



St. Joseph Faith Formation  
Catechist & Hall Monitor Handbook  
2024-2025

## **GUIDELINES FOR CATECHISTS & HALL MONITORS**

### **ARRIVAL**

**The Hall Monitor(s)** will need to arrive at 5:45 pm for prayer in the Library. Report to gym at 6:00 pm to open doors. Class begins at 6:15pm. Parents will drop off their student at the lower level, gymnasium entrance. Hall Monitor will escort children to their classroom. Older siblings may escort younger siblings.

**Catechists** are asked to arrive at 5:45 pm for prayer in the Library. Pick up your binder for attendance and any instructional materials. Report to your class at 6:00pm. Look over your classroom before you begin. Please report any issues or needs to Director of Faith Formation/Parish Evangelist.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Catechists take attendance at beginning of class. Mark the attendance sheet in your folder using "P" for present, "A" for absent, and "T" for tardy and then put sheet in your folder. Please bring folders to library after class where we can discuss any problems.

### **Attendance Policy**

Faith formation students shall attend all classes to receive the maximum benefit from the program. Excessive absenteeism will result in a conference with the Director of Faith Formation, the Pastor, and possible delay of the conferral of the Sacraments.

### **CANCELLATION OF CLASSES**

If St. Joseph School is dismissed early due to weather OR have classes cancelled for the day, then St. Joseph Faith Formation classes will automatically be cancelled as well.

- Check the parish website at [www.stjosephcatholicdsm.org](http://www.stjosephcatholicdsm.org).
- You may receive an email updating you of the cancelations.
- Catechists may assist in contacting the parents of their students.

### **CLEANING**

Class ends at 7:30 pm. Students need to clean their desks and chairs with disinfecting cleansers. Catechists will wipe down other high touch/horizontal surfaces.

### **DISMISSAL**

Parents will pick up their children at the gym. The Hall Monitor will dismiss each class in an orderly fashion. They will ask the student their name and ensure that they are picked up by the authorized family member.

### **PICKING UP A CHILD EARLY**

Parents must notify the Faith Formation office if they are picking up a child early from class. Catechists will be notified if the student has permission to leave early.

### **AT-HOME LEARNING**

Special circumstances, i.e. adaptive learning may merit at-home learning, online learning or other distance learning options. The Faith Formation Director/Parish Evangelist will notify catechists about the details regarding families choosing this option.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

Catechists are encouraged to write an introductory letter to the students' parents early in the year and provide a weekly update as well. This can be done by e-mail. Cooperation with parents involves staying in touch with what's happening in the classroom.

## **SUBSTITUTE CATECHISTS**

The Faith Formation office will arrange for substitutes if you are unable to teach. Please call David Ortega at the office at 515-402-4733 or email [dortega@stjosephcatholicdsm.org](mailto:dortega@stjosephcatholicdsm.org) as soon as possible if you are unable to teach.

## **ILLNESS/INJURY**

If a child becomes ill or is injured during class, please have him/her come to the nearest hall monitor. Parents will be contacted if necessary. In the event of blood and/or other bodily fluids, please use disposable gloves and avoid contact. A first aid kit is located in each of the classroom cabinets. These materials will need special disposal—please contact the director. If the injury or illness is serious call 911.

## **BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS**

Consider blood and certain body fluids as infectious. Reasonable precautions (disposable gloves) can help limit exposure to these potentially infectious materials. Each room has a Universal Precautions kit containing gloves, Kleenex, Band-Aids and a plastic bag. Place all soiled items in the plastic bag and notify the faith formation director/Parish Evangelist for disposal.

## **CLASSROOM/FACILITY USE**

- Assign the students to a chair/desk. A seating chart is recommended.
- Rearrange the room if needed for your class but return everything to its proper order at the end of class.
- Supplies are kept in each classroom for faith formation. (Markers, pens/pencils, crayons, and prayer supplies). Additional supplies are located in the work closet.
- Each class has their own cabinet for books and supplies.
- Please erase boards at the end of class. Close windows, and turn off lights and AC if necessary. Leave the room in better shape than you found it.
- No food or drink is allowed.

## **SUPERVISION**

Never leave the class unattended! Please send a student to ask the hall monitor if you need additional supplies or help during class. You are responsible for the students during faith formation class time. Students should sit on chairs or the floor, not on tables or countertops. Students are not to play with or remove any items in the desks, lockers, or teacher's desks in the classrooms.

## **FOOD/TREATS**

No food is allowed on premises. This includes candy, gum and pop. Ask the student to dispose of it before class.

## **ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Cell phones may be brought, but may be turned in to a collective location at the beginning of class, at the discretion of the catechist. They are not to be used during class time unless directed by the catechist. St. Joseph faith formation leadership is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

### **FOOD ALLERGIES**

If food is allowed in the future, please do not bring peanut butter (candy, crackers, craft clay) into the building. There are children who are severely allergic to peanut butter in the program and in the day school.

### **FIELD TRIPS/GUEST SPEAKERS**

Faith Formation Director/Parish Evangelist will notify volunteers when any field trips or special guest speakers are scheduled.

### **COPIES**

If you need to make copies, you are welcome to use the copy machine in the school work room. A hall monitor can make copies and bring them to your room upon request.

**SUPPLIES** are located in each classroom as well as in the work closet. You may call or email ahead and arrange for supplies to be ready for you. If you need additional supplies not found in the Faith Formation closet, contact the director before class to arrange.

### **SHARING FACILITY**

The faith formation program shares space in the school. Respect and cooperation are vital to help ensure a good relationship. Encourage the children to be respectful of the desks/tables, lockers, teacher's desk and other items in the room. Have them tidy the area before they leave. You may want to leave a note for the day school teacher who shares your room to introduce yourself and ask if there are any special considerations/instructions for the room.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality is generally held to mean that one individual or individuals will keep private information that has been given to them and they will not reveal it. Catechists must ensure that opinions and facts concerning students are stated only to those having a legitimate right to know. Verbal comments to parents should be about the parents' own children. If a catechist learns that a student intends to harm themselves or others, the catechist **must** reveal that information to the Director of Faith Formation/Parish Evangelist as soon as possible, even if a promise of confidentiality has been given. If a student (intentionally or not) leads you to believe there may be abuse at home, please place a note with comment and date in your catechist binder and bring it to the director as soon as possible.

### **VOLUNTEER SCREENING**

All volunteers including catechists and assistants who have regular contact with children must complete the Protecting God's Children program known as Virtus. It requires a background check and watching a training video. Each catechist shall abide by the Code of Conduct. See more information in the POLICIES section below.

### **BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES**

1. Everyone is to be treated courteously and with respect. This includes other children, catechists, assistants, volunteers, staff and parents.
2. Students will come to class prepared to learn and willing to participate in activities in class. No student will be allowed to interfere with the learning and participation of other students.
3. No loud talking, yelling or running in the building.
4. No gum chewing or candy allowed in the building.
5. Respect the authority of the catechists and staff.
6. Respect all property and share in the care of your classroom.
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# POLICIES

## CHILD ABUSE: PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN

**If you suspect any form of child abuse, notify the Director of Faith Formation/Parish Evangelist or Pastor immediately. If the child is in imminent danger, call 911.**

Each catechist is to have a background check and attend an online [VIRTUS](#) training session. The Protecting God's Children program is designed to protect children from child sexual abuse. The education component helps prevent child sexual abuse by first making every adult employee and volunteer aware of the issues surrounding child sexual abuse. This includes awareness of the many ways that sexual abuse harms its victims, their families, the parish, and the community. The awareness session empowers each person with five steps to help prevent child sexual abuse and helps adults learn to recognize the warning signs of abuse and shows them the appropriate way to respond to suspicious behavior.

## DISCIPLINE POLICY

Discipline is defined as the training that develops self-control, character, and orderly conduct, as well as acceptance of or submission to authority and control. The St. Joseph School Leadership and Parish Leadership have the authority and responsibility to set discipline codes and maintain good order in the classrooms and church. The children in the faith formation program are entitled to learn and develop in a setting which promotes respect for self, others, and property. Catechists, parents and students are charged with cooperating to develop mature, healthy and responsible individuals capable of self-control. It is essential that all students give the catechists their full cooperation.

To maintain an environment of Christian education and learning, we have set guidelines which make it possible to have a valuable and vital program. Our philosophy is one of respect for one another and ourselves. Every child has the right to learn and each catechist has the right to teach in a respectful atmosphere.

### Parents

1. Parents are asked to ensure that children attend classes regularly and on time.
2. They are to communicate any special needs or circumstances to the Director of Faith Formation.
3. Parents are asked to be an active part of their child's learning and be involved with special activities or service projects.

### Students

1. Behave in a Christian manner at all times, showing respect and being cooperative with adults and other students.
2. Actively participate in classroom activities and discussions.
3. Attend class regularly and complete any assignments or homework.
4. Respect the property of others, especially the desks shared with the students of St. Joseph School during the day.
5. Demonstrate respect for the catechists who volunteer to share their faith and lead each session. (e.g. Back talk and verbal or non-verbal interruptions are not acceptable.)



## **PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH DISCIPLINE ISSUES**

The catechist will deal promptly with any inappropriate behavior. If the student chooses to continue the inappropriate behavior after sufficient warning, the following procedure will be implemented:

**1ST OFFENSE** • The student will be removed from the classroom and given a choice to either return to class and cooperate or go to the Faith Formation office. A discipline report will be filed and parents will be contacted.

**2ND OFFENSE** • Recurrent misbehavior will result in a second discipline report being filed and a conference with the parents, the Faith Formation Director and/or the Pastor will be held prior to the child returning to Faith Formation Activities.

**3RD AND FINAL OFFENSE** • In the case of repeated failure to behave and/or gross violations of the discipline policy (including but not limited to: fighting, danger to others, repeated insubordination), the student may be suspended from the faith formation program. Parents will be given materials and assume the responsibility for instructing their child for the remainder of the year. Re-admission to the faith formation program will NOT take place until the Director and the Pastor have met with the parents and child and are satisfied that the behavior problem is under control.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY**

It shall be the policy of the Diocesan Board of Education that all educational programs maintain a learning and working environment free from sexual harassment.

### **PROHIBITED ACTS**

Sexual harassment is strictly forbidden in diocesan educational programs. For the purposes of this policy, sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. Submission to such conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of an individual's employment or status in a class, program, or activity;
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for an employment or educational decision affecting an individual; or
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or educational performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment for work or learning.

### **EXAMPLES OF HARASSMENT**

Sexual harassment encompasses any sexual attention that is unwanted. Examples of the verbal or physical conduct prohibited include, but are not limited to:

1. Physical assault;
2. Direct or implied threats that submission to sexual advances will be a condition of employment, work status, promotion, education, grades or letters of recommendation;
3. Direct propositions of a sexual nature;

4. Subtle pressure for sexual activity, an element of which may be conduct such as repeated and unwanted gestures;
5. A pattern of conduct (not legitimately related to the subject matter of a course if one is involved) intended to discomfort or humiliate, and/or that includes one or more of the following: (1) comments of a sexual nature; or (2) sexually explicit statements, questions, jokes or anecdotes;
6. A pattern of conduct that would discomfort and/or humiliate a reasonable person at whom the conduct was directed that includes one or more of the following: (1) unnecessary touching, patting, hugging, or brushing against a person's body; (2) remarks of a sexual nature about a person's clothing or body; or (3) remarks about sexual activity or speculations about previous sexual experience.

#### ISOLATED AND INADVERTENT OFFENSES

- (a) Staff and students, who, without establishing a pattern of doing so, engage in isolated conduct of the kind described above or who exhibit a pattern of engaging in such conduct but fail to realize that their actions discomfort and/or humiliate demonstrate insensitivity that necessitates remedial measures. When program administrators become aware that such activities are occurring in their areas, they should discuss such conduct with those involved and, where appropriate, recommend that person take an educational program designed to develop understanding of the harm being done.
- (b) If, after participating in the educational program or failing to participate after being recommended to do so, a person continues to engage in the conduct described above, he/she will be deemed to have engaged in a pattern of conduct intended to discomfort or humiliate the one at whom the actions or statements are directed.

### **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE GUIDELINES**

It shall be the policy of St. Joseph School Leadership that as a Catholic faith community, open communication between parents, students, teachers, staff and administrators is encouraged in all programs under the Board, including day school, preschool, faith formation and youth ministry. It is the intent of the St. Joseph Board of Education that all such interaction shall be conducted in a respectful Christian manner, as we believe Christ has taught us "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace."<sup>1</sup> In all such interactions, all parties involved shall strive to "be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven [us] in Christ."<sup>2</sup> We believe that in following Christ's example, we can create an environment in all our education programs that allows our children the best opportunity to grow and achieve academic, spiritual and social success.

### **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

Each classroom has emergency procedures inside the red binder labeled "Emergency Response and Crisis Management". Please review the emergency procedures in your

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classroom prior to the first class. Each room has fire and tornado evacuation procedures to follow in case of an emergency. Take your class list with you when you leave the room and follow the directions posted in your room.

## **FIRE**

Maps are posted in each classroom showing the exit routes. Students should line up single file quickly and quietly. There should be no talking. Close the classroom door after the last student leaves. All students are to assemble in the rear parking lot. Catechists should call roll from their class list. All unexpected absences should be reported to the director or coordinator immediately. Catechists should listen for the “all clear” signal to return to class.

## **TORNADO**

Maps are posted in each classroom showing where to take shelter: Students should line up single file quickly and quietly. There should be no talking. Students should bring a book to place over their heads. Students should face the wall and kneel down with their head low. They should place the book over their head. If they do not have a book, they should cover their heads with their arms and hands. Catechists should call roll from their class list. All unexpected absences should be reported to the director or coordinator immediately. Catechists should listen for the “all clear” signal.

## **STRANGERS IN THE BUILDING**

No strangers are allowed into the building. Kindly ask them to leave.

## **LOCKDOWN PROCEDURE**

If possible a clear announcement declaring a lockdown will be made. All catechists and students remain in their rooms out of the sight of the door with lights out and quiet. Take attendance and do not leave the room until the “all clear” is given.

## **UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS**

- All bodily fluids of all persons should be considered to potentially contain infectious agents (germs).
- When possible, direct contact with body fluids should be avoided. Disposable gloves are available for emergency use as necessary.
- Vigorous hand washing should always be a first priority whenever one comes in contact with any bodily fluid.
- Disposable gloves, plastic bags and 1:10 solutions of Clorox or any other accepted disinfectant needs to be used for protection and cleanup in all situations.
- If items to be disposed are materials with body fluids on them, these items will be placed in a designated red plastic container and securely tied prior to disposal.

## **SUPPORT FOR CHURCH TEACHINGS POLICY**

It shall be the policy of the Diocesan Board of Education that all employees/volunteers of the faith formation, school and youth ministry programs of the Diocese of Des Moines are expected to support the mission of the program in which they are involved and the teachings of the Catholic Church.



Employees/volunteers shall be either Catholics in good standing with the Church or others who have a positive attitude toward the Catholic faith and a commitment to Christian living. Teachers of religion in Catholic schools and catechists in parish catechetical programs are to be fully initiated Catholics in good standing with the Church.

Program officials cannot and should not concern themselves with the private lives of employees/volunteers unless their public behavior and/or teaching become a source of scandal to the Catholic faith (Cf: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 2284-2287). If concern of this nature should arise, the program administrator should consult the proper diocesan official for the purposes of raising awareness and seeking information.

Upon confirmation that an employee/volunteer of the education/formation programs for youth demonstrates behavior that is inconsistent with Church teachings, the person may no longer be qualified to serve in a given situation for a certain time.

This expectation of all employees/volunteers should be placed with other expectations in employee/volunteer documents.

## **Contact Information**

David Ortega (parish office): 515-402-4733  
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