

Morning Star School
2011-2012
Student-Parent Handbook

Open Admission Policy

Morning Star Catholic School-Pinellas Park, Inc, of the Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg, holds an "Open Admission Policy." No Person on the grounds of sex, race, color, national origin or creed is discriminated against in admission or in receiving services.

Accreditation

Morning Star Catholic School is fully accredited by the Florida Catholic Conference, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and holds membership in:

The National Catholic Education Association
Council for Exceptional Children
Florida Association for Independent
Special Education Facilities
Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities

All teachers are certified by the State of Florida in the field of Special Education.

INTRODUCTION

The faculty and staff would like to welcome you to the Morning Star School – Pinellas Park school community. Morning Star School – Pinellas Park strives to develop a partnership with all of our parents as we assume the task of educating students. Our goal is to develop a program that enables each student to reach his/her potential academically.

We at Morning Star School therefore want to facilitate, inform, and share with you our philosophy, curriculum, policies and other matters of interest. We provide this handbook in an effort to make you aware of the policies and procedures in place at Morning Star School. It is our goal that this handbook is a resource for you and that it provides valuable information pertaining to the school.

The student's spiritual, social and academic excellence is our aim as we take into consideration his/her handicapping condition and learning style.

Together, we can bring our children to a realization that God is the one who really counts in their lives.

I. MISSION STATEMENT AND PHILOSOPHY OBJECTIVES

Morning Star Catholic School, a mission of the Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg, recognizes the unique educational needs of children.

The Administration, faculty, staff and parents work together to provide an ungraded academic curriculum in which students can achieve their potential academically, socially and spiritually.

In the Pastoral Statement on Persons with Disabilities, the Bishops of the United States concluded that:

"The Church should express anew a visible sign of her concern for the spiritual, intellectual and social welfare of her handicapped sons and daughters."

Morning Star School exists as a ministry of the Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg's concern for God's special children. The school provides an individualized learning program designed to meet the specific needs of its students. Opportunities are provided for spiritual and moral growth through religious instruction, celebrating Sacraments and liturgical functions in a Catholic environment. We, the faculty and staff of Morning Star School, commit ourselves to providing an atmosphere in which true moral and academic learning may take place. In partnership with the parents and students, our school is an extension of the education that begins in the home.

We strive to teach tolerance and appreciation for the uniqueness of each person. Our purpose is to enhance and develop the values necessary to prepare our students to be productive Christian members of society.

The staff seeks to educate the heart, mind and soul of each student by:

1. recognizing the dignity, self-worth, esteem, integrity and identity of each student;
2. providing opportunities for spiritual and moral growth through religious instruction, liturgical and paraliturgical functions;
3. integrating a balanced academic curriculum effective and accountable to the parents through the Student Support Plan (SSP);
4. utilizing evaluative instruments and learning styles as criteria for developing and modifying goals and objectives;
5. challenging the students to achieve their maximum potential in academic subjects;
6. providing an educational atmosphere that promotes social and emotional growth in value-centered relationships and meaningful leisure-time activities;
7. providing physical education that includes therapy in sensory-motor skills (designed to promote visual-perceptual motor skills, agility and dexterity);
8. developing in students an appreciation of aesthetic values through music and art instruction;
9. providing speech and language therapy to enhance receptive and expressive communication skills and reading comprehension;
10. providing occupational therapy to enhance fine motor skills and visual perception.
11. providing opportunities to participate in outside community programs.

We, the faculty and staff of Morning Star School, endeavor to work as a professional and spiritual team, committing ourselves to quality Catholic education, as we seek to provide an atmosphere where true moral and academic learning can take place.

II. POLICIES

A. ADMISSIONS

New students are accepted to the school program on a month to month basis. It is during this time that the student's ability to adjust to the school philosophy and program is observed.

1. Acceptance is also dependent upon:

- a. Availability of a suitable program for children age six (6) through age fourteen (14) years inclusive.
- b. A complete professional evaluation to be obtained by the parent should include:

- (1) Psychological
- (2) Process Testing
- (3) Achievement Testing
- (4) Social History
- (5) Medical History
- (6) Current school records and IEP information
- (7) IEP and Matrix information

- c. Current immunization records as required by the State of Florida
- d. Annual physical
- e. School Application
- f. Permission forms

The following need parental or guardian permission signatures for the student's file on a yearly basis:

- a. to go on field trips - form is provided when field trip occurs
- b. to have pictures taken for publication use should the occasion arise
- c. to administer medication

Each activity requires a signed permission form from the parent or guardian in order for the student to participate in the activity.

2. Procedure for Admission:

- a. The parents/guardians make the initial contact with the school by calling (727) 544-6036.
- b. The parents are invited to visit the school and view the program. They are asked to bring all required or available testing for the administrator to review. An application form is then given to parents/guardians.

c. When the application form is received from the parents/guardians an appointment is then set for an interview with the school administrator. The parents/guardians are asked to bring the child for a tour of the school and to meet with the school administrator.

B. FEES

1. REGISTRATION

This is a nonrefundable registration or re-registration fee for each child.

2011-12	Initial registration - new student	\$250.00
	Registration for current students	\$150.00

2. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

These fees are due by July 10th. These fees cover the cost of textbooks, testing costs, student accident insurance, Speech/Language materials, Occupational Therapy materials and computer fee.

3. O.T.H.E.R.S. - (Opportunity To Help Educate Receptive Students)

O.T.H.E.R.S. is the booster group for Morning Star and raises funds to help educate the students at Morning Star School. Their main focus is to raise funds to keep tuition at an affordable rate. O.T.H.E.R.S. pays tuition costs not covered by Diocesan subsidy and Parent tuition. It is therefore, expected that Parents support the fund raising efforts of O.T.H.E.R.S. and strive to help increase their membership by enlisting new members. All Morning Star School families require membership.

4. TUITION

The total cost to educate a student for the 2011-2012 school year is \$17,000.

Tuition	\$8700.00
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Catholic students are required to present a Parish Verification form stating they are supporting members of the Parish in order to receive a \$500.00 grant.

Tuition may be paid in ten monthly payments (first payment due September 1 and the last payment June 1).

Tuition Payment Options 2011-2012

1. Ten (10) Monthly Payments (due the first of each month September 1 - June 1) \$870.00
2. Payment in full
3. Semester payments due in September and January.

COLLECTION

Tuition is due and payable on the 1st of each month and is delinquent after the 10th of each month. A fifty (\$50.00) dollar late fee will be charged when tuition is delinquent. If you have any questions or must pay your tuition after the 10th of the month please call the Principal at (727) 544-6036.

All tuition, fees and other financial obligations must be completed before final report cards are issued. The Diocese of St. Petersburg supports all reasonable efforts to secure compliance with these regulations including the withholding of report cards, permanent records, the refusal to transfer student records, and refusal of the student for final graduation exercises.

EXTENDED DAY SERVICES

This service is available for working Parents and is in operation when school is in session. The program is available and is operated at Morning Star School.

III. CURRICULUM AND AUXILIARY SERVICES

A. CURRICULUM

1. **Religion** is considered an important part of the curriculum. It gives direction and meaning in our lives and helps establish a relationship with our Creator.
 - a. Christian living will be taught specifically for 30 minutes per day, Monday through Friday.
 - b. A preparation program for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, the Eucharist and Confirmation together with parent involvement will be given to Catholic students separately. Students must be enrolled in their respective Parish CCD Program.
 - c. The students, with the help of the Religion Coordinator, participate in Liturgical Celebrations and attend a weekly Liturgy at Sacred Heart Catholic Church.
 - d. A Family Life Program is taught by the Guidance Counselor to instill Family values and a Christian outlook on human sexuality.
2. **Reading** programs are offered in a variety of learning styles to meet individual needs of the students.
3. **Language Arts** consists of spelling, writing and language development.

4. **Mathematics** is an individualized prescriptive program to meet each child's needs beginning at the concrete level and progressing through the representational level to the abstract level. The Saxon Math and Touch Math programs are taught daily and at the instructional level of the student.
5. **Science** encompasses hands on and sequential concepts based upon the Diocesan Science Guidelines Benchmarks and Standards.
6. **Social Studies** includes a developmental program of social and historical events based upon Diocesan Social Studies Guidelines Benchmarks and Standards.
7. **Physical Education/Health**. The program is based on individual development and achievement. Students may also participate in Special Olympics in areas of best achievement. Monthly bowling is part of the program.
8. **Music** includes appreciation, singing and programmed activities developed by the Music Instructor.
9. **Art** group activity and gives appreciation of esthetic value and develops innate talent in students.
10. **Computer** instruction to enhance the students ability to use computers effectively and for instructional purposes.
11. **Guidance** is provided to all students by the Counselor on a weekly basis in small groups and on an individual basis when the need exists.

B. AUXILIARY SERVICES

1. **Speech Therapy** is determined after the Speech and Language Pathologist completes an evaluation for each student. Individual therapy is determined by need after testing. Students receiving therapy in other programs outside the school will not be considered for Individual Therapy.

Language Development - all students are involved with the Speech Therapist for language development classes. At the Primary level the students have classes 3 times per week and individual therapy is provided 2 times per week for students requiring language and articulation therapy.

2. **Occupational Therapy** - is determined after a complete evaluation. Individual therapy is determined according to need 1 time per week.

The therapist works closely with the classroom teacher and assists students in their respective classrooms.

3. **Extracurricular** activities augment the educational program.
 - a. Library facilities are provided by Morning Star School.
 - b. Field Trips enhance language development by providing actual experiences and enrichment.
 - c. Bowling develops social interaction and life skills.
 - d. Homework is assigned to provide carryover of skills taught in the classroom.
 - e. Students wishing to participate in inter mural sports may try out for teams at Sacred Heart Catholic School.

B. HEALTH

1. **Medication** - A completed medication form should be filed with the school office indicating if the student is on medication. All medication required to be taken at school will be kept in the school office and distributed as needed by a Staff Member. Should there be a change in your child's medication, **please inform the OFFICE in writing** and a new medication form will be issued to keep our files current in the event of an emergency. All medication must be in a prescription bottle with instructions as how to administer as prescribed by an authorized physician.
2. **Services** - The school provides annual vision, hearing, scoliosis, and scalp/hair checks (when necessary).

D. ATTENDANCE AND TARDINESS

The quality of learning for any student must often reflect the regularity with which he/she attends classes. Attendance regulations have been formulated as a means of helping our students develop habits, which will serve them best while in school and in later years.

1. **Absences** - PLEASE CALL THE OFFICE THE FIRST DAY your child is absent, giving reason and approximate length of expected absence. **A written excuse is necessary to have on file to verify the legal absence on the child's return.**
2. **Tardiness** - Students not present for the opening prayer at 8:00 a.m. are considered tardy and must stop in the office for a late slip. Parents

are encouraged to have their children at school on time, as this is a way to reinforce the importance of punctuality. Tardiness has an adverse effect on the progress of the student who is late and disrupts the learning environment in the classroom.

- a) **If** a student reports to school after 10:30 a.m., the student is marked absent for the day.
 - b) **If** a student leaves school before 10:30 a.m. and does not return that day, the student is marked absent for the day.
 - c) **If** a student leaves school after 10:30 a.m. and does not return that day, this student is marked absent for a half day.
3. **Vacation** - Excused vacations are permitted only through the PRINCIPAL. The classroom teacher cannot give this permission.
 4. **Students** who miss more than 20 days during the school year, according to state law, will have to repeat the year or grade level.
 5. **Doctor and Dental Appointments** requires a written note for dismissal. Inform the school should the nature of the problem be important for the student health record. Parents/Guardians are urged to schedule routine appointments **AFTER SCHOOL HOURS** so as not to disrupt the instructional program.

E. SCHOOL ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

1. **School hours** - The regular school day begins at 8 a.m. We ask that students not arrive on the school grounds before 7:30 a.m. without permission. Dismissal is **PROMPTLY** at 2:30 p.m.
2. **Transportation** is not provided by the school. Car pools are arranged by parents.
3. **Arrival and Dismissal Procedure** - All cars must enter the school driveway from the north entrance and exit to the south. Parents are asked not to block the driveway and remain in their car until their child is sent to them.
4. **Exception to regular transportation** - If someone other than the parent is to pick up the student, please write a note to the School Office, (727) 544-6036. The party is required to go to the school office, submit their Driver License for verification of name submitted by the parent.
5. **Inclement Weather** - Morning Star School has an agreement with "SchoolReach". You will be notified instantly by phone or email in regard to school closings. It is important that home phone and cell

phone information be updated immediately by calling the school or by going on line to update your information.

F. DRESS CODE

1. CLASSROOM

Boys: SCHOOL UNIFORMS ARE TO BE WORN AT ALL TIMES

The School uniform is:

- a) Light blue polo shirt with Morning Star logo.
- b) Navy blue or khaki shorts to the knee, zipper front (older students).
- c) Navy blue or khaki trousers.
- d) White or navy blue socks, ankle length or above.
- e) Black, brown, or white shoes or sneakers.
- f) Navy blue or white sweater in cool weather.

NOTE: No earrings
No fad hairstyles, unnatural or dyed hair or tipped dyed hair

Girls: SCHOOL UNIFORMS ARE TO BE WORN AT ALL TIMES

The School uniform is:

- a) Light blue polo shirt with Morning Star logo.
- b) Navy blue or khaki walking shorts to the knee, navy blue or khaki slacks or navy blue jumper. **NO LEGGINGS OR SWEATPANTS.**
- c) Black, brown or navy blue shoes or sneakers.
- d) White or navy blue socks, ankle length or above.
- e) Navy blue or white sweater in cool weather. Navy blue Morning Star School sweatshirt.

NOTE: No fad haircuts, hairstyles, unnatural or dyed hair or tipped dyed hair.

No dangling earrings, simple posts are fine. No excessive jewelry or bracelets.

A simple religious cross or medal necklace is fine.

2. P.E. Uniform

The PE Uniform is:

a) Navy blue gym shorts. (Long pants or warm-ups for cold weather).

NOTE: **NO** Cheerleader style shorts or running shorts.

b) Morning Star Tee shirt (available from the office). A sweater or jacket in cold weather.

c) White gym shoes

d) White or navy blue socks, ankle length or above

e) A mesh gym bag

f) Comb or Brush

g) Deodorant for students as needed

NOTE: No jewelry is to be worn during PE classes.

PE uniforms are to be brought to school on **MONDAYS** and are to be left at school for the week.

G. LUNCH

Students may bring their lunches to school. A hot lunch program is offered in partnership with Sacred Heart Inter-parochial School on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. Pizza is ordered on Wednesday and Friday. A lunch menu and order forms will be sent home on a monthly basis. There will be no lunch available on early dismissal days.

Daily optional purchases are available. These include: Milk, (white only) Juice and Snack items.

H. MONEY

Do **NOT** permit your child to bring large sums of money to school.

It is our policy that no student borrows or lends money to another student.

If there is a limit on anything you do not want your child to purchase to eat please send a note to let us know or consult with the lunchroom supervisor.

I. BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS - are encouraged

Please contact the teacher or Office in advance for time arrangement.

J. HOMEWORK

The purpose of home assignments is to reinforce by study and practice the material learned in school. Parents should encourage completion of each assignment.

However, if frustration occurs parents should use discretion and notify the teacher about the problem. Homework assignments are to be 30 to 45 minutes duration.

K. CONFERENCES

Parent/Teacher conferences are held twice each year. The Student Support Plan (SSP) is explained at the first conference. The second conference is held in May to inform parents of the child's progress. Parents may request a conference at any time and are encouraged to take advantage of our "Open Door" policy. We ask that you avoid conferences with the teacher during teaching hours. Teachers are available after 2:30 p.m.

Parents may not go into a teacher's class when students are present to discuss their child. They must report to the Office first to set an appointment that is more convenient for teacher and parents. Conferences may be scheduled anytime after 2:30 p.m.

L. REPORT CARDS

The report card is based upon the teacher's evaluation of your child as a unique individual in terms of spiritual, academic, social, emotional and physical growth experiences. Report cards are issued three times annually.

M. DISCIPLINE

Enrollment of students at Morning Star implies the willingness of both parents and students to comply with the policies and regulations of the school. In order to realize the school's aims, parents and students must agree with and support the **Philosophy** of the school. Morning Star reserves the right to dismiss any student whose family fails to respect these regulations.

N. TERMINATION

Termination may be in order at any age and can be requested by the school.

The following may apply:

- a. In lieu of another program that will be of greater benefit for the child.
- b. When the child has reached his/her maximum capacity in the program offered. (This is determined by age, test results and in consultation with parents, teachers and Principal)
- c. **If the child endangers the welfare of other children by his/her negative behavior.**
- d. If a child physically harms a teacher or staff member by his/her negative behavior.
- e. If he/she purposely disrupts classes which prevents students from learning by outbursts or other actions that are not a result of the student's disability.
- f. **LACK OF PARENTAL COOPERATION OR INTEREST** in school activities such as those set up by the Home and School Association. No school can function without parental assistance and cooperation; therefore every family must assume this obligation of helping the school in one way or another. Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles or Friends can help fill in for those parents unable to be present at some functions.
- g. **If a child willfully runs away or leaves schools grounds without permission.**

IV. SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

A. HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

All Parents of Morning Star School students are members of the Home and School Association. A \$25.00 membership fee is payable to the Morning Star School PTA.

The Home and School Association primary purposes are:

- a) To help parents and teachers work toward the ideals of Catholic education for the benefit of the child.
- b) To promote clearer understanding of the mutual educational responsibilities of parents and teachers.
- c) To be a financial support group for the betterment of the school program.

Each family is expected to participate in the fund raising activities of the Home and School Association. Some activities planned for the 2011-2012 school year are:

October: Fall Pumpkin Sale

November: Silent/Live Auction

December: Christmas Poinsettia Sale

February: Annual Appreciation Dinner

April/May: Bowl-A-Thon Family Fun Day

May: Golf Tournament

Service Hours - 20 hours per family, 10 hours for single parent. Each family is required to give 20 hours of service to the school. Single parents are required to give 10 hours of service.

Parents can fulfill their service hours in the following manner:

1. School activities

- a) Volunteer to be the homeroom parent
- b) Assist the classroom teacher
- c) Assist with events held at the school (Halloween, Christmas, Seder Meal)
- d) Assist in the Library.
- e) Assist in the garden and with landscaping
- f) Chaperone on field trips

2. Silent/Live Auction

- a) Assist by being on planning committee,
- b) Obtain auction items
- c) Assisting at the event
- d) Assist with set-up and clean-up

3. Fall Pumpkin Patch

- a) Help unload the truck and set up
- b) Work at the Pumpkin Patch selling pumpkins

4. Christmas Poinsettia Sale

- a) Sell poinsettias
- b) Help unload the truck and distribute the poinsettias

5. Annual Appreciation Banquet

- a) Assist setting up and with clean up
- b) Obtain items for raffle baskets

6. Bowl-a-thon

- a) Assist by being on the planning committee
- b) Assist during the event
- c) Obtain sponsors for the event

- d) Obtain bowlers for the event

7. Golf Tournament

- a) Obtain sponsors for the event
- b) Obtain golfers for the event

8. School Dances

- a) Provide refreshments
- b) Chaperone at the dance

9. Teacher Appreciation Week celebration

Participating in events for the children held at school such as Halloween, Christmas, and Santa Workshop. Assist the classroom teacher, field trip transportation when needed and assist in the lunchroom.

All hours must be completed by May 15, 2012. Any hours not accounted for will be assessed a fee of \$25.00 per hour.

Where does the fund raising money from the Home and School Association go?

1. \$25,000.00 or more is committed to the school budget annually.
2. Bus transportation for children for field trips.
3. Parent Club needs.
4. Teacher appreciation week celebration.

Morning Star participates in the following programs:

1. Campbell Soup labels, **Swanson product** labels, **Prego** labels and **Valasic** lids are collected and redeemed to Campbell's for equipment and educational materials. The UPS label is to be turned in for point redemption.

2. BOX TOPS FOR EDUCATION can be found on General Mills products.

3. Target offers a 1% return to the school on every purchase made using their Guest Card when purchasing. Application forms are in the school office.

B. O.T.H.E.R.S. (Opportunity To Help Educate Receptive Students)
The Support Group for Morning Star School

The organization was founded in 1976 for the sole purpose of helping to keep our tuition at an affordable rate. O.T.H.E.R.S. supports the school financially (tuition support, building fund and maintenance) through its various types of memberships and other fund raising activities.

All parents of Morning Star School students are asked to join O.T.H.E.R.S. and it is part of the fees charged each year.

Group and Individual Membership entitle you to receive an invitation to the Annual Appreciation Banquet held in February.

All parents are asked to encourage grandparents, relatives and friends to join this prestigious group that is for the benefit of the children attending Morning Star School.

If you belong to any Organization or Club that supports charitable benefits acquaint them with Morning Star and our needs. When they contribute to the school they become members of O.T.H.E.R.S. These organizations also receive an invitation to the Annual Banquet.

HARASSMENT POLICY

Morning Star Catholic School, Pinellas Park, Florida, strives to establish a Christian, professional and supportive educational community for administrators, faculty and staff, parents and students. The Diocese of St. Petersburg has adopted and promulgated a harassment policy for its school that addresses behaviors that interfere with fulfilling the school's mission. We, at Morning Star Catholic School, condemn any form of harassment. Concerns should be reported directly to the school/center administrator. All credible allegations will be addressed according to the Diocesan policy.

NOTIFICATION STATEMENT

The Facilities/Maintenance Department of MORNING STAR CATHOLIC SCHOOL maintains the Asbestos and Radon Management Plan, which is available for review upon request.

BEHAVIOR POLICY

For the 2011-2012 school year this is the behavior policy that will be immediately implemented.

The following behaviors will not be tolerated:

Profanity; includes swearing, any foul language or obscene gestures.

Physical abuse to self or others

Verbal abuse or threat directed toward the teacher or other students Destruction of school property

Sexual Harassment in any form will involve school suspension at the discretion of the Principal.

Inappropriate Public Display of Affection (PDA)

NOTE: Lack of medication will not be an excuse for improper behavior.

CONSEQUENCES:

The classroom teacher will administer initial consequences.

A student who is sent to the Office for any of the above behaviors will be given a 30-MINUTE DETENTION that will be enforced on the next available detention day.

Tuesday and Thursday are designated days. **THE PARENT/GUARDIAN WILL RECEIVE NOTICE OF THE DETENTION A DAY IN ADVANCE.**

If a student serves **THREE** detentions the parent/guardian will be notified and a conference will be held with the **PARENTS, PRINCIPAL, TEACHER, AND CHILD**. At this conference an in-school suspension will be enforced. The in-school suspension will mean the student will be isolated from the rest of the school population for a given number of days depending upon the behavior. During that time the student will be responsible for doing all schoolwork required for the day(s).

If a student threatens bodily harm to a teacher or another student, or if a student repeatedly exhibits defiant behavior:

- a) The parents and child will be called to the school, and
- b) Appropriate consequences will be administered as determined by the School Principal.

Immediate Dismissal from the School Program results when:

1. A student is in possession or displays a weapon.
2. A student is in possession of illegal substances.
3. Unauthorized leaving of the School Campus during the school day.

I understand this policy and will abide by it.

Parent/Guardian

Parent/Guardian

Student Signature

Date

Cell Phone and Pager Usage Guidelines for Students

In order to insure a safe environment and an optimal learning environment, it is necessary to establish some guidelines for cell phone usage by students. Some issues of concern are the use of a cell phone or pager for illegal purposes, the disruption of the learning environment and the invasion of privacy.

1. Cell phones will be brought to the school office each day at 8:00 a.m. and returned at 2:45 p.m. to the student.
2. No cell phones may be used for picture taking.
3. No harassment or threatening of persons via the cell phone is permitted.
4. Cell phones may not be used for game playing, Internet or e-mail access, text messaging, gambling or making purchases of any kind.
5. Pagers may not be brought to school.
6. Those that violate any of the rules regarding cell phones will have the phone confiscated until a parent can claim it. Students will forfeit the privilege of bringing a cell phone to school if there is a second violation. Repeated violations will be handled within the school's disciplinary code.
7. Where appropriate, infractions will be handled within the published code of conduct.

Please sign and return this page.

2011-2012

Handbook Acknowledgement Page

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the Morning Star School Handbook. By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the procedures and policies and agree to comply with them. This Handbook does not constitute a contract.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Parent/Guardian Signature