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ST. JOHN'S ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

STUDENT HANDBOOK

*Fr. Marc Dunaway
Pastor and Archpriest
St. John Orthodox Cathedral*

Mrs. Lynn Streff, Administrator

St. John's School Information:

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We welcome you to St. John's Orthodox Christian School, and look forward to educating your child. There is nothing more precious than our children and no greater honor than to teach them. We will do everything we can to be great partners with you in offering your students opportunities to learn.



Our Mission - The mission of St. John's School is to provide an excellent academic education within the safe, nurturing Christian environment of the St. John Cathedral community.

Our Philosophy - We believe that the education and character formation of children is best accomplished through the partnership of home, school, and church. Children learn best in a safe, caring environment and in small classes where they can receive the individual attention they need. We believe an excellent education prepares a child academically, spiritually, and socially. At St. John's, children are encouraged to give back to the community while learning to be independent, capable young adults.

Our Promise

- Partnership with parents
- Academic excellence
- Community conscious

Christian Immersion

Our goal is to present a Godly perspective to issues, so that our students will be immersed in a Christian environment. We endeavor to support and reinforce the Christian values that children are taught in the home.

We welcome all families to St. John's School, where the truth and wisdom of the Orthodox Church's teaching and tradition are tenets of our lives. While students aren't required to cross themselves, accept Orthodox theology, or venerate Orthodox icons they are however, expected to participate in school-day prayers, church services, and Christian Education activities with an attitude of reverence and respect.



St. John's School Information and Policies

Preschool Program

The Preschool Program is divided into two groups: **Preschool I** is in session Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 – 11:30. Depending upon enrollment, an afternoon class may be offered on the same days. **Preschool II** is in session Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 8:30 – 11:30 and/or 12:00 – 3:00.

K – 6th Grade School Program

School for students in grades K-6 is in session Monday through Friday from 8:15 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The calendar for the school year includes 180 days of classes, including teacher In-Service days. Our school calendar closely follows the Anchorage School District with a few exceptions.

Enrollment Criteria

St. John's welcomes applicants and does not discriminate according to race, religion, or ethnic origin. Students are accepted when the school staff determines that we may adequately provide for the child's learning and behavioral needs here at St. John's School. New students are accepted on a probationary basis.

The minimum ages for enrollment in Preschool I and II are three and four years of age respectively by September 1st. The minimum age for enrollment in Kindergarten is five years of age by September 1st of the current school year. Promotion or placement in successive years is determined by assessing all areas of the student's academic performance, maturity and behavior.

Parents must provide all records that pertain to physical examinations and immunizations that are required per State of Alaska guidelines. The State law requires that either immunization or immunization exemption documents be on file at the school.

Standards of Excellence

St. John's School is committed to providing a quality education for all of our students. While striving for excellence at all grade levels, we have opted to keep class sizes small to optimize learning opportunities. We review our curriculum regularly to assure that we are meeting our goal of providing the best education we can. In order to measure all students by national norms, we administer standardized tests annually to all students in grades 2-6.

The primary focus of St. John's is to teach the core subjects of language arts, math, social studies, and science with an academically sound curriculum that is consistent throughout all grade levels. We believe that academic subjects, well taught and properly understood, reflect the majesty, order and goodness of God. Thus, we do not exclusively use curriculums from Christian publishers.

We use traditional classroom instruction, hands-on experience, cooperative learning, and computers in our academic instruction. Secondary emphasis is given to other subjects – physical education, art, music, and drama. The School also offers opportunities for community service, field trips, and special speakers throughout the year. Foremost, St. John's School seeks to promote a caring and mutually supportive relationship among teachers and parents as we work with your children. Parents are urged to become familiar with the materials we use and to actively participate in their child's learning.

Christian Education

As a Christian School, incorporating God throughout the day is an important priority for us. If you have any questions regarding these procedures, please contact the Administrator.



Both our school day and lunchtime opens and closes with prayer. During the lunch hour students are often read a Bible story from the Old or New Testament. Students attend twice-weekly noon prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays. Parents are always welcome to join us for the Noon Hour Prayers, which typically last about 15 minutes. On Mondays, students meet with Fr. Marc for a short teaching on the Christian Education topic for the semester. Topics have included: the Beatitudes, the Disciples of Christ, the Ten Commandments, the New Testament Parables, the Fruit of the Spirit, and the Lord's Prayer.

We observe the feasts and fasts of the Orthodox Church and important Saints of the church are commemorated on days set aside for their honor. During Advent and Lent, classes will participate in various organized acts of “*good work*” to serve those in need. Past projects have included collections for the Eagle River Food Pantry, for local families in need, and through the IOCC we provided hundreds of hygiene bags for the citizens of earthquake-ravaged Haiti. If you know of an organization in need, local or otherwise, please bring it to the attention of the Administrator for consideration in our support of future acts of good work.

School Staff

As a ministry of St. John Orthodox Cathedral, the school, staff, and School Board operate under the guidance of our parish pastor, Fr. Marc Dunaway.

The Administrator is responsible for the general operation and maintenance of the school, staff policy, and community relations. The Administrator provides support and direction to the staff, and acts as a liaison between the pastor, parish council, school board, teachers, and parents. The Administrator is responsible for interviewing prospective teachers and aides for positions at the school.

We believe that Christian values are best taught by modeling Godly behavior. Therefore, we expect all of our staff members to conduct themselves at all times in a manner above reproach in and out of the classroom.

While some staff members are certified teachers through the State of Alaska, others have been trained in the education field or have gained experience on-the-job. Our teachers are strongly encouraged to pursue continuing professional development throughout their careers at St. John’s School. During In-Service days, our teachers gather to discuss pertinent subject matters in the area of education.

The St. John’s School Board is responsible for helping formulate a vision for the school, promoting growth, advertising, fundraising, and reviewing major school policies and purchases. Made up of the parish pastor, the School Administrator, and seven voting members, the School Board meets quarterly.

Communication

Open communication between parents, staff, and students is essential for an effective and successful school. Parents are encouraged to contact their child’s teacher or the Administrator with any academic questions or concerns. Due to their teaching commitment, teachers are not able to meet with parents during school hours but are available after 3:00 pm by appointment.

Teachers will alert parents to any concerns about their students as they arise. Parents will receive a copy of their student’s report card at the end of each quarter. Mid-quarter

progress reports will also be sent if teachers believe it necessary to alert you about your student's performance.

Another important component of communication between parents and teachers are the Conferences that are held each year at the end of the 1st and 3rd quarters. If necessary, conferences may be scheduled at other times during the year as well.

Parental Input

If a parent has a concern about a school policy or situation, it should first be addressed with the classroom teacher. If the issue is not resolved with the classroom teacher, the following procedure should be used in order to resolve the problem as quickly as possible:

- The parent presents the concern to the Administrator verbally or in writing.
- If the concern is not settled to the parent's satisfaction, the concern may be submitted in writing to Fr. Marc Dunaway. He may then decide on the matter or bring it to the attention of the School Board for resolution and policy interpretation.

Student Participation

We expect students to attend all scheduled events with their class, and to participate in classroom activities as instructed by the teacher, substitute or classroom aide. Students may not leave the school grounds without approval during the day, except as part of a pre-arranged and approved field trip. Those who live within walking distance are not allowed to return home for forgotten schoolwork or lunches once school begins.



Discipline Philosophy

St. John's School aims to instill in students respect for people and property. Respect means students will properly esteem the value and worth of each other, adults and the world around them. At the same time, the teachers, Administrator, and other adults of St. John's School will endeavor to model proper respect through their relationships with one another and with the students.

We strive to clearly communicate and consistently enforce our behavioral standards, which emphasize kindness, respect and self-control. Teachers will communicate, to students and parents, classroom rules and consequences at the beginning of the school year.

We encourage and reinforce appropriate student behavior both in the classroom and on the playground. Conversely, students will experience consequences for negative behavior, which creates disruption, conflict or other problems. St. John's School policy does not permit any member of its' staff to use corporal punishment. At the discretion of the Administrator, a student may be suspended or expelled for serious or chronic misbehavior.



School News

Current school events, announcements, and the occasional school closure are communicated via email, notes home and also through our website: www.sjocs.org.

Each class has their own page on our website where news and announcements from the teacher are posted. Please make sure you check our website regularly.

School Website

Upon registration, families will be given the necessary information to log-on to our secure website. At this time, parents will be asked to sign a form granting or denying their permission to have pictures of their student engaged in various school activities posted on the secure portion of our website.

School Closures

St. John's will cancel school whenever the Anchorage School District is closed for extreme weather conditions or natural disasters. Such closures are announced on local radio stations (AM 650, AM 750, FM 91.1). You may also visit our website www.sjocs.org or the ASD website, www.asdk12.org for up to date school closure information.

Dress Code

The general appearance and dress of students should be neat, clean, modest, and conducive to study. While we hope to encourage holiness in our students, we do not encourage hole-e-ness in their attire. The Administrator will make any necessary interpretations to the dress code in questionable circumstances.

- Clothing should be clean and fit appropriately; no holes
- No short skirts, dresses, or shorts.
- No sweat pants or nylon training pants.
- No hats worn inside the building or in the lunchroom.
- No clothing with messages, emblems or pictures that are offensive or detract from a Christian school atmosphere of study.
- Students are encouraged to wear a school logo shirt on Wednesdays and Fridays, which are, designated "School Spirit Days". (Spirit wear is available for purchase)
- Students are permitted to wear shorts during the 1st and 4th quarters.

Books and Supplies

A supply list is given out before the school year begins. Students should begin the year with supplies labeled with their name. Occasionally, requests will be made to replenish supplies during the school year. All textbooks must be covered and kept protected throughout the school year. Students will be held responsible for the damage or loss of textbooks and other school property.

Parent Volunteers

We welcome and encourage active parent participation. We are especially grateful to anyone who volunteers his or her time in the area of fundraising. Please inquire in the office for a list of all volunteer opportunities.

Fund Raising

St. John's School attempts to keep tuition as low as possible. Like other private schools, it is necessary to augment our annual budget with fundraising. We are committed to limit fundraising to a few special projects each year, and we count on your active participation.

Contributions

Tax-deductible donations to the School are always very welcome and appreciated. We operate as a not-for-profit enterprise. Any excess funds beyond our yearly school budget may be applied to scholarships and school improvements.



St. John's School Day-to-Day Operations

School Hours

8:15 a.m. - 1st bell rings, students are admitted to the school building.

8:20 a.m. - 2nd bell rings, students will be at their desks; **class begins.**

Students are required to be at school and *ready for instruction at 8:20* when the 2nd bell rings.

Punctuality

Punctuality is essential and expected. Students who are chronically tardy miss not only important instruction time, but their late arrival is also a disruption to the rest of the class. Parent, please help your students to arrive on time.

Homework

St. John's School believes that homework is a powerful learning tool and an important component of a child's education. Homework allows students to work independently on material presented in the classroom. Additionally, homework assignments allow teachers to pinpoint those areas in which students may be struggling. If you assist your child with his or her homework, please note that on your student's homework log to ensure that the teacher has an accurate indication of your student's understanding of the material.

Tardy Policy

Students who are tardy for any reason must report to the school office, obtain an admittance slip and then proceed to class. Asking students to check in at the school office before going to class allows us to keep accurate attendance records.

Visitors

During school hours, all visitors, even parents, must check in at the office. We enforce this policy to ensure the safety of our students and staff and to prevent disruptions. It is of utmost importance to know who is in our building at all times. Your cooperation in this area is much appreciated.

If you need a forgotten item to be delivered to your student (i.e. lunch, homework, snow clothes etc...) you may leave it in the office and we will see that they receive it at an appropriate time during the day.

Absences

Parents are asked to notify the school in advance, when possible, and no later than 8:45 AM of the day their student will be absent or late to school (illness or medical appointment, for example). Any time a student is absent, it is the student's/parent's responsibility to get classroom assignments and complete them. A pre-arranged absence form is available for planned absences of two days or more. To help your child's teacher prepare lessons and homework please fill out the pre-arranged absence form at least a week in advance of the absence.

Student Departure During the School Day

If a student must leave during the school day for either an appointment or due to illness, parents, or a responsible adult authorized by the parent and coordinated with the Administrator, must come to the school office to pick up their student.

Medical Emergency Form

Parents or guardians must fill out a Medical Emergency Form yearly or as required for each student. In the event of illness or injury during the school day we will call the individual listed on the Medical Emergency Form as authorized by you, if we are unable to reach you.

Illness

St. John's School works hard to ensure a healthy learning environment. Students are expected to wash their hands frequently, and cover their nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing. Hand sanitizer and tissues are also available in each classroom. Please help us promote this healthy environment and don't send your children to school when they are feeling poorly.



When deciding if your child is well enough to attend school after an illness, remember that students must be fever free for a full 24 hours before returning to school. If due to illness, your child will be absent for several days, please ask your child's teachers to provide you with their make-up work.

Medications

If at all possible, students should be given medication outside of school hours. If, however, a student is required to take prescription medication during the school day, it must be brought to the office in its original pharmacy container with the child's name and dosage requirements on it. The appropriate medication administration form must be on file in the school office in the student's file. Medication may be given only under the supervision of the Administrator or the office manager.

We will, with your approval, provide your child with either cough drops or Tylenol to address minor issues like a cough or headache.

Allergies

St. John's School is sensitive to the issue of childhood allergies. If your student is allergic to any particular food items we will ask that you disclose this on our allergy form. If your child has an Epi-pen we will ask that you provide us with two of them, one for the student's classroom and one for the lunchroom. Likewise if your child suffers with asthma we will request that an inhaler be kept in the school office.



Snacks

Throughout the school year teachers will request that students provide snacks for their mid-morning break time. We ask that all classroom snacks be nut-free and further request that you don't bring any type of snack that was processed on equipment that may also be used for items containing nuts.

Recess

At St. John's School we are firm believers in a child's need to "get out and move". Time and again, in addition to our own first hand observations, studies have shown that elementary age students need to engage in regular times of physical activity in order to help them focus on academics in the classroom.

On most days, we provide our students with a morning and afternoon recess. For our older students, Physical Education may take the place of afternoon recess in order to gain more time in the classroom. Recess will be held indoors during inclement weather or when the temperature dips to -10 or more.

Outdoor recess is rarely canceled so make sure your student has the appropriate clothing for the season. Students in K-4 are required to wear snow pants, boots, gloves, hats and coats during the winter. Snow pants are optional for students in 5th and 6th grade.



Lunch Program

Students eat lunch in the church basement. Hot lunch is available for purchase four days a week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday). A monthly lunch order form is available on our website for your convenience at www.sjocs.org. For students bringing lunch from home, we do provide a microwave for reheating food items.

The second Wednesday of each month is Family Lunch Day (except during the months of December and March). Family members are invited to eat lunch and attend Noon Hour Prayers with their students on this day.

Physical Education

St. John's School believes that students who engage in regular physical activity reap not only the health benefits from embracing an active lifestyle, but also an enhanced ability to focus in the classroom. Students in 1st through 6th grade will participate in PE twice per week for approximately an hour per session. PE field trips to the CHS pool or the local ice rink will generally be scheduled once per quarter. Aside from inclement weather, (too cold, too icy, too rainy etc...) or a P.E. field trip, classes will likely be held outside. During the winter months students need full winter gear for P.E. participation.

Please make sure that your student has boots, snow pants, a jacket, gloves and a hat, this includes the 5th and 6th graders.

Field Trips

Throughout the school year, students will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of field trips. Parents are often asked to volunteer as drivers and chaperones on scheduled field trips. Students will be asked to wear their St. John's School spirit wear on field trips.

Some of our most memorable field trips have been to places like: the Seward Sea Life Center, Pyrah's U-Pick Farm, the Great Harvest Bread Company, the Alaska Native Heritage Center and various plays and concerts at the Performing Arts Center.

Extra-Curricular Activities

At the beginning of the school year, St. John's School fields a soccer team. Students in grades 3rd through 6th are eligible to play on the St. John's School team. Games are scheduled against other local Christian Schools through ACSAA (Alaska Christian School Athletic Association). It is very fun!!

Personal Items

During school hours students may not use electronic items to include: handheld games, cell phones, iPods etc... Not only are these items incongruent with a school atmosphere they also pose a problem for damage or loss. Students who bring these items to School will have them taken for safekeeping until the end of the day. St. John's School will not be responsible for items like these that are lost during school hours.



After School

We understand that many children like to stay after school and play outside on the playground; it is this sense of community that is such a big part of St. John's School. But it is important for parents to know that St. John's School does not provide outside adult supervision after school hours. Parents, you are responsible for your students beginning at 3:00 p.m.

Alaskan Wildlife

Rather unique to the Alaskan landscape is the occasional presence of large wild animals... For the protection of our students and staff, please call the school office if you see a bear or a moose in the neighborhood so that we may monitor its' location and respond accordingly.



Finances

For tuition costs and fees, please refer to the current copy of the Tuition Schedule, which the Administrator will provide to families during Registration. Checks may be made payable to St. John's School placed in the metal tuition box outside the front door, delivered to the school office, or mailed to the School. Please see the Administrator regarding other available payment options.

Tuition Policy

Tuition payments are due the first day of each month, August through May (ten months) for grades Preschool through 6th grade. These payments are not tax-deductible.

- There will be a \$25.00 late fee for payments received after the 10th of the month.
- Tuition may be prepaid at any time. Parents are responsible for monthly payments beginning August 1st, even if they choose to make a lump sum PFD payment in October. Any remaining balance will be billed in equal monthly payments.
- Tuition must be current to register for the next school year.
- Delinquent accounts may result in report cards and student transcripts being held until all fees are paid.
- Parents may always appeal to the pastor of St. John Orthodox Cathedral for assistance to satisfy tuition obligations in the event of financial hardship, assuming they have exhausted all other reasonable efforts to satisfy the outstanding balance.

Tuition Waivers

A limited number of partial tuition waivers are available each year for students in Kindergarten through 6th grade to help families needing tuition assistance. Waivers are awarded based on family financial need and the school's available resources. Tuition waiver applications are due in late-February and are reviewed by the Administrator and Fr. Marc Dunaway. Late applicants risk being denied a waiver as most funds are awarded during a scheduled waiver review meeting. The maximum tuition waiver will not be greater than one-half of the student's annual tuition fees.

St. Innocent Scholarship Fund

The St. Innocent Scholarship Fund augments the financial aid given by St. John's School. Because of limited school funds, the St. Innocent's Scholarship Fund was created to provide additional support to families in need of tuition assistance. This fund depends on

donations from persons or organizations desiring to help with such assistance. The St. Innocent Scholarship Fund provides an excellent means for neighbors, grandparents, godparents, and others to support St. John's School through tax-deductible contributions. Contact the Administrator for the appropriate form and further information.

Thank you

Thank you for choosing St. John's School for your child's education. At St. John's, children have the opportunity to learn about God, excel academically, and build solid lasting friendships. The journey through childhood is an awe-inspiring time, which the staff of St. John's is privileged to share with you and your young ones.



Curriculum

The following materials are currently in use, supplemented by the individual teachers as they adapt programs to meet student needs:

Reading & Language:

K - 6th 2003 Harcourt Trophies Reading and Language Arts Program, a comprehensive reading, spelling, grammar and writing program. It is based on solid research and contains a balanced reading program.

Science:

K – 6th Harcourt Science, an integrated science program covering earth, physical and life sciences. Both textbooks and hands-on investigations are used to teach scientific inquiry skills.

Math:

K - 6th Saxon, a complete mathematics program using incremental development and continual review. Manipulatives and real-life problems are included.

Social Studies:

1st - 6th Houghton Mifflin, a history-based approach, focusing on critical thinking with literature selections in each unit.

Physical Education:

1st – 6th The goal is to help each child achieve optimum growth and development. Emphasis is placed on skill building, participation and sportsmanship. Activities are planned according to age and developmental stage. Grading is based on evaluation of basic skills, participation level, effort, and sportsmanship. P.E. classes are *generally* held outdoors year round; appropriate clothing and footwear are required to participate.

Art & Music:

Art and music are sometimes offered as separate classes, but may be integrated into the core curriculum at the discretion of the teacher.