

PARK ATHLETICS

Policies and Procedures Guidebook
2023-2024

Mission

Park’s Athletics program creates opportunities for every student to develop (educational, social, emotional, and physical) skills through sports-specific activities, team experiences, competition, being outside of their comfort zone, engaging in different roles on a team, and leadership opportunities. Students learn about the value of being part of a team and how they, as individuals, can work hard to make that team better. Our program and coaches value competition and character. We are interested in the development of our athletes and helping them learn excellence in sportsmanship as much as the final result of games. We strive to instill a strong sense of commitment, responsibility, teamwork, and enjoyment in all of our athletes. Park enjoys many wonderful rivalries and participates in competitive tournaments and games so that our athletes experience healthy competition.

Introduction

Park’s goal for “educational athletics” is to offer an athletic and intramural program where students learn about the values of character, commitment, responsibility, teamwork, and enjoyment. Students are not required to participate in the athletic or intramural programs, but once they choose to do so, students and families must understand that they are committing to the season. Families are asked to review the calendar carefully before making a commitment, as students are expected to attend practices and games. This handbook is designed to help students and parents or guardians become more familiar with Park’s Athletics department and program.

Intramural for Grade 4

Athletes in Grade 4 learn fundamental skills and an understanding of the basic elements of the game. Intramurals take place twice a week (Mon and Thurs or Tues and Fri).

- Fall: soccer, field hockey,
- Winter: basketball
- Spring: lacrosse

Athletics for Grades 5–8

Athletes in the Upper Division can choose from a variety of sports each season. Students are placed on teams based on their age, ability, experience, and readiness. The intent is to allow athletes to develop similarly, participate confidently, and earn meaningful playing time. Athletics takes place four times a week (Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri). Interscholastic competition (against other schools) is offered in the following sports:

- Fall: cross-country, field hockey, flag football, soccer (boys and girls), volleyball
- Winter: basketball (boys and girls), ice hockey,
- Spring: lacrosse (boys and girls), softball (girls), track & field, Ultimate Frisbee

Health, Safety, and Medical Information

Each fall, all Park School students must complete and return the School’s health and emergency contact form as well as provide a physical form signed by a physician. Students will not be allowed to participate in athletic contests until these documents are submitted. The doctor’s physical form must be completed within one year

of the participating season's start. If the physical form expires during the season, the student will become ineligible to practice or play in games until a new physical form is turned in to the School's Health Office. The Park School employs an athletic trainer from 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. each season. The Athletic Trainer is one of the first responders for all injuries and emergencies involving athletes and will contact parents or guardians directly whenever necessary. When an athlete sees a physician due to an injury (whether it occurred at school or not) that physician must provide a return-to-play protocol to the School's Health Office. Without this doctor's note, the athlete will not be allowed back to participate in Park School athletic practices or games. Park's coaches are required to be certified in CPR and First Aid.

Students can still learn from the sidelines and an injured student should try to attend all team functions to the best of their ability. If a student is unable to participate in their daily class schedule (including physical education) then they are excused from participating in athletics that day.

Team Placement

Every student wishing to participate will be placed on a roster within the program as long as they are meeting the expectations and responsibilities of the team/athletics program. Before the start of the school year, families should sign up students for fall, winter, and spring athletics teams. Roster availability cannot be guaranteed once the season has started. New students to the athletic program can choose to experience a few days of a "trial period" to evaluate different sports options. This is more common for grade 5 students and/or new middle school students. A final decision on participation in the activity must be made before team placements are finalized.

We field one or more teams per program based on the number of interested students. When there is a need for more than one team for a program, there will be days set aside for the evaluation/tryout and placement of students on Varsity and Junior Varsity (JV) teams at the start of each season. At the start of the season team meeting, students will be able to express interest in playing varsity. We encourage families to sit down with students to discuss the possible outcomes of the experience before evaluation/tryouts.

Varsity and JV decisions for students in Grades 5-8 are made based on age, athletic ability, sport-specific experience, and physical and emotional readiness. The intent is to allow students to develop, participate confidently, and earn meaningful playing time on the team that is appropriate for their skill level. There are unique instances where a student in Grade 5 who demonstrates the ability to be an impactful contributor may play on a varsity team in their first year. The other instance is when we can only field one team. In general, Grade 5 students play on developmentally appropriate teams whenever possible. If we don't have enough to field a grade-specific team, they play on the JV team whenever possible.

At the end of the evaluation process, coaches will meet one on one with each student to let them know their appropriate team placement on Varsity or JV. The placement decision can be difficult for a student and coaches will do everything to make sure the meeting is handled with care and respect for all involved. Students who have questions about their placement are encouraged to speak directly with their coaches the next day.

Once rosters are established, students are expected to honor their commitment to their assigned team (They cannot change athletics teams after placement). We believe that students who commit to our program will find positive leadership roles in their team placement, and will grow as a student and an athlete.

Practice Information

Intramural for Grade 4 practices run from 3:15 to 4:30 p.m., two days per week. Girls' soccer, field hockey, girls' basketball, and girls' lacrosse meet on Mondays and Thursdays. Boys' soccer, boys' basketball, boys' lacrosse meet on Tuesdays and Fridays. The season dates for each sport are communicated before the start of the season.

Athletics for Grade 5 to Grade 8 practices run from 3:15 to 4:30 p.m. except on early dismissal days in the fall and spring. Home games start between 3:15 and 3:30 and end between 4:15 and 4:45 pm. Athletic teams' return time to campus is between 5:00 and 6:15 pm for away games. The winter season is more complicated due to court space and ice times; therefore the winter practice schedule is communicated at the beginning of the winter season. Athletic game schedule information is available on the Veracross portal and the Park School athletic web page: <https://www.parkschool.org/whole-child/athletics>. Please confirm this information as the schedule is subject to changes.

Attendance and Playing Time

The athletics program strives to teach personal responsibility. Learning to uphold one's commitments is paramount to our program. Attendance at all practices, games, meetings, and weekend tournaments is expected.

We understand that conflicts arise throughout the season. Any attendance change that arises after the end of the academic day (e.g., a 3:30 appointment that allows a student to remain on campus through the end of classes but requires a student to miss athletics) should be communicated directly to the coaches and/or the athletic director as early as possible. This is very helpful and allows coaches and the athletic program advance notice to plan accordingly. When practices or games are missed, students should expect to see an impact on their playing time and/or starting position.

Junior Varsity (JV) players can expect playing time in each game as they prepare for Varsity competition when the time comes.

Varsity players can expect some playing time in every game, but equal playing time is not guaranteed.

If a student accumulates a significant number of absences during the same season, a meeting with the parents or guardians will be scheduled to discuss the matter.

When a student is excused from participating in Physical Education (PE) class due to injury or illness, they are also unable to participate in athletics. In these cases, we expect that the student will still attend the practice or game and observe from the sideline if physically able.

Away Game Information

Bus departure and return times are listed on the Veracross portal and families should check this information regularly. Directions to our competitor schools are also listed on the Veracross portal.

After the game is completed, students will return to school on the team bus or go home with their parents or guardians. Students who wish to depart from an away game with anyone other than their parent or guardian must provide permission from a parent or guardian before the bus's initial departure from Park. Students will not be released to Uber, Lyft, or taxi drivers. We ask that students be picked up soon after the bus returns to school. Coaches will remain with their students until everyone is picked up.

Practice/Game Cancellations and Snow Days

From time to time it is necessary to cancel athletics games and/or practices. In most cases, this is due to inclement weather and/or unsafe playing conditions. On these occasions, the Athletics Department will communicate the information on the Park School Athletic web page and the Veracross portal. Parents and/or guardians will be notified via email if possible. Unless instructed otherwise, please assume that students will remain at school until 4:30 p.m. for a practice, team meeting, or study hall in lieu of the competition. When school is canceled due to inclement weather, all practices and games are canceled as well.

Student Responsibilities

Uniforms and equipment: Team uniforms and other equipment are issued to students at the beginning of each season and they are expected to be clean and in good condition. These uniforms and equipment must be returned as soon as possible after the team's final contest. Uniforms that are damaged during regular gameplay will be repaired or replaced by the School. Uniforms lost or damaged by other means may be charged to families. If a student does not have their complete uniform for a game, students may see an impact on their playing time and/or starting position. Being prepared for games is one of the ways in which students learn to be responsible for themselves and to be positive members of their team. Information on the necessary equipment needed for each sport can be found in the [Athletic Information Sheet](#).

Behavior: Park School students are ambassadors for our school. Their behavior on buses, in locker rooms, and on the campuses of other schools should reflect that role. Students who do not represent themselves and their school appropriately will not be allowed to remain on a Park School team.

Park Athlete Expectations: Students and families should review the Park Athlete expectations below before the start of each season.

Being a member of a Park School athletic team is a privilege that comes with many excellent opportunities. Athletes will represent Park School in interscholastic competition against other schools. During this season, a Park athlete can expect to learn both the skills and tactics of the sport, as well as life lessons about teamwork, sportsmanship, respect, effort, and personal responsibility. The athletic program expectation for students choosing to be a member of a team is to:

- understand that their school work comes first and if grades or behavior in school start to slip, participation on the team may be in jeopardy – as determined by my coach, teachers, and advisor.
- treat coaches, teammates, opponents, officials, and fans with respect at all times.
- arrive on time to practice and with all of the necessary equipment needed.

- understand the need to practice to play. Missing practice/game due to an unexcused conflict can impact playing time. A significant number of absences during a season can affect the ability to participate in athletics.
- communicate clearly with the coach if necessary to miss a practice/game.
- take care of uniform/equipment and return it in good condition at the end of the season.
- understand they represent Park whether at home games, traveling to or from games, or at another school
- try their best (effort, focus, attitude) at practices and in games.

Locker Room

Students have access to locker spaces in the West Building, outside of the gymnasium. Students can keep their belongings safely in a locker at the start and end of athletics during the season. The gymnasiums and locker rooms are used by outside groups in the evenings all year long. Please remember that our locker rooms are not private spaces and the Athletics Department cannot be responsible for belongings that are left unaccounted for after practices/games.

Park's Coaches

Whenever possible, Park's coaches are members of the School's full-time faculty and staff. It is important for our coaches to know and understand both the School's philosophy and culture as well as its students. It is also important for students to see and know their teachers in environments other than the classroom. When a qualified faculty or staff person cannot be found to lead a team, we will hire an adult from outside the School community. Park's coaches are required to be certified in CPR and First Aid.

Behavioral Guidelines for Parents, Guardians, Athletes, and Coaches

We hope and expect that families will be involved with and supportive of their children's athletics endeavors. Should parents or guardians have any questions or concerns about how their children are experiencing the season, they should contact the Director of Athletics and Coach. Parents and/or guardians should not approach coaches during games to inquire about playing time or appropriate positions for their child and should not speak with others about the ability of participating athletes (either Park students or our opponents) or officials within earshot of other spectators. Like coaches and teachers, family members are role models for our young athletes. Parents and/or guardians must refrain from coaching their children from the sidelines because it causes confusion, mixed messages, and frustration for players, coaches, and other parents.

Families can be most helpful by enabling their child to attend as many practices and games as possible. Honoring commitments is a valuable lesson we teach through athletics. Families can help with that by scheduling medical appointments and other potential conflicts on off days.

The New England Prep School Athletic Council (NEPSAC) provides valuable guidelines for athletes' proper conduct and sportsmanship, as well as guidelines for spectators. The Park School fully supports these guidelines and asks families to review [The NEPSAC Code of Conduct and Ethics](#).

Facilities Information

Outside usage: The Park School athletics facilities are spaces used commonly with the Physical Education Department and include playing fields, gymnasiums, locker rooms, equipment, and storage closets. Park's

playing fields can only be used by Brookline youth sports groups in the afternoons beginning at 4:45 p.m. with prior approval from Park's Rentals Coordinator. Priority, though, is given to Park School parents or guardians who serve as coaches of these youth teams.