available to the athletes in unlimited quantities. Water breaks must be taken every fifteen minutes during each practice session. No athlete shall be denied water when requested.
4. After every half hour of heavy exercise in the heat, allow a 10-minute rest period in a cool shaded area. Remove helmets, jersey pads, and other equipment during rest periods.
5. The Head Coach will check the temperature and humidity before and during each practice session. The following guidelines on temperature, humidity, and air quality will be followed:

#### **Temperature**

Below 100	Practice may be conducted outdoors.
100	Practice may be conducted without helmets and pads.
101 and above	Limited practice may be conducted outdoors with extended water breaks and rest periods under shaded areas. Conduct practice without helmets and pads.

#### Heat Index

Below 95	Practice may be conducted outdoors.
95– 100	Practice may be conducted outdoors without helmets and pads. Frequent water breaks every 15 minutes. Rest periods under shaded areas.
101 and above	No outdoor practice. Practice may be conducted indoors.

#### **Air Quality**

Green 0-50	Outdoor practice
Yellow 51-100	Outdoor practice
Orange 100-150	Practice may be conducted outdoors, but can be altered at any time at the discretion of the coach.
Red 151-200	No outdoor practice
Purple 201-300	No outdoor practice

6. If adverse weather conditions are present, a parent may exclude their child from outdoor practice for health reasons. In such cases, the child will not be penalized for missing the practice

session.

7. All athletes will be watched closely during practice sessions and will be observed for any signs of heat-related illness.
8. Coaches will know the signs of heat-related illnesses and will be familiar with first aid practices.
9. Regarding changing weather conditions: All athletes and coaches must seek a safe structure when there is a flash-to bang count of thirty seconds.
10. Athletic activity may not resume until at least thirty minutes after the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder.

\*\*Parents need to be advised that, if their child has a chronic illness and/or respiratory disease, prolonged outdoor exertion should be limited.

## **SCHOOL MASCOT AND LOGO REGULATION**

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The use of the name "St. Mark" or "St. Mark Lions" may only be used by those teams participating in the Dallas Parochial League as representatives of St. Mark Catholic School. The school administration strongly encourages and promotes school spirit and pride; however, the school cannot govern or accept responsibility for the St. Mark or St. Mark Lions identified teams that participate in non-diocesan organizations. Therefore, teams participating in these non-diocesan organizations (i.e., YMCA, ASA, PSA, etc.) are not allowed to use the St. Mark or St. Mark Lions school/team names.

All St. Mark/DPL teams are to be known as the "St. Mark Lions."

**School Team Colors** - All school teams must play under the green, gold, and white school colors that adhere to the St. Mark Catholic School official "Branding Guide" policy found on the school website.

**School Team Mascot** - All school teams must only play under the official "winged lion" logo described in the St. Mark "Branding Guide" policy found on the school website.

**League Affiliation** - St. Mark Catholic School participates in the Dallas Parochial League, a league comprised of Catholic schools within the Diocese of Dallas.

**Use of the School Logo, Image, and Name** - St. Mark maintains specific logo and image guidelines. Individuals or groups wishing to use the school logo, the school name, the school mascot, the "Lions" name, or to represent the school through written, digital, or video formats in any way for any reason, must first receive permission from the school. This includes, but is not limited to, apparel of any kind, flyers, brochures, programs, signage, websites, videos, and social media pages. St. Mark team shirts, hats or other apparel may not be produced independently; permission must first be granted by the school. Please contact the Director of Marketing and Communications at 972-578-0610 for the official artwork files and permission to use them, as well as the guidelines for all applications.

**Right to Amend:** The Principal may make changes to any policies outlined in this handbook as needed and has the final decision regarding policy. Changes will be made public in the "Weekly School Bulletin."