

# DISCIPLINE

## **Introduction**

The administration and faculty of Divine Mercy Academy are committed to teach and model Gospel values to encourage students to live their lives as a reflection of Christ. The philosophy of the school strives to recognize and respect the dignity of each person and to offer a positive, Christ-centered, safe learning environment based on the Social Teaching of the Church. Discipline is considered an element of moral guidance not as a form of punishment.

Every teacher and staff member shares the responsibility to model appropriate behavior and to support the structure necessary for learning self-discipline. Students are encouraged to assume responsibility for their actions, develop self-control, and accept responsibility and consequences for inappropriate behavior.

A Christ-centered school environment fosters the following behaviors:

- Recognizing and fostering the uniqueness and dignity of each individual
- Nurturing respect in all relationships
- Developing a sense of rights and responsibilities and commitment to the entire school and community

Social skills, both interpersonal and intrapersonal, are taught, modeled, practiced and infused into the daily life and experience of the school family.

## **Guiding Principles**

The following seven principles are the basis of Catholic Social Teachings and are the principles that guide us in all of our interactions.

- We believe in the life and dignity of the human person. Each person is sacred.
- We believe we are called to family, community, and participation. It is our duty to support each other by our actions.
- We believe that we have rights and responsibilities. Every person has the fundamental right to life and responsibility to and for one another.
- We believe that we have an obligation to the poor and vulnerable. We are called to put the rights of others before our own.
- We believe that we are called to care for God's creation. We are all stewards of the earth.
- We believe that solidarity is our call. We are one family regardless of our differences.
- We believe that workers have rights and that work has dignity. Work is a form of participating in God's creation.

## **Expectations**

As a matter of safety, students are expected to avoid conduct unbecoming a Catholic School student at all times and to behave in the following manner:

### **Before school**

- Dress according to the school dress code.
- Arrive after 8:20 AM and before 8:30 AM.
- Obey adults on entrance duty.
- Report to your homeroom immediately and wait for the teacher to tell you when to enter.
- Do NOT linger in the stairwells and/or hallways.
- Phones MUST be turned off and away as you enter the building. Phones are not permitted in the hallways.
- Engage in quiet conversation.
- Follow classroom procedures for lunch sign up, turning in office paperwork, etc.

### **In school**

- Walk quietly and in a single file at all times including during change of classes.
- Use proper language at all times.
- Follow the dress code for school days and dress up/dress down days.
- Respect school property and the property of other students.

- Bring a note from a parent/guardian if there is a change in the mode of school transportation.
- Put electronics (cell phones, smart watches, etc) in the place designated by the homeroom teacher.

#### In the classroom

- Follow the classroom rules of each teacher.
- Be responsible for submitting homework on time and making up missed assignments.
- Have a respectful attitude toward teachers and one another.
- Be responsible for appropriate supplies.
- Be honest in all communications.
- Use appropriate and respectful language when communicating with teachers and peers.
- Use computers and school equipment appropriately.
- Refrain from chewing gum or eating food.
- Do not remain in or enter a classroom at any time without a teacher or designated adult present.

#### During Lunch

- Remain seated while eating.
- Raise hand to get out of seat.
- Clean up your area by picking up all papers, scraps of food, etc. from the table, chairs, and floor, and dispose of them properly.
- Only get up to throw away trash at the **end** of the lunch period when directed to do so.
- Obey cafeteria monitors at all times.
- Speak in a conversational tone. No yelling.
- Refrain from abusing food; your own or that of others. **Never** throw food.
- Be courteous and respectful to all those who are helping in the cafeteria.
- Walk at all times.
- DO NOT take food or drinks from the cafeteria.

#### During Recess

- Do not re-enter the building without a monitor's permission.
- Display good sportsmanship and exercise self-control.
- Play in assigned areas only. Different grade levels may be designated different areas to play.
- Each grade level will have their own recess basket filled with recess items. It is the responsibility of each grade level to care for, collect, and return items each day. Do not take items from other grade level baskets.
- Stay in the recess area at all times. This includes not retrieving a ball that has gone outside of the recess area.
- Obey the directives of playground monitors, courteously and promptly.
- Rough games are not permitted. Footballs, kickballs, etc. will be removed if rules are not followed.
- Students are not permitted to play in/with snow, mud, or water.
- Stop playing and walk quietly to the designated spot when the monitor gives the signal.

#### After school

- Follow dismissal procedures.
- Walk to the assigned place to wait until your bus or car arrives.
- NO running or playing games on the school grounds during dismissal.
- Car riders must report to their car immediately and get buckled in.
- Leave the school grounds immediately.
- **Students are not permitted to return to the classroom for forgotten items.**
- Sign in at the extended care program if not picked up by 3:20 PM.

#### At athletic events and assemblies

- Practice good sportsmanship as spectators and participants.
- Be respectful to coaches, referees, and visiting teams.
- Use appropriate good manners during special performances.

### Outside school

- Behave responsibly off school property. If the principal is made aware of misconduct off school property of a child recognized to be a student of Divine Mercy Academy, parents may be contacted; however, it is important to note that the school is not responsible for student's actions that occur off school property.
- Principals will forward disciplinary notices given by public school bus drivers to parents to support the disciplinary report of the bus driver. Continual infraction of rules may result in loss of bus transportation privileges.
- Social media harassment and/or cyber-bullying will be dealt with according to school discipline policy.

### Bus/Van

- Use only the bus and bus stop assigned.
- Remain seated while the bus is in motion.
- Talk quietly and make no unnecessary noises.
- Refrain from talking to the driver unless it is necessary.
- Refrain from placing objects or body parts outside the windows.
- Refrain from littering inside the bus or from throwing anything out the windows.

Principals will forward disciplinary notices given by public school bus drivers to parents to support the disciplinary report of the bus driver. Continual infractions of rules will result in loss of bus transportation privileges.

### **Disciplinary Procedures/Consequences**

Discipline is the key to good conduct, to respecting the rights of others and is essential to learning. Classroom standards and expectations for student behavior vary according to age and are determined by the individual teacher. Please be aware that any disrespect, destructive act, or inappropriate behavior will be dealt with accordingly. If an individual student does not meet his/her personal responsibility for good conduct, the school may discipline the student.

The severity or repetitive nature of non-compliance to the above expectations will determine the appropriate consequences. Because our students are children, they do not always make the best choices. Sometimes, as part of their moral development, they must recognize the consequences of inappropriate behavioral choices. When this happens, a student may be issued a Student Discipline Report (SDR) and receive consequences based on the age of the child and the severity of the infraction, at the discretion of the teacher and administration.

To remediate unacceptable behavioral infractions, one or more of the following actions may be taken:

- Verbal redirection
- Teacher/student conference to develop a plan for remediation
- Phone call or email home
- Issuing of a Student Discipline Report to be signed and returned
- Behavior Reflection Assignment
- Writing Assignment
- Loss of recess
- Letter of apology
- Lunch Detention
- After School Detention
- Denial of participation in school activities, including sports
- Suspension
- Administrative referral
- Expulsion

### Primary Grades

A student who repeatedly disregards school rules, disrupts learning, or interferes with the safety of others may be isolated in the classroom, cafeteria, or on the playground until she/he evidences the desire to change behavior. If it is necessary to isolate a child repeatedly, parents will be notified to assist the child in developing appropriate behavior. Serious offenses or repeated infractions as described below will result in detention which is served during the normal lunchtime and recess.

### Grades 4-8

If behavior warrants action, any member of the faculty may issue a student detention. Students may be given multiple warnings before receiving a lunch detention. Students receiving a lunch detention will serve the lunch detention on the same day if received before lunch or the next day if received after. Students will serve the detention in the cafeteria and eat lunch separate from their peers. The students will be monitored by the teacher on lunch duty.

Considering that good behavior is the norm achieved by most students, students in grades 4-8 will serve one-hour detentions after the accumulation of three lunchtime detentions. After school detentions will be served in the main office on Wednesdays with advance notification given.

In addition to the expectations set forth for the students, please be aware that there is a list of inappropriate behaviors containing minor and major infractions that will be addressed. The severity or repetitive nature of non-compliance to the school's expectations will determine the appropriate consequences.

Minor infractions that may cause a student to receive a lunch detention include:

- Being tardy for school or class **three or more** times during a grading period
- Loitering in the hall, stairwell, and/or restroom
- Chewing gum or eating food outside of the cafeteria
- Throwing or tossing food or other items
- Consistent lack of preparation for class, including incomplete or missing homework, materials, or items requiring parental signature
- Disrupting instructional time, including writing and/or passing notes in class
- Failing to care for school property, such as computers, text books, desks, lockers, etc.
- Consistent dress code violations, eg: unkempt appearance, short skirts/shorts, untucked shirts, etc. (after third violation and each consecutive violation)
- Not conforming to the uniform code relating to make-up, shoes, jewelry, hair, socks, etc. (after third violation and each consecutive violation)
- Failure to return a discipline report
- Misconduct during safety drills.
- Disrespectful behavior during prayer and/or worship
- Possessing and/or using a cell phone, smart watch, or any other electronic device when not permitted to do so (including school Chromebook)
- Failing to care for school property, such as computers, desks, books, etc.
- Disrespect for any person, both those in authority or other students
- Any behavior which the principal deems to be contrary to the school's values

A student may be issued a one-hour detention for the following major infractions:

- Being tardy for school or class **six or more** times during a grading period
- Fighting; violent or threatening behavior; harassment
- Repeated incidents of bullying behavior, physical, emotional, social, including repeated name calling, peer ridiculing, teasing in a hurtful manner
- Conduct detrimental to the reputation of the school
- Cheating; plagiarism; dishonest representation; lying
- Profane or foul language, writing, gestures, actions, or material
- Stealing; extortion
- Destruction of school or other's property, vandalism (in addition to to the punishment, the student will also have to make monetary reparations and/or clean the area involved)
- Using school equipment and/or facilities without permission
- Violation of the Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- Leaving school without permission; cutting class; truancy
- Physical or verbal abuse to other students, faculty, staff, or adult volunteers; refusal to comply with directions from adult
- Dangerous horseplay
- Willful disobedience as determined by previous detentions
- Any other behavior which the principal deems to be contrary to the school's values

To remediate unacceptable behavior the following actions for a major infraction will be taken:

- The parent/guardian will be called or emailed by the teacher and a copy of the discipline referral will be sent home. The parent will be asked to return a signed copy to the teacher the next day. In addition, denial of participation in school activities, including sports may be an immediate consequence of a major infraction.
- First Major Offense:
  - In addition to the above, a meeting will be held involving the student, parents/guardians, teacher(s) and may include principal and regional administration.
  - At this time an action plan in the form of a contract will be signed by all parties involved to describe how to avoid reoccurrence.
  - The student will serve a one hour after school detention.
- Second Major Offense:
  - In addition to the above, the student will receive an in-school suspension.
- Third Major Offense:
  - In addition to the above, the student will receive an out-of-school suspension for the fourth offense.
- There are some offenses that could result in an immediate suspension as indicated below.

Should the student receive a detention, the parent/guardian will receive a written notice with at least a 24-hour notice. It is in the best interest of the student that home and school work together for the child's academic and social development.

In the event of a serious act of misbehavior or repeated acts of misbehavior, a student may serve either an in-school or out-of-school suspension. If misconduct continues, a student may be asked to leave the school. These decisions rest with the administration and may be necessary for the benefit of the total program.

#### Aggressive Behavior

Fighting, using physical means to settle a disagreement is never acceptable. Any physical confrontation that may result in disciplinary action by the administration may result in the involvement of local law enforcement.

The developmental levels of the offending students will be taken into consideration when determining consequences.

#### Electronics

In order to maintain a focus-friendly environment, no student is permitted to have any electronic device (anything that can be turned on/off) on his/her person during school hours. This includes during special classes, lunch, recess, walking in the hallways, in bus rooms, and during dismissal. Students must deposit these items in the place designated by the homeroom teacher. If a student is found with an electronic device, it will be confiscated and kept in the office until a responsible adult picks it up.

Smart Watches should not be worn to school. Students are strongly advised to leave Smart Watches at home. If a Smart Watch is worn, it must also be deposited in the place designated by the teacher.

#### Extra-Curricular Activities

Since participation in extracurricular activities is a privilege, restrictions may be placed on student participation if unacceptable behavior is not altered. This includes athletic events.

Students with behavior incidents that take place at athletic events and/or extra-curricular activities are subject to all discipline policies and may be excluded from practice/games/activities as a consequence for their behavior.

#### Student Discipline Record

In accordance with Pennsylvania Act 2008-61, the parent/guardian of a student transferring to another school shall provide a sworn statement of affirmation stating whether the student previously was suspended or expelled from any public or private school of the Commonwealth or any other state for an offense involving weapons, alcohol or drugs; for the willful infliction of injury to another person; or for any act of violence committed on school property. A certified copy of the student's disciplinary record shall also be obtained from the school from which the student is transferring.

#### Suspension Policy (Diocesan Policy 550.02)

In the event of a serious infraction of school regulations or for repeated detentions, a student may serve either an in-school or out-of-school suspension. Suspension may vary in length from one to ten days. No prior notice is needed. The parent/guardian

will receive a written notice of suspension. This notice will explain why the student was suspended. It will also contain an agreement between the student/parents/guardians and the principal describing the student's future cooperation in a program designed to resolve the student's problems. If misconduct continues, a student may be asked to leave the school. These decisions rest with the administration and may be necessary for the benefit of the total program.

The following examples for suspension are illustrative but not exhaustive:

- Leaving the school grounds without permission
- Vandalism
- Theft
- Fighting
- Truancy
- Continued instances of bullying
- Conduct judged by the principal as seriously contrary to the purpose of Catholic education, the goals of the school, the physical or spiritual welfare of the students or members of the school community

Suspensions should be held in school, and the student not marked absent, unless the offense is particularly excessive, in which case, out-of-school suspension is the remedy. Out-of-school suspensions follow the same guidelines as in-school suspensions except assignments are given in the various subject areas for home study. The parent/guardian will meet during this time of suspension with the principal and teachers to define expectations upon the student's return.

As a general rule, suspensions are to be served in school as soon as possible. Students may not participate in lunch recess or in any school sponsored activities, including but not limited to athletics, from the date of the incident until after the suspension is served. If further suspensions occur, the student will be on probation and in danger of expulsion.

### Expulsion Policy

A student may be expelled for the following reasons:

- Chronic, undesirable conduct detrimental to the physical and/or moral well-being of self or other students as evidenced by an accumulation of suspensions.
- A single serious incident, event, or situation involving disregard for, or a clear violation of a school rule or regulation, such as possessing a weapon on school property.
- Conduct judged by the principal as seriously contrary to the purpose of Catholic education, the goals of the school, the physical or spiritual welfare of the students or members of the school community.

The foregoing listings establishing reasons for disciplinary action are not all inclusive. It remains the duty of the principal, administration and staff to deal appropriately and proportionately with individual instances of attitude or conduct which may occur.

In areas where a specific Diocesan policy exists, those policies apply and can result in referrals to law enforcement or other government agencies. Any of the items below will result in an immediate suspension, pending expulsion.

- Violations of weapons policy
- Violations of the drug/alcohol policy
- Violations of anti-sexting, harassment, anti-bullying (including cyber bullying) policies
- Any purposeful action that results in bodily harm to another
- Terroristic Threats or actions

In the case of expulsion, the student is suspended immediately with written notice to the parents that expulsion is under consideration. Once a determination is made, parents will be informed of the expulsion decision in writing. If the decision is in favor of expulsion, dismissal is immediate.

### Elastic Clause

Because it is impossible to foresee all problems that arise, this clause empowers the administration and faculty to take disciplinary action for any behavior that violates the spirit and philosophy of the school even though it is not specified in the Discipline Policy.

The principal/regional administrator/Department for Catholic Schools are the final recourse in all disciplinary situations and may waive any regulation for just cause, at his or her discretion. In the case of all suspensions and expulsions, Diocesan procedures are followed.

The Catholic Church and Divine Mercy Academy Catholic School recognize parents as the primary educators of their children. The education of students at our school is a partnership between parents and the school. If, in the opinion of the administration, the partnership is irretrievably broken, the school reserves the right to require the parent to withdraw his or her child. This is a very serious decision that is not made lightly.