



St. Stephen Catholic School

January 22, 2026

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Thank you for choosing St. Stephen and allowing us to help your child grow academically and spiritually. Parents and families are partners in this endeavor, and we look forward to working with you to focus on your child's success.

Continuous enrollment is in effect, and all students PK3 – 7th grade will be automatically re-enrolled for the 2026-27 school year on February 2, 2026. A non-refundable re-enrollment fee of \$300 will be billed through FACTS on February 2. All families must pay the re-enrollment fee, including those receiving tuition assistance or a state scholarship. The re-enrollment fee helps pay for our FACTS/SIS fees, student insurance, and curriculum costs. Re-enrollment is no longer an opt-in event; it is an opt-out option if your situation has changed and you need to withdraw your child from the school for the next school year. If your child is not returning for the 2026-27 school year, you must notify the school by Tuesday, January 27, 2026, to avoid the re-enrollment fee. If you are unsure and want to hold your child's seat, we recommend remaining in continuous enrollment and paying the re-enrollment fee. Please contact Gail Leung at Gleung@sscsfl.org for instructions on opting out from continuous enrollment. You will be charged the registration fee if you do not contact us by January 27.

Due to continued increases in operational costs and human resources (salaries and benefits), tuition will increase by approximately 7% next year. To be a school of excellence, we need to be able to attract and retain teachers of excellence. It has been a goal of the Diocese and St. Stephen to give our teachers and staff a fair wage and bring the teacher salary scale closer to that of the public school. Most of the increase will go directly to faculty and staff wages. The remainder will support increases in utilities and the cost of maintenance. While this is the same increase as last year; the impact will not be as great since we are eliminating the security fee. Since our officer is now an employee, his salary and benefits become part of our human resources expenses and will be covered by tuition. Please know that Step-Up and AAA Scholarships may increase by approximately 3%, and we will continue to provide an opportunity to apply for school-based tuition assistance. Information regarding tuition assistance will be provided in March. It is also important to mention we continue to have lower tuition rates than most schools in the Diocese.

We continue to have two tuition rates – Active Catholic Parishioner and Full Tuition. Families with multiple children receiving the Active Catholic Parishioner Rate will continue to have the opportunity to apply for school-based tuition assistance. Amounts awarded will be based on need and the amount of your state scholarship. A tuition assistance application will be available in March, and it will be due May 1, 2026. All considerations will be made for our families, and all income levels will be eligible for assistance.

It is important to understand that tuition does not cover all our expenses. For the 2023-24 school year, the cost to educate a student at St. Stephen was \$8952. In 2024-25, the cost rose to \$9834. Based on our budget for 2025-26, the cost has risen to approximately \$10,383 and we expect it to increase again for the coming year. When considering expenses to determine this cost, we consider salaries and benefits, instructional and administrative costs, and facility expenses. We do not include costs such as athletics, extended day, and major renovations. To meet the difference between the tuition charges and actual cost, we depend on fundraising, the Angel's Gala, support from the church, and other donations.

The required fundraising obligation will increase to \$300 per family and is to be raised through participation in our Fall and Spring PTCO fundraisers. Putting this fee in fundraising rather than a higher tuition increase allows families to solicit funds from others to help pay the additional \$300 through fundraising. Families who have not met their fundraising requirement by the end of April will be charged \$300 (or the balance owed) in May through FACTS. We understand that families' situations sometimes change, and students leave the school mid-year. The fundraising and volunteer hours commitments would be prorated if this were to happen. Any commitment amounts not met at the time of withdrawal will be charged to your FACTS account.

Below is a summary of our tuition and fees:

- Tuition rates increase by 7%
- There are two tuition rates – Active Catholic Parishioner and Full Tuition
- Tuition includes all curriculum fees except overnight field trips and the Middle School Chromebook.
- There are two tuition scales, one for PreK through 5th grade and one for grades 6-8.
- Grades 6-8 have higher tuition due to graduation costs which are spread over three years.
- Device fees are spread over three years and are due October 1, 2026.
- All families must contribute \$300 in fundraising dollars (through our two PTCO fundraising events) or be charged the difference in your FACTS account.
- All families are required to complete 20 volunteer hours by April 30, 2027. Any hours not completed will be billed at a rate of \$50/hour through FACTS on May 1, 2027.

Financial support from St. Stephen Parish allows us to offer an Active Catholic Parishioner Rate for families who practice the faith and attend weekly Mass. The school handbook states, "*The family agrees to support a Catholic parish by attendance at Mass on Saturday evenings or Sunday and use of the envelope system on a weekly basis. Registered and practicing members of a Catholic Church qualify for the Active Catholic Parishioner Rate. For St. Stephen Parishioners, church envelope number must be used, submitted and maintained weekly in the parish collection. For those who are supporting another Catholic Parish, verification is required.*" Please remember, it is not about how much money you are contributing; it is about bringing your children to Mass and helping them practice their faith.

Mass attendance will be checked in January 2026, and we will send letters to those who have not met this requirement. To maintain the Parish Rate, you must be attending Mass each week and putting your envelope in the offertory collection basket. Please use the envelope provided by the church with your number on it. If you forget your envelope, you can use an envelope in the pew and write your name and envelope number on it. Without the envelope number, you cannot get credit for attending Mass. If you are traveling and attend Mass at a different church, bring back a Sunday Bulletin from that church, write your envelope number and name on it, and drop it off at the school office and you will get credit for attending Mass that Sunday. Pictures or copies of the bulletin sent by email will not be accepted. We will continue to monitor Mass attendance to determine your tuition rate for next year. While we understand that things happen on occasion and your attendance will not be 100%, we expect that your child will be at a weekend Mass the majority of the time (at least 75%). If you are registered at another parish, you must submit a new Parish Verification form to the office by May 1, 2026.

Mission Statement

St. Stephen Catholic School is devoted to inspiring students to achieve their full academic potential while demonstrating a desire to continue Jesus' mission by applying Catholic morals, beliefs, values, and practices in their everyday lives. We are committed to motivating students to sustain a lifelong love of learning.

Here are the essential facts to remember:

- Mass attendance will be checked in January when your tuition rate for next year will be determined.
- If you give online, you will still need to put an empty envelope in the basket each week. Multiple envelopes given at one time will only be counted for the weekend submitted.
- If you attend a parish other than St. Stephen, you must submit a new parish verification form by May 1.
- **Only families with at least 75% Mass attendance or a parish verification form will be eligible for the parish rate.**

We look forward to working with you to ensure your child receives the best Catholic education possible. Please review all attachments, which further explain tuition fees, extended day costs, and financial aid options. As always, don't hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have. If you have questions about our expectations in helping your children live their faith, Fr. Dermot or I will be happy to speak with you. Thank you for your support and trust in our efforts to help your student grow and succeed. We pray that the Lord will help us remain steadfast in our commitment to Courageously Living the Gospel in our homes, neighborhoods, parish communities, and wherever He may lead us.

Peace,



Mrs. Linda Umoh
Principal

Mission Statement

St. Stephen Catholic School is devoted to inspiring students to achieve their full academic potential while demonstrating a desire to continue Jesus' mission by applying Catholic morals, beliefs, values, and practices in their everyday lives. We are committed to motivating students to sustain a lifelong love of learning.