

# **ST. MARK CHRISTIAN ACADEMY**



**“Believe. Achieve. Succeed.”**

## **PARENT/STUDENT POLICY HANDBOOK**

**Handbook Effective July 2021**  
(Updated July 1st, 2024)

**Mrs. Janette Caulfield, Principal**  
**Father Mark Hanna, Pastor**

**80 David Street**  
**South River, New Jersey 08882**

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**Mission Statement:**

*At St. Mark Christian Academy, we strive to provide an innovative and Christ-centered, nurturing environment, which encourages curiosity and discovery and inspires all to reach their highest aspirations to become future leaders and Ambassadors for Christ.*

**Our Goals:**

***At SMCA***

1. We encourage students to develop creative and critical thinking skills in academic subjects using the Bible as their standard of faith.
2. We work together as a community, to assist families in preparing their children for future education.
3. We recognize and develop the individual personality, intellectual abilities, and unique gifts and talents of each student.
4. We help each student to reach his or her full academic potential.
5. We help each student gain a command of the fundamental processes used in communicating and dealing with others through reading, writing, speaking, listening, mathematics, and character building.

**Administration**

Principal	Mrs. Janette Caulfield
Assistant to the Principal	Mrs. Laura Knaster
Pastor	Father Mark Hanna

**Departments**

Before Care Supervisor	Mrs Mary Boulos
Food Services Supervisor	Mrs.Mary Boulos
Parent/School Association	Mrs.Nicole Ojeil
School Maintenance	
Nursing Department	
School Uniforms	French Toast Inc.

**Board Members**

Father Mark Hanna	Pastor
Jimmy Gandour	Financial/Treasurer
Joy Demetrious	Curriculum Committee
Sandra Girgis	Curriculum Committee
Andrew Andrawis	Technology

**School Hours**

Main Office 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Arrival Time 8: 15 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.  
Pre-K3 to 4th 8:30 a.m. - 2:50 p.m.

Early Dismissal Days 8:30 a.m.- 12:50 p.m.  
Delayed Opening Inclement Weather 10:30 a.m.- 2:50 p.m.

Before Care Hours 7:00 a.m.- 8:15 a.m.  
After Care Hours 3:00 p.m.- 6:00 p.m.

**Contact Information**

St. Mark Christian Academy  
80 David Street  
South River, NJ 08882  
Phone: 732-743-9670

**Website:**

stmarkacademy.com

**Non-Discrimination Policy** - St. Mark Christian Academy admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the School. St. Mark Christian Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

**Inclusion Policy** - As a Christian school community, we view each child individually, and as disciples of Jesus are called to create an environment where every child is provided with whatever he or she needs to learn. We strive to serve all our students by using available service plans, communicating with parents, and participating in Child Study Team meetings whenever possible. We aspire to support the professional recommendations of learning consultants and to encourage students to participate in the services to which they are entitled to the best of our abilities.

**AGE REQUIREMENTS KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS** - Children must be turning 5 years old by October 31st. This is a New Jersey state-mandated requirement for Kindergarten.

**PRE-K 4-YEAR OLD STUDENTS** - Children must be turning 4 years old by October 31st.

**PRE-K 3-YEAR OLD STUDENTS** - Must be 3 years old by the start of school and fully toilet trained.

**REQUIRED DOCUMENTS AND FEES**

1. **Birth Certificate:** Please submit a copy of the original Birth Certificate. The original birth certificate is for verification of age, and the school has the right to ask to see the original as well as request the copy for our files.
2. **Immunization Form Requirements:** A physician-signed immunization history is required for all new students. Please note that the influenza vaccine is a requirement for all children between six and fifty-nine months of age attending preschool. Each child must receive at least one dose of the vaccine between September 1st and December 31st of each year (one dose annually required). St. Mark Coptic Christian Academy follows all state-mandated vaccine requirements.
3. **Bus Form (B6T) and Proof of Residency** (if required)
4. **Non-Public Use of Textbooks Form**
5. **Textbook Form**
6. **Nursing Services Form**
7. **Medication Form**
8. **Before/AfterCare Registration (if applicable)**
9. **Registration Fee:** \$400 per family for 2024-2025 school year.

### **TRANSFER STUDENTS**

In addition to all of the above items, a transfer notification, a most recent report card, and standardized test scores are to be submitted upon application. All transfer student applications will be considered on a per case basis. If a student has an IEP from a former school, it is the parent's responsibility to bring a copy at the time of registration. A new 407-1 form must be filled out and signed in order for the student to receive services from Middlesex County Educational Services.

### **RE-REGISTRATION FOR RETURNING STUDENTS**

All returning families will be automatically re-registered for the new school year on January 31; unless written notice is received by January 15 that the family will not be returning. The \$400 Registration Fee is paid in two installments of \$200 each in the months of February and March. After February, the \$400 must be paid in full.

\*All Registration Fees are non-refundable.

### **ACADEMICS**

#### **Curriculum**

St. Mark Christian Academy prides itself on setting rigorous academic standards for each child. With the help of our faculty, staff, and community, our curriculum is designed to develop the emotional, spiritual, social, and academic needs of each of our students. We believe that all children need to explore and discover their natural God-given talents.

Our curriculum meets all NJ State standards with Christian values woven into lessons.

**PreK 3 and 4 - Language Arts:** which includes phonemic awareness and letter recognition, handwriting, sight words, early reading comprehension through retelling. **Mathematics,** such as number recognition, early addition using manipulatives, **science/stem activities,** music and movement, art, and dramatic play, religious studies.

**Kindergarten and up** - Reading/Language Arts which includes literacy, phonics, spelling, grammar, writing, handwriting, and vocabulary. Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Religion, STEM, Music, and Physical Education.

### **Grading System**

❖ Grades: 1st and up - letter grade with the numerical equivalent of

- A+ 96-100
- A 90-95
- B+ 85-89
- B 80-84
- C+ 75-79
- C 70-77
- D 65-69
- F 0-64

### **Reporting Code for Kindergarten:**

- E = Excellent
- VG = Very Good
- S = Satisfactory
- NI = Needs Improvement
- U = Unsatisfactory
- NA = Not Assessed

Formal, scheduled conferencing is available for parent(s)/guardian(s) twice per year. Parents/Guardians may request another conference at any time.

Report Cards - The Report Card indicates the general progress of the student and is issued for grades K – and up on a quarterly basis

**HIGH HONORS** - A+'s in all subjects

**HONORS** - A's in all subjects

**MERIT** - Not less than a B in all subjects.

\*In addition, a teacher may recommend any student for Commendation in a particular subject for outstanding effort or achievement.

### **Homework Guidelines**

Homework assignments are part of the general schooling process. They provide an opportunity for the student to:

1. Reinforce a lesson or concept.
2. Perform on an individualized basis.
3. Establish and develop solid work habits.

### **It is recommended that parents:**

1. Encourage the student to put forth his/her best effort.
2. Help the student budget his/her time in relation to other student and/or family activities.
3. Be aware of any particular difficulties that should be brought to the attention of the teacher.

Parents will be notified if a child consistently fails to accomplish homework assignments.

## **ALLERGY POLICY**

Upon registration, any students that require a medical plan should meet with the nurse to discuss accommodations. A parent or guardian of a student with food allergies is responsible for providing all food for his/her own child. Sharing or trading food in the classroom or cafeteria will be prohibited. Proper hand cleaning techniques will be taught and encouraged before and after the handling/consumption of food.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Prompt, regular attendance is required by law and is absolutely essential to academic success. The parent/guardian is expected to foster these good habits in the student, both for the benefit of the student's current academic achievement and to encourage mature adult behavior in the future.

If a student is unable to attend school, parents/guardians must call the nurse's office or the main office before 9:30 A.M. The parent/guardian should give the student's name, homeroom teacher's name, and reason for absence. If a parent/guardian forgets to call, the school will call the home to confirm the student's absence. **A student who has been absent from school 2 days or longer, must, upon returning, present a written excuse, signed by the parent/guardian, stating the reason for the absence and the exact dates of the absence.** Failure to do so will result in a call home by the school nurse. If the child is diagnosed as having a contagious disease, it is to be reported immediately to the office and a doctor's note must be sent with the child upon returning to school. Children should not be sent to school if ill (fever of 100F, vomiting, diarrhea, unidentified rash) before they leave home. Children are only to be sent back to school 24 hours after the fever has broken and the symptoms have ceased (without the help of medication). Any student who leaves school before 11:00 A.M. for any reason and does not return, will be marked absent as a full-day absence. Frequent absences, including family vacations, for no apparent reason may result in the nurse calling the school administrator. These absences may cause a child to be retained or not graduate. Please be aware, **all absences are part of the student's permanent record regardless of the reason for the absence.**

### **Lateness**

Lateness is recorded in the office daily. Students who arrive after 8:25 A.M. are considered late. Students arriving after 8:25 am must report to the school office to get a late pass. Five latenesses in a marking period will result in detention (either before or after school).

### **Early dismissal**

Early dismissal from school for medical/personal appointments is discouraged, however, if there is reason a child must leave school early for an appointment or personal reasons, a note stating the time of dismissal should be presented to the homeroom teacher who will send it to the office. The student will meet the parent/guardian in the school office and record the time of the student's dismissal. If the dismissal is due to a medical appointment, a note from the doctor's office should be given to the homeroom teacher upon return.

### **Vacation**

Parents/Guardians are strongly discouraged from planning a vacation during the school. A prolonged absence from school is a hindrance to academic progress and will be viewed as an “UNEXCUSED” absence. **Teachers will not be expected to plan assignments for the duration of a vacation.** To keep a child academically challenged, reading is always a good alternative to homework. Students will be responsible for any work missed while away from school. Additionally, any student who is absent more than 18 days in a school year, may result in a student being retained and a call to DCF (Division of Children and Families) may be made since it is required by statute. Absences due to vacations are considered truanancies.

### **Illness or Injury**

Should a student be injured or become ill, the parents/guardians will be contacted. No student will be permitted to go home before this contact is made. If a parent/guardian cannot pick up an ill student within 1 hour of contact, or cannot be reached the emergency contact will be called by the school nurse. If parents/guardians cannot be reached and the illness or injury is serious enough to require medical attention, the principal or nurse will consult the student’s emergency care authorization form and arrange for the treatment authorized therein.

### **Delayed Openings/School Closures**

If the opening of school is delayed, the announcement will be made through the SmartSend through GRADELINK and also on the front page of the school website (stmarkacademy.com). School is usually delayed for two hours, and all students are to be in class by 10:45 A.M. Children who ride the bus should report to their bus stop two hours later than their usual pick-up time.

### **BEFORE / AFTERCARE PROGRAM**

Before / After Care program is offered by St. Mark Christian Academy. It is supervised by members of our faculty and members of our community. All have been completely background-checked and fingerprinted according to state guidelines.

- Our Before Care program begins at 7:00 am until 8:15 am when the regular drop-off begins.
- Aftercare begins at 3:00 p.m. and ends promptly at 6:00 p.m.

Fees are as follows (all fees must be paid by the 10th of the month):

Any parent who requires Beforecare /Aftercare must fill out the appropriate form, which can be found on our school website.

*\*After 6pm, a late fee will be charged to your account beginning at \$25. The After Care Program will operate each day from 3:00PM to 6:00PM. Consistent pickups past this time may result in dismissal from the program.*

**\*Before and After care students will be admitted based on a monthly registration. There will be no daily drop ins for the program.**

**Parents are encouraged to send in “snacks” or a meal for their child/children during aftercare.**



## **CALENDAR**

At the beginning of every month, a calendar of events will be accessible on our website [www.stmarkacademy.com](http://www.stmarkacademy.com). Please visit this site frequently, as it will inform you of early dismissals, meetings, holidays, report card distribution, etc. A yearly calendar of all school holidays will be posted at the beginning of the school year to help you in making plans for family vacations. Adjustments to this calendar are sometimes unavoidable. All changes will be made as early as possible.

## **CHILD ABUSE**

New Jersey law requires any person who has “reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse or acts of child abuse to report the same promptly to the Division of Youth and Family Services by telephone or otherwise.” See N.J.S.A. 9:6-9.10 et. Seq. Failure to report suspected child abuse is punishable as a disorderly persons’ offense. N.J.S.A. 9:68.14. Under law anyone who makes a report shall have immunity from any civil or criminal liability that he may have otherwise incurred. N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.13. The law imposes this obligation on every citizen without exception.

## **CLASSROOM PARTIES**

Teachers are responsible for all classroom parties. St. Mark Christian Academy recognizes the importance of one’s birthday, but for safety reasons, parents are never allowed to send in home made food to share with other students. If a child’s birthday falls on a weekend, holiday, or during vacation, he/she is free to choose a half-year date or another day of his/her choosing.

## **DISCIPLINE/CONSEQUENCES/ACCOUNTABILITY**

At SMCA we believe that discipline is necessary for the school to run smoothly. Discipline is a way for all students to learn what acceptable behaviors are through positive reinforcement and encouragement. Acceptable behaviors such as respecting oneself and others, proper manners, and treating others with kindness are part of our Christian doctrine. Self-discipline, self-regulation and successfully dealing with stress are important parts of social-emotional learning and an integral part of a holistic approach to educating the whole child. As our mission statement says, *“At St. Mark Christian Academy, we strive to provide an innovative and Christ centered, nurturing environment which encourages curiosity and discovery, and inspires all to reach their highest aspirations to become future leaders and Ambassadors for Christ.”*

The following system of consequences has been developed to modify, inhibit, or change behaviors, which may interfere with the well-being of each of our students and the learning process.

## **Warnings**

The following is a list of infractions that would require a teacher’s attention. If the infraction is severe, or requires multiple warnings, a (1) after school detention may be given (2) an email or phone call to a parent, (3) a visit to the principal’s office. A student disciplinary report would be completed, sent to the parent and included in the student’s physical records.

1. Purposeful disregard for property
2. Lateness to class
3. Failure to pick up after oneself in the classroom/cafeteria
4. Inappropriate language
5. Disrespectful towards staff

6. Inappropriate or unkind behavior toward another student
7. Being out of uniform. Students are expected to look clean and neat.
8. Disrupting class
9. Disorderly conduct (i.e. Liturgies, hallways, fire drills, crisis drills, class trips, school-yard, assemblies, etc.)
10. Taking pictures or video of any person without permission
11. Lateness to school (after 5 times late in a marking period, a detention will be given).

#### **Detention: Grades K through 4**

Serious or multiple infractions and/or disrespectful behavior to another student, faculty member or staff may result in lunch detention. The primary means of discipline is “time out” from playtime. The students will be given ample warning when rules are not being followed.

#### **Suspension**

Any student that has been given ample opportunities to correct their behavior, will receive a suspension from school and or school-related activities. This suspension will be given at the principal’s discretion.

#### **Grounds for Dismissal**

Serious offenses such as, but not limited to, theft, assault, cheating, continued violations of St. Mark Christian Academy policies, continued disrespect of school personnel, harassment, intimidation, bullying, setting off a fire alarm, or willful destruction of property may be grounds for dismissal. Excessive absences and frequent delinquent tuition payments may also result in dismissal from the school. The Administration reserves the right to review all incidents on a case-by-case basis. If a student is found in possession of a weapon, drugs or any drug paraphernalia; legal authorities will be called and the student will be subject to immediate expulsion.

#### **DRESS CODE/UNIFORM REQUIREMENTS AND PURCHASING INFORMATION**

St. Mark Christian Academy has a uniform policy for Kindergarten students and up. Pre-K3 & Pre-K4 uniforms are optional, but SMCA gym wear is mandatory for all students.

Uniform requirements can be found on [stmarkacademy.com](http://stmarkacademy.com) and are as follows:

\*Please note-uniform pants (khaki, shorts, skort, may be purchased through French Toast, Inc. The school code is polos, sweaters, vests, blazers, and fleeces must be ordered through the school website as they require our logo.

#### **GIRLS K-up (For more detailed information see the website under uniforms)**

- SMCA - khaki skirt or skort (winter uniform - may wear khaki pants).  
NO LEGGINGS or TIGHT FITTING PANTS.
- Polo - burgundy or white collar polo must be tucked in at all times.
- Shoes - Closed-toe black or brown shoes. No sneakers are allowed except for gym days.
- Belts - belts must be worn with slacks with belt loops.
- Socks & tights - white, black, or burgundy socks or tights must be worn at all times.
- Sweater/Vests/Sweatshirts - burgundy cardigan or vest. Sweaters may be a cardigan or pullover style.

- Please note- PreK students not in uniform must wear sneakers or closed-toe shoes. No sandals are allowed.

**BOYS (for more detailed information please see website under uniforms)**

- Polos- burgundy or white.
- Pants - khaki pants (winter) or shorts ( in summer) .
- Shoes - Closed-toe black or brown shoes must be worn at all times.
- Belts - Belts must be worn with slacks with belt loops
- Socks - white, black, or burgundy must be worn at all times.
- Sweaters/Vests/Sweatshirts - burgundy cardigan or vest. Sweaters may be a cardigan or pullover style.

**PLEASE NOTE:** All students should have their name on the inside of their clothing (especially outerwear), backpacks, and lunch bags. All students in grades Kindergarten and up must be in full adherence to the dress code upon entrance to school each day. The dress code is in effect from September through June.

**GYM UNIFORMS (BOYS AND GIRLS) -** Burgundy or gray sweatpants or shorts, SMCA t-shirt (burgundy, gray, or black), white or black sneakers

**SPIRIT WEAR (school spirit days, sports, etc.) -** SMCA burgundy fleece, St. Mark Lions Tee Shirts, etc. The gym uniform requirements can be found on the website.

The following will be considered violations of the uniform dress code:

- For all: no SMART PHONE watches allowed.
- For all: incorrect blouses, shirts, sweaters, sweatshirts/jackets, gym uniforms, pants, socks or shoes;
- Skirts are to be worn no shorter than two inches above the knee.
- Shirts and blouses are to be tucked in neatly.
- Hairstyles should be neat and age-appropriate, with traditional haircuts, natural color, and no extreme cuts.

**Dress Down** - Dress down days are sponsored by the school in order to support important school projects, functions, or charities. Regulations for dress down days are listed below. Rules specific to a particular dress down day (for example, school colors) will be communicated to the parents and students beforehand. The guidelines below pertain to all dress down days.

The following items are not permitted:

- Any article inconsistent with our Christian philosophy of education and values
- Any article which is excessively worn or soiled (No pants with holes or rips).
- Clothing which does not cover the body appropriately (Ex. tank tops, spaghetti straps, short tops, short shorts, low cut bottoms)
- Any item that may cause a safety risk to the student or his/her classmates
- Hats, caps or headgear

\*The administration reserves the right to make the final decisions regarding the appropriateness and acceptability of student dress in school.

## **DROP OFF/PICK UP PROCEDURES**

For safety and good order, drivers bringing students to school in the morning, or picking them up at dismissal, are to respect the following regulations:

- ALL student drop off and pick up for students K and up, will take place in the back parking lot of the school. There will be **NO** parental drop off or pick up in the front of the school.
- Students in PreK classes are to be dropped off / picked up at the front of the school. Park in the lot across from the main entrance and escort your child/ren to and from the entrance.
- Siblings of PreK students can enter and exit from the main entrance with their younger siblings.
- All parent drop off /pick up will take place by the back door in the parking lot closest to the cafeteria entrance. Only bussed students will be picked up and dropped off by the front entrance.
- There is NO PARKING or stopping on David Street for drop off/ pick up.
- Please note, if someone other than the authorized adult will be picking up a student, a written notice along with a photo identification permitting the release of the child/ren along with that person must be submitted to the School Office prior to dismissal.

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

Any child who is deemed a danger to themselves and/or another person within the school building must be seen by the child's primary care physician and a psychiatrist/psychologist. The school must receive a letter from the doctor stating the child does not pose a threat to themselves or others in order to return to school. Appropriate measures (911, call to parent/guardian, emergency contact) must be taken to keep all in the building safe and to mitigate the escalation of the event.

## **PARENT-TEACHER ORGANIZATION**

The Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO) is composed of all parents/guardians of the students of St. Mark Christian Academy. The faculty and administration are included in the membership.

The objectives of the PTO include:

- Creating better parental awareness.
- Serving as a vehicle of communication between faculty and parents.
- Assisting the school administration in attaining its goals through active parental involvement. All communication from the PTO must be addressed and approved by the principal.
- Fundraising to support the school. With this in mind, we are looking for parents who may serve as school volunteers for fundraising, athletics, special events planning, lunch aides, teacher aides, and substitute teachers, etc.

If interested, please visit our website [stmarkacademy.com](http://stmarkacademy.com) "Student/Parent Portal" and click on "Parent Student Organization" to complete a Volunteer Application.

## **SCHOOL REGULATIONS/FIRE/EMERGENCY DRILLS**

Fire/emergency drills will be conducted periodically as directed in the New Jersey regulations (18:114-106)

## **STANDARDIZED TESTING**

Two times per year, St. Mark Christian Academy will administer the NWEA *MAP TESTING* designed to assess student achievement in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, vocabulary, spelling, and other areas. The results are nationally norm-referenced, meaning that students' scores reflect their achievement in comparison to all students who took the test nationally. Students absent from school when standardized tests are scheduled will be tested within the time allowed. Standardized test results will be entered

on each student's permanent record card. A copy of the results will also be sent home for parent review.

## **TEXTBOOKS**

All textbooks are the property of St, Mark Christian Academy or the State of New Jersey. They are provided for student use at great expense. It is important to instill in the students a sense of responsibility in regard to the property of others. All textbooks and workbooks are to be kept clean, covered at all times, and handled carefully. If a book is lost, mutilated, or destroyed, the parents must assume the cost of the book.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

In order to comply with this policy and the specific guidelines in each school, the following procedures will be observed:

- Cell phones must be turned off while the students are in the building. Students are not to call, text message, email, or electronically communicate with others from their personal device, including parents, guardians, friends, and family, from the time they enter the school building at the start of the day until leaving the building when they are dismissed.

### School Issued Devices

All students in grades K and up will be issued a school-owned Chromebook or laptop for use during the current academic year. These school devices are only to be used for school-related assignments. They are not to be used for personal reasons, such as gaming or social media.

### **Internet Acceptable Use Policy**

The use of technology must be consistent with the philosophy and mission of the school. The school administration reserves the right to make determinations that particular uses are or are not consistent with the mission of the school. The school considers the information gathered from the Internet and obtained from all other software in the same manner as all other reference materials, in that such resources must enhance the learning environment.

Access to, and use of, the Internet and other computer-related technology, may not be obtained in a manner that:

- Intentionally interrupts network traffic
- Degrades or disrupts equipment
- Constitutes plagiarism
- Gains or seeks unauthorized access to the files of others or vandalizes the data of another person
- Forges communication or uses an account owned by others
- Invades the privacy of others

Written permission of the parent/guardian will be obtained in order for a student to gain access to school-provided technology and network. Students using the Internet are responsible for their behavior in accordance with the school's disciplinary policy.

## **Acceptable Use of Technology Policy**

The Acceptable Use Guidelines listed below outlines the behaviors that students are expected to follow when using technologies on school campus.

- St. Mark Christian Academy network is intended for educational purposes only.
- All activity over the network or using district technologies may be monitored and retained. Students are permitted to access only the school's network through school-issued Chromebooks/laptops, not private networks.
- Access to online content via the network may be restricted in accordance with our policies and federal regulations, such as the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)
- Students are expected to follow the same rules for good behavior and respectful conduct online as offline.
- Misuse of school resources can result in disciplinary action.
- St. Mark Christian Academy makes a reasonable effort to ensure students' safety and security online, but will not be held accountable for any harm or damages that result from use of school technologies.
- Students are expected to alert a teacher or staff member immediately of any concerns for safety or security.
- Students will only use appropriate educational applications on their device (i.e. not games and/or non-school related tasks and functions).
- Students are not permitted to use any electronic device to record audio, video, or take still pictures of any student or staff member without their permission.

All parents/guardians are to acknowledge the Technology Agreement and sign that they have read the policy.

## **VISITORS**

Every parent, volunteer, and/or visitor is required to sign in at the office and obtain a *Visitor* badge to wear during his/her stay. No one is permitted to go to a classroom and interrupt the teaching process for any purpose.