

POPE FRANCIS PREPARATORY ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

A resource for coaches, parents and athletes

Revised 9/22/25

Mission Statement of Pope Francis Preparatory School:

Pope Francis Preparatory School is a Catholic co-educational, college-preparatory school which instills Gospel values and fosters academic excellence in a diverse community of learners. Our mission is to challenge students to grow spiritually, intellectually, socially, and physically to become critical thinkers and faith-based leaders who embody justice, peace, service, and mercy in the global community.

Section 1

Overview of the Athletic Program

Welcome to Pope Francis Preparatory School. In choosing to attend and participate in Cardinal Athletics you have decided to enter into a faith-centered Catholic education steeped in academic excellence and athletic tradition. As a student athlete many opportunities await.

As a school community, we all must consider the opportunities and responsibilities that come with athletics. At our core Pope Francis Prep is a school with a deep tradition of faith, in which we pride ourselves on being models for the greater community around us. As parents, fans, coaches, and athletes we are held to the standards our institution embodies.

This handbook outlines the philosophy and reflects the policies of the Pope Francis Prep Athletic Program for the current academic year. Please read this document carefully, sign the agreement on the last page, and return it to the school before the first meeting, practice or tryout date for your child's perspective sport. The agreement states that you have read this document, and that you intend to abide by the policies of the Pope Francis Prep Athletic Program for the entire season and academic year.

Pope Francis Athletics understands the most important element of our athletic program is our student athletes. It is through athletics we desire to foster spiritual development, personal growth and integrity. We thank you for doing your part to help positively direct our student athletes, at home, in the larger community and on the field of play.

Conference Affiliations:

Pope Francis Preparatory School participates as a member of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA), as well as the Pioneer Valley Interscholastic Athletic Conference (PVIAC). Pope Francis Prep plays under the rules and bylaws of all governing organizations. In addition to conference opponents, Pope Francis Prep plays against neighboring communities at an appropriate competitive level. Pope Francis Prep competes against and welcomes athletes from diverse backgrounds as well as a variety of skill levels.

Section 2

Teams

Tryouts:

Tryout dates and locations for all sports will be announced in advance. The first day of practice or tryouts for all Fall sports other than Golf is always the second Monday preceding Labor Day (Golf begins practice the third Friday preceding Labor Day). The first day of practice or tryouts for all Winter sports is the Monday after Thanksgiving. The first day of practice or tryouts for all Spring sports is the third Monday in March. Athletes are expected to be in attendance at all tryouts and practices; spots will not be “reserved” for athletes who are on vacation or otherwise unable to attend a practice or tryout. Coaches may, at their discretion, allow an athlete to try out or join a team after the start of practices. By MIAA rule, an athlete must be a member of a team for 50% of the regular season schedule in order to participate in the post season.

Cuts:

It is not the expectation that all athletes will make a team in every sport. If cuts do have to be made, they are made at the discretion of the coach of that respective sport.

Athletic Teams at Pope Francis:

Fall

Cross Country
Soccer
Golf
Girls Volleyball

Winter

Alpine Skiing
Basketball
Ice Hockey
Indoor Track

Spring

Outdoor Track
Baseball
Softball
Lacrosse
Tennis

Depending on the number of participating student athletes a variety of these sports offer junior varsity programs.

Do you know what my favorite part of the game is? The opportunity to play. – Mike Singletary
Chicago Bears Hall of Famer

Section 3

Student Athlete Expectations

Student athletes and parents should recognize that participation in athletics is not a right of all students, but rather a privilege. Violations of our standards may call for the restriction or withdrawal of the privilege of athletic participation as determined by the coaches, athletic director, and administration of Pope Francis Preparatory School. It is a condition of participation that students, parents, and guardians recognize the right of school authorities to determine such restrictions and withdrawal of the privilege of participation, as these officials deem appropriate. The rules and policies of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA.) and the Pioneer Valley Interscholastic Athletic Association (PVIAC) and those of the school govern Pope Francis athletics as they are published, posted, or announced. If infractions occur, student athletes may face both a school and an athletic consequence. By joining the school's athletic program, a student becomes a representative of his or her team and of Pope Francis Preparatory School. Student athletes are expected to demonstrate and encourage in others the behaviors that reflect good sportsmanship.

Academic Eligibility:

A student who fails a class and/or has a GPA below 2.0 is deemed academically ineligible for athletics. Ineligible students are allowed to practice with their team, but they cannot compete or otherwise represent the school at contests (and therefore they may not be dismissed early for travel).

Eligibility/ineligibility takes effect automatically on the days when grades are officially issued: mid-semester grade reports and end-of-semester report cards

*Eligibility Waiver: Students who become academically ineligible by failing only one subject (while still having a GPA of 2.0 or higher) may apply to waive their ineligibility. This waiver is only available once in each student's entire time at PFPS. In order to receive the waiver, students must:

1. Apply to the Assistant Head of School within three days of grades being officially issued.
2. Explain the circumstances leading to the ineligibility before a committee including the Assistant Head of School, the student's guidance counselor, and the subject teacher. (Note: the committee has the right to deny applications for any reason at their discretion.)
3. Meet with their subject teacher and guidance counselor weekly to improve their grade. Students who fail to attend these meetings or improve their failing grade will have their waiver revoked.

Physical:

Student athletes must have a current and valid physical on file with the school nurse before being eligible to participate in athletics. Physicals are only valid for a period of 13 months; if an athlete is "in season" when his or her physical expires, he or she must get a new physical in order to remain eligible for practices and contests.

Required Preseason Forms

All required forms for athletic participation, including emergency contact forms, should be filled out online on Blackbaud prior to the first day of practice.

Transportation Policy:

Athletes may be picked up at an away game by a parent or guardian provided a note signed by a parent/guardian is provided to the coach in advance. Students are often expected to find their own means of transportation to practice. They are allowed to take their own vehicles provided they are legal drivers in the state of Massachusetts and abide by all Junior Operators License requirements.

MIAA and PVIAC Rules and Regulations:

1. Transfer: A student who transfers schools, without a change of residence, is ineligible for one year in those sports participated in as a varsity athlete or its equivalent, at the original school during the one-year period immediately preceding the transfer.
2. If a student athlete is ejected from a contest by an official, the athlete will be suspended for a number of games as designated in the MIAA Handbook (number of games depends on the severity of the offense).
3. A student must have a physical examination administered by a licensed medical physician, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant in order to be eligible to participate. A physical exam is valid for thirteen months (395 days). A student in violation shall be suspended for the number of contests or practices in which he/she participated without a proper physical.
4. On entering Grade 9 of any school, a student has 12 consecutive sports seasons of eligibility. The student's non-participation in any such season does not extend that student's eligibility.
5. A student must be under nineteen years of age to compete; however, he or she may compete during the academic year he or she turns nineteen, provided the nineteenth birthday occurs on or after September 1st of that year.
6. A student who, regardless of quantity, uses, consumes, possesses, buys, sells, or gives away any item containing alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, or any controlled substance, is ineligible for 25% of the season. A second or subsequent violation renders a student ineligible for an additional 60% of the season. Any remaining time will carry over to the next season.
7. A student who represents a school in an interscholastic sport shall be an amateur in that sport. Amateur status will be lost if a student athlete competes for money or monetary compensation, capitalizes on athletic fame by receiving money or gifts of monetary

value, or signs a professional playing contract in any sport. Only awards of no intrinsic value and approved by the MIAA may be accepted by a high school athlete as a result of participation in school or non-school competition in any sport recognized by the MIAA. Individual interscholastic athletic awards and similar mementos to athletes shall be limited to those approved and administered by the institution, league, or MIAA in keeping with traditional school requirements as to what constitutes an acceptable reward.

8. Massachusetts General Law (Chapter 269 Section 17) states that it is a criminal offense to commit an act of “Hazing.” The law defines hazing as “any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization...which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person.” Examples of hazing include, but are not limited to, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor or beverage, drug or other activity that physically endangers someone or subjects them to extreme mental stress. Incidents of hazing must be reported to an administrator as soon as it is practicable.
9. Captain’s Practice: The term “captain’s practice” usually means the team’s captain (or other team members) organizes and conducts out of season practice for that sport. The MIAA does not in any way sanction, encourage or condone “captain’s practice” in any sport.
10. Bona Fide Team Rule: A bona fide member of the school team is a student who is consistently present for, and actively participates in, all high school team sessions (e.g. practices, tryouts, competitions). Bona fide members of a school team are precluded from missing a high school practice or competition in order to participate in a non-school athletic activity/event in any sport recognized by the MIAA. Students cannot be given special treatment (late arrival, early dismissal, etc.) for non-school athletic programs.
A student athlete found to be in violation of this rule will be suspended for one contest and shall not participate in the next scheduled interscholastic competition that is part of their regular season schedule or in tournament play. On a second offense, a student shall be suspended for an additional 25% of the season and is ineligible for tournament play.

Pope Francis Prep Athletic Rules:

1. Students must be in school for three full class periods in order to participate in athletics on that day. Students must be in school for three full class periods on a Friday, or on the last day of a week, in order to participate in athletics over the weekend.
2. Coaches will impose appropriate penalties for non-excused absences from team practices.
3. All school property such as uniforms and equipment issued to athletes by a team is the team member’s responsibility. Failure to return this equipment in good and clean condition makes the athlete financially responsible for the equipment.

4. The practice of hazing on any teams at Pope Francis Preparatory School will not be tolerated. Any student athlete subjected to any form of hazing should report it immediately to his or her coach or the athletic director.
5. Any action or conduct that is deemed to be in violation of school or team rules, or team policies and expectations, may be cause for dismissal from a team.
6. Academic Eligibility: See ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY on page 4
7. Transportation: See the TRANSPORTATION POLICY on Page 5
11. The scheduling of athletic events is not totally in the control of Pope Francis Preparatory School. Membership in a league dictates which teams we will compete against. When teams have to travel a distance to compete, team members will be allowed to leave school early. The athletic director, coach, or activity moderator will emphasize to the students in their care that it is each student's responsibility to make up work they may miss. If a student is abusing the privilege of early dismissal, or if a student is doing poorly academically because of missing class time, the subject teacher will speak to the athletic director and/or coach in an attempt to resolve the problem.

Section 4

Sportsmanship

All student athletes are expected to represent Pope Francis Preparatory School in an exemplary manner. This behavior is expected both on and off the field of competition. Student athletes are expected to display the best manners and values Pope Francis has to offer. They are expected to display these qualities when interacting with officials, coaches, opposing coaches, players and spectators. At all times good sportsmanship is expected. The penalties for unsportsmanlike behavior during a practice or game will be left to the discretion of the coaches for each sport, as well as the input of the athletic director and school governance. In cases of ejections or extreme behavior athletic governing bodies have their own protocol that cannot be overruled by the school or athletic department.

Taunting:

Taunting includes any actions or comments by coaches, players or spectators, which are intended to bait, anger, embarrass, ridicule or demean others, whether or not the deeds or words are vulgar or racist. Included is conduct that berates, intimidates or threatens based on race, gender, ethnic origin, or background and conduct that attacks religious beliefs, size, economic status, speech, family, special needs or personal matters.

Taunting does not ally itself with the philosophy of Pope Francis Prep Athletics. Examples of taunting include but are not limited to: “trash talk,” defined as verbal communication of a personal nature directed by a competitor to an opponent by ridiculing his/her skills, efforts, sexual orientation, or lack of success, which is likely to provoke an altercation or physical response, and physical intimidation outside the spirit of the game, including “in the face” confrontation by one player to another and standing over opponents.

In all sports, officials are to consider taunting a flagrant un-sportsmanlike foul that disqualifies the offending bench personnel or contestant from that contest/day or competition. In addition, the offender shall be subject to existing MIAA Expulsion Rules. A warning shall be given to both teams by game officials prior to the contest.

At all MIAA contest sites and tournament venues, appropriate management may give spectators one warning for taunting. Thereafter, spectators who taunt players, coaches, game officials or other spectators are subject to ejection.

“Never give up, never give in and when the upper hand is ours, may we have the ability to handle the win with the dignity that we absorbed the loss.” --Doug Williams Super Bowl XXII

MVP

Section 5

Expectations for Parents

Pope Francis Preparatory School understands and respects that parents/guardians are the primary educators of student athletes. It is the institution's goal to foster a partnership with parents in the formation of student athletes. Parents/guardians and other members of the community play a vital role in student athletes' participation in school sponsored athletics. Together, we are all working in the best interest of our student athletes.

Ways to Productively Support Student Athletes:

- **Be present** – Show up to games, cheer and support your athletes and teams.
- **Be positive** -- Your athletes are a reflection of you. They model their behavior based on yours. When discussing plays, performance, or teams please be positive and encouraging. Support your athletes; ultimately life is filled with successes and failures and it is how they are dealt with that matters. One of the best places to learn this is on the field of competition.
- **Encourage independence** – Your athletes are in high school. Encourage them to take responsibility for their behavior and performance. When issues arise ask them to talk to teammates or coaches before you intervene.
- **Observe the “24 Hour Cushion”** – Just as good educators do, our coaches will reflect upon game situations and decisions. Please allow coaches the time they need to process their decisions before approaching them with any questions. It is the policy of Pope Francis Prep that coaches do not need to discuss playing time, strategies, specific plays or other athletes.
- **Be the best fans in Western Massachusetts** – Take pride in your athlete's performance. Model great behavior for your athletes, the competition and other spectators. Cheer for your team rather than cheering against the opponent. Respect officials, whose jobs are rarely easy. Refrain from criticizing coaches before, during or after the competition. Leave the athletic facility as clean as it was when you arrived.
- **Keep your athlete's physical up to date** – Physicals are valid for 13 months and can expire “in season”. Help your son or daughter remain eligible by scheduling their physicals within the 13-month window.
- **Join or Support the Booster Club** – The Pope Francis Booster Club is an active and vital part of the athletic program at Pope Francis Prep. The group is responsible for coordinating the concession stand at all home games and provides funds that can be used to recognize athletes and teams. All of the money raised by the Club goes toward the teams and athletes of Pope Francis Prep.

Section 6

Coaching Expectations and Responsibilities

Coaches are first and foremost educators, and they are expected to work in coordination with parents and Pope Francis Prep as the primary educators of student athletes. At all times, coaches must be examples of the high standards found at the core of Pope Francis Preparatory School. They are expected to be role models for their student athletes to emulate. This includes but is not limited to carrying forward the school's mission and ensuring athletic programs embody the ideals of Pope Francis Preparatory School.

Preseason Meeting:

Coaches are expected to hold a meeting with parents early in the season where policies, procedures and expectations are clearly defined for student athletes and parents.

The topics to be covered at the preseason meeting should include:

1. Tryout procedure
2. Practice times and expectations
3. Eligibility reminders
 - a. Academic requirements
 - b. Physical and all paperwork
 - c. Attendance on days of practice and competition
4. Training rules
5. Team rules
6. Equipment expectations
7. Transportation

Coaching Duties:

- Plan practices and competition strategy
- Supervise athletes at all times during practice and competition, including travel and waiting for all athletes to be picked up.
- Safely condition athletes
- Assess athlete's readiness to compete and participate safely and successfully.
- Competent understanding of skills pertaining to the sport.
- Instruct positively
- Maintain safe playing conditions and ensure safety of facilities
- Report all results of home games or matches to appropriate media outlets
- Provide and maintain proper equipment.
- Communicate practice and game schedules to athletes and parents.
- Select a staff that confidently reflects the message of the Pope Francis Prep Athletic community.
- Understand and support the athletic department's concussion policy and protocol, and communicate any injuries or concerns about athletes to athletic trainer

• Conduct of Coaches:

Coaches are expected to be role models for their student athletes in and out of season. They are expected to uphold the expectations of Pope Francis Preparatory School as well as the laws of the greater community. All coaches, whether paid or volunteer, are required to sign a Diocesan Code of Conduct and complete a CORI check.

Language:

Language should be appropriate and constructive towards student athletes, parents, spectators, staff, as well as opponents. Coaches are expected to not only monitor their own language, but they should also set and enforce standards of appropriateness for their student athletes. This includes, but is not limited to swearing, harassment, exclusionary language, sexual innuendo, personal attacks, and unsportsmanlike conduct.

Treatment of Opponents:

Although opponents are not members of the Pope Francis Preparatory School community, they are members of a much larger community, in which we are all members. Coaches should model respect for opposing athletes and instruct players to win with humility, lose with pride and maintain an appropriate level of healthy competition. Pope Francis Prep Athletics prides itself on its sportsmanship and personal excellence.

Prayer:

Athletic experiences play an important role in the spiritual formation of students at Pope Francis Preparatory School. Coaches, as team leaders, are chosen as mentors and role models for student athletes. Prayer should be a component of team culture. Prayer does not need to emphasize winning but should embody the spirit of Christianity. Coaches are encouraged to start and develop spiritual traditions into their team culture.

Holding Tryouts:

It is understood that in many sports not every student athlete is a varsity caliber player every year. This is one of the purposes of junior varsity programs. Often, they are the place in which younger or less experienced student athletes can develop. In sports that have a significant number of participants cuts become a difficult reality. It is one of the most challenging aspects of coaching. It is not the expectation that all students make a team in every sport, but when cuts are necessary, student athletes need to be treated fairly and with compassion. Coaches should provide feedback in some manner, rather than simply posting a team list. If possible, alternative roles can be developed for student athletes who fail to make a team.

Communication with Athletes and Parents:

Pope Francis Prep coaches should establish clear procedures and guidelines for communication with athletes and parents that align with the philosophy of the school and athletic department. Discussion of concerns should be done in person, but not prior to or directly after a competition. If necessary, a phone call is acceptable. Before meeting with parents or student athletes a clear understanding of what will and will not be discussed should be understood. Coaches do not have

to discuss playing time, coaching strategies, decision making process or other student athletes with parents. Coaches should not “friend” or interact with students on social media outlets such as Facebook.

Reporting results:

Coaches are responsible for reporting all home results to assigned media outlets. When doing so they need to provide correct and accurate accounts. They also need to handle themselves professionally, answering all questions and responding positively, treating all members of the media with professional respect.

“Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you do” – John Wooden UCLA Basketball
Legendary Co

Revisions/Modifications to Policy:

The athletic department reserves the right to make changes to any policies in this handbook as needed. Changes will be distributed on a necessary basis as soon as possible.

Go Cardinals!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

“The difference between the impossible and the possible lies in a person’s determination”
--Tommy Lasorda Former Dodgers Manager