

**A
Guide
to
First Grade**

To: 1st grade parents
From: Former 1st grade parents

ST. GILES SCHOOL

September 7, 2016

Dear First Grade Parents,

As parents, we know how important communication is to making a school year go smoothly. PTO believes that the parent-to-parent communication is an important link in the communication network.

This guide is PTO's attempt at documenting parental helpful hints. Parents who previously had children in first grade have compiled these hints. We hope they provide you with an overview of the upcoming year, highlighting the differences from kindergarten.

Please keep in mind that this guide is to serve as an "unofficial" guide, please look for "official" details from the School and teachers. The communication tools used at the school, grade and teacher level remain the foundations of strong communication.

School-wide information on policies, rules, and regulations is in the **School Handbook** (the "Handbook"). A copy of the Handbook may be found on the School website at www.stgilesschool.org.

Teacher-specific information such as expectations, best ways to communicate with them, grading, etc. will be presented at **Curriculum Night**. The school website www.stgilesschool.org and individual teacher webpages on the school site, found under "Teacher Pages," have critical and current information including but not limited to curriculum, homework, field trips, special events, etc. Please check those resources daily.

eNews is your information lifeline to the School. All information will be delivered via e-mail to all parents. If you ever need a flyer or announcement included in the eNews, please forward a DIGITAL copy to enews@stgilesschool.org. All submissions due by noon Friday for publication on Sunday. All articles subject to approval.

We hope this guide helps your student to have happy and successful 1st grade year!

St. Giles PTO

IT'S A LONG DAY . . .

First grade is an adjustment to all day school and lunch at school. It all adds up to a long day. You may want to keep after school activities to a minimum for the first month. Many families have found that established morning and after school routines are beneficial. Keep in mind to pack healthy foods that will energize them all day. Also, a little note in the lunch bag can go a long way.

GET YOURSELF READY

- Read the Handbook for the official rules and regulations of the School.
- Try to meet other parents of first graders. It's nice to have a few people to call with any questions you may have. Besides, some probably will become your very good friends.
- Try to attend the Welcome Back coffee that PTO sponsors on the first day of school. It's a great way to meet other parents and share school thoughts.
- Sign-up to volunteer for at least one PTO committee. Volunteering not only helps the School, but it's another opportunity to meet other parents. If you need a volunteer form, extra copies are in the office.

GET YOUR FIRST GRADER READY

- There are two first grade classrooms, one teacher per room. You are notified of your child's teacher and room assignment by mail late in the summer.
- The School uniform code is described in the Handbook, which is available at www.stgilesschool.org. Uniform logo polo shirts, girls' jumpers and St. Giles sweatshirts must be purchased through the uniform company, SchoolBelles. Alternatively, there is a uniform resale in the summer and at the Welcome Back Coffee on the first day of school where you can purchase gently used uniform items. Keep in mind that it can be very warm in some classrooms in the winter, so the long-sleeved shirt options are not always popular with the kids.
- Label all belongings, including gym shoes, winter gear, sweatshirts, lunch bags and backpack. Belongings are kept in the lockers that are shared by students.

- The supply packs purchased through the School should have all the supplies your first grader will need. The supplies will be waiting in your student's desk the first day. The list of required school supplies is available at www.stgilesschool.org under the Parents (Forms) tab should you choose to purchase school supplies yourself.
- Throughout the year, teachers may request a few replacement supplies.
- All first graders need backpacks. Backpacks on rollers do **NOT** fit in the lockers.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Arrival /Dismissal

School begins at **8:10 a.m.** with the entry bell. The **tardy bell is at 8:20 a.m.** Primary students must report directly to their classroom where the tardy will be recorded and a classroom admittance slip will be given to the late student. Instruction begins at 8:25 a.m. School instruction ends at 3:00 p.m. and the school day ends at **3:10 p.m.** Students not picked up before 3:20 p.m. will be brought to the office and will need to be picked up there.

1st graders enter and exit the Corrigan Building through the south Linden Avenue door. Car pick-up after school is on the Linden Avenue side. Remind your student that they must cross at the corners. Refer to the Handbook for traffic and safety regulations.

Refer to the Handbook for a complete description of the traffic and safety plan.

Take special note of the times and rules. The drive-up lines may be long, especially on rainy/snowy days. The process for the whole school is usually finished in 10-15 minutes, if everyone follows the rules. Be especially aware of the no parking areas. The Village of Oak Park will issue tickets. If you want to walk your student up to the school, you should park on one of the side streets. Do **NOT** get out of your car if you are using the carpool line!

Absences

Absences must be reported to the School office by 8:30 a.m. either by phone call to (708) 383-6279 or by e-mail to office@stgilesschool.org. Phone messages should be left on the main line voicemail any time before 8:30 a.m. **Note:** Parents may let teacher know of an absence, if desired, however, this is

secondary to the office receiving notification of a student's absence and does **not** replace School office notification.

Mass

First graders attend 8:30 a.m. Mass every Wednesday. Parents are encouraged to attend. Children must be at school by 8:10 a.m. on Tuesdays. Do not drop them off at the church.

If there is an all school mass during a school week, students will not be attending mass on their regularly scheduled day.

Snack

Every first grader will have a mid-morning healthy snack. This is to be a handheld snack that a student can eat while continuing to work.

Lunch

First graders eat lunch in their classrooms from 11:45 a.m. – 12:05 p.m., followed by recess on the playground until 12:25 p.m. Lunch supervisors are assigned to each homeroom and are responsible for supervising the classrooms and playground.

Send food ready-to-eat, transfer hard to open food (e.g., oranges, fruit) to reusable containers. Healthy lunches are appreciated. If your first grader forgets his/her lunch, bring it to the School office marked with your child's name and room number. It will be delivered.

- **Nut Free Policy** - The only food items that may be served at classroom or school events are pre-packaged food items with complete ingredient lists so that potential food allergens can be screened at the event. Foods sent in for an individual student's snack or lunch should be carefully checked to make sure they are peanut/tree-nut free.
- **Zero Waste policy** - Students are encouraged to use reusable containers. Each classroom in the primary building is equipped with compost, recycle, and trash bins.
- **Fun Lunch** is a PTO sponsored fundraiser. It consists of hot lunch meals delivered twice each month from fast food restaurants. The meals are pre-paid/pre-ordered. Most kids participate in the fun lunch program. Ordering for the program is available in early September and January for

each semester. A link to the ordering platform is available on the School website, and reminders will be sent through eNews.

- **SmartLunches** - A representative from Smartlunches.com will be at the PTO coffee hour to talk with parents about our new daily lunch program at St. Giles Smartlunches. The representative will again be at Curriculum Night in the Corrigan building lobby with a display of the different lunch box sizes & to answer any questions. SmartLunches will be dropped off in the student's building and given to the student in a box clearly marked with their name, grade and room number. Parents can order these lunches up to 48 hours in advance.

You can order a lunch for your child(ren) almost everyday school is in session, with the exception of a few dates that coincide with school holidays or our PTO Fun Lunch. To order SmartLunches, log onto <http://www.smartlunches.com/>. This is a service provided to our students that does not require the help of our fabulous parent volunteers.

“Specials”

Spanish – once per week in the classroom (W #101, W#102)

Art – once per week in the Convent Building (Th. #101, M #102)

Music – once per week in the Frawley Building (M #101, T #102)

Computers – once every other week in the Convent Building (F #101, T #102)

Library – once every other week in the Corrigan Building (F #101, T #102) - Library book check-out is for two weeks. Books must be returned before another book may be checked-out.

Gym – twice per week in the Corrigan Building gym (T & Th #101, Th & F #102) - It may be helpful to leave a pair of gym shoes at school just for gym class. No one is allowed to participate in gym class without gym shoes. On gym day, girls usually wear blue or black shorts under their jumper.

Forgotten Items

Bring forgotten items to the office. The office will deliver the items or ask you to place them on the table outside of the locked hallway door in the Corrigan Building. They will be brought to your child if adequately labeled (student's full name, room #). Parents should not deliver forgotten items directly to the classroom.

Homework

Homework will be assigned each night. Students write their homework assignments and upcoming tests in their Assignment Notebook. You should expect to spend 20-30 minutes on schoolwork each night, not including time spent reading, studying math facts or spelling words. First graders should be reading EVERY night.

COMMUNICATION

The student's **Assignment Notebook** is an important tool for keeping track of homework and for communicating with the teacher. The amount and type of homework is at the teacher's discretion. Teachers will respond to your notes or concerns through the use of this notebook or email. Homework is also listed on the teacher webpage.

The Sunday eNews is your information lifeline to the school. All information will be delivered via email to all parents. You also should check the teacher's web page at www.stgilesschool.org for more specific classroom news. The link is found under "Classroom Info" heading. On occasion, paper notices/forms get sent through the students' take home folders.

STUDENT'S PROGRESS

Parent-Teacher Conferences are held in early November. Be prepared with concerns you wish to discuss. If you have a few specific areas you would like to discuss, send a note to the teacher in advance. Additional conferences are scheduled in March on an as needed basis.

Teacher meetings can be arranged at a mutually agreed date and time. The assignment notebook or email may be used to request a meeting. Meetings can be especially helpful since conferences are held so early in the year.

Grades – 1st graders do not receive letter grades.

Tutoring needs for a child may be mutually discussed between the teacher and parents. The actual request for tutoring must be parent initiated. There are several teachers in the school who will provide tutoring. The arrangement must be made with the approval of the principal and tutoring fees paid by parents/guardians for at-school tutoring must be paid directly to the school in the school's name. The teacher will be paid by the school through the school's regular payroll system.

SPECIAL DAYS AND EVENTS

Early Dismissal is scheduled **every Wednesday at 2 p.m.** with the same pick-up procedures as regular days. In addition, there are **occasional half days** scheduled which typically means that **dismissal is at 11:40 a.m.** with the same pick-up procedures as regular days.

Institute Days are days that school is not in session, but the teachers are in meetings and/or training sessions.

Picture Day is the day students are photographed for their individual and class photos. The students are **out of uniform**. (*Refer to the Handbook for information on appropriate attire for out of uniform days.*) If for some reason you miss picture day, a make-up/retake day is scheduled.

Halloween is traditionally celebrated with a school parade. Students may bring their costumes to school, or they may go home for lunch and to change. Teachers will send home a permission slip. Specifics on costumes, parade and party will be provided by the teachers.

Christmas Program – First graders are included in the annual Christmas program. Rehearsals are held during December during school. The concert is held in the church in mid-December at night.

Birthday Celebrations - Sign up your child for participation in Birthday Book Club in the month of the student's birthday on the hot lunch website <https://stgilesschool.hotlunches.net/admin/>. Students may be out of uniform one day during the week of their birthday or half birthday. Food treats sent to school in celebration of birthdays are **not** allowed.

SCHOOL'S MAJOR FUNDRAISERS

Lion's Leap is the name of the School's walkathon that takes place in September. It is one of two major fundraisers for the school. The minimum amount due is \$100 for a one child family in K – 8, \$200 for a family with two or more children K – 8, and \$50 for preschool. Read the back of the Lion's Leap form that is distributed early in September for the details of the walkathon and incentives. It's a fun day for the kids and is a vital source of funds for the operating budget. Parent volunteers are needed to count laps, hand out water, supervise the students, and students love to see parents at the event.

Black and Gold Gala is the second major fundraiser - an auction which includes silent, live and online bidding items. This year it will take place on March 11, 2017 at McDonough Hall. This event is organized by the Development office and committee coordinators. Parents in 3rd and 6th grade each year will be expected to commit some volunteer time for the event. Parents, parishioners and friends can enjoy a social evening and bid on a wide variety of items with lower and higher bid amounts in order to support the School.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

APEX Intramural and Summer Programs - *Contact Mr. Collins*

Intramural indoor soccer and hand hockey are available to first graders. These intramural sports are coached by junior high students and take place after school and on some weekends in the gym. Information regarding registration is distributed by Mr. Collins, the gym teacher. APEX also runs a gym program from the end of school in June to mid-July. Various activities are programmed throughout the day and students pay one fee and drop in for activities of interest. Summer program information is distributed in the spring.

Scouts

Parents volunteer to be troop and den leaders. Information is sent home via eNews, email or the take home folder. Information on scouting may be found on the School website at <http://www.stgilesschool.org/student-life/clubs/>.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENTS TO PARTICIPATE

Parents should sign up with the PTO if they are interested in being involved. All volunteers in the school must complete the Archdiocesan requirements for Protecting God's Children (VIRTUS) in order to volunteer. Virtus information may be found on the School website at <http://www.stgilesschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SGS-Volunteer-Requirements.pdf> and in every edition of eNews. Please contact Assistant Principal Mrs. Lofgren with any questions.

Field Trips – If first grade has any field trips during the year, parents may be needed as chaperones. If you are interested in helping in any way, please check with the office to fulfill the Archdiocesan requirements for volunteers.

Room Parents – There are typically two room parents per classroom who organize class parties with games, crafts, and treats at Halloween, Christmas,

and Valentine's Day. They also work jointly with the second grade room parents to organize the year-end picnic first/second grade picnic. Parents will be asked to help with these parties.

Visitors/volunteers in School - All visitors or volunteers must report to the office for an identification badge while in the buildings. Upon leaving, please return the badge to the School office.