

## Student Conduct and Discipline Policy

St. Martin's Episcopal School (SMES) strives for an appropriate balance between nurturing students and teaching accountability. The objective of class and school rules is always to promote courteous behavior in all places during the school day, extending to extra-curricular school-sponsored activities, and to enable children to know and understand what is expected of them.

Students are expected to:

- be honest, trustworthy, equitable and kind.
- accept full responsibility for their actions.
- be a good citizen and respect school and personal property.
- Represent SMES with honor and be a positive school ambassador.

### Demerits:

Most student discipline will be addressed in the classroom by the classroom teacher. If a pattern of willful, disruptive behavior develops, students will be referred to the Middle School Coordinator and a demerit will be issued. Demerits are assigned by the Middle School Coordinator to bring parents'/guardians' attention to a discipline issue as well as to hold students accountable for their actions. Parents will be notified via email or phone call that a demerit has been issued.

### Middle School Behavior Steps and Consequences

If a student is not successful in addressing problem behaviors, either the Middle School Coordinator or the Head of School may place the student on a Step. Although the consequences associated with these Steps usually follow the procedure below, it is important to recognize that the SMES administration may modify these measures if they deem a more--or less--severe consequence to be more suitable.

**Step 1** – When a student is placed on Step 1, notification of the Step is sent home for parent signature and then returned to school. The Middle School Coordinator or Head of School clarifies that this is Step 1, and that further steps have more severe consequences.

**Step 2** – This Step involves an on-campus conference with parent/guardian, child, and school counselor, if appropriate. The Middle School Coordinator or Head of School will clarify that this is Step 2, and that further Steps have more severe consequences (e.g. the next Step includes a day's suspension). Middle School Coordinator or Head of School outlines expected behavior and consequence. Further, the student may be removed from any extracurricular activities (sport, musical, etc.).

**Step 3** – The student goes home when placed on Step 3 and receives an additional day of suspension the following school day. The student receives a grade of zero on any schoolwork other than major class grades (tests, projects, major papers); those major assignments are made up per conversation with each teacher. The Middle School Coordinator or Head of School contacts the parent/guardian, advising them that the student has been placed on the next Step and suspended, and outlines expected behavior and consequences.

**Step 4** – The student goes home when placed on Step 4 and receives two days of suspension on the following two school days. The student receives a grade of zero on any schoolwork other than major class grades (tests, projects, major papers); those major assignments are made up per conversation with each teacher. The parent/guardian and Middle School Coordinator or Head of School have a conversation specifically addressing the child's future at SMES and the ways in which the child's behavior will need to change in order for that future to be a successful one. The parent/guardian may be guided to explore other options for the student if it appears that St. Martin's may not be a good fit for them.

**Step 5** – The student goes home when placed on Step 5 and receives five days' suspension on the following five school days. The student receives a grade of zero on any schoolwork other than major class grades (tests, projects, major papers); those major assignments are made up per conversation with each teacher. The parent/guardian and Middle School Coordinator or Head of School have a conversation specifically addressing the fact that a future infraction is likely to result in the student's expulsion from SMES.

Placing a child on a Step does not necessarily mean that further instances of problem behavior will automatically result in the child being placed on the next Step; on the contrary, that may be the least productive approach to take. The school administration will make those determinations as appropriate in each case, but parent/guardians will be notified any time a student is placed on a Step.

Because it is expected that most students will successfully complete their middle school years without being placed on a Step at any point – and because Steps are an indicator of problem behaviors that require ongoing attention from the School – students who have accumulated Steps do not begin subsequent years with zero steps.

However, in the unlikely event that a child does move through multiple Steps within a single year, two Steps will be subtracted over the summer. Thus, a sixth-grade student with one or two Steps at the end of the year would begin seventh grade with zero Steps, while a student who is on the third Step at the end of sixth grade would begin seventh grade on Step 1.

The decision to report disciplinary demerits or Steps to another school rests with St. Martin's Episcopal School administration. Factors such as student growth and progress in this area will have a significant impact on that decision.

### **Age-Appropriate Teasing vs. Bullying**

Bullying and middle school teasing share some similarities, but they also have distinct differences. SMES does not tolerate bullying, and allegations of bullying are taken seriously.

Bullying involves a power imbalance between the bully and the target. The bully exerts power and control over the victim, often repeatedly and over a sustained period. Bullies typically have the intent to hurt, intimidate, or humiliate their victims. Their actions are purposeful and may include physical, verbal, or psychological abuse. Bullying involves repetitive and ongoing behavior. It is not a one-time occurrence but rather a pattern of mistreatment that can last for weeks, months, or even longer. Bullying can have severe and long-lasting effects on the victim's well-being, including emotional distress, decreased self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts or actions. Bullying often occurs when there is a power differential, such as differences in physical size, social status, or popularity.



Middle school teasing is often more light-hearted and intended as playful banter among peers. It is not meant to cause significant harm or distress. Teasing in middle school typically lacks a significant power imbalance. While one person may engage in teasing, it is not driven by a desire to dominate or control the other person. Teasing tends to be sporadic and temporary, occurring in isolated incidents rather than as a sustained pattern of behavior. While teasing can be hurtful, it has a lesser impact on the victim's emotional well-being compared to bullying. It is likely to be shrugged off and forgotten.

The line between teasing and bullying can blur, and what starts as harmless teasing can escalate into bullying if it becomes more harmful, persistent, and intentionally hurtful. At SMES we want to address any form of mistreatment and provide support to those involved to prevent potential harm.

Accusations of bullying are taken seriously and will be investigated by the school administration.