

St. Paul's Lutheran School

Athletic Handbook

2026-2027



School Mission Statement: "St. Paul's Lutheran School, in partnership with the home, strives to shape minds and mold hearts to apply the Christian faith in all aspects of life and learning."

St. Paul's Lutheran School
Athlete (and Parent) Handbook
2026-2027

Introduction: This handbook has been created to provide athletes and parents with information relating to all Christian athletic opportunities at St. Paul's Lutheran School (SPLS). After reading this handbook, both the athlete and his/her parent(s) must sign and return the form included in this handbook. These signatures indicate that both the athlete and the parent have read the handbook and agree to the policies and procedures described within.

St. Paul's Mission Statement: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and I am with you always, to the close of the age." -Matthew 28: 19-20

When this document refers to the word *Christian* it implies that coaches, athletes, parents, and fans believe in their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As a disciple of Christ, all of our actions should be a witness to everyone. God desires that our actions should reflect Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is now law.

St. Paul's Lutheran School is committed to providing meaningful opportunities to all students. We believe that through our Christian athletics, students can learn valuable life lessons that carry over into all aspects of their lives. We believe faith in God, hard work, dedication, good sportsmanship, teamwork, and school spirit are all components that not only make for successful teams, but also for successful individuals. It is our goal that our students succeed in life and we believe athletic participation provides an avenue to learn these many important skills necessary to succeed.

Athletic Opportunities Currently Offered:

- Fall Season
 - Cross Country – 5th through 8th grade
 - Boys Baseball – 6th through 8th grade (co-op with St. George)
 - Girls Softball – 6th through 8th grade (co-op with St. George)
 - Girls JV (B Team) Basketball – 5th and 6th grade
 - Girls Varsity (A Team) Basketball – 7th and 8th grade
 - Co-ed Soccer – 5th through 8th grade
- Late Fall/Winter Season
 - Boys JV (B Team) Basketball – 5th and 6th grade
 - Boys Varsity (A Team) Basketball – 7th and 8th grade
 - Cheerleading – 5th through 8th grade
- Winter Season
 - Girls JV (B Team) Volleyball – 5th and 6th grade
 - Girls Varsity (A Team) Volleyball – 7th and 8th grade
- Spring Season
 - Track and Field – 5th through 8th grade

Goals:

- To use the gifts God has given His children for His glory
- To provide athletes the opportunities to learn and develop the skills necessary to improve in their sport
- To provide opportunities for social interaction
- To build a positive image of school activities that community, parents, and students can support and be proud of
- To provide opportunities to practice wholesome competition

St Paul's Lutheran School is committed to achieving all of these goals in all sports offered at SPLS. Although all efforts will be made to secure playing time for every student, student athletes are expected to do their part in earning playing time through proper attendance, attitude, and work habits. Other specifics regarding the goals of our program include:

- Junior Varsity (JV or B Team): This level is designed to meet the developmental needs of its participants. The purpose of this level is to develop skills, sportsmanship, and behaviors that are part of being on a team. Playing time is determined by the coach based on practice, games, and skill level in relation to the competition. Each coach's goal is to play every player in every game.
- Varsity (A Team): The varsity teams play a competitive schedule. SPLS's commitment to excellence requires that we field the best team available from among our student athletes. Scheduling and playing time are determined by the coach and considerations are based on what best prepares the team to pursue season long excellence. Each student athlete's skill level is reevaluated throughout the season.

Student athletes wishing to play two different sports or extracurricular activities during the same season may do so only with the approval of the respective head coaches/teachers. He/She must make a commitment at the beginning of the season to one of the teams in case of a conflict and should communicate that commitment to the coaches/teachers. In some cases, it may not be possible for a student athlete to participate on two teams during the same season.

Participation:

In order for a student to participate in any athletic activity, he or she will need the following:

- An **annual** IESA pre-participation examination form signed by a physician and a parent/guardian. This must be filed in the school office prior to participating in the sport. This includes pre-season practices once the school year has begun.
- A signed Athlete/Parent handbook form (located on the last page of this athletic handbook) is filed in the school office on an annual basis.
- Passing grades (A, B, C, D) in all subjects in which they receive a grade. A failing grade (F) or two D's in any subject(s) will result in a student being placed on the ineligibility list for one week. Ineligibility is checked on Friday afternoons with the ineligibility period beginning on Monday and ending on Sunday. Ineligible students may practice with the team and attend home games/meets, however will

not be in uniform. Ineligible students may not attend away games/meets. IF a student is out of school for an illness, they are not to attend any home/away games or meets. After four consecutive weeks of ineligibility, a student will be dismissed from that team. This pertains to all extra-curricular events (athletics and activities).

Concussions

A concussion is a brain injury and all brain injuries are serious. They are caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or by a blow to another part of the body with the force transmitted to the head. They can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works. Even though most concussions are mild, all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications including prolonged brain damage and death if not recognized and managed properly.

An oversight team consisting of the Athletic Director and Head Coach will remove a student immediately from practice or competition if any member believes the student has sustained a concussion.

St. Paul's Lutheran School follows the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) concussion protocols which can be accessed on the IESA website www.iesa.org/activities/concussion.asp. Students who have experienced a force of impact believed to have caused a concussion may not participate in athletic practices, competitions, physical education classes, recess, and/or other physical activities during the school day or in school-sponsored after-school activities until successful completion of the concussion protocol, including a medical release from a licensed physician who has treated the student. Students exhibiting signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion will be immediately removed from these activities.

Concussion Return-to-Learn Protocol

A student experiencing symptoms of a concussion should be evaluated by a medical professional before returning to school and school activities.

A student with a concussion should be evaluated by a licensed healthcare professional who has experience managing concussions for guidance about when it is safe to return to school as well as recommended appropriate levels of cognitive and physical activity throughout the recovery process. If at any time during the school day, the student needs to leave the classroom or school due to symptoms, provisions will be made to meet the recovery need, whether the student takes a break in a quiet area or the parents are called to pick up the child.

St. Paul's Lutheran School supports a Return-to-Learn post-concussion framework. This framework provides guidance for supporting the student through the concussion recovery

period. As brain injuries can vary in how the student is impacted, this protocol should be used as a guide for the return-to-learn team through the different phases of recovery.

The Return-to-Learn team shall consist of the resource teacher, school administrator, classroom teacher, and parents. The return-to-learn team will follow the guidelines of the student's medical professional.

The Return-to-Learn plan will be documented. For students with prolonged symptoms, a formal St. Paul's Learning Plan may be created to ensure the child's educational needs are being met.

Phases of Recovery:

Phase 1: No School/Complete cognitive rest

No tests, quizzes, etc. Notes are provided to the student while the student remains at home.
No visual activity (i.e., reading texts, etc.)

Phase 2: Part-Time School attendance with accommodations

Student returns to school on a limited basis. Classroom activities are modified with an emphasis on limited/eliminated screen time, eliminating non-essential homework assignments, prioritizing homework, and missing work, no tests or quizzes, extended time for assignments, and copies of classroom notes provided. The student checks in with a member of the return-to-learn team on a daily basis. Accommodations are determined by student symptoms. No physical activity is permitted without a doctor's release.

Phase 3: Full-Time attendance with accommodations

Student returns to school full-time. Accommodations are determined by student symptoms and will be reduced/eliminated as the student recovers. No physical activity is permitted without a doctor's release.

Phase 4: Full-Time attendance without accommodations

A plan is created to help the student complete missed work. Physical activities permitted according to the doctor's recommendation.

Phase 5: Full School and Extracurricular Involvement:

No symptoms are present. Students may return to full involvement under the direction of their doctor's recommendation.

Return-to-Play Protocol:

St. Paul's follows the IHSA Protocol for Implementation of National Federation High School (NFHS) Sports Playing Rule for Concussions: "Any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or 10 behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from

the contest and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional.”

Definition of a Concussion: A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that interferes with normal brain function. An athlete does not have to lose consciousness (be “knocked out”) to have suffered a concussion.

Behavior or signs observed indicative of a possible concussion:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Appears confused
- Forgets plays
- Unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Cannot recall events prior to or after the injury
- Loss of consciousness

Symptoms reported by a player indicative of a possible concussion:

- Headache
- Nausea
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or fuzzy vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish
- Feeling foggy or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion

Communication: St. Paul's Lutheran School believes communication is a key component to having a successful athletic program. SPLS has set up the following communication expectations.

School: The school's website (<https://www.stpaulslutheran.net/home-school>) includes an athletic calendar showing dates, times, and locations of all SPLS games/meets. Scheduling is done in conjunction with the schools in the South Suburban Lutheran Athletic League (SSLAL) and local schools participating in IESA competition. Changes

may need to be made to accommodate other activities happening in churches and schools. Many hours go into preparing the athletic schedule. While it is a priority to make and keep a schedule at the beginning of the season, changes may occur. Athletes will be given as much advance notice as possible. The athletic calendar on the website will be updated when changes occur and a fast direct message will be sent to the athletes when possible. At times, there may be last minute changes in scheduling.

Coaches will provide their teams with the following faith-based teachings:

- Their preferred method of communication
- A list of additional equipment needed to participate in the sport
- Locations and times of practices
- Time when the athletes should arrive at the game/meet (typically 30 minutes prior to the start of the game/meet)
- Changes to game/meet schedules
- Coaches will be trained on concussion protocol

Communication coaches expect from athletes/parents:

- Advanced (if possible) notification of any schedule conflicts for practices and games/meets
- Concerns in regards to a philosophy and/or expectation of athletes
- Concerns regarding the mental or physical treatment of athletes
- Ways to help improve their athlete's skills
- It is our hope that all athletes who go out for a team, stay with it for the remainder of the season. However, if a circumstance occurs where an athlete and parent feel that they need to quit a team, we expect the athlete and parent to communicate this with his or her coach in person and turn in any equipment and uniform.

It is very difficult for a parent to accept when their child is not playing as much as he/she hopes. However, one must keep in mind that the volunteer coaches are doing their best and make judgment decisions based on what they believe to be best for all students involved. As you have seen from the list above, certain issues can be and should be discussed with your child's coach. Others, such as those that follow, will be left to the discretion of the coach.

Issues Not Appropriate to Discuss with Coaches:

- Playing Time – playing time is not guaranteed
- Team Strategy
- Play Calling

Problems/Concerns: If a problem or concern should arise that requires a conference between the coaches and the parents, there are certain procedures that need to be followed. These procedures will help promote finding a resolution to the concern and give all parties involved a clear understanding of the other's position.

Conference: If a concern presents itself, players are expected to talk to the coach first. If there is still a question, parents can call to set up an appointment with the coach. If, after this meeting, there continues to be a question, please contact the principal AND athletic director and all parties will meet to discuss the situation. Please do not attempt to confront a coach for 12 hours before or after a practice or game. These can be emotional times for both parents and coaches. Meetings of this nature do not promote resolution.

Practices/Games/Meets:

- Practice attendance is required, and times vary from before school, after school, and in the early evenings. Teams may practice Monday-Saturday and are closed to observers. Wednesday practices will be concluded by 6:00pm. Practices over Christmas and spring breaks are optional. Coaches may have their children present when necessary.
- Students are to be picked up from school or go to after school care at the regular dismissal time unless their coach has made arrangements for direct supervision. For example, athletes are not to stay after school to wait for a 5:00 game or practice unless the coach has given other instructions and will provide supervision.
- All players/parents will need to arrange their own transportation to events and home from events.
- All players/parents are required to let the coach know when they are leaving a team activity.
- It is the athlete's responsibility to be on time for practices and athletic events. Please be dressed and ready to participate at your assigned times. Tardy participants may be penalized.
- It is imperative that athletes bring all uniform pieces to all games or meets.
- Coaches will remain with players for 5-10 minutes after practices. Athletes not picked up within 10 minutes will be sent to extended care (if available) at the parent/guardian's expense. Please be prompt and respect the coach's time. This is important for games/meets as well as practices.

Attendance: Athletes must have attended classes all day the day of a practice or game/meet in order to participate in the event. All day attendance is required on Friday in order to compete on Saturday. Approved field trips or school activities constitute attending school. Any exemption (funeral, dental, doctor, etc.) must be approved through the athletic director and/or the principal.

Reporting of Injury or Illness: All injuries that occur while participating in athletics should be reported to the coach. It is then the coach's responsibility to complete an Accident Report Form that will be given to the athletic director. Athletes treated by a physician as the result of an athletic injury must obtain medical permission before returning to the athletic activity.

Volunteering: The St. Paul's Lutheran School athletic program relies heavily on the help of volunteers. Our school has been very fortunate in the past to have parents, teachers, and church members willing to coach, keep the books, and run the clock. We ask that every parent/guardian of an athlete volunteer during home games/meets at the door and/or in concessions for at least

5 shifts per year. Scheduling will be done via Fast Direct as events are planned. Parents/guardians will be assessed a fee of \$20 per shift that they do not complete in a school year.

Uniform Care: It is very important for athletes to take good care of their uniforms and other school-issued clothing and equipment. It is the students' responsibility to keep track of their gear and keep it clean. ALL uniforms should be washed in cold water and hung dry. (Drying shrinks uniforms and lessens their life span). If an athlete loses their uniform, they will be charged the replacement cost. At the conclusion of the season, clean uniforms should be turned in to the athletic director. Please speak to the athletic director if there is damage to a uniform piece.

The school allows student athletes to modify their athletic or team uniform for the purpose of modesty in clothing or attire that is in accordance with the requirements of their religion, cultural values or modesty preferences.

Sportsmanship: St. Paul's Lutheran School promotes and expects the highest sportsmanship behavior by its coaches, players, and fans. Parents must be a positive role model for their athletes and his/her teammates by encouraging good sportsmanship, showing respect and courtesy, and by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, officials, and spectators at every game/meet. Our young athletes must recognize proper behavior and language from coaches and parents. Unacceptable behavior by an adult could result in removal from the activity/event immediately and for a period of time to be determined by the administration.

Athletes are expected to exhibit and to model the following traits:

- **RESPECT** for teammates, coaches, officials, and opponents. He/She should work at maintaining a positive attitude even in the face of the tremendous pressures of the game. He/She will not use profanity or make inappropriate comments toward their teammates and/or opponents.
- **LOYALTY** to their teammates. They should not criticize their teammates or coaches. Their only reason to comment on their teammates' play or performance is to assist them in becoming a better athlete. They should realize their obligation to the team. They should be on time and be prepared to perform. They should arrive with an open mind and a willingness to learn. They should maintain a positive attitude. They should practice and play to the utmost of their abilities.
- **TRUSTWORTHY.** Athletes should not spread rumors and should keep confidential those things entrusted to them. They should keep their commitments to their family, coaches, school, team, and the community in which they live.
- **HONESTY.** Athletes should not lie, cheat, or break the rules. When they are unable to keep commitments, they should apologize to those who are depending on them. They will not be deceptive in their speech, actions, or behaviors.
- Athletes should accept full **RESPONSIBILITY** for their actions. They should be committed to doing their personal best on and off the field. When things get tough, they should continue to focus on their goals. They are accountable for their behavior.

- They should demonstrate self-control and sportsmanship at practice, during contests, and throughout their life.
- Athletes should practice FAIRNESS in all they do. They should refrain from judgment, giving their teammates their support and encouragement and always striving to understand the situation in which they find themselves. They should teach and model fair play. They should play by the rules and encourage their teammates to do likewise.
- Athletes should be CARING individuals who show compassion, kindness, and unselfishly attempt to treat others the way they would like to be treated. Athletes should think of their team before they think of themselves.
- Athletes should practice good CITIZENSHIP by playing by the rules governing their sport, and respecting the authority of the officials and coaches. They should play with emotion and direct that emotion towards their performance and the game, not other players or officials. They should be aware that circumstances may arrive that will not go in their favor and they should work hard at taking the emotional stress generated by such events and directing that energy at doing their job better.
- Athletes that fail to exhibit these traits on a consistent basis will be placed on probation at the discretion of the coach or Athletic Director.

Parents are expected to:

- Demonstrate by their actions the fruits of the Spirit as they set an example for their children.
- Communicate in a respectful manner with all staff and volunteers if they have any issue they wish to discuss with them.
- Be respectful of officials and scorekeepers who are part of the competition taking place. • Encourage the athletes and coaches through positive cheering from the stands.

Pictures: A team picture and individual pictures will be taken by a professional photographer during the season. Students will be given an informational packet for parents wishing to order pictures.

I have read through the Athletic Handbook. I agree to do my best to respond as a disciple of Christ in all my communication. I understand and will abide by the rules and policies set forth by the Athletic Program at St. Paul's Lutheran School. I understand not following the rules and policies could affect my position on the team.

Athlete's Signature

Date

My child has shared the code of behavior rules for athletic events with me. I support the rules as outlined above.

Parent's Signature

Date

My child, _____ will participate in athletics at St. Paul's Lutheran School for the 2024-2025 school year. I understand that I will not hold the school responsible for insurance coverage because I have my own insurance policy.

Parent's Signature

Date

Updated July 2025