

Church of Saint Aidan



Religious Education Program

Parent / Student Handbook

2021 - 2022

Dear Parents,

The Saint Aidan Faith Formation Program is part of the community of believers who bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ by helping families nurture their children in the love of God, the love of neighbor, and Catholic Christian values. We believe in each child's uniqueness and giftedness. We work to foster in each student a sense of respect for, and responsibility to God, self, and others.

Our program has as its primary mission the Formation of children in the Catholic Faith. The catechists of our parish are committed to teaching the fullness of revelation as taught by the Roman Catholic Church. Our catechists will always teach within the context of fidelity to the doctrine and traditions of our teaching Church. The instruction offered to the children seeks to fulfill the Six Tasks of Catechesis: Promoting Knowledge of the Faith, Liturgical Education, Moral Formation, Forms of Prayer, Education for Community Life; and Missionary Initiation. The ultimate goal is to help each child develop and grow in intimacy with God and to embrace his/her mission to spread the Good News to others.

Formation in the spiritual life begins at home and is always the primary responsibility of the parents. Parents are assisted in fulfilling this most important responsibility by having their children actively participate in the parish Faith Formation Program. Although the Covid Pandemic is still greatly affecting us, we are excited to be able to again provide the in-person program that children deserve. We will make every effort to provide a safe environment for both the staff and the children entrusted to us. This year will be a "work in progress" as we continue to cope with the challenging changes or "new normal" that the pandemic has inflicted on us. During these challenging times, it is essential that the family prays and worships together at Sunday Mass and Eucharist. The Mass is the center of Catholic life. We are blessed that our church is open again and that we can attend Mass in person.

The pages that follow provide you with general guidance for participation in the program during the upcoming school year. Please keep this handbook for your reference. This handbook as well as other documents and updates are available on the Faith Formation webpage, <https://StAidanParish.org/ff>. The policies and procedures included in this document are followed by the Faith Formation Office throughout the school year. Should changes need to be made at any point during the school year, you will be alerted via e-mail and the changes will be posted on our webpages.

The whole staff of the Faith Formation Office welcomes you and your family. Please pray every day that we have a healthy and productive school year. Contact us anytime with any questions or concerns you may have. The Faith Formation Office is here for you!

Sincerely,

Elaine Smith
Director of Faith Formation
And Special Needs

Table of Contents

Admission.....	4
Tuition	4
Communications	4
Arrival & Dismissal	4
Attendance & Lateness	5
Cancellation of Classes.....	5
Textbooks	5
Medical Conditions	6
Assignments	6
Home Schooling	6
Homework.....	6
Complaint Procedures.....	7
Conduct / Discipline Policy.....	7
Dress Code	7
Bathroom	7
Snacks and Drinks	7
Electronic Devices	8
Substance Abuse	8
Vandalism.....	8
Safe Environment.....	8
Photograph / Videos	8
Visitors	8
Right to Amend	8

PLEASE NOTE:

FACE MASKS MUST BE WORN BY STAFF AND STUDENTS AT ALL TIMES UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

Masks MUST stay up and cover both the nose and mouth areas.

Admission

The Saint Aidan Religious Education Program (hereafter referred to as the 'Program') does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, nationality, or disability: Parents are required to register all students annually for admission into the program. A copy of the baptismal certificate must be submitted in order to complete each student's initial registration.

Transfers from another parish religious education program will require verification. The parent is responsible to providing the Program with a Letter of Transfer from the child's previous religious education program. Children must successfully complete each level of instruction. Children who have not received prior instruction will be evaluated on an individual basis to determine the appropriate level at which they should enter the Program.

Tuition

Tuition charged in the program is used to offset some of the expenses for books, supplies, administrative costs and other needs of the religious education program and is due at the time of registration unless other arrangements have been made. Once classes begin, tuition is not refundable. Financial hardship should never preclude enrolling a child in the religious education program. Financial assistance is available for those in need by contacting the Director of Faith Formation

Communications

While the Program will attempt to maintain communication with parents using various methods, the main method to be used will be by e-mail notifications and the Faith Formation Webpage. To ensure that you are receiving all communications from the Program, please keep the Office up-to-date with the following information:

- E-mail address
- Home & Cell Phone numbers
- Emergency Contact person's phone

Also check the child's class folder each week for updates and flyers; however most updates will be sent via e-mail.

Arrival & Dismissal

Students should be dropped-off and picked-up by their parent/legal guardian. If someone other than a parent or legal guardian is authorized to pick-up a student, the Faith Formation Office needs to be notified in writing.

The building used for religious instruction is the upper school building of St. Aidan School and is located on the east side of Willis Avenue, across from the church, between Dover Street on the south and Winthrop Avenue on the north. There is only one authorized entrance to be used for arrival/dismissal for class. The Main Entrance (Front Door) is located at 508 Willis Avenue; an exterior sign indicates "Finamore Parish Center".

Front Door – This door is to be used by all students when coming to or departing from class. Parents and/or designated caregivers may park in the parking lot behind the upper school building, the parking lot across the street on Dover Street, or on the street along Willis Avenue. **THIS IS THE ONLY ENTRANCE/EXIT FOR OUR PROGRAM.** Students will not be permitted to exit via the back parking lot door.

Parents may NOT enter the building during arrival or dismissal, nor may they remain in the building during class time.

Attendance & Lateness

Children are expected to attend class each week and to arrive for class on time.

Absences - Students are expected to attend all their classes unless they are sick. Children are to make up all missed classwork. Students who exceed 5 absences are in jeopardy of not moving to the next level. Absences due to quarantine can be removed by the providing the quarantine email from the child's school or the state quarantine notice. Regardless of the reason, all missed classwork from all absences must be made up.

Lateness – Students are expected to arrive for class **on time**. We have our students for only one hour per week and students arriving late to class can have a disruptive effect on the class and the lesson being presented. Teachers have been instructed to take attendance at the class start time. Students arriving **more than five minutes late** must sign-in in the Rotunda. Students arriving **more than fifteen minutes late** **WILL NOT be permitted to attend class** and will have their record marked as absent.

Early Dismissal – We understand that on a **rare** occasion a student may need to depart class early, however please avoid scheduling appointments and activities during class time. The following procedures are to be followed if a student needs to depart class early:

- The parent sends a note to the Faith Formation Office requesting the early departure. No one may pick up someone else's child for early dismissal without **written permission** from that parent. The written consent must be filed in the Faith Formation Office.
 - The parent/guardian picking up the child comes to the Rotunda to sign the student out.
 - **Once the child is signed out**, the student will be released from class. (**Note:** Students will not be released before a parent/guardian signs out the child.) No student may ever leave on his/her own.
- *Frequent lateness and/or early dismissals can result in a student being expected to make-up class time.

Cancellation of Classes

Each family is given a Religious Education Calendar at the beginning of the school year, however sometimes inclement weather can cause cancellation of classes. In general, Religious Education classes WILL NOT be held if any of the following conditions occur:

- If Saint Aidan School is closed.
- If the Mineola School District schools are closed.
- If the Herricks School District schools are closed.
- If the East Williston School District schools are closed.

In the event of a need to cancel scheduled classes due to inclement weather or other emergency, notification will be made through the following mass-media outlets:

- TV – For **Cablevision** customers on News 12 (Channel 12) also at www.news12.com
- TV – For **FIOS** Customers (Channel 529)
- Radio – WBAB 102.3 FM also at www.wbab.com
- Radio – WBLI 106.1 FM also at www.wbli.com
- Faith Formation Webpages at www.staidanparish.org/ff

Textbooks

All religious education textbooks used in our program conform to the guidelines published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Textbooks provided are the responsibility of each student. If a textbook is lost, a replacement textbook may be purchased in the Faith Formation Office.

Medical Conditions

Parents must complete the medical questions found on the Student Registration Form for each of their children enrolled in the program who have medical issues (e.g. allergies, asthma, auditory or visual impairment, etc.). This information will be shared with the child's Catechist. No medication of any kind, with the exception of an EPI Pen or prescribed inhaler, may be given to a child by a Catechist.

If a child has been prescribed an Epi Pen by his/her physician, the parent/guardian must provide the Director with a FARE Form, which is issued by the Religious Education Office authorizing the administration of an Epi Pen as necessary. THESE FORMS MUST BE SIGNED BY THE PRESCRIBING DOCTOR AND MUST HAVE THE DOCTOR'S STAMP. A picture of the child must be attached. In the event that a child requires the administration of an Epi-pen, the 911 Emergency will be notified immediately. Students MUST bring their Epi Pens to class EVERY week. If a student does not have his/her Epi Pen, the child must wait in the Rotunda for his/her parent to bring the Pen.

Children carrying rescue inhalers must have a doctor's filed in the office updated annually.

Assignments

Students must complete all program assignments in their textbooks according to the schedule provided and complete any required chapter assessments.

Parents of students who fail to complete the necessary work will be contacted regarding their children's situations. Parents should keep the Faith Formation Office informed about any events that could negatively impact their children's progress in the program.

Home Schooling

The National Directory for Catechesis states that "all parents have an obligation to involve their children in the life and mission of the Church. Since their children are being initiated into the life of the Church, which is fundamentally realized in the local parish, parents who provide catechesis for their children in their homes should participate fully in the life of the local parish. They should celebrate the Sunday Eucharist in the local parish, involve themselves in its charitable works, and attend appropriate training and formation sessions the parish or diocese provides." (NDC # 3, pg. 260)

While we recognize that parents are the primary religious educators of their children and that some parents may "choose to provide catechesis for their children in their home, their catechesis must be both complete and authentic." Parents who choose to be not only the primary educators of their children but also their Catechists must adhere to all guidelines for Catechists outlined by the diocesan bishop." (NDC # 3, p 259). It must be understood that these efforts cannot be done independently of the parish. Students will be provided with all the necessary materials and will be expected to complete all the requirements for the appropriate grade level. Work must be submitted at the end of the Religious Education School Year in order to receive credit for the school year. To request Home School, parents must complete the "Letter of Request" provided by the Faith Formation Office that asks for the specific extraordinary circumstances that necessitate the request. Home School should not take place for more than one school year or during the immediate preparation for sacraments which are grades 2, 7, and 8.

Homework

Catechists may assign appropriate homework to their students to help complete or reinforce a particular lesson. All students are expected to complete homework assignments within the allotted time frame. Constant failure to accomplish assigned work may result in the student not moving on to the next grade level. In grades 1 through 6, all chapter tests from assigned chapters must be completed in the textbook. Catechists may assign additional tests. For grades 7 and 8, chapter tests will be distributed. All chapter tests must be completed and will be filed in the student's Confirmation folders that are in the Faith Formation Office.

Complaint Procedures

In the event that a parent has a complaint regarding program procedures, the following steps should be followed. First, contact the Director at x406 and then the pastor. If satisfaction is not reached, contact the Diocese of Rockville Centre Office of Evangelization & Catechesis.

Conduct / Discipline Policy

We expect courtesy and respect from our students at all times. We are all created in the image of God and we are called upon to treat others with the dignity that we each have as images of God. Students are expected to treat all others with dignity and respect, fellow students and catechists alike. Inappropriate conduct cannot be tolerated. Instances of student misbehavior will normally be handled first by the Catechist, perhaps with a reminder of class rules, or a redirection of the student to proper behavior. Continued misbehavior or an increase in the seriousness of an incident may require the involvement of the program Director, and as applicable parental involvement. In the event of serious misconduct, the parent/guardian may be called to pick up his or her child. In severe cases of misbehavior, the Director may determine that it is necessary to remove a student from the program entirely. The final decision must be approved by the Pastor

Dress Code

Appropriate clothing must be worn at all times when attending Faith Formation events. Students are expected to dress in properly fitting, neat clothes. Shoes/sneakers must be worn at all times in the school buildings and church. Since proper footwear is a safety issue, students who arrive in flip flops and wheelies will not be permitted to attend class or program events until a parent brings the proper footwear.

General guidelines:

- Hoods and hats may NOT be worn inside the school buildings or the church
- Skirts and shorts should be an appropriate length - Skirts, no shorter than 1 inch above the knee; shorts should be standard walking shorts length - no gym shorts or short-shorts. (This includes the uniforms of some sports.)

The following items are not permitted:

- Clothing with suggestive questionable language or drawings
- Bare midriffs or any shirt/top that exposes cleavage
- Basketball jersey or see through mesh unless a tee-shirt is worn underneath
- Sagging pants that expose undergarments
- Pajamas, bedroom slippers, shower shoes
- Flip flops and "wheelies" (shoes/sneakers with built in wheels)
- Chains or any attire that could be used as a weapon

Bathroom

The classroom time with our students is limited and valuable and therefore the use of bathroom facilities during class time is discouraged. Parents should ensure their children use the bathroom before arriving at class. If your child has a medical condition that may require frequent bathroom trips, please notify the Director.

Snacks and Drinks

Because of the number of students in the Religious Education Program as well as the number of students attending Saint Aidan School, it is highly likely that many will be afflicted with various food allergies; therefore in the cause of student safety, students are NOT permitted to bring snacks or drinks (other than water) into their Religious Education classes. If a student has a medical need for a snack, please contact the Faith Formation Office. Water bottles are permitted if needed.

Electronic Devices

While we appreciate the proliferation of electronic devices in our society, they must not be a distraction to others. Therefore, items such as AirPods, earbuds, iPods, iPads, etc. are not permitted in class or at any program-related events. Students may bring cell phones; however, they must be out of sight and **MUST be turned OFF** (not airplane mode or silenced). Students who use their cell phones in class will have their phones taken away. The cell phones will be placed in the Faith Formation Office and will be returned only to parents.

In the upper grades, cell phones will be placed in an individual zip bag with each student's name on the bag. Students will remove their phone from the bag at the end of class.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is defined as the possession of, use of, selling or distributing any unauthorized, illegal drug, chemical, alcohol, tobacco, or tobacco-like substance, which can be introduced into the body through ingestion, inhalation, or injection. Any student found in possession of an illegal or unauthorized substance on parish property or parish sponsored events will be immediately suspended from the Program. A conference with the student, parent, Director of Faith Formation, and the Pastor is mandatory for re-admittance. Any student selling or distributing these type materials will be turned over to the local authorities.

Vandalism

Students responsible for vandalism anywhere on the parish/school property will be responsible for the repair of damage and restitution. Depending on the extent/type of damage, the student may be removed from the Program.

Safe Environment

Saint Aidan Parish complies with the Diocesan Child Protection Policy. All Program catechists and staff members complete the VIRTUS "Protecting God's Children" training program and have a Federal Background check performed. Children in grades 1 to 6 participate in the Child Lures Program as mandated by the diocese.

Photograph / Videos

Throughout the year pictures of the children in the Faith Formation Program may be taken during various activities. Occasionally these photos may be submitted to the parish bulletin, and on very rare occasions to local media such as the Williston Times and/or the Mineola American. Parents are asked to complete a "Photograph/Video Release Form" for their children upon program registration.

Visitors

Visitors will NOT be allowed in the classrooms unless they have been previously authorized by the Director. Parents and other visitors should report directly to the Faith Formation Office.

Right to Amend

The Director of the Religious Education Program reserves the right to amend this handbook at any time. Parents will be notified if changes are made.