Middle School Things to Know

Holy Spirit’s middle school environment is intended to meet the needs of the adolescent in a caring, Christ-centered setting. Holy Spirit’s middle school provides positive social interaction with adults and peers in a structured environment with clear limits. Emphasis is on the acquisition of basic skills through academically challenging experiences; on the development of social and emotional growth through integrated curricular experiences; and on personal development through a Christian-based foundation, which permeates all experiences. Holy Spirit’s middle school is student-centered, provides structures and time in order to achieve success, and provides meaningful opportunities to grow and develop.

The purpose of Holy Spirit’s middle school is to recognize the developmental changes (intellectual, social, emotional, and moral) of the middle school adolescent, to establish a caring educational and social environment, to provide a strong core curriculum with specialized programs and opportunities for exploratory learning, and to involve students, parents, and the community in the support of the educational process.

(Amended, Spring 2000)

Middle School Advisory

We believe that an effective middle school experience requires meaningful connections between students and teachers. We believe that every student should be well known by at least one adult within their school environment.

Because of the complexity of the middle school system we have established an advisory program. Each middle school staff member is assigned a group of advisees with whom he/she meet every day. These advisory times provide an opportunity for advisors to check in with students individually and as a group to address a broad range of concerns (i.e. relationships, organizational skills, academic progress, etc). Advisory enables teachers to provide responsible adult guidance and support as middle school students undergo normal, yet often challenging, developmental changes that directly and indirectly affect learning.

While the advisor will have ongoing contact with the student’s parents, and while the advisor may be in the best position to address general questions or concerns, we expect individual teachers to contact parents about specific subject-area concerns. **We also expect parents to contact individual teachers directly if they have specific concerns or questions about a particular subject area.**

Course Summaries

One of the challenges of middle school is developing the organizational skills necessary to effectively handle multiple classes, teachers, and assignments. In an effort to assist this process, course summaries are reviewed with middle school students every two weeks. Course summaries outline general course content for all core subject areas, along with dates on which projects are due, tests are given, etc. These summaries are posted on Google docs.
Homework
Homework is a reality that students must meet squarely. Teachers are responsible for providing homework assignments that students can complete independently. Students should expect regular homework assignments totaling 1 to 1 ½ hours in length. We ask parents to work with their child to design a homework schedule that meets their family schedule.

Interdisciplinary Units
On a more formal basis, the middle school has developed several interdisciplinary units that include all students and all subject areas. The topics of these units have included justice and freedom, creativity, health, waste management, other cultures, a performing arts experience, and the neighborhoods of the Twin Cities. One time a year, students are moved out of their usual schedule for several days to explore topics such as these in depth. They are able to learn in a variety of settings and groupings, using many different skills and resources, and share their learning with the school community.

Conferences and Progress Reports
Middle school conferences are held two times each year. Conferences are held on two evenings midway through the first and second trimesters. Time is available for meetings with advisors as well as other middle school teachers. Parents may choose to meet with as many of their child’s teachers as they wish. **In preparation for conferences, parents are asked to check their child’s academic progress (grades) on Cornerstone.**

Parents are asked to monitor student grades on an on-going basis via Cornerstone. Any time issues or concerns arise, parents should contact their child’s subject-area teacher.

Grading
Student performance is measured individually. We expect each student to achieve the course objectives. Students achieving below 70% on an assessment will have one opportunity for a re-take/re-do for that assessment. The maximum score a student can achieve on a re-take is 70%. Re-done tests and assignments must be completed within 2 weeks of the original due date. Sixth and seventh grade students may retake tests throughout the entire year. Eighth grade students may retake tests during the first trimester only.

Turning in assignments late is discouraged. Points are deducted for late assignments, and only accepted up to two weeks after the due date (unless specified by the teacher).

Holy Spirit issues **report cards** at the end of each trimester. **Parents can access their child’s report card through their Cornerstone account.** (If you have questions about Cornerstone or are having difficulty accessing your account, please contact the school office). The following grading rubric is used for: Religion, Math, Social Studies, Science & Language Arts.

\[ A = 90\% - 100\% \]
B = 80% - 89%
C = 70% - 79%
D = 60% - 69%
F = 0 - 59%

Students also receive a ranking on specialty classes that include: Art, Music, Band/Block, and Physical Education.

3 = exceeds expectations
2 = meets expectations
1 = does not meet expectations

Report cards also include information on key qualities referred to as successful learning behaviors. These behaviors refer to qualities such as effort, use of time, respect, attention to detail, etc. Middle school teachers collaborate in the assessment of these skills using the following rubric.

4 = consistently
3 = frequently
2 = sometimes
1 = rarely

Middle school students must achieve a cumulative grade of 60% or better before the middle of the third trimester to pass a course. Students who achieve below a 60% cumulative grade in any core subject will be required to attend summer school or an acceptable tutoring alternative and must provide verification that he or she has successfully completed this summer work in order to move on to the next grade level.

Students who achieve below a 60% cumulative grade average in three or more core subjects (Religion, Math, Science, Language Arts, Social Studies) will not be passed into the next grade at Holy Spirit.

Grades On-line

Parents can access their child’s grades through Cornerstone. Grades are updated regularly. Parents who have concerns about their child’s grades are asked to contact the sub-area teacher.

Academic Recovery Lab

Wednesdays and Thursdays the Academic Recovery Lab (ARL) is available to students from 2:50 – 3:30 p.m. This lab is designed to assist students who have missed classes due to illness; have missing assignments; or students who have are working on group projects. Students can choose to attend ARL or teachers may assign students to ARL. Sessions start promptly at 2:50 p.m.
**Academic Integrity Policy**

Representing someone else’s work as your own is dishonest and against the Holy Spirit Code of Conduct. Cheating compromises the integrity of students and diminishes what we stand for as a school community. We believe that the success of students is dependent on their own efforts. Students are expected to complete all work with honesty and integrity.

Cheating is defined as representing someone else’s work as your own or allowing someone to represent your work as his or her own. In a broad sense, cheating includes, but is in no way limited to:

- Copying another’s work or allowing someone to copy your work
- Looking at another’s assessment or letting another student look at your assessment
- Using any secretive methods of giving answers
- Using any electronic device to communicate information about an assessment
- Copying information from a source that is not properly attributed
- Working with others on an assignment that was meant to be done individually

When a student is not sure what would be considered cheating for a particular assignment, she or he is responsible for requesting clarification from the teacher. Individual teachers have, or will provide, guidelines as to what is or is not cheating within their course or related to specific assignments.

**Consequences**

Students who have been discovered cheating will receive a “0” for the work. The teacher will also notify the student’s parent(s). It is left to the discretion of the individual teacher as to whether the student may complete any related work to supplement his or her grade. In addition, the following procedure will be followed:

- The teacher involved will check the student’s file for previous infractions.
- The teacher will place written documentation of the incident in the student’s school file.
- If previous infractions are noted in the file, the teacher will report the presence of a pattern to the principal.
- The principal will contact the parent(s), and any additional consequences will be determined.
- At the end of eighth grade, a single infraction documentation will be removed from the student’s file.
- More than one documented infraction will remain part of the student’s permanent record.

**High School Applications**

During the first trimester, seventh and eighth grade students and parents will receive information about the process of applying to high school. Some schools require letters of recommendation from teachers. Students and parents must provide adequate notice to teachers regarding these letters of recommendation to ensure that a thoughtful and thorough recommendation may be provided.
Guidance and Discipline

Detention and Service Hours
When students receive three (3) tickets for unacceptable behavior within a 30-day period, they serve a detention. Detention is held after school until 4:00 p.m.

Physical Aggression
Physical aggression is not allowed. Physical aggression includes but is not limited to pushing, shoving, kicking, etc. regardless of whether the student identifies the behavior as intentional or “just kidding”. When these behaviors are seen the student will:

1. Be removed from the population for 3 class periods
2. Call their parent to report the incident
3. Complete a “Stop and Think” form
4. Talk with an available adult

Parent will review the “Stop and Think” form, sign it and return it to the student’s advisor.

Please see Holy Spirit’s Guidance and Discipline Policy for additional information.

Middle School Day-to-Day Items

Middle School Snack
Students are encouraged to bring a mid-morning snack to school. Middle school students eat their snack at a designated time. We encourage nutritious snacks. Juice boxes are permitted, however, carbonated sodas are not.

Care of Locker
Students are assigned lockers at the beginning of each school year. Students are not to damage the locker in any way (i.e. marking, scratching, etc.). The contents of lockers are the property of the user. Students taking items from others’ lockers, damaging materials, etc. will be responsible for repair/replacement, along with disciplinary action.

Care of Text Books
Textbooks are loaned to students to use throughout the year. Books must be covered at all times. While there is normal wear and tear that occurs, any significant damage sustained will be the responsibility of the student. Students who have damaged their textbooks are charged the replacement cost.

School Tools
In order for students to perform to the best of their ability, it is very important that each one has the proper “school tools” accessible at all times. Each spring, a list of required supplies will go home to inform students and families what will be needed for the following year. With the exception of the calculator needed for math class, most of these supplies are consumable, so it is important to make sure they are kept current throughout the year. Holy Spirit also provides an assignment notebook which is essential to organizing school work.
Special Middle School Activities

Geography Bee (Grades 6 – 8)
Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students are given the opportunity to participate in the annual Geography Bee, sponsored by the National Geographic Society. The bee challenges students with written and oral competition.

Quiz Bowl (Grade 8)
Several eighth grade students are given the opportunity to participate in this academic competition for area Catholic grade schools. A good general knowledge in a variety of topics and quick thinking are required.

Student Leadership (Grade 8)
Eighth grade students have an opportunity to develop leadership skills and initiate activities that benefit the school and the larger community. Faculty moderators guide the group in its meetings and activities.

Fall & Spring Retreat (Grades 6 – 8)
Because we value a sense of community, the middle school begins and ends each year with a retreat day.

Middle School Dances (Grades 6 – 8)
Typically, two middle school dances are scheduled throughout the school year. Dances are held in Howley Hall (lower level of the church) on Friday evenings from 7:00 – 10:00 p.m. Students from other area Catholic schools are invited to attend. Holy Spirit students must have signed parental permission to attend. Dances are supervised by faculty members and parents.

Middle School Athletics

Policies and Guidelines

Extracurricular Team Sports Policy

• Student athletes may not participate in more than one sport in a season except for swimming and track, which overlap other seasons.
• Student eligibility for teams is determined to be the following:
  1) Student athletes in grades 6, 7, and 8 are eligible for A teams.
  2) Student athletes in grades 6 and 7 are eligible for B teams.
  3) Student athletes in grade 6 are eligible for C teams.
  4) Student athletes in grade 5 are eligible for teams when space is available and numbers are required.
• Proof of an athletic physical must be on file in the school office.
• Any team member who exhibits improper behavior while representing Holy Spirit may be suspended or dismissed from the team.
• Any team member using or possessing tobacco, alcohol, or mood altering drugs is liable for suspension from the team.  
*Holy Spirit, Revised Spring 1995*

**Cooperative Program Policy**
Holy Spirit will accept neighboring Catholic school athletes if their school does not have a team for a particular sport. If an athlete has played on a Holy Spirit team, the athlete will be allowed to try out for the next season. In turn, if Holy Spirit does not have a team for a particular sport, the athlete is welcome to try out for a neighboring Catholic school’s team, if positions are available.  
*Holy Spirit, Adopted Spring 1993*

**Purpose**
The primary objective of the Holy Spirit Team Sports Program is an extracurricular athletic program operated through the Catholic Athletic Association (CAA). This program offers students with athletic ability opportunities to participate in team sports and related activities. These sports are soccer, basketball, swimming, and track for boys and girls; baseball for boys; and volleyball and softball for girls.

**Expectations of Student Athletes**
Participation in athletics at Holy Spirit requires the following rules and regulations to be met by each student participating in the sports program.

**Academics**
We expect 6th and 7th grade students participating in athletics to put forth effort, show cooperation, and make satisfactory progress toward meeting the school’s academic standards. To be eligible for athletics, eighth graders must have 60% or better in all subjects with no more than two Ds.  
Holy Spirit reserves the right to withhold a student from athletics and/or other extra-curricular activities due to academic performance, effort, or cooperation.

**Positive Christian Attitude**
Team members will treat everyone connected with an athletic event with dignity and respect, including the opposing team, officials, and fellow team members.

**Chemical Abuse**
It is shown that the use of mood altering chemicals is a significant health problem for many adolescents, resulting in negative effects in behavior and personal development. Therefore, any use of such chemicals will result in the loss of eligibility for the remainder of the season and may result in further suspension from the athletic program.

**Abusive Language**
At no time will abusive language by a member of Holy Spirit Sports teams be accepted.

**Team Commitment**
Participation in a Holy Spirit team is a commitment to the school and the team. Participation in
other activities should not conflict with scheduled games or practices. While certain conflicts, both personal and academic, may occur during the season, it is imperative that the student athlete show consideration for the coach and inform him or her of such conflicts as early as possible. If a student athlete does not inform his or her coach personally of an absence, it will be considered unexcused.

**Uniform**

The student athlete is responsible for the uniform issued to him or her.

- It should be kept clean.
- It is to be worn **ONLY at Holy Spirit games**.
- If the student athlete should lose it, he or she must pay for it.
- It should be washed before returning it at the end of the season.
- It is to be turned in on the day announced by the coach or school.

**Transportation**

It is the student athlete’s responsibility to help arrange rides to and from each game. These arrangements must be made prior to the day of the game, as phone calls are not allowed for this purpose in the school office.

**Fee-Insurance Forms and Responsibility Form**

Uniforms will be issued when the responsibility form, insurance waiver, and fee have been received. A separate uniform deposit check will be required. This check will be returned when the uniform is returned in good condition. Please make check payable to “Holy Spirit Athletics.” The insurance waiver and responsibility forms must be submitted with the fee on the day announced by the coach or school. All student athletes must have a current health exam form on file to participate in athletics. If there are any questions about the sports program, please contact the coach, and he or she will contact the athletic director, if needed.

**Fees**

No student athlete will be denied the opportunity to participate on a team because of the inability to pay fees. If you have a need for assistance, contact the athletic director. All information is confidential.

**Prayer and Sacrament**

**Communal Prayer**

Periodically during the year, particularly during Advent and Lent, the middle school gathers together for prayer. Whether we meet in the middle school hallway or gather in the church, we believe that the school that prays together stays together.

**Confirmation**

Students can receive immediate preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation during their eighth grade year. In addition to classroom instruction, preparation includes retreat days, service projects, and intergenerational sessions.
Penance

Students in grades 2 – 8 are invited to participate in the sacrament of Penance during the Advent and Lenten Seasons. The sacrament of Penance is scheduled during the school day. Teachers assist in the preparation of students.