

Divine Mercy Academy
FAMILY HANDBOOK 2023/2024

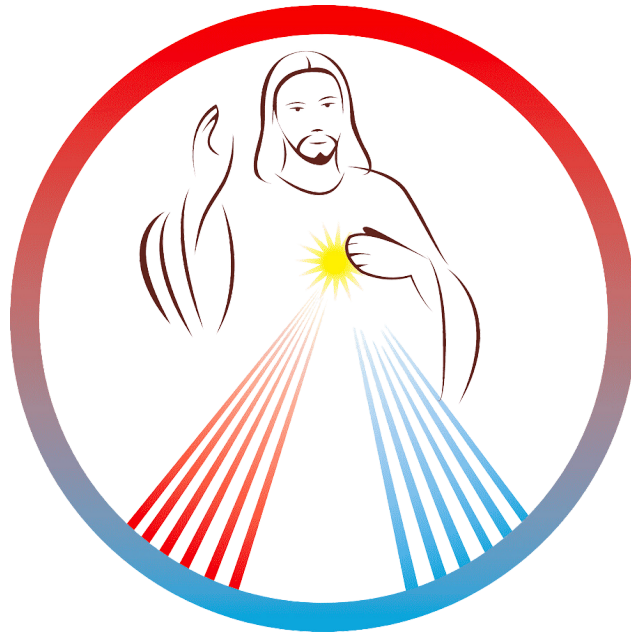
Mission Statement

At Divine Mercy Academy our mission is to provide a nurturing and faith-filled education rooted in Catholic teachings and the spirit of mercy. We celebrate each child's unique gifts endowed by God, and we empower students to grow spiritually, academically, and socially, fostering compassionate individuals who embody the love and mercy of Christ. Through a comprehensive curriculum, inclusive community, and strong partnership with families, we prepare students to become well-rounded leaders, making a positive impact in the world and Church through acts of mercy.



Divine Mercy Academy

2023/2024 Family Handbook



**245 Azalea Drive
Monroeville, PA 15146
412-372-7255
www.dmapgh.org**

**Nikole Laubham
Interim Principal**

**The PERCES Board and/or the principal reserve the right to amend the Family Handbook at any time.
Families will be given prompt notice of any amendment.**

Revised August 2023

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The administration of Divine Mercy Academy reserves the right to amend the Parent/Student Handbook at any time. Parents/Guardians will be given prompt notice of any amendment.

DIVINE MERCY ACADEMY SCHOOL FACULTY AND STAFF

Due to the nature of the job teachers are not available for calls during the school day. It is also the policy of the school that teacher's home phone numbers will not be released to the school community through the school office. Parents wishing to contact teachers may do so by sending a note with their child, emailing to the address below, or calling the office and leaving a message. The teachers will then respond to you as quickly as possible. Please contact your child's teacher first with any concerns as you will simply be redirected back to the teacher if you contact someone else first.

NAME	Office/ Homeroom	ROOM	E-MAIL
Mrs. Nikole Laubham	Interim Principal		nikole.laubham@dmaphg.org
Mrs. Erin Bozicevic	Administrative Assistant		schooloffice@dmaphg.org
Ms. Beth Bandurski	Preschool 4th Grade Language Arts	107 202	beth.bandursk@dmaphg.org
Mrs. Katie Fisher	Preschool Aide	107	katie.fisher@dmaphg.org
Ms. Angela Bellissimo	Preschool Aide	107	angela.bellissimo@dmaphg.org
Mrs. Melissa Seech	Preschool	105	melissa.seech@dmaphg.org
Mrs. Bonnie Benacquista	Preschool Aide	105	bonnie.benacquista@dmaphg.org
Ms. Kimberly Rossetti	Kindergarten	209	kim.rossetti@dmaphg.org
Ms. Julianne Skoner	First Grade	205	julianne.skoner@dmaphg.org
Ms. Allie Boff	2nd/3rd Language Arts 2nd Religion	210	allie.boff@dmaphg.org
Mrs. Samantha Rathjen	2nd/3rd Math, Science, Social Studies, 3rd Religion 6th Grade Religion Academic Support Coordinator	208 302	samantha.rathjen@dmaphg.org
Mrs. Erin Zeigler	4th Grade Homeroom 4th/5th Math, Science, Social Studies	204 204	erin.zeigler@dmaphg.org
Mrs. Lisa Rettig	5th Grade Homeroom 5th/6th Language Arts, 5th Religion	201	lisa.rettig@dmaphg.org
Mrs. Loretta Marrone	PreK - 8th Art PreK-8 STREAM	110 108	loretta.marrone@dmaphg.org
Mrs. Lisa Genton	6th Grade Homeroom 6th Grade Math & Science 7th Grade Religion Middle School Social Studies	303 303 302 303	lisa.genton@dmaphg.org
Mr. Alexander Kidwell	7th Grade Homeroom Middle School Math 7th & 8th Science	304	alexander.kidwell@dmaphg.org
Mrs. Jennifer Weaver	8th Grade Homeroom 7th & 8th Language Arts 8th Religion	301	jennifer.weaver@dmaphg.org
Mrs. Solimar Iorio	PreK-8th Spanish	200	solimar.iorio@dmaphg.org
Mr. Michael Visnick	PreK-8th Vocal Music	100	michael.visnick@dmaphg.org
Mrs. Kathleen Starr	Physical Education	GYM	kathleen.starr@dmaphg.org
Mrs. Michelle Long	Lunch Director	Cafeteria	michelle.long@dmaphg.org
Mrs. Susan Cwynar	Extend Care	109	susan.cwynar@dmaphg.org
Ms. Danielle Pazuchanics	Extended Care	109	danielle.pazuchanics@dmaphg.org

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Faculty, Staff, and Administration, welcome to Divine Mercy Academy (DMA). When you enrolled in Divine Mercy Academy, you became part of the rich history of education in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. We are proud to be both a community of families with shared values and a partner with parents in the education of their children.

It is the aim of Divine Mercy Academy to provide a Catholic educational setting in which our students and their families can integrate Gospel values in daily living. We strive to create a climate in which each child can develop spiritually, intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially, and in turn, enhance the world.

Each child will develop an understanding of Catholic Doctrine, Liturgy, the Sacraments, Sacred Scripture, and Personal Prayer to build a personal relationship with Christ and His Church.

All children will be provided with challenging, yet realistic goals to achieve their full potential. Individual learning styles and rates of achievement will be recognized.

Each child will receive guidance in developing sound attitudes and habits for both mental and physical health.

Each child will develop a Christian awareness of responsibility to God, family, parish, community, nation, and world.

VISION STATEMENT / DEPARTMENT FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The vision for the Department for Catholic Schools is to promote and to sustain Catholic Schools of unparalleled quality, which integrate faith into every aspect of life and culture, producing graduates who continually strive for human and Christian perfection.

MISSION

At Divine Mercy Academy our mission is to provide a nurturing and faith-filled education rooted in Catholic teachings and the spirit of mercy. We celebrate each child's unique gifts endowed by God, and we empower students to grow spiritually, academically, and socially, fostering compassionate individuals who embody the love and mercy of Christ. Through a comprehensive curriculum, inclusive community, and strong partnership with families, we prepare students to become well-rounded leaders, making a positive impact in the world and Church through acts of mercy.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

In accordance with our Gospel values our school assists parents in the formal education of their children.

We Believe:

- *That children are the world's most valuable asset.
- *In the dignity and individuality of each student.
- *That parish and parent involvement is essential.
- *In developing the sense of responsibility to the global community.
- *In a faith community that strives to serve all people.

PROFILE OF A GRADUATE

A graduate of Divine Mercy Academy will leave our school with a strong Catholic background rooted in the Gospel, allowing him/her to integrate these values into his/her everyday life. Through the attention to each child's spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development, our students will leave DMA ready to enhance the world.

HISTORY OF DIVINE MERCY ACADEMY

Divine Mercy Academy was established in 2018. It came into existence through the merger of North American Martyrs School and St. Bernadette School, both located in Monroeville. Divine Mercy Academy also became home to many former St. Bartholomew School and East Catholic School students during the past several years. Divine Mercy Academy has worked diligently over the past four years to establish its own, new identity within the Diocese and the community.

PARISH

The host parish of Divine Mercy Academy is Christ the Divine Shepherd Parish. CDS has two worship sites, one in Monroeville and the other in Penn Hills. Divine Mercy Academy is located at CDS's Monroeville location. Christ the Divine Shepherd is made up of the following six former parishes : North American Martyrs, St. Bartholomew, St. Bernadette, St. Gerard Majella, St. Michael, and St. Susanna.

REGION

Divine Mercy Academy is one of six schools that are part of the Pittsburgh East Regional Catholic Schools, Inc. (PERCES). In addition to Divine Mercy Academy, the PERCES Schools are: Holy Family School (Plum), Mary of Nazareth School (White Oak), Sacred Heart Elementary School (Shadyside), Saint Bede School (Point Breeze), and Saint Therese School (Munhall). The Regional Administrator for PERCES is Mr. Jonathan M. Cuniak.

MIDDLE STATES ACCREDITATION

The Middle States Evaluation is an ongoing process requiring the submission of updated plans every three years. After seven years the school is re-evaluated for continued accreditation. Our most recent accreditation was May 2018. Divine Mercy Academy will begin the accreditation process during the upcoming 2023/2024 school year with a visit from the MSA team in the fall of 2024.

CATECHETICS (Religious Education)

Catholic Faith Formation is the center of the Catholic school. A conscious effort is made to create a Christ-centered atmosphere by stressing Christian values in the classroom as well as throughout the school. It is our goal to integrate catechetics into every aspect of the school curriculum.

Our belief in Jesus has drawn us to this school community. Our beliefs are expressed in and strengthened by daily communal prayer. Students develop an understanding and a love for the Church's daily worship.

Morning prayer includes an introduction that briefly sketches the saint or feast of the day or some aspect of the liturgical season. Attention is also given to the seasons of the year, to the anniversaries of historical figures and peacemakers of our time, to the civil holidays that have significance for our children, and to birthdays of students, faculty, and staff members. Each morning, the students also pray with their classmates a prayer common to our Catholic Faith. (i.e. Our Father, Hail Mary, Act of Faith, etc.) with the hope that these prayers will become part of their personal prayer life.

Faith experiences are an integral part of catechetics. Opportunities for Eucharistic Liturgies, Reconciliation, Stations of the Cross, Devotion to Mary, classroom prayer, and service to others are included. Community is at the heart of Catholic education, not simply as a concept to be learned, but as a reality to be lived. For the 2023/2024 school year, we will be adding a service requirement for students in all grades K-8. This service requirement will be part of each child's religion grade. Since it may be difficult for our younger students to participate independently in service projects, we ask that parents and guardians accompany and/or assist their children with these outreach endeavors. Students must turn in a signed "service form" to his/her teacher to receive credit for service hours. Hours will be included in the second and fourth nine week's religion grades. The requirements are as follows:

- Kindergarten through Third Grade.....3 hours per semester (6 hours total per school year)
- Fourth through Sixth Grade.....4 hours per semester (8 hours total per school year)
- Seventh and Eighth Grade.....5 hours per semester (10 hours total per school year)

Student Masses are held at 9:00 AM every Friday school is in session at Divine Mercy Academy. Masses on Holy Days of Obligation are also scheduled at 9:00 AM. Kindergarten students traditionally begin joining students in grades 1-8 for Mass in early/mid-September. Dates and times of all Masses and services are communicated on monthly school calendars.

The principal, in conjunction with the local Pastors and the Catechetical Administrators, work with the teachers in the religious development and sacramental preparation of the students. Parent Preparation Programs for Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation are held during the year. These are parish programs and involve all eligible children and parents of the parish and school. It is important to note that the conferring of sacraments is the responsibility of the home parish of the child.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

CONTINUOUS GROWTH APPROACH TO INSTRUCTION

The Catholic Schools located within the Diocese of Pittsburgh are committed to a program of education that seeks knowledge and practice of the Catholic faith, academic excellence, moral courage and the learning of the faith in the light of social teachings of the Church.

The Catholic School offers a strong traditional curriculum. In the "Continuous Growth Program" of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, students advance through a defined curriculum according to their individual needs and abilities. In addition to meeting all the requirements of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the curriculum gives special attention to the integration of Gospel values.

Research indicates that children will achieve according to the expectancies placed upon them by their teachers and parents. Catholic school teachers place high expectations on all children so that all children are encouraged to achieve to the best of their ability.

This is particularly true in the skill areas of Reading and Math. The curricula for these subjects are so designed that students can advance through defined levels of competency according to their needs and abilities. Student achievement is evaluated at the students' grade level.

The goals of the Continuous Growth Program in Language Arts and Math are:

- to recognize and provide for differences in each student's growth patterns.
- to provide an environment in reading and math classes that permits and encourages continuous progress.
- to adapt the math and reading curriculum to each child so as to challenge maximum individual development.
- to encourage students to exert effort so that they may experience success in their encounter with each school situation.

Curriculum guidelines for all subject areas are provided through the Diocese of Pittsburgh Department for Catholic Schools. The guidelines endeavor to give continuity to the teaching/learning process and to meet individual needs of students. All textbooks are selected from texts, recommended by the Curriculum Directors of the diocese, that have a philosophy consistent with the Catholic philosophy of education and presentation of subject matter which is sequential, consistent, and adaptable to the Continuous Growth Program.

Flexible pacing is an important component of the continuous growth concept. This provision places students at an appropriate instructional level and then allows them to move forward in the curriculum as they achieve mastery of content and skills. Teachers will assess the instructional needs of students and provide differentiation through the use of small, flexible groups.

Teachers, recognizing different learning styles, vary their presentation and assignments so as to provide for the individual needs of each child. Critical thinking skills, problem solving and research techniques are a part of instruction. Enrichment activities are provided for all students, to broaden lessons presented.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Divine Mercy Academy strives to be as inclusive as possible in welcoming all students for whom we can provide an appropriate education. Therefore, we implement the Diocesan Academic Support Model to assist students who are struggling academically and/or have been identified as a person with a special need. Students may receive academic support through teacher-developed planning as needed. This can be accomplished in many ways including:

- Creating a growth plan for each student identified with a special need.
- Adapting curriculum as appropriate for identified students.
- Making accommodations and interventions that will benefit the student.
- Providing remedial reading and/or mathematics support programs.
- Providing speech and language support programs.
- Having an Equitable Participation professional observe the student as a consultative support to the school.
- Referring students to be screened for learning deficits.

Parents/Guardians who have a concern that their child may need additional academic support should contact their child's homeroom teacher. Specific steps will be outlined at that time which may include a team meeting with the parent, teacher and principal.

COURSE OFFERINGS

The following disciplines are included in the Divine Mercy Academy curriculum:

- Religion
- Reading: Phonics (PreK-3), Vocabulary, Comprehension, Literature
- English/ Writing /Library
- Spelling/Handwriting
- Mathematics: Concepts, Computation, Problem Solving, Pre-Algebra (7), Algebra (8)
- Science
- Health
- Social Studies
- Spanish (PreK-8)
- Computer Technology/STREAM (PreK-8)
- Fine Arts: Music (PreK-8), Art (PreK-8)
- Physical Education (PreK-8)

Catechetics/Religious Education

The Catholic Church recognizes parents/guardians as the primary educators of their children. The role of the school is to supplement and complement the role of the parent. In the school, a formal catechetical program is taught daily. The Diocesan Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines, "Growing in God's Covenant" contain a balance of doctrinal content, scriptural understanding, faith formation, and prayer and worship experiences.

Goals and objectives are constant and consistent to enhance the spiritual formation and moral development of all students. A genuine, personal relationship with God and the response of worship and service are ultimate goals of the religious instruction. Liturgical and personal prayer are outcomes of the guidance and religious instruction provided. Opportunities for both communal and personal prayer are a daily priority. Careful planning and programming ensure a broad and deep understanding of authentic Church Doctrine. A variety of materials and resources are used to foster both spiritual growth and moral development.

Parents are encouraged to communicate in words and actions the Church's teaching concerning human sexuality. When adults respond to their sexuality in a love-giving manner they enable their children to integrate the Church's teaching concerning human sexuality into their own lives. The Catholic Vision of Love is the Diocesan mandated Sexuality Program.

Language Arts

The language arts curriculum presents numerous opportunities for the integration of faith, culture and life by developing an awareness of the Gospel values. The philosophy inherent in the language arts curriculum is one of continuous growth, which recognizes and nurtures the God-given potential and learning style of the individual.

Language, as communication, enables one to become more perceptive through listening, observing and feeling. Language, as a skill, provides one with the important tools to speak fluently, to read and comprehend, to compose, to write legibly and to spell correctly. An awareness of the history of language and the continuous development of vocabulary also are important phases of skill development. An appreciation of literature enriches the student through the experience of skillful authors who vicariously open new worlds to the student.

Mathematics

It is our mission to enable all students to learn the skills, acquire the knowledge, and develop the attitudes in mathematics necessary for them to become morally and socially responsible citizens. The challenge is not only to meet and to exceed grade level expectations but to excite students to explore topics on their own, to develop proof for answers and to learn from one another.

Social Studies

In the Catholic School, Social Studies provides many opportunities for teachers to help students understand, appreciate, and learn how to live Christian social values.

The scope of the social studies curriculum includes elements of anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, and sociology, with emphasis on global awareness and values. An integrated interdisciplinary approach helps students develop a sense of relationship among the various social studies disciplines. A clear understanding of current events helps students to integrate the past with the present and prepares them for the future.

The Social Studies curriculum begins in kindergarten with an introduction to community helpers. It progresses in the primary grades to the study of family and friends, and later encompasses a more in-depth study of the community. Beginning in fourth grade, the curriculum focuses on the study of the United States land regions and Pennsylvania history. At the fifth grade level, both United States history through the Civil War and a study of the United States geographical regions are studied. Sixth grade students study World Cultures and World Geography with an emphasis on the countries of the Eastern Hemisphere. Seventh grade studies United States history to the Reconstruction and eighth grade studies United States history beginning with the Reconstruction to the modern day. Map and geography skills are taught at all levels. Social Studies prepares students for the future by instilling the importance of a value-oriented life perspective.

Science

The primary goals of the teaching of science in the Catholic schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh are to develop a respect for the sacredness of all life, the pursuit of peace and order in the world, and an awareness of the responsibility to be co-creators of life-giving designs and protectors of the environment.

The science curriculum focuses on an inquiry-based process and fosters collaborative learning. Science education strengthens life skills, such as creative problem solving, critical thinking, team cooperation, use of technology, and the value of life-long learning.

World Languages

Because the Church is universal and embraces all people, regardless of race, nationality and financial status, the Catholic school encourages the study of world languages and other cultures. World language students learn the sounds and syntax of the language and work toward proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing. A variety of materials and methods are used for instruction. Divine Mercy Academy offers Spanish in grades PreK-8.

Physical Education

Physical education is a vital component of the curriculum, which assists students in identifying their physical strengths and weaknesses and encourages them to build on their strengths to achieve personal goals. Students learn to follow rules and to respect the rights of others through games and physical activity. Learning to channel energies constructively helps students perform successfully in life.

Health

The curriculum presents information at each level of development to help students make wise, moral decisions with respect for the God-given gift of life. The health curriculum places holistic emphasis on wellness, fitness, behaviors, and skills for healthy, active living. Education and health for children are inextricably intertwined. Students then have the benefit of sustained learning for reducing health-risk behaviors and enhancing health-promoting behaviors.

Fine Arts

In the Fine Arts program, students have the opportunity to deepen their awareness of God's gift of creation and to respond creatively to the beauty and goodness of the world through music, art and drama. Instruction in the Arts contributes to the development of the whole person, promotes individual expression, allows experimentation with diverse materials and elements, enables exploration and appreciation of the works of other students and major artists and musicians, develops an awareness and sensitivity toward the environment, and finally promotes a deeper understanding of heritage and culture. The Fine Arts curriculum provides a holistic approach to education that incorporates many aspects of the core curriculum and can be integrated into the total educational experience. Although students will have classes dedicated to visual art and music each week, our teachers strive to integrate the arts into all aspects of the curriculum.

Technology/STREAM

Technology instruction is essential in today's educational process. It starts with computer awareness and computer literacy, but goes much further with the integration of STREAM (Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Art, and Math). This promotes logical thinking and problem-solving, creative writing, communication, the handling of information, and many other areas of learning.

Our teachers also look beyond hardware and, through the use of our new Maker Space/STREAM Lab, allow students to develop an awareness of values such as relationships, collaboration, ethical conduct, responsibility and creative expression. As in all other areas of the curriculum, the integration of the Gospel values is a part of the teaching/learning process in the computer lab and classroom.

Library

The school library exists primarily to support and enrich the curriculum. It is a service and teaching agency as well as a place of purposeful learning where the use of all resources correlate with the school curriculum to intensify and individualize a child's educational experiences. The Library is an integrated part of the total curriculum and is an essential element in the development of lifelong learning skills for students. The Library at DMA is in its final stages of renovation and will be available for students to use with their classroom teachers.

***There will be a charge for lost or damaged books so as to replace it in our library.

Internet Use Policy

This guideline is established to ensure understanding and application of Divine Mercy Academy's Internet Use Policy. Divine Mercy Academy reserves the right to amend these guidelines at any time. It is understood that the administration of Divine Mercy Academy will inform parents/guardians of any changes through written communication from the principal via monthly newsletter and/or email message. **Students' parents and/or guardians are required to review these guidelines with their child(ren) and complete and return a parent/guardian consent form annually.**

This guideline includes, but is not limited to, the following areas:

- Information and news from a wide variety of sources and research institutions
- Public domain and shareware software of all types
- Discussion groups
- Access to any educational institutions and libraries
- Social Media Sites

Internet Etiquette

All students are required to:

- Be polite when sending written messages to others.
- Use appropriate language in all messages.
- Avoid anything pertaining to illegal activity.
- Protect information, personal or otherwise.
- Respect others' access to the internet.
- Remember that deleted materials can be retrieved.

The following actions, which are not inclusive, are considered unacceptable actions:

- Unauthorized use of the school or region's branding including name, logo, etc.
- Use of anyone's picture or likeness without expressed written permission
- Placing unlawful information on the Internet
- **Using the Internet for non-school related activities during the academic day**
- Sending messages that are likely to result in loss of the recipients work or systems
- Using the Internet for commercial purposes
- Using the Internet for political lobbying
- Sending or receiving copyrighted material without permission
- Plagiarism
- Using Internet access to send or retrieve pornographic material, inappropriate file text, files dangerous to the integrity of the system, violent or threatening material or messages
- Circumventing security measures on school or remote computers or networks
- Vandalism
- Falsifying one's identity
- **Using social media sites during the school day**
- **Using the Internet for to send personal messages or emails to family members and friends during the school day**
- **Using the Internet to harass another person or engage in personal attacks, including prejudicial or discriminatory attacks, cyber bullying**

Chromebook and/or Tablet Usage

Students in grades 2-8 will be issued a Chromebook which will be kept at school. Students in grades K & 1 will have the opportunity to use classroom sets of Chromebooks and tablets throughout the year. All students will have access to Google Classroom outside of school which they can access via personal devices for homework, assignments, study materials, etc.

Each student is responsible for plugging in and charging his/her Chromebook at the end of each school day. Students must also provide a **case** to transport his/her Chromebook from class to class. Students are expected to handle their devices with great care, keeping them clean and protected at all times.

Permission slips for the Chromebooks, in addition to the internet release, are needed before the students can use the Chromebook. This year, we will also begin collecting a \$20 Chromebook usage fee from each student in grades 2-8. This fee will be used to cover any necessary repairs due to **accidental damage**. If a device is lost or damaged due to neglect or irresponsible behavior/usage, the student/family will be financially responsible for associated replacement/repair costs. Divine Mercy Academy will not assume or accept responsibility for devices lost, damaged, or stolen.

All students are required to use a school issued Chromebook or Tablet. No personal devices will be allowed to be used. Personal devices are not permitted due to security reasons. School issued devices are monitored through the school's security system. Teachers will inform students when the technology devices are permitted to be used in the classroom for educational purposes. Students are not permitted to use technology without the permission of the teacher. Students are not permitted to send personal emails, texts, or messages throughout the school day. Violations of any of these policies and/or the Internet Acceptable Use Agreement will result in disciplinary action and the student will lose the privilege of using technology during the school day.

Conduct

Conduct, whether inside or outside the school, which is detrimental to the reputation of the school, can result in discipline. Therefore, defamatory or threatening statements and images exchanged on social media can result in discipline of the student account holders.

No one may use the school name, logo or motto on any type of social media or in any other way, e.g. putting the name on t-shirts without the express written permission of the principal.

As Divine Mercy Academy requests parent permission for posting student photographs, online posting of photos of students during school hours is strictly prohibited, regardless if the name of the student is used or not. This includes school volunteers and parents posting photos on social media platforms of school events of children other than their own.

Cell Phone and/or Smart Watch Usage

Cell phones and/or Smart Watches **are not permitted** to be used in school during the school day. If a member of the faculty/staff sees a student's cellular device (whether or not it is on and/or being used), the device will be confiscated immediately. If a phone or smart watch is confiscated, it will be held in the office for **parent** pick-up along with a **detention slip**. **NO** student is permitted to carry a **cellular phone or wear a smart watch** while in school. If a student needs to bring a cell phone and/or smart watch to school, it is to be turned OFF and kept in the teacher's designated area. Electronic devices may only be carried by students with special needs and/or as approved by school administration. Divine Mercy Academy is not responsible for lost or damaged items.

Technology is to be used for educational purposes only. Violation of any of these policies and/or the Internet Acceptable Use Agreement will result in disciplinary action and the student will lose the privilege of using technology during the school day.

TESTING PROGRAM

Formative and summative assessments are regular components of classroom instruction at Divine Mercy Academy. These assessments require students to synthesize information, apply what they have learned and demonstrate their understanding of what has been taught. In addition, standardized tests and Diocesan assessments are administered to gauge student progress, identify individual student skills as well as strengths and weaknesses of the overall school academic program in comparison to other Diocesan and national schools.

Achievement Tests

Students in grades 3-8 are administered a standardized test to measure progress from one year to another. A component of the standardized testing program for grades 4 and 6 is a cognitive abilities section, which helps compare a student's achievement with other students of the same age, grade, and ability. If a child should be absent due to illness, every attempt will be made to enable the child to make-up the tests. However, since the tests must be mailed on the last scheduled test day, make-up testing often necessitates taking more tests daily than is ideal. To prevent this, trips and non-emergency appointments should not be scheduled during testing weeks. Testing weeks will be published as soon as the dates are available.

Acadience Reading

Acadience Reading is a screening assessment administered to students in grades K-3 minimally three times a year (September, January, May). This tool helps teachers identify specific needs of emergent readers and to identify goals to move the student forward academically.

IXL

Starting in the 2023/2024 school year, Divine Mercy Academy will begin using IXL with grades 1-8 in reading and math. IXL is a targeted learning tool. It offers experiences for students, tailored to their age group by specific subject and topic. By offering analytics and recommendations, it is able to help support teaching and learning with a very focused outcome. Teachers will be able to utilize the results to best fit the needs of their students.

AUXILIARY SERVICE

Remedial Reading and Math (Act 89)

Allegheny Intermediate Unit (IU3) personnel work with and provide support to students who are not demonstrating grade level proficiency in reading and/or math. This service is a pull-out remedial program for eligible students based on teacher referrals, standardized test results, and parent approval. Alternate strategies are planned for students in accordance with individual goals and in support of the classroom curriculum to help students develop mastery of basic skills.

Speech/Language

Speech and language services are provided through Act 89 funding. This service is offered through the Allegheny Intermediate Unit who screens and identifies students whose moderate or severe impairment of language, articulation, voice or fluency impacts academic performance. This program is a pull-out health related service that accommodates individuals as well as groups to enhance communication skills which directly impact social and academic interactions.

Educational Psychological Testing

This service is an academic evaluation or a consultation for students not meeting expectations appropriate for grade or chronological age. The evaluation is to identify accommodations and adaptations that can be used in the classroom to help the student.

Psychological testing is available by parent/guardian request or at the recommendation of the teacher in consultation with the principal. Parents/guardians make the final decision. Parents/guardians may request testing in writing through their school district of residency or through the intermediate unit. Divine Mercy Academy faculty and the student's parents complete the necessary forms and forward them to the school district. Results are formally reported to parents/guardians, principal and teachers along with a list of recommendations made by the psychologist. This information is kept confidential and not shared with anyone without parent/guardian permission.

Counseling

This service offered through the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (IU3) addresses school related issues by a qualified and certified school counselor. Children may be referred by parents, principal, teachers, and through self-referral. Individual counseling requires parental permission. However, a student may be seen one time without parental consent if deemed necessary by the principal.

At Divine Mercy Academy, we value the personal and social development of your child as much as their academic growth and success. Throughout the school year, our School Counselor from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit will be visiting classrooms to present lessons based on the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) standards. ASCA standards address the career, academic, and personal/social development of all students. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the principal or school counselor.

Equitable Participation

This service offered through the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (IU3) provides a range of academic, behavior and speech and language consultation services.

Gifted Program

Admission to the Gifted Program for students in the local school district is based on results of standardized academic testing, tests of cognitive skills, and academic performance. The parent/guardian submits a letter to the school district requesting testing. Divine Mercy Academy completes the necessary forms and forwards them to the school district. Students who are accepted attend classes in a local public school of their particular school district. They are responsible for making up missed classroom work.

Student Assistance Program

Act 211 of 1990 mandates the Student Assistance Program (SAP) in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It is a comprehensive program of prevention, intervention, and support for students in grades K-12. The members of the Team are the principal and faculty members of the school who have received special training through approved agencies.

The program exists in order to promote the growth and development of the child. The team members work with students who are experiencing educational and behavior difficulties which impact their social, emotional, and educational progress.

Faculty and/or parents/guardians make referrals for the program. Once the team has received a referral, classroom teachers are asked to complete a form which helps identify the behaviors. The team then makes informed assumptions as to what is needed to help the student. They convey this information to classroom teachers, parents/guardians and evaluate the results. If necessary, after consultation with parents, appropriate referrals are made to outside agencies.

Team members must maintain all information regarding students and their families under safeguard of privacy and confidentiality. Access is limited to those who have a legitimate educational interest.

CURRICULAR RELATED

Assemblies

Assemblies are held throughout the school year. The assemblies are planned in conjunction with the principal and faculty with a focus on education.

Field Trips

Every class is permitted field trips during the year. Each student must have a signed permission slip before he/she is permitted to participate. Transportation, in accordance with diocesan directives, is provided by bus, and a fee is charged to cover costs. Every effort is to make costs as reasonable as possible. If costs for a field trip are a hardship, the family is encouraged to contact the principal to make arrangements for assistance.

Guidelines for both students and chaperones are in effect for each trip. Proper behavior is expected from students and chaperones on field trips. Chaperones are selected at the discretion of the teacher and may not be necessary for every field trip.

Chaperones on field trips must have all clearances required by the Safe Environment Policy of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Homework

A reasonable amount of homework, according to grade level, is of great educational value. Assignments are not always written. Independent reading, study and memory work are frequently assigned. Homework is assigned on a regular basis to enrich school experiences, provide practice and review, develop good study habits, teach responsibility, and foster originality.

Parents can assist students with home assignments in the following ways:

- Provide a quiet spot away from distracting elements
- Check to see what was accomplished during the designated study time regarding completeness, neatness, and correctness
- Be willing to listen to reading, spelling, and math facts and to explain procedures, but never do the assignment
- Consult the OptionC on-line homework information and/or the student planner if the child uses the excuse "no homework" too often.

The Diocese recommends the following time schedule for home study:

Primary (Grades K-2)	10-30 minutes
Intermediate (Grades 3-5)	40-60 minutes
Middle School (Grades 6-8)	70-90 minutes

At the discretion of the teacher, late or missing assignments may not be accepted. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, homework is expected to be turned in on the date of the submission deadline. If a teacher chooses to accept late assignments, it is at his/her discretion on whether to give full or partial credit for the assignment. Under no circumstances will homework or assignments be accepted after the grading period has ended.

If a child is regularly spending significantly more time on homework than the above guidelines, please contact your child's teacher.

Library

Our library renovations are nearing an end. The school library will be open on school days. Teachers will have the opportunity to take their students to the library on a weekly basis as well as when needed for projects, research, etc. All books may be checked out for one week and a fine is charged for overdue books. Generally, the fine is five cents per day. This fine may be lowered at the discretion of the principal. Students are responsible to pay for any lost or damaged books. Final records may not be released if lost or damaged books are not returned or replaced.

DAILY PRACTICES AND POLICIES

ADMISSIONS/REGISTRATION POLICIES

Divine Mercy Academy admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to all students at the school. Divine Mercy Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Students applying for admission to grades 6, 7 and 8 will be interviewed by the principal or his/her designee prior to admission. This requirement may be waived if the student presents a letter of recommendation from the principal of the previous Catholic School or the Director (Coordinator) of Religious Education of a Parish Catechetical Program.

All transfer students will be screened to determine if placement is appropriate. All transfer students are admitted on a probationary basis, and some transfer students will be admitted on a probationary and conditional basis. These students will be monitored closely to be sure placement is appropriate.

From time to time, it may become necessary for students to transfer between schools within the Pittsburgh-East Regional Catholic Elementary Schools, Inc. Families are encouraged to contact their current building principal before beginning the enrollment process in another PERCES School. A student may be accepted for transfer between PERCES Schools only upon agreement between the principals of both buildings and after consultation with the Regional Administrator.

Students can be admitted with a disability if, with reasonable accommodation, the student can meet program requirements.

Children who are not of the Catholic faith are expected to participate in religion classes and to attend all religious functions of the school/church.

Registration

Registrations are accepted beginning in late January or early February.

Age Requirements

- Students entering preschool must be three years old (PreK3 Program) or four years old (PreK4 Program) before September 1.
- Students entering kindergarten must be five years of age before September 1.
- Students entering first grade must be six years of age before September 1.
- Those registering for grades 1-8 must fulfill the age requirement for the desired grade.

Records Required

- Complete medical records and official certificates of birth and baptism are required at the time of registration.
- When a student transfers, a certified copy of the student's disciplinary record must be obtained from the school from which the student is transferring prior to admission.
- All parents and students are to sign the "Catholic School Memorandum of Understanding."
- Students applying for admission to grades 6, 7 and 8 will be interviewed by the principal or his/her designee prior to admission. This requirement may be waived if the student presents a letter of recommendation from the principal of the previous Catholic School or the Director (Coordinator) of Religious Education of a Parish Catechetical Program.

Grade level and academic group determinations are made on the basis of school records.

A waiting list will be established if/when any grade level (Preschool-8th grade) reaches capacity. A second section of any grade level may be opened (if not already opened) once the number of students makes it economically feasible for the school to do so.

Immunization

Immunization records must be complete before any child may enter school. The requirements, as indicated by Pennsylvania State Law, are as follows:

Grades K – 8

- 4 doses of tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis* (1 dose on or after the 4th birthday)
- 4 doses of polio ** (4th dose on or after 4th birthday and at least 6 months after previous dose given)
- 2 doses of measles, mumps, rubella***
- 3 doses of Hepatitis B
- 2 doses of varicella (chickenpox) or evidence of immunity

**Usually given as DTP or DTaP or if medically advisable, DT of Td*

*** A fourth dose is not necessary if the third dose was administered at age 4 years or older and at least 6 months after the previous dose*

**** Usually given as MMR*

Grades 7 – 8

- one dose of tetanus/diphtheria/acellular pertussis (Tdap)
- one dose of meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV)

ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL, unless the child has a medical or religious/philosophical exemption, a child must have had at least one dose of the above vaccinations or risk exclusion.

- If a child does not have all the doses listed above, needs additional doses, and the next dose is medically appropriate, the child must receive that dose within the first five days of school or risk exclusion. If the next dose is not the final dose of the series, the child must also provide a medical plan within the first five days of school for obtaining the required immunizations or risk exclusion.
- If a child does not have all the doses listed above, needs additional doses, and the next dose is not medically appropriate, the child must provide a medical plan within the first five days of school for obtaining the required immunizations or risk exclusion.

Questions about immunizations should be directed to your family physician. Failure to have a child properly immunized or failure to produce immunization records may result in exclusion from the school

Memorandum of Understanding

Parents enrolling their child(ren) in a Catholic school, are expected to accept this memorandum of understanding, support the Catholic identity and mission of Divine Mercy Academy, and uphold all the principles and policies that govern a Catholic school.

The primary purpose of a Catholic school education is to form students in the values of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Catholic schools are distinctive religious education institutions operated as programs of the Catholic Church; they are not private schools but are administered and supported by the Pittsburgh-East Region, the diocese, or religious community. Attending a Catholic school is a privilege, not a right. While academic excellence and involvement in extracurricular activity (i.e., sports, clubs, etc.) are important, fidelity to the Catholic identity of the school is the fundamental priority. The school and its administration have the responsibility to ensure that Catholic values and moral integrity permeate every facet of the school's life and activity. In all questions involving faith, morals, faith teaching, and Church law, the final determination rests with the diocesan bishop.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance and punctuality are major factors in determining academic success. Only serious illness or a family emergency should cause a student to be absent. **Excessive absenteeism is a contributing factor to a student's academic difficulties.** Parents and guardians of students who acquire excessive absences will be required to provide documentation from a physician indicating that the absences are related to an existing medical condition. Students absent for more than thirty days during the academic year may be denied academic promotion. Students are responsible for making up all work missed due to absence.

Absence

Absences from school are defined as either **excused** or **unexcused** according to guidelines from the Pennsylvania School Code. Excused absences include illness, quarantine, impassable roads, recognized religious holidays, and urgent reasons, such as a death in the family or a court appearance. The state guidelines also permit an excused absence for trips if a request is sent to the school prior to the dates of the trip. If no prior notice is received, the absence is classified as unexcused.

According to the Pennsylvania School Code (1327, 1327.1), "the person(s) who are caring for the child – usually the child's parent(s), but sometimes a guardian, relative or foster parent – are legally responsible for making sure that the child attends school."

According to the Pennsylvania School Code, Section 1332, "The absence of any pupil who remains out of school with or without his parent's permission, and is not absent because of illness or for other urgent reasons, as defined in the School Code, shall be unexcused. Such absence will be recorded as 'unlawful-unexcused' for a pupil who is under the compulsory attendance age." Section 1333, "Any such child who has been absent three days, or their equivalent, during the term of compulsory attendance, without lawful excuse...shall be given written notice. If, after such notice is given..., attendance is again violated by the person, such person shall be liable... for referral to the magistrate."

The following regulations are the policy of Divine Mercy Academy:

- A student's absence must be reported to the school via the form on the website or by telephone (412-372-7255) prior to 8:30 AM in the morning.
- After a student has been absent for 3 consecutive days, an excuse from a licensed physician is necessary.
- After a student has been absent for twenty days, an excuse from a licensed physician will be required for the **remainder of the year.**

Upon returning to school from an absence, a student must submit a written excuse signed by the parent or guardian to the homeroom teacher, stating the reason for the absence and the date or dates of absence as required by state law. Following a communicable disease or extended absence, a note must be presented from a doctor certifying that the student is able to return to school. A written excuse must be received within three days of the absence, or the absence will be classified as unexcused.

Students who leave school early for reasons other than illness MUST have a WRITTEN REQUEST from a parent/guardian and permission from the principal. If someone other than a parent is picking up a student, this must be stated in a **WRITTEN** note requesting an early dismissal. Persons who are picking up students at times other than the regular dismissal must enter the school lobby and sign the child(ren) out at the kiosk. Students will only be released to persons listed on the emergency card. Identification is required. Student(s) will only be released after the sign-out is complete.

A written excuse should be given to the teacher for the following reasons:

- Following an absence
- Excused from gym class - If the excuse from gym is for an extended period of time, a note from the doctor is required.
- Permission for out of school appointments (child is expected to return when possible)
- Attending funerals
- Vacation
- Change of plans in leaving school (bus, ride or walk)
- Early dismissal

Parents and guardians of students who acquire excessive absences (ten days) may be required to provide documentation from a physician indicating that the absences are related to an existing medical condition.

Assignments and tests missed during absences must be made up upon return to school. It is the student's responsibility to see each teacher about work missed and to see that it is completed within a reasonable time after the return to school.

A student is responsible for making up all work when absent from school and for completing the course of study prescribed by the State and the Department for Catholic Schools.

Students arriving before the stated time of arrival and/or remain after the normal supervision time ends will be placed in our extended care program, and parents will be billed at the standard rate.

Return from School Following Illness

It is the goal of Divine Mercy Academy to keep illnesses at a minimum. Students who are ill should stay home for the purpose of the safety of all.

Early Dismissals/Late Arrivals

Parents/Guardians should make every effort to schedule appointments at a time that school is not in session. Days off for students are published for your convenience on our school website. If a child must have an early dismissal, he/she must have a written note for the principal's approval. For these dismissals, parents or an authorized adult must sign the student out at the kiosk in the lobby and wait for your child to be dismissed. If an appointment is made for early in the day, it is important to have the student return to school as soon as possible.

No Early Dismissals will be permitted after 2:50 PM. Please plan appointments accordingly. After 2:50 PM, students must wait for regular dismissal time.

Tardiness

Students are tardy when not present in the classroom at 8:30 AM. A parent or guardian **must accompany** the child into the school lobby and sign the student in via the kiosk. A late slip will then be given to the child to enter the classroom. During each grading period, every unexcused tardy after 3 will result in a lunch detention. During each grading period, each tardy after 6 will require an after school detention to be served. Students who arrive after 11:15 AM are marked absent for the morning session. Children who leave school before 12:15 PM are marked absent for the afternoon.

Vacations

Parents are strongly encouraged to schedule vacations when school is not in session. If students are away from school on vacation, teachers may not be able to give all assignments before they leave. All work missed during the vacation time will be due within a reasonable time upon the student's return. Parents must inform teachers at least one week in advance of travel absences.

DAILY SCHEDULE

The following is the standard schedule. Divine Mercy Academy follows a modified schedule on school delay and early dismissal days.

7:00 AM	Extended Care Available
8:20 AM	School Doors Open - All students being dropped off via car are to enter through the blue doors closest to the church.
8:30 AM	Students Considered Tardy - HOMEROOM
8:35 AM	Period 1
9:15 AM	Period 2
9:55 AM	Period 3
10:35 AM	Period 4
11:15 AM	Period 5A – First Lunch (Grades K-4)
11:50 AM	Period 5B – Second Lunch (Grades 5-8 and PreK)
12:25 PM	Period 6
1:05 PM	Period 7
1:45 PM	Period 8
2:25 PM	Period 9
3:05 PM	Return to Homeroom
3:10 PM	Closing Prayer/Announcements
3:15 PM	Dismissal - Extended Care Available
6:00 PM	Extended Care Ends

In order to ensure a safe environment for all students, students may not arrive at school any earlier than 7:00 AM for extended care and 8:20 AM for regular day.

CAFETERIA/RECESS

Lunch

Pittsburgh East Regional Catholic Elementary Schools Inc promotes healthy students by providing a healthy environment where students learn and participate in positive dietary and lifestyle practices. By facilitating learning through the support and promotion of good nutrition and physical activity, schools contribute to the basic health status of students. Improved health optimizes student performance potential.

All students must bring or buy lunch. The cost of lunch is \$4.00. Milk may be purchased separately for students who pack. The cost of milk is \$0.50.

The use of good manners is encouraged and, therefore, the following cafeteria rules are to be observed:

- Remain seated while eating.
- Raise your hand if you need to get out of your seat.
- Only discard trash, etc. when directed by an adult as you prepare to leave the cafeteria.
- Refrain from abusing food; your own or that of others. Never throw food.
- Obey cafeteria monitors at all times.
- Be courteous and respectful to all those who are helping in the cafeteria.
- Speak in a conversational tone.
- Walk at all times.
- DO NOT take food or drinks from the cafeteria.

Parents and guardians are not to bring food to the cafeteria during the lunch period. If a child forgets to bring lunch, it can be dropped off at the office, or he/she may purchase lunch from the cafeteria.

The cafeteria is operated in accordance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, age, handicap, religion, or national origin.

Recess

Students will have a recess period every day which will be monitored by the teachers.

For the safety and wellbeing of all students, we have the following rules during recess time:

- 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 assigned designated areas.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Students are never to leave the playground area without the permission of the principal and the knowledge of the teacher on recess duty. In case of illness or accident, the student is to report to the school office under the supervision of a monitor.

If a child has an early dismissal during recess time, the parent or designee picking up the child must follow normal procedures and sign the child out at the kiosk in the school lobby. School personnel will escort the child from recess to the main office for dismissal.

Teachers with the students at recess have the responsibility of enforcing rules. They are to be obeyed and treated respectfully. When the bell rings to end the playground session, the students will be met by their homeroom teacher and brought to their classrooms. If inclement weather makes it necessary to stay indoors at lunchtime, teachers are to take students to the gymnasium. The same recess rules as above are to be followed and enforced. We will make every effort to have children play outside. We will use the gymnasium if the temperature falls below 40 degrees.

DRESS CODE

Divine Mercy Academy is a Catholic elementary school which maintains the right to establish a uniform dress code for its students. It is recognized that proper school attire and good grooming are conducive to a student's educational and social development. The dress code was developed to promote a Christian atmosphere, free children for academic concentration, de-emphasize competition among children regarding clothing, allow more economical dress for school, and provide some choice to accommodate individual differences.

This dress code policy is intended to maintain a standard of dress that is neat, economical, modest, and clean. The goal of a dress code is to emphasize neatness and care appropriate to serious pursuits such as learning. All students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade are required to follow the dress code and be in uniform during each school day (see Gym Uniform Policy for students' designated gym day). It is the obligation of the parents/guardians to see that student dress is according to the guidelines and the spirit for which the uniform was adopted.

Each student is required to purchase one (1) DMA-embroidered, Navy Blue Polo. This shirt is to be worn on Fridays for School Mass, on Holy Days for Mass, or whenever directed by the principal for other events. These and all other embroidered items may be purchased through Log Cabin Embroidery www.logcabinembroidery.com. Additional polos and all other embroidered items are optional. Optional DMA Navy/Red Plaid skirts, jumpers, and accessories may be purchased through Log Cabin Embroidery or through any retailer (Schoolbelles, JCPenney, French Toast, Amazon.com, etc.) which offers a matching pattern.

	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>
Shirts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red, White Light Blue, or Navy Polo shirts, long or short sleeved - NO pockets, patterns or logos (other than DMA) Collared, button front long or short sleeved dress shirts in Red, White, or Navy - NO pockets, patterns, or logos (other than DMA) DMA embroidered Navy Polo shirt, available through Log Cabin Embroidery Shirts without ribbed bottoms must be tucked in at all times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red, White Light Blue, or Navy Polo shirts, long or short sleeved - NO pockets, patterns or logos (other than DMA) Collared, button front long or short sleeved dress shirts in Red, White, or Navy - NO pockets, patterns, or logos (other than DMA) DMA embroidered Navy Polo shirt, available through Log Cabin Embroidery. Shirts without ribbed bottoms must be tucked in at all times.
Sweatshirts/ Pullovers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DMA embroidered full-zip fleece jackets in Navy Blue DMA zip-up wicking jacket in Navy Blue DMA pullover sweatshirts Hoodies are NOT permitted to be worn in school. Uniform shirts must be worn under all sweatshirts/pullovers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DMA embroidered full-zip fleece jackets in Navy Blue DMA zip-up wicking jacket in Navy Blue DMA pullover sweatshirts Hoodies are NOT permitted to be worn in school. Uniform shirts must be worn under all sweatshirts/pullovers.
Sweaters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sweaters in Red, White, or Navy - button front or full-zip cardigan style Pullover vests in Red, White, or Navy Uniform Shirt must be worn under all sweaters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sweaters in Red, White, or Navy - button front or full-zip cardigan style Pullover vests in Red, White, or Navy Uniform Shirt must be worn under all sweaters.
Pants/Shorts Bottoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dress Style Flat of Pleated Navy or Khaki Pants or Shorts* Navy, Khaki or Plaid skirts, skorts or jumpers. Cargo shorts, carpenter pants, skinny pants, and leggings are not permitted. Shorts/Skirts/Skorts.Jumpers must be no shorter than 2 inches above the knee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dress Style Flat of Pleated Navy or Khaki Pants or Shorts* Cargo shorts, carpenter pants, skinny pants, and leggings are not permitted. Shorts are to sit at the waist and not be excessively baggy. <p><i>*Shorts are permitted from April 1-October 31 unless otherwise announced by the administration.</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Solid colored shorts, opaque tights, or full length legging (in color of the socks) are to be worn under skirts/jumpers. ● Tights or leggings MUST be worn under skirts when the morning temperature is below 40 degrees. <p><i>*Shorts are permitted from April 1-October 31 unless otherwise announced by the administration.</i></p>	
Socks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Red, Navy, Black, Tan or White plain socks ● Red, Navy, White, or opaque tights - NO PATTERNS OR DESIGNS ● Socks must be worn at all times. ● Socks must be visible. ● Socks may not have conspicuous logos, patterns, or designs on them. Solid colors only. (SMALL Nike, Adidas, etc. symbols are permissible.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Black, Navy, Tan, or White plain socks. ● Socks must be worn at all times. ● Socks must be visible. ● Socks may not have conspicuous logos, patterns, or designs on them. Solid colors only. (SMALL Nike, Adidas, etc. symbols are permissible.)
Shoes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Black, White, Gray, Tan, Brown, or Navy Tennis Shoes with NO designs, lights, or bright colors ● Black, Brown, Tan, or Navy Dress Shoes, including “Sperry” style shoes.* ● Shoes must be flat and closed toed. ● Laces must be tied - NO BRIGHTLY COLORED OR PATTERNED LACES ● Younger students (Grades PK-3) may wear Velcro or easy-on/off shoes. ● Boots are not to be worn with the school uniform. When rain/snow boots are worn to school, uniform shoes must be brought for students to change into. ● Backless shoes, flip flops or slippers are never permitted. ● Fluorescent colored shoes are not permitted. ● Shoes may not be heeled more than one inch. ● Wheeled or light up shoes are not permitted. <p><i>*Tennis shoes are required on gym days.*</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Black, White, Gray, Tan, Brown, or Navy Tennis Shoes with NO designs, lights, or bright colors ● Black, Brown, Tan, or Navy Dress Shoes, including “Sperry” style shoes.* ● Shoes must be flat and closed toed. ● Laces must be tied - NO BRIGHTLY COLORED OR PATTERNED LACES ● Younger students (Grades PK-3) may wear Velcro or easy-on/off shoes. ● Boots are not to be worn with the school uniform. When rain/snow boots are worn to school, uniform shoes must be brought for students to change into. ● Backless shoes, flip flops or slippers are never permitted. ● Fluorescent colored shoes are not permitted. ● Shoes may not be heeled more than one inch. ● Wheeled or light up shoes are not permitted. <p><i>*Tennis shoes are required on gym days.*</i></p>
Hair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hair should be neat, clean, and a natural color. Subtle highlights are permitted. ● Fad hairstyles are not permitted. ● Hair must NOT cover the eyes or face. ● Subtle hair accessories (i.e. clips, barrettes, hair ties, headbands, or small bows) are acceptable as long as they are in line with DMA's school colors (red, black, white, brown, navy, or school plaid) ● Excessively large bows or hair adornments are not acceptable. ● No bandanas or headscarves permitted. ● Headbands may not have cat ears, slogans, or any other type of adornment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hair should be neat, clean, and a natural color. ● Fad hairstyles are not permitted. ● Hair must not cover the eyebrows, reach the top of the shirt collar, or cover more than ½ or the ear. ● A <u>single</u>, inconspicuous hair-colored hair tie may be used to pull hair back to remain in compliance with the dress code. ● Mohawks, or hairstyles with designs, patterns, and lines are not permitted.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any accessory that becomes a distraction to the learning process will be sent home and not be permitted to be worn again. 	
Jewelry/ Make-Up/ Accessories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small, tasteful posts or hoops earrings are permitted. No oversized hoops or dangly earrings are permitted. Bracelets, necklaces, watches and/or rings in moderation. Necklaces should be tucked inside uniform shirts. Necklaces, bracelets, and rings must be removed for gym class. Only subtle, natural make-up is permitted. No colored eye shadow, mascara, blush, or lipstick is permitted. Nails should be neat, cleaned and trimmed. Acrylic fingernails/tips should NOT be worn. Nail polish, if worn, should be modest and light in color. Belts are required in Navy, Brown, or Black for children in grades 4-8 if belt loops are present. No hats of any kind are to be worn in school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bracelets, watches, or religious necklaces or pendants are acceptable in moderation. Necklaces should be tucked inside uniform shirts. Boys are not permitted to wear makeup or nail polish of any kind. Belts are required in Navy, Brown, or Black for children in grades 4-8 if belt loops are present. No hats of any kind are to be worn in school.

Physical Education Uniform

All students in grades K-8 are to wear their gym uniform to school on the day they have physical education class. This schedule is announced prior to the start of school. For the 2023/2024 school year, students in the following grades will have physical education classes on Wednesdays: PreK, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8. Students in grades K, 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, & 8 will have gym class on Thursdays. Students are not permitted to participate in physical education class without appropriate gym apparel. The gym uniform tops and bottoms (shorts/sweats) must be purchased through Log Cabin Embroidery. Additional gym dress code rules are:

- Only the specified gym shirts purchased through Log Cabin are permitted. These include short or long sleeved t-shirts in Red or Navy with DMA logo in either cotton or dri-fit. Other school shirts or Spirit Wear **are not** permitted to be worn for gym.
- Only the specified gym bottoms purchased through Log Cabin are permitted. These include cotton or mesh shorts in Navy with the DMA logo (**April 1st-Oct. 31st**) or jogger style sweatpants or wicking pants in Navy with DMA logo.
- As with the school uniform policy, gym shorts are only permitted from **April 1st - October 31st**.
- Necklaces, bracelets, and rings must not be worn in gym class.
- A DMA or Sabers crewneck sweatshirt or a DMA wicking or fleece jacket is **required** for gym from **November 1st - March 31st**. Only the specified sweatshirts and jackets purchased through Log Cabin are permitted. **NO HOODIES** are permitted to be worn.
- Tennis shoes must be worn on gym days.

School Liturgy Attire

A **DMA embroidered Navy Blue Polo**, purchased through Log Cabin Embroidery, is the REQUIRED uniform top for ALL students in grades K-8 for Friday morning school Masses as well as any other special liturgies or events (or other school activities directed by the principal). Required "church shirts" may be worn with dress pants, dress shorts (following time guidelines, or, for girls, uniform skirts or skorts. Jumpers are not to be worn.

Non-DMA jackets must be removed after entering church. No sweatshirts or hoodies are to be worn during Mass.

Dress Down Day Attire

Throughout the year, we will offer children free and fundraising Dress Down Days. Whatever students choose to wear must reflect our Catholic School values. Please make sure the following rules are followed:

- Attire must be clean, neat and modest.
- Nothing tight, cropped, low-cut, ripped, torn, oversized, or ragged may be worn.
- Only **long shorts** (no more than 3 inches above the knee) are permitted.
- Jeans, sweatpants and T-shirts are permitted.
- All shirts must have **sleeves that cover the entire shoulder**. Spaghetti straps are NOT permitted.
- T-shirts with inappropriate words, graphics, and/or logos are not permitted.
- If your child is wearing form-fitting jeans, stretch pants, leggings or yoga-style pants, a long top which comes down below the hips must be worn to cover the front and backside of the pants.
- Socks must be worn with shoes.
- No flip-flops, Crocs, or heeled shoes/boots are to be worn.
- Occasional themed Dress Down Days will be scheduled throughout the school year. In order for a student to participate, he/she must adhere to the theme. Otherwise, he/she is to wear the regular school uniform.
- Policies for hair, socks, makeup, shoes, etc. are in effect on Dress Down Days except in special circumstances as announced by the administration. Shorts may only be worn on Dress Down Days during the period of **April 1-October 31** unless otherwise indicated by the administration.
- In the event a Dress Down Day occurs on the student's designated Physical Education day, students must wear tennis shoes so that they may participate in Physical Education class.

If you have questions about whether your child is dressed appropriately, please call and ask.

Dress-Up Days

There will be times during the school year when students may be asked to dress up. Examples would be Picture Day, Holiday Programs, etc. Students are to wear **modest** attire equal in formality to the uniform or better. Shirts, dresses, skirts, pants, etc. in style and color different from the uniform code may be worn, however skirts/dresses must still adhere to the guidelines for length stated above. **NO** jeans, t-shirts, open toed shoes, flip flops, Crocs, hoodies, etc. are permitted to be worn on Dress Up Days.

Uniform Swap

As children grow, new uniforms will be needed. Please make sure that your child's uniform fits appropriately. If you find that pants and/or sleeves are getting a little too short, please let us know. We have extra clothes available which you can swap out with the uniform items which your child has outgrown. Watch for specific times where Uniform Swaps will be available.

Clothing Identification

Parents **MUST** mark their children's personal belongings with their names. Since children do not readily claim lost items, proper identification helps us to find the owner and save parents the cost of replacement. The "lost and found" articles are found in the main hallway. Students are encouraged to look for lost clothing and school items there. More valuable items, such as glasses, jewelry, watches, etc. are to be turned into the office. Periodically, all items at the "lost and found" will be displayed and students will be reminded to look for missing items. Notice will also be placed on occasional communications. Items that are not claimed by the end of each school year will be donated to a local charity.

EMERGENCIES

Emergency Cards

At the beginning of each school year, parents/guardians are required to complete a student emergency card. It is imperative that the school is able to reach you to inform you of illness or an emergency situation. It is also important to list the names of others who can be contacted should you be unavailable. Keep the card updated by notifying the office of changes.

Emergency Closings and Closings and Delays

If inclement weather or some other emergency requires that school be delayed or closed, this information will be announced via parent notification system and/or television. We currently follow Gateway School District's closings and delays for inclement weather. PLEASE DO NOT CALL THE SCHOOL OR RECTORY FOR THIS INFORMATION. Students from many different school districts attend Divine Mercy Academy. If the school district in which you reside determines that road conditions are not safe, please follow your local school district's closing/delays.

Although Divine Mercy Academy follows Gateway School District for weather closings and delays. There may be occasions where Gateway School District does not close or delay, and Divine Mercy Academy does or vice versa. These situations may include power outages or other utility emergencies, an already scheduled school closing, etc. Parents/guardians should always look for announcements identifying Divine Mercy Academy if Gateway School District is not announced.

Bus riders are to listen for delays/cancellations in their school district. If Divine Mercy Academy is in session at the usual time, it is the decision of the parent or guardian regarding transportation to school on these days. If a school district cancels school and Divine Mercy Academy is in session, the school district will not transport students to or from school. Parents are urged to use their best judgment as to whether it is safe to bring their children to school.

When there is a two-hour delay, extended care will open at 9:00 AM. The school building will open at 10:20 AM for all students. Preschool will also begin at 10:20AM on delay days. Preschoolers who attend morning sessions only are permitted to attend on these days and stay until 2:45 PM dismissal. If you choose to send your child on these days, please remember to pack him/her a lunch.

If Divine Mercy Academy is on a two-hour delay and your district is running on a regular schedule, please do not put your child on the bus. **Children will not be admitted to the building nor will supervision be available if students arrive prior to the two-hour delay start time.**

PLEASE NOTE: Because our attendance registers are legal indicators of a child's presence at the times we are in session, children who arrive late or are absent because of weather will be marked as Excused Tardy or Excused Absence.

Emergency Dismissals

In the event that we would be required to dismiss school early, that information will be announced in the same way as closures and delays. Because phone service may be interrupted in the school, some emergency situations may not allow for all of these options. Children will be dismissed as indicated on the emergency card. Please make arrangements and alert your child where to go if he/she arrives home in your absence. Please do not depend upon school phone lines and availability of staff to address individual needs.

EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM

Divine Mercy Academy offers an extended day program before and after school for parents and guardians who need child care for students in grades K-8. Morning extended day is available beginning at 7:00 AM and afternoon extended day is available immediately after dismissal until 6:00 PM.

For your child to participate in our Extended Day Program, the following guidelines MUST be followed:

- Parents are required to register each child IN ADVANCE regardless of the time the program will be used.
- Parents must fill out an Emergency Care Card for each child using the program BEFORE the program can be used.
- Children CANNOT be dismissed to parents in the parking lot. Parents MUST come in and sign out their child(ren).
- The After School Extended Day Program ends at 6:00 PM. Parents MUST be on time for pick up. Parents will be charged additional fees if they arrive after 6:00 PM. Repeated late pick ups will be grounds for dismissal from the program.

For additional information on Extended Care registration and fees, please contact the school office.

TEXTBOOKS AND SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Textbooks

Divine Mercy Academy participates in Pennsylvania's Act 195/90 whereby the state purchases textbooks and instructional materials of non-religious nature. A parent form with permission to have their child use these books must be signed and is kept on file in the school office. All books are to be covered at all times. Students are responsible for the condition of the books given to them at the beginning of the year. Students are required to pay for the book if it is damaged or lost. Books taken to and from school are to be placed in a book bag.

School Supplies

For the convenience of families, supply lists are available each summer for the following school year. They are posted on the school's website: www.dmapgh.org. Students provide their own school supplies and are expected to comply with individual teacher requirements. At the end of each school year, students will be able to purchase supply boxes set up by the teachers they will have the following year. These boxes are delivered to the school at the beginning of the next school year.

TRANSPORTATION

It is important that we know the ordinary means by which each child arrives and departs daily. Families are to complete a “Dismissal Information Google Form” at the beginning of the school year indicating each child's daily schedule for transportation. Homeroom teachers must receive written notification from parent/guardian if there is a change in the manner in which the child is to go home.

Bus

Students who live more than a 1.5 mile radius from Divine Mercy Academy are eligible to be bussed to the school. Those who live along a route that has been declared "hazardous" are also eligible for busing. The Board of Education Transportation Division determines "hazardous route" claims. The student transportation policies and procedures of the local educational agencies responsible for busing students are applicable to all students in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Students are expected to maintain appropriate behavior while en route on the bus. Every bus follows the guidelines that are within their own discipline code. Students are expected to remain in their seats at all times. This ensures their safety and the safety of others.

If improper conduct occurs, the driver prepares a report which is sent home to alert the parents to the problem. If the behavior persists, the bus company has the right to ask the school district to suspend the student's privilege of riding the bus, temporarily or permanently. This will result in the student losing bus privileges. The parent will be responsible to make other arrangements for transportation.

The following bus rules are to be obeyed:

- Use only the bus and bus stop assigned. Only the Department of Transportation can authorize changes.
- Remain seated at all times until the correct stop has been reached. If the driver has assigned seats, these seat assignments are to be honored.
- Keep head, hands and feet inside the bus. Do not put anything out the window.
- Observe the same conduct as in the classrooms. Quiet, respectful talking is permitted. Loud talking, etc. may distract the driver, prevent students from hearing instructions, or prevent the driver from hearing signals from emergency vehicles.
- In vehicles where seat belts are available, use them properly.
- Keep the bus clean; do not eat, drink, or chew gum on the bus.
- Cooperate with the driver. Any directives of the bus drive in addition to the above are to be followed.

If your child requires bus transportation, or if you have any questions or concerns regarding bus transportation and scheduling, please contact your local public school district.

ARRIVAL PROCEDURE

Classrooms open at 8:20 AM for students. Parents/Guardians should not assume that it is permissible to drop off children at school early in the morning unless they are pre-registered for the our morning Extended Day Program. We cannot be responsible for the safety of those children who arrive too early and are left unattended. When bringing your child to school, leave him/her at the designated drop-off areas. Please do not accompany the child to the classroom.

Bus Riders

Children will exit the buses at the drop-off area located at the rear of the school building next to the preschool room and will walk to their classrooms.

Car Riders

It is imperative that the traffic pattern for student drop-off be followed accurately since it is based on the safety of all children.

- Circle around the school and enter the drop-off line along the building.
 - Pull **ALL** the way up to the church. A teacher will be there with an orange flag to direct you how far to go.
 - Have students exit from the **passenger side** of the car closest to the school building.
 - Students should **NOT** exit the car until the line has stopped. Only allow them to exit the car if it is stopped **at or beyond the blue doors**. They should not exit the car behind the teacher/principal on duty at the blue doors.
 - Do not move your vehicle until directed to do so.
 - Stop at the teacher/principal with the orange flag by the blue doors to make sure no families are waiting to cross.
 - If you are in the drop-off lane, **DO NOT** exit your car to assist your child.
 - If your child needs assistance, please park along the hill or in the middle parking spaces and WALK your child(ren) across. You will not be permitted to enter the building, but teachers will be available to assist students when needed.
 - Students/families may only cross at the teacher/principal with the orange flag when directed and cars are STOPPED.
 - If parked in the middle row, please **BACK OUT** of the parking space carefully. **DO NOT** pull out into the drop-off line.
 - Be patient and courteous. Our children are watching.
-
- Students should arrive by car between 8:20-8:30 AM and report directly to their classrooms. If your child must arrive prior to that time, please register for Extended Care.
 - Once your child is dropped off, you will be directed to exit the parking lot to the left of the church.
 - All children must enter through the main doors with a parent/guardian to sign them if arriving after 8:30 AM as the blue doors will be locked.
 - Students will be marked as tardy if they arrive at 8:30 AM when the school bell rings.

DISMISSAL PROCEDURE

Car Riders

All parents/guardians picking up a student from school at dismissal must drive around to the lower parking lot and line up. No cars are permitted in the upper lot as it is used for bus dismissal. Please follow the following guidelines when picking up children at dismissal time:

- All parents/guardians picking up a student from school at dismissal **MUST** drive around to the lower parking lot and line up. **NO** cars are permitted in the upper lot as buses are being loaded.
- Please pull as close to the car in front of you as possible. Do **NOT** stop in the middle of the lot leaving space in front of you. We must allow for the maximum number of cars to line up as possible so as not to impact preschool pick-up and bus dismissal.
- Please feel free to arrive early and mingle with other parents. This is a great time to get to know each other. However, at 3:00 PM (11:50 AM on early dismissal days), please return to your own vehicle and remain either directly next to your vehicle (so that small children may see you) or remain in your vehicle.
- Please do **NOT** wait for your child(ren) on the porch area.
- Teachers will be leading the students from the school to the lower parking lot. Please wait until your child is dismissed to you.
- Do not allow other students into your vehicle unless you are the person designated to drive them home.
- Do **NOT** allow children to run around the parking lot as this is unsafe. They should quickly become settled in the car so that car dismissal can begin promptly.
- Once your child is safely inside the vehicle and buckled in, please wait for the signal from the teacher to exit. Do **NOT** move your vehicle until signaled that it is safe to do so.
- Do **NOT** drive around other vehicles. This is extremely dangerous and makes dismissal unsafe.
- Please take your time, be observant, and drive slowly.

- Please stay in your lane until you have exited the parking lot.
- **ALL DRIVERS PICKING UP CHILDREN AS CAR RIDERS MUST WAIT IN THE CAR RIDER LINE.** If you have an extenuating circumstance or an emergency, please notify the office and we will do our best to accommodate your situation. At the end of the day, buses will be picking up students from the upper lot, so we ask that you do not park in the upper lot at dismissal.
- Please be patient with and courteous to the teachers and staff on duty. Their primary concern is the safety of your child(ren). They are not there to cause you distress. They are following procedures set in place by the school to best service the students and keep them safe. As a Catholic school, we want to make sure that everyone is reflecting Christian values and is treating others with kindness and respect.

EARLY DISMISSAL PICK-UP - We know that the car rider line at least doubles due to lack of busing on half-days. In addition to following the above guidelines, please also heed the following instructions:

- If you are stopped behind the Lourdes Center or DMA School Building, please do **NOT** get out of your vehicle and come around the building to find your child(ren). This not only causes a safety issue, but it also makes the dismissal process last longer.
- Please do **NOT** slip around to the upper lot for any reason. We do still have a few buses that transport students on our early dismissal days. This area is reserved for them. Cars coming through this area creates a safety concern.
- Please be patient with and courteous to the teachers and staff on duty. Their primary concern is the safety of your child(ren). They are not there to cause you distress. They are following procedures set in place by the school to best service the students and keep them safe. As a Catholic school, we want to make sure that everyone is reflecting Christian values and is treating others with kindness and respect.

Our goal is the safest dismissal possible. We started this new, more efficient dismissal procedure last year, and it worked wonderfully. It allows us to clear the lots of cars and buses in less than ten minutes.

Students who are not picked up by 3:20 PM will be sent to our Extended Care Program and families will be billed accordingly.

Bus Riders

Children will report to their assigned busroom teacher at the end of each day. That teacher will lead his/her students to their assigned bus which will be located in the upper parking lot between the school and the Lourdes Center.

Any changes from the regular dismissal plan for a child **MUST** be communicated in **writing** to the child's homeroom teacher.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Students are offered a wide variety of extra-curricular activities to enrich their total Divine Mercy Academy experience. They may choose to participate in the following activities during their years at DMA:

Religion Activities

- Altar Servers - Students have the privilege of serving at liturgical services in their parishes. Those who choose this privilege are expected to fulfill assigned responsibilities and be on time. Students in grades 3-8 are required to be trained before assisting as an altar server. In addition, students who serve at school Masses are also required to serve at Saturday/Sunday CDS Parish Masses.
- School Liturgies - Homerooms take turns preparing school masses. They are lectors, gift bearers, and add to the awareness and solemnity of the celebration.
- Advent/Christmas Program - Students from PreK-8th Grade celebrate the Advent and Christmas Season with a beautiful and holy presentation in the church in mid-December. The third grade class has the honor of portraying the Holy Family and other members of the Nativity scene.
- Living Stations - The seventh grade class has the honor of bringing to life the story of Holy Week by reenacting Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday in a solemn way through the Living Stations of the Cross.
- Community Outreach - Divine Mercy Academy helps students develop a sense of connectedness between school, parishes, and local community through exposure to a variety of outreach programs within our community.

Arts and Science Activities/Programs

- Drama - Divine Mercy Academy students are encouraged to use their natural giftedness to develop skills in music, art, drama, and dance. Several times throughout the school year, talented and/or interested students will have an opportunity to explore the arts and to develop their creative talents.
- Instrumental Music Program - The diocesan instrumental music program is available for a fee for interested students from grades 4-8. The Diocesan Program dictates the monthly fee annually. The instruments are rented with the option to buy. Small group lessons are provided one period a week and practice is held once a week. The periods are rotated so the same classes are not missed too often. However, it remains the responsibility of the student to make up for missed work. A meeting is held at the beginning of each school year to provide more information for interested parents.
- Arts and Science Fair - Students in grades K-8 are invited to participate in DMA's Arts and Science Fair. They are encouraged to show off their abilities in a variety of forms. This event will be held in mid February.
- Artastic! - Students in all grades are given opportunities to learn about famous artists and create their own masterpieces through this awesome program.
- Cantor Choir - Students in 3rd through 8th Grade are invited to become members of our school's cantor choir. They will rehearse once a week and lead the music during the school liturgy each week.
- Future City - Future City is a project-based learning program where students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades imagine, research, design, and build cities of the future.
- PJAS - The Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science (PJAS) is a statewide organization of junior and senior high school students designed to stimulate and promote interest in science among its members through the development of research projects and investigations.

Academic Programs

- **Junior Achievement** - JA allows students in K to 8 to learn about economics, business and capitalism using fun activities. Junior Achievement sponsors the program with students from Central Catholic High School teaching some of the classes. These are usually scheduled on one day, typically during Catholic Schools Week.
- **Diocesan Spelling Bee** - Students in grades four, five, and six are invited to participate in our local DMA Spelling Bee. The winner of our school Spelling Bee will advance to the Diocesan Spelling Bee held at St. Louise de Marillac school every Spring.
- **24 Club** - This club allows students to strengthen their mathematical skills. The objective of the 24 Game is to make 24. One may accomplish this goal by adding, subtracting, multiplying and/or dividing numbers. All four numbers on a card must be used, but only once. There is at least one solution to every card. The 24 Game is designed to improve basic mathematics skills

Sports Programs

All students at Divine Mercy Academy may participate in the Diocesan Sports League.

All coaches are required to be accredited, to have completed all requirements of the Diocesan Safe Environment Policy, and to follow the guidelines for the Diocesan Catholic Elementary Schools Sports Program.

- **Basketball** - Basketball is offered beginning with developmental boys' and girls' teams in the primary grades and continuing with boys' and girls' junior varsity and varsity teams at upper levels. Playing time varies per level in accord with diocesan guidelines. The decision of the coach is final. Ordinarily, the athletic director, or principal will not intervene in playing decisions unless Diocesan policy is not followed.
- **Cheerleading/Pep Squad** - Students in grades K-8 are invited to become members of DMA's Cheerleading and Pep Squad. These students will have regular practices, will build school spirit, and lead the crowd at cheering on our various sporting teams.
- **Track and Cross Country** - Track and Field helps children to enjoy their success in speed, strength, endurance, excitement and fun of track and field. Meets are set up with area schools throughout the season and culminate with a Diocesan competition ending the season.
- **Volleyball** - Volleyball is offered to both boys and girls at the Junior Varsity and Varsity level. The season for girls begins on or shortly after the first day of school. Boys' volleyball is a spring sport.
- **Soccer** - Soccer is offered to both boys and girls. They have both a fall and spring season.

The education of the student is our primary concern. The faculty and administration of Divine Mercy Academy along with the DMA Athletic Association (DMAAA), hereby agree to the following policy:

- The student will be expected to maintain acceptable school behavior. Serious offenses may result in exclusion from one or more practices and/or games.
- The student will be expected to maintain acceptable academic achievement in relationship to his/her ability. If grades drop below 75% in core subjects at the midpoint and/or end of each grading period, the student will be suspended from sports (practices/games) and/or activities for two weeks or longer, depending on how long the student takes to improve his/her grade.
- Parents/Guardians will be contacted if students do not meet the above expectations.

Fundraising for all teams is provided entirely through DMAAA sponsored fundraising events and refreshments sold at games. The DMAAA has a general organizational meeting in the fall to acquaint parents and students with the programs. Consult the DMAAA website for information and schedules.

Leadership Opportunities

- Student Council - The purpose of Student Council is to develop leadership, pride, and responsibility and to be of service to Divine Mercy Academy. These student leaders are Middle School students who demonstrate exemplary behavior, are dedicated to academic success and display commitment to their faith. Students interested in running for a leadership position must complete ballots by getting signatures from teachers and classmates, run a campaign, give campaign speeches, and take an oath of office. Student Leaders play an important role in outreach activities by developing social consciousness and bringing life to the Gospel message of service. Throughout the school year, the Student Leaders assume leadership in school-wide fundraisers to help the needy. They raise money for various charitable causes.
- DMA Morning Announcements Crew - These eighth grade students record a video message each morning which is shared with all teachers and students at DMA. The announcements include the Saint of the Day, lunch choices, "Daily Holidays," daily or weekly activities or sporting events. student and/or teacher birthdays, and a joke of the day.
- DMA Newspaper - Middle School students organize, conduct interviews, design layouts, print, and run the DMA NEWS which is published monthly.
- School Store - Our Middle Schoolers will run a school store once a month to provide all students with the opportunity to purchase needed school supplies.
- DMA Yearbook Staff - Middle school students will assist Mrs. Weaver with organizing and designing the school yearbook.
- DMA Service Club - Led by the Monroeville Rotary, students in grades K-3 and 4-8 will work to assist those within our local community.

The education of the student is our primary concern. The faculty and administration of Divine Mercy Academy hereby agree to the following policy for participation in all DMA extra-curricular activities:

- The student will be expected to maintain acceptable school behavior. Serious offenses may result in exclusion from one or more meetings, events, practices, games, etc..
- The student will be expected to maintain acceptable academic achievement in relationship to his/her ability. If grades drop below 70% in core subjects at the midpoint and/or end of each grading period, the student will be suspended from sports (practices/games) and/or activities for two weeks or longer, depending on how long the student takes to improve his/her grade.
- Parents/Guardians will be contacted if students do not meet the above expectations.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

HEALTH ISSUES

Nurse

A school nurse is assigned to Divine Mercy Academy by Gateway School District each year and is present in the building only to fulfill her responsibilities. She is available in any emergency situations. The school nurse has the following responsibilities:

- Maintain updated health records for all students
- Make sure all immunizations are current
- Conduct vision screenings yearly
- Assure the completion of a physical examination before entrance to kindergarten and in the 6th grade
- Conduct scoliosis screenings
- Conduct hearing screenings
- Recording height and weight for students yearly
- Assist the school in appropriate health education
- Contact parents/guardians if any health problems arrive

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to secure proper medical treatment as it is needed.

Dental Health

The Pennsylvania School Health Law requires dental examinations for students entering 1st, 3rd, and 7th grades. These grades were selected because they represent critical periods of growth and development in a child's life.

We recommend that your family dentist do these examinations. School dental health evaluations will be provided for students who do not furnish proof of a private dental examination within the last six months. These forms are given out to the students before school ends so that appointments can be scheduled over the summer.

Illness

It is often difficult to decide if your child should stay home from school when complaining of illness. An objective sign is an elevated temperature. A child must be kept home from school if his/her temperature is 100°F or higher. A student must remain home until he/she has been fever-free for 24 hours WITHOUT THE AID OF MEDICATION. In addition, your child must remain home until he/she has gone without vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours.

If a child has a temperature of 100° or more, shortness of breath, severe cough, skin rash, pink eye, diarrhea/vomiting, strep throat, or evidence of head lice, the child will be sent home. All cases of head lice should be reported immediately. Parents should not send their children to school if they display any of these symptoms. Please inform the school office if your child becomes sick with a contagious illness. Notes will be sent home with the other children to warn parents of contact and incubation of communicable diseases.

Accident and Injury

In the case of an accident or illness at school, parents are contacted to take the child home, to the doctor, or to the hospital. It is important for your child's safety and comfort, as well as the effective operation of the office, that emergency information needed to locate parents/guardians is available for each child and that this information is kept up-to-date by parents/guardians.

Parents of children who have any type of physical disorder should contact the principal, school nurse, or teachers to make them aware of the problem.

Administration of Medication During School Hours (Diocesan Policy 560.08)

Whenever possible, medication should be given at home, and physicians should be asked to change the schedule for the administration of medication so that it can be given before and after school hours. Medication that must be distributed during school hours must be administered by the parent or their designee.

Students requiring a fast-acting inhaler, such as albuterol for asthma or epinephrine for life-threatening allergies may be self-administered. Students may carry their own medication and administer it during the school day as ordered by their licensed prescriber and authorized by their parent and school.

An order from a licensed prescriber for the medication, including a statement that it is necessary for the student to carry the medication and that the student is capable of self-administration, is required before the student may carry the medication on his/her person. A student needing to self-carry emergency medication should have an emergency care plan or a similar form completed by their healthcare provider. Before allowing a student to self-carry medication, the nurse assigned to the school will ensure that the student is competent in self-care through demonstration of administration skills and responsible behavior. The student must notify school administration immediately following each use.

If medicine must be administered at school, the following guidelines apply:

1. When possible, school personnel should supervise the student's self-administration of medication.
2. Stored medications administration by a RN, LPN or parent must be in a secure, locked location. Students should never be given access to this location.
3. The medication should be delivered to the school by the parent, guardian or other responsible adult along with the treating physician's written documentation relative to the diagnosis, prescribed medication, dosage and instructions for the student's self-administration of the medication.
4. Medication brought to school must be in a container labeled by a pharmacist or doctor. The label must include the student's name, the name of the physician, date of prescription, dosage and frequency of administration.
5. Parents must sign a Medication Permission Form.

Nutrition

The Department for Catholic Schools Diocese of Pittsburgh promotes healthy students by supporting the Nutrition Guidelines for Competitive Foods in Pennsylvania as a part of the total learning environment. All diocesan schools are expected to provide a healthy environment where students learn and participate in positive dietary and lifestyle practices. By facilitating learning through the support and promotion of good nutrition and physical activity, schools contribute to the basic health status of students. Improved health optimizes student performance potential.

Birthday Treats

Class treats for birthdays must be pre-packaged and individually wrapped. No home-made treats are allowed. Whole cakes/cookie cakes are **NOT** to be brought into school. Consideration must be given to students with allergies. Students with allergies may bring in a bin of safe snacks that can be enjoyed during birthday celebrations. In lieu of birthday treats, parents/guardians may purchase a dress down day for the entire homeroom. The teacher will contact you to determine a date for the class to use the Birthday Dress Down Day. If you are interested in purchasing a dress down for your child's birthday, please send a note along with your \$25 payment in an envelope to the school office..

Parties

DMA's PTG often sponsors treats for special occasions during the school year. Classroom parties for Halloween, Christmas and Valentine's Day may be held. Teachers in each department (Primary, Intermediate, Middle School) will determine the time and structure of the party. No other instructional time should be used for parties without the principal's permission. All parties are expected to follow the nutrition policy for treats as stated in this handbook. Homeroom parents may assist with parties. A Maximum of five (5) parents/guardians may assist with a class party at any given time. All volunteers **MUST** have all clearances on file with Divine Mercy Academy before assisting with any school event, including class parties. All volunteers must sign in at the front office and wait for instructions regarding time to report to the student's room. **Younger siblings should not be present as it can take away from the supervision of the classroom students during party activities.**

Party Invitation

Party invitations are not to be sent to school for distribution as this may cause hurt feelings among the students who are not invited. The only exception to this is if every boy or every girl is invited or all students in your child's room are invited.

Physical Activity

The Department for Catholic Schools Diocese of Pittsburgh promotes daily physical activity for all students, and a physical education curriculum that engages students in moderate to vigorous activity during physical education class time. Each school is to provide recess for students that encourages moderate to vigorous physical activity through the provision of space and equipment. Recess periods in the gym and/or outside are scheduled for each grade for daily physical activity.

Substance Abuse

The Department for Catholic Schools recognizes that chemical abuse is a serious problem. We believe that chemical dependency is a life-threatening illness that affects individuals in all areas of their lives, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and socially. It is therefore, the intent of this policy to prevent and to prohibit the possession, use, sale, distribution and/or intent of distribution of any illegal or controlled mood-altering medication or chemical. These are prohibited on school property and at any school sponsored event.

Violations of this policy may result in the following consequences:

- a. appropriate disciplinary response consistent with the school's philosophy
- b. notification of parent/guardian
- c. notification of municipal authorities when appropriate
- d. suspension or expulsion from school
- e. referral of students to appropriate drug and alcohol agency

This policy will be implemented through the cooperative efforts of administration, faculty, parent/guardian, staff, student and community.

Teacher/Student Confidentiality

Teachers will keep a student's confidence so long as no one's life, health or safety is involved.

Wellness Policy

Divine Mercy Academy promotes healthy students by supporting good nutrition and regular physical activity as part of the total learning environment. Our school believes that promoting proper dietary habits will contribute to students' health status and academic performance. The entire school environment shall be aligned with healthy goals to positively influence a student's understanding, beliefs and habits as they relate to good nutrition and regular physical activity. Improved health optimizes student performance potential.

SAFETY ISSUES

Asbestos Notice

Pursuant to the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Act (AHERA), our school was inspected by a certified AHERA Inspector. A Management Plan was developed and submitted to the PA Department of Education. A copy of our Asbestos Inspection Report and Management Plan is on file in the school office.

The school is re-inspected by a certified AHERA Inspector every three (3) years. The maintenance and custodial staff have received two (2) hours of Awareness Training and conduct a periodic surveillance twice a year, in December and June.

“All Hazards” School Safety Plan

Catholic schools teach the value and dignity of every human life. With this in mind, it is critical that every step is taken to insure the safety and security of all members of the Catholic school community. Under Commonwealth law, all schools in Pennsylvania are mandated to develop emergency preparedness plans. These plans identify, from a school administration level, action to be taken during the four phases of an emergency: prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

The purpose of this plan is to identify and clarify emergency roles and responsibilities for Divine Mercy Academy and its staff. It further prescribes procedures and coordination structures for Prevention/Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery efforts at the school level. The ultimate objective is to minimize the negative consequences of any incident on the school, its staff, students, and parents/guardians.

This document provides a basic “All Hazards” School Safety Plan, recommended emergency response teams, site specific hazard vulnerability analysis and list of vulnerabilities, staff roles and responsibilities, training requirements, and exercise procedures based on the four phases of emergency management.

Safety Drills

The purpose of practicing safety drills is to protect and keep as safe as possible the children and adults in the building from a potential emergency. We want everyone in the building to know what to do, how to react, and to be calm and responsive. Drills are conducted twice a month at different times of the day and often without pre-announcement to give students and staff the opportunity to practice what to do in different scenarios.

The faculty and staff participated in mandatory training and have a copy of the “All Hazards” School Safety Plan that provides lesson plans with instructions on how to exercise the drills. Procedures for all drills are posted in every classroom. Teachers take roll calls at the start of all drills. Students remain in absolute silence during all drills. Misconduct of any nature is reported to the principal. It is considered a serious offense and is dealt with immediately.

Fire Drills

Fire drills are held monthly. No one--teacher, student or other personnel--may remain in the building during fire drills. When the students hear the bell, they are to leave the room quickly and quietly in single file and go to their designated location. Students remain there until summoned back to class.

Weather Emergency Drills (Drop, Cover and Hold)

Once the announcement is made concerning a weather drill, teachers follow the policy governing weather emergencies for student safety. All classes move quietly to their assigned safe places. Once there, the children get into position. They are instructed to sit facing the wall, cover their eyes by leaning their face against their arms and remain in this position until given the all clear signal.

Lockdown Drill

A lockdown takes place to prepare students for hostile intruders, hostage situations, and a weapon on campus or anytime instructed to do so. An announcement is made to lock doors immediately. Students move to the safest part of the room, away from windows and doors. Window shades are pulled down. The window in the classroom door is covered to prevent an intruder from seeing into the room. Classroom lights are turned off. No one is permitted to exit or enter the room once the door is pulled shut and locked. Classes wait for instructions to resume activities. During a lockdown, no one is permitted to enter or exit the building for any reason.

Shelter-in-Place

Shelter-in-Place drills are designed for those situations in which it is safer for everyone to remain in the building than to evacuate. Generally, shelter in place means simply staying indoors. When directed to do so, all students report to their assigned room. Doors and windows are closed and locked.

Evacuation

Evacuation drills are designed to prepare students, teachers, administrators, and other people in the school to leave the building quickly and in a pre-planned and organized manner when conditions outside the building are safer than the conditions inside the building.

Dismissal procedures are as follows:

1. Students will only be dismissed to the authorized individuals as indicated on the Emergency Release Card.
2. Parent/Appointee must report to the homeroom teacher for dismissal so that each teacher may document to whom the child has been released.

Safe Environment Program

The purpose of the Safe Environment Program of the Diocese of Pittsburgh is to take reasonable measures to assure that adults who have contact with minors (those under 18) are committed to providing a safe environment for children and youth, are capable of identifying and preventing abuse of children, and have no personal history of behavior that would be a threat to children.

Teachers, coaches and assistants, chaperones, and adults who volunteer at Divine Mercy Academy are required to follow the steps outlined below to receive their clearances. We realize it takes time and attention on your part to complete the process; please realize the goal is solely to protect your child(ren). Adults (18 or older) volunteering with children at Divine Mercy Academy must be compliant with the requirements of the safe environment policy as listed on the Diocesan website at www.diopitt.org/school-volunteer.

HOW TO BE COMPLIANT

All School Volunteers must complete the following:

- Go to <https://diopitt.org/school-volunteers>
- Register through VIRTUS to complete the safe environment requirements:
https://www.virtusonline.org/virtus/15497/reg_pwd.cfm?theme=0
- Obtain PA State Police Criminal Record Clearance (renew every 5 years) at
<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/KeepKidsSafe/Clearances/Pages/Criminal-Background-Check.aspx>
- Read and sign the Code of Pastoral Conduct
- Obtain the Department of Public Welfare Child Abuse History Clearance (Renew every 5 years) at
<https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>
- [Complete FBI Clearance or Waiver \(if a PA resident for at least 10 years\)](#) or [obtain FBI clearances](#) - use code 1KG6Y3 (Renew every 5 years)
- Complete Protecting God's Children [On-line Class](#) or [Live Class](#)
- Complete Mandated Reporter Training [On-line Class](#) or [Live Class \(Renew every 5 years\)](#)

Send a copy of the certificates you receive at the conclusion of each training to the school office. Divine Mercy Academy is required to follow diocesan procedures to keep your confidential file and database updated.

You must complete all requirements within 3 months of the submission of your application or it will be archived. When you have completed all of the requirements, your application will be removed from the archive and you may begin volunteering.

In accord with the Diocese of Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania law, school staff are obligated under penalty of fine and/or jail term to report the reasonable suspicion of physical abuse, emotional abuse, emotional deprivation, physical neglect, inadequate supervision, and/or sexual abuse and exploitation. In this very serious and legally narrow area, the school will not contact parents in advance of making a report to legal authorities, which would be the procedure followed in most other legal matters. The clear intent of the law, based on the seriousness of the crimes listed above, is to mandate that a report of reasonable suspicion of abuse

be made. School staff will make such reports in the best interests of the affected child and do not, once reasonable suspicion is established, have any legal alternative except to make the report to the proper authorities for their investigation and review.

Weapons

No person other than public officers in uniform in the exercise of their duties shall bring any weapon as defined in Section 912 of the Pennsylvania Crimes Code, 18 Pa. C. S. 912, onto school grounds or in any school building or vehicle even though they may have a legal permit to carry such a weapon.

Any person carrying a weapon, look alike weapon, or any object which might simulate a weapon onto school property, including, but not limited to, a school building, outdoor areas, outdoor facilities, vehicles used to transport students, or school related activities poses a clear and present danger to students and staff. For the purpose of this policy, a weapon is defined to be a gun, knife or any other article which could be used to cause injury. Such person in possession of a weapon violates state criminal statutes and school regulations and will be subject to the following discipline and penalty:

1. If a student is found to be in possession of a weapon, his/her parents will be notified immediately.
2. The matter will be referred to local police authorities, if in the sole discretion of the school administration, such a referral is appropriate.
3. Administration of the school will decide upon the appropriate disciplinary measures to be taken.
4. The disciplinary action taken may result in expulsion. (Diocesan Policy 560.04)

Any student or employee found in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action and reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency for criminal prosecution under 18 Pa. C. S. 912. Non-school students who violate this policy shall be prosecuted as trespassers.

Security/Visitors

All doors to the school will be closed and locked during school hours. Parents/guardians and visitors should ring the buzzer by the main school door to gain entrance to the building. For security reasons, anyone entering Divine Mercy Academy is to report to the office immediately regardless of the purpose of the visit. For the safety of all students, all visitors must sign in through the Ident-a-Kid security system located in the school lobby. The printed visitor's pass must be worn at ALL TIMES..

Communication with teachers and students will be handled by the school office and will be done in a manner that does not disrupt the educational process in the school. In order to meet with a teacher or administrator, an appointment must be made in advance.

Any articles or items to be left for a student should be left in a cubby in the school lobby. There are Post-It notes for you to label the item. This will eliminate any unnecessary interruptions to classes and instruction.

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.

BULLYING PREVENTION

Anti-Bullying Diocesan Policy

It is the policy of Divine Mercy Academy to ensure that Catholic values and moral integrity permeate every facet of the school's life and activities. In keeping with the teachings of Christ, Divine Mercy Academy provides a safe, caring and supportive school environment, free of bullying, for all members of the school community. Therefore, all members of the Catholic school community are expected to use non-violent means to resolve conflict as reflected in the gospel values.

All situations of conflict are not necessarily bullying. When people are interacting and have different opinions, different ways of doing things, different ideas, etc. conflict can occur. Mature people can often work through the differences and move on. However, when working with developing minds, it is not always easy to find commonality and moving on doesn't happen readily.

Definition of Bullying

The National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) legal definition of bullying consists of three parts:

1. Bullying is intentional aggressive behavior. It can take the form of physical or verbal harassment and involves
2. An imbalance of power (a group of children can gang up on a victim or someone who is physically bigger or more aggressive can intimidate someone else, for instance).

Bullying behavior can include teasing, insulting someone (particularly about their weight or height, race, sexuality, religion or other personal traits), shoving, hitting, excluding someone, or gossiping about someone.

Bullying can cause a victim to feel upset, afraid, ashamed, embarrassed, and anxious about going to school. It can involve children of any age, including younger elementary grade-schoolers and even kindergarteners.

3. Bullying behavior is frequently repeated (unless there is intervention).

As you can see, not all conflict falls under the category of bullying. Teaching young minds how to resolve conflict is a very effective way of preventing bullying. When students are armed with self confidence, tolerance, and the ability to work through differences, they reduce their chances of being bullied.

School Setting

A school setting means in the school, on school grounds, in school vehicles, at a designated bus stop, or at any activity sponsored, supervised, or sanctioned by the school.

- A school entity shall not be prohibited from defining bullying in such a way as to encompass acts that occur outside a school setting if those acts meet the other requirements specified in the definition of bullying.

Students are expected to:

- promote a positive and caring environment for all by developing an awareness of bully issues.
- refuse to bully others or to be a bystander to acts of bullying.
- report all acts of bullying that they may experience or observe to appropriate school personnel.
- assist and cooperate in the implementation of school-wide anti-bullying initiatives.

Parents/Visitors are expected to:

- promote a positive and caring environment for all by developing an awareness of bullying issues.
- inform the school if bullying is suspected.
- encourage students to discuss any incidents of bullying and reinforce the need to speak out.
- support the school when resolving identified incidents of bullying.
- support the school promoting local school anti-bullying initiatives.

Reporting/Investigating Incidents

Students who experience bullying are encouraged to report it to any adult employee of the school. Employees of the school who observe bullying or receive reports of it will act immediately to protect the alleged victim and will immediately forward an Incident Report to the Principal for prompt investigation.

Sanctions for Bullying

Once an investigation has concluded, if bullying has occurred, actions may be taken against the perpetrator. These action(s) must be appropriate to the seriousness of the incident(s) and in accordance with accepted common sense application of the school's bullying discipline policy.

Retaliation Prohibited

Retaliation or reprisal against any person who reports bullying incident(s) is strictly prohibited. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment used against a person who reports incident(s) of bullying in good faith. Disciplinary action against any person who retaliates or engages in reprisal for reporting such behavior(s) will be determined by the bullying discipline policy.

False Reporting

Students are prohibited from knowingly or willfully falsely accusing one another of bullying. Disciplinary action will be taken and determined by the bullying discipline policy.

Consequences

A student who violates the anti-bullying policy shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action consistent with the Code of Student Conduct which may include:

- Parental conference
- Loss of school privileges
- Exclusion from school-sponsored activities
- Detention
- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Counseling/Therapy outside of the Intermediate Unit or school.
- Referral to law enforcement officials

School Harassment Policy (Diocesan Policy 550.13)

Harassment- a general term to describe words, gestures, and actions which, according to Black's Law Dictionary, tend to "annoy, alarm and abuse (verbally) another person. A person commits a petty misdemeanor if, with purpose to harass another, he: (1) makes a telephone call without purpose of legitimate communication; or (2) insults, taunts, or challenges another in a manner likely to promote a disorderly response; or (3) makes repeated communication anonymously or at extremely inconvenient hours, or in offensively coarse language; or (4) subjects another to an offensive touching, or (5) engages in any other course of alarming conduct serving no legitimate purpose.

In sum, it is making cyber harassment of a child a criminal offense (harassment) and misdemeanor of the third degree.

Cyber harassment of a child occurs when a person:

- Has an intent to harass, annoy, or alarm a child
- Uses electronic means to directly address a child or indirectly through social media
- Engages in a continuing course of conduct which:
 - Make a seriously disparaging statement or opinion about the child, or
 - Threatens to inflict harm on the child,

Minors can be charged with the crime. The crime may be deemed to have been committed where the victim child resides.

Anti-Sexting Policy (Diocesan Policy 550.16)

It is the policy of the Diocese of Pittsburgh that a student may not possess, view, send, or share pictures or text having sexual content.

Sexting can have serious moral, social and legal consequences. Students and parents need to be aware of the consequences of sexting.

Currently, under the Pennsylvania sexual abuse of children statute, minors could be charged under the Commonwealth's child pornography laws. In general, under Pennsylvania's sexual abuse of children statute, it is a felony to:

- Photograph, videotape, depict on computer or film sexual acts by a child under the age of 18 years.
- Disseminate photographs, videotapes, computer depictions and films of a minor engaged in a sexual act.
- Intentionally view or knowingly possess or control any book, magazine, pamphlet, slide, photograph, film, videotape, computer depiction or other material depicting a child under the age of 18 years engaging in a prohibited sexual act or simulation of such act.
- If convicted under the statute, the offender must register as a sex offender and can be subject to up to 10 years in jail and/or a \$25,000 fine.

Students may encounter social consequences. Images can easily escape their control through being shared more broadly than they had anticipated. This can have a long-term impact on their digital reputation. Images can also potentially be used for cyber-bullying or cyber-stalking, or they may attract unwanted attention from others.

If anyone suspects or is made aware that such activity is happening in the school, the administrator should be notified.

Anyone that has intercepted any content which may constitute child pornography, should not interact with the information or forward or share it in any way including to school authorities. Immediately seek guidance from local police.

School authorities are to notify the police whenever they have been made aware that sexting has occurred.

Students in violation of this policy are subject to school discipline, including suspension and possible expulsion.

Gender Policy (Diocesan Policy 550.21)

The gender of every human being is a gift fashioned by God that enriches the human family through the complementarity of masculinity and femininity. At this time the Diocese of Pittsburgh recognizes gender according to the student's birth certificate. "Learning to accept our body, to care for it, and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element or any genuine human ecology."

Catholic Schools and all catechetical programs of the Diocese of Pittsburgh recognize that all children, because they are made in the image and likeness of God, deserve to be treated with charity, love and respect. Each school strives to provide a safe educational environment that fosters academic success as well as physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. The teachings of the Church are followed, including those teachings related to gender, in a Christ-centered atmosphere that promotes Gospel values.

Our Catholic schools and catechetical programs will follow these procedures:

- Administrators will maintain student permanent records and other legal records and documents using the student's legal name and gender.
- School personnel may honor requests of parents/guardians to address a student by a preferred name or nickname.
- Students are to use bathrooms according to their God-given gender. Where possible, arrangements are to be made for a private bathroom to address special needs.
- In all other circumstances students are expected to comply according to their God-given gender.

RATIONALE AND AUTHORITY

"By his incarnation, the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every human being. This saving event reveals to humanity not only the boundless love of God who 'so loved the world that He gave his only Son' (Jn 3:16), but also the incomparable value of every human person." (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 2) With these words, St. John Paul II reaffirms our deeply rooted belief in the inherent dignity of every human person. Each person that we encounter is to be regarded as the image of the living God.

According to the divine plan, the image and likeness of God for every human person is embodied in a specific gender as either male or female. The distinction and complementarity of men and women is thus to be accepted from God as a gift to be received, honored, and affirmed. As Pope Francis explains, "The acceptance of our bodies as God's gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation" (Pope Francis *Laudato Si*, no. 155).

Instead of seeing gender as something to which we ascribe our own meaning and self-determination, the School believes that the gender each person receives from their mother's womb is a sign of God's love for the person and all humanity. It is on this basis that the Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms that, "Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity [because] physical, moral, and spiritual difference and complementarity are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life" (CCC no. 2333).

During the early years of life, children experience the natural developmental process of growth in all areas of their life, but especially in regard to their sexuality. Due to the supreme dignity of human sexuality and the personal feelings that surround the development of a person's sense of personal value, no form of contempt, bullying, or mistreatment in regard to gender will be tolerated in our Catholic Schools. Loving pastoral care should be provided with due consideration to fairness, safety, and the privacy rights of all students.

PARENT INFORMATION / INVOLVEMENT

The basic principles of the philosophy of a Catholic School flow from the obligation of parents to be the primary educators of their children. To fulfill this responsibility, the parent must become the educational partner with the school.

To help the parents' partnership in education become a reality, the school endeavors to help parents to

- have a clear understanding of the philosophy of a Catholic School.
- have a working knowledge and a commitment to the philosophy of the local Catholic school.
- establish mutual cooperation concerning all aspects of their child's education.
- provide home experiences that will complement, reinforce, and extend the formal religious and academic instruction received in school.

Rights of Non-Custodial Parents

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act gives full rights to each parent, unless the school has been provided with evidence that there is a court order, State's statute, or legally binding document relating to such matters as divorce, separation or custody that specifically revokes these rights. Such an order is to be on file in the school and those persons responsible for the child(ren) are to be informed of the circumstances. Every effort is made to keep the non-custodial parent apprised of the progress of the child(ren) through reports, report cards and parent/teacher conferences if requested by the non-custodial parent and not prohibited by the court.

Parent Organizations/Volunteers

Volunteers

The help of volunteers is always needed in the school and at school-sponsored events. Please consider using some of your time and talent to help enhance our quality program. The possibilities are endless. At Divine Mercy Academy, parents play an integral role in the education of their children through the PTG, Divine Mercy Academy's Advisory Council, fundraising activities, recess/lunchroom monitors, field trip chaperones, and classroom helpers. This partnership is invaluable to the success of our school.

School Advisory Council

The School Advisory Council of Catholic Schools is a body whose members are selected through a process determined by the Principal and who are expected to participate in offering expertise and assistance in designated areas of responsibility to the Principal. School Advisory Councils do not have the power to enact policy, but exist to offer advice, guidance, and support to the Principal in specific areas as requested by the Regional Administrator and Principal.

Such advice and assistance are especially encouraged in the areas of public relations, student retention and recruitment, fundraising and development, and the strengthening of parental and community support for the school. The Principal is responsible for the operation of the school and its programs and he or she is accountable solely to the Regional Administrator and Superintendent of Schools.

The local School Advisory Council shall consist of no fewer than five (5) and no more than nine (9) members. Members of the Advisory Council are expected to be practicing Catholics and parents of enrolled students; however, it is possible for qualified non-Catholic members of the community to be selected for the Advisory Council. Such non-Catholic membership, however, can never exceed one-quarter of total membership.

Parent Organization

Divine Mercy Academy's PTG is intended to provide opportunities for parents to fulfill their God given role as educators and to give mutual support through collaboration with the school.

The membership of the parent organization consists of the parents/guardians, pastor, principal, and the faculty of the school. It is not intended to replace the School Advisory Committee.

The objectives of the organization are:

- To support the advancement of Catholic Education and the welfare of the school children of Divine Mercy Academy
- To offer opportunities for parents to understand the Catholic Philosophy of education and the Diocesan School Program(s)
- To actively support the principal, teachers, and staff in the philosophical goals and objectives of Divine Mercy Academy and provide opportunities for parents and teachers to work together for the good of the child
- To help with fundraising endeavors to support the operating budget of the school as well to fund activities throughout the year
- To maximize financial resources available to the school through well-planned fund-raising activities, volunteer services, and contributions from the business community
- To act in promotion of the PTG activities and to increase on the part of its members, interest in educational and civic affairs
- To publicize through an ongoing and effective public relations marketing campaign the contributions of the school to the parish and the broader Church and civic communities
- To provide communication to parents about activities and involvements of Divine Mercy Academy.

Money

Anytime a payment is sent to the school, please place it in an envelope with the child's name, grade level and what the payment is for on the outside of the envelope. If payment for several items is being made at one time, each payment must be on a separate check and put in separate envelopes. Payments usually go into different accounts and/or to different organizations, thus the reason for separate checks and separate envelopes. Preferred payment is by check or money order, cash payments are discouraged. The school will not be responsible for cash not received. When a check is returned due to NSF, the family must pay all fees associated with NSF charges. All monies collected for any organization must be deposited in the appropriate school account PARENT/GUARDIANS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO KEEP OR HOLD MONEY FOR ANY REASON AT ANY TIME. If a parent/guardian issues a personal check in the name of the school or any of its organization without the administration's knowledge/permission, that check will not be reimbursed. All fees for Divine Mercy Academy Catholic School or any of its organizations must be paid for with a school check.

Divine Mercy Academy Athletic Association (DMAAA)

All sport programs are the responsibility of the Principal. The Athletic Director is accountable to the Principal. Coaches are selected by the Athletic Director and approved by Principal and serve on a volunteer basis. The Diocesan Guidelines for Elementary Catholic Schools Sports programs guide the policies. Parent interest and willingness to serve on the Board are vital to the continued success of the program.

The executive board consists of the Principal, Athletic Director and the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Committee Meetings

Dates for committee meetings are on the school calendar. Any parent/guardian may attend these meetings. If you wish to address a specific topic, you must have your agenda item to the president 48 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.

Home/School Communication

Divine Mercy Academy utilizes a variety of communication methods.

Parent Alerts

Our primary mode of communication is through FACTS SIS Alerts. Email and texts are sent with daily updates and communications as needed and will be sent in an emergency situation. **Please thoroughly read your messages because they contain a great deal of pertinent information.** Monthly calendars, lunch menus, and other timely notices are sent electronically. Information from the Diocese, Parish, PTG, DMAAA, and other school related news is sent as needed.

Information or fliers, etc. that a parent/guardian may want to send by e-mail must be approved by the principal.

DMA Saber Scoop

Divine Mercy Academy's PTG newsletter, DMA Saber Scoop, is published monthly and is distributed via Parent Alerts. The newsletter includes a message from the principal, a look at upcoming events and other timely information. The newsletter will also be posted to the school website, www.dmapgh.org.

Messages for Teachers

Teachers and administration will most often use email as the primary mode of communication. Please check your email regularly for information. Teachers will respond to emails within 24 hours of the next business day. Additionally, staff is not available for responding outside of normal school hours.

Positive communication between teacher and parent/guardian is vital to our total educational program. Any questions or concerns you have about your child should first be directed to the teacher. The teachers and principal have school issued email addresses. The teacher/principal will respond to you at his/her earliest convenience.

Church Bulletin

Christ the Divine Shepherd Parish Bulletin "School News" section contains information for parents and includes a feature article each week about events happening in specific classes or subject areas in the school.

Facebook

Watch livestream events, read exciting news, and look for information about school events on our [DMA Facebook Page](#) and our [DMA Fundraising Facebook Page](#).

Google Classroom

Students may often find information about assignments on a teacher's Google Classroom page. If a teacher is utilizing Google Classroom, students will be provided with the information to join the class.

Instagram

Look for photos, posts, and information about events by following [DMA](#) and DMA Fundraising on Instagram.

Website

Most pertinent information will be available on our www.dmapgh.org website

Telephone

No child is permitted to use a telephone, including cell phones, except for emergencies. Forgotten homework, books, lunch, gym clothes or changes in afternoon plans are not sufficient cause to call home. In an emergency, the office will call the parent/guardian. If a parent cannot be contacted, phone numbers on the emergency card will be utilized. Please keep the Emergency Card updated with appropriate phone numbers. Please notify the office if there are any changes throughout the year.

Principal's Absence

When the principal is not present in the school building, a teacher or teachers is/are assigned to handle any emergency that arises concerning the school children.

Reporting Student Progress

Reporting student progress will be in accordance with diocesan regulations which combine parent conferences with written reports of a student's progress.

At Divine Mercy Academy, we recognize the importance of reliable and readily available communication. FACTS SIS is an online educational resource available to all DMA families. This resource keeps all of your students' important and necessary information in one place. It is easy to use and provides access to all the information parents/guardians need to know about your child's educational progress.

Parents and Students can use FACTS SIS to verify homework assignments and due dates, check subject grades and test/quiz scores as often as you like, know test dates and when projects are due. To access your child's information, you will need the school-supplied user-name and password. Contact the office if you need your child's password. If you do not have access to a computer with an Internet connection, notify the office so that arrangements may be made to keep you informed periodically about the academic progress of your child(ren).

Report Cards and Conferences

Reporting student progress to parents is one of the primary responsibilities of the school. In addition to posting grades on-line, the school combines parent conferences with electronic reports of a student's progress. Electronic report cards are issued four times a year, with the exception of Kindergarten which is issued three times.

Parent-teacher conferences are formally conducted twice, once in the fall and once in the spring.

Parent teacher conferences have the following goals:

- enable home and school to meet the needs of the student more effectively
- establish a working relationship with parents in the interest of the student
- interpret to parents their child's academic growth and progress
- suggest ways parents can help students succeed in school.

Efforts are made to provide every parent with an opportunity for a conference. Students may be dismissed early to facilitate meetings with parents. Evening conferences may be scheduled.

Telephone calls are one possible way for teachers and parents to maintain good communication for the benefit of the child. Because of the importance of class time, no teacher is to be called from class to talk with parents/guardians.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Scholarship Monies may be available for students of families meeting diocesan eligibility criteria for financial need.

1. Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) Grants: EITC grants are available to needy families with children in Catholic schools from preschool through 12th grade meeting state income criteria.
2. Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Program (OSTC): OSTC grants are available to needy families with children in Catholic schools from K through grade 12th meeting state income criteria who reside within the attendance boundaries of a low-achieving school as determined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
3. The Bishop's Education Fund (BEF) is a tuition assistance fund for Catholic students attending a Catholic elementary or secondary school in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Families submit an application for financial aid through the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Applications typically must be completed by March 15. This one application is used for Scholastic Opportunities Scholarships and Bishop's Education Fund. Application forms may be downloaded on the diocesan website: www.diopitt.org.

Tuition

Divine Mercy Academy is an important, available ministry which emphasizes academic excellence within a value-oriented Catholic environment. Because significant expenditures are required to provide a quality elementary school education, it is necessary to charge tuition and to seek compliance with the payment schedule.

Pittsburgh East-Regional Catholic Elementary Schools, Inc. (PERCES) Tuition Policy

The Board of Directors of the Pittsburgh East-Regional Catholic Elementary Schools, Inc. (PERCES) have approved the following tuition policy:

- Upon registration or re-registration (K-8), families are required to pay a \$100.00 registration fee that is applied to tuition for the upcoming year. Under no circumstances is this fee refundable.
- Preschool registration fees are also non-refundable for any reason, including non-matriculation.
- Tuition is paid in advance monthly beginning in July and ending in April. Families have the option to pay tuition in full (July) or by semester (July/January).
- As staffing is determined by enrollment and materials are ordered in advance of the school year, tuition is typically non-refundable. Limited exceptions to this policy include:
 - o Families who paid tuition in full will receive a refund proportional to the time enrolled, including summer months. For example, a family withdrawing in September will have 70% of tuition refunded.
 - o Similarly, families who pay by semester option will receive a proportional refund as described above.
- There are no refunds, for any reason, for a student withdrawing after March 31.
- Tuition due dates vary as a convenience to families. If a student is enrolled in any given month, full tuition for that month is due before records will be released.
- Diocesan and local tuition assistance are applied to family accounts in advance and may need to be returned to the diocese. Families who receive aid may have a balance owed to the school depending upon the date of withdrawal.
- Families transferring to another PERCES school will have their tuition balances and payments transferred to the new PERCES school without penalty. Tuition aid awards typically will transfer with the student but due to donor restrictions, some aid amounts may need to be recalculated. The PERCES Business Office will work to move as much financial aid as possible. **Families may not transfer to another PERCES School for any reason until financial obligations to the original school are fulfilled.**
- Any fees (athletic, activity, etc.) are not refundable for any reason.
- All financial obligations to the school must be paid before any student records are released to the extent permissible by Pennsylvania law.
- If a family makes an application to another school of the Diocese of Pittsburgh (including high schools), PERCES is obligated to report any tuition delinquencies.

As tuition is paid in advance, families enrolling during the school year will be charged tuition calculated at a per diem rate with payments to be made according to the normal schedule. Extensions to the schedule (i.e. adding a May payment, etc.) can be made at the discretion of the Regional Administrator.

From time to time, students will need to withdraw from their current enrollment at Divine Mercy Academy. A formal records request from the new school is required to initiate the withdrawal process. Until that is received, the student continues to be enrolled in and parents/guardians are responsible for tuition payments.

No transcripts will be released until tuition payment amounts have been verified and reconciled by the regional office.

If a family is temporarily burdened by a financial problem, a parent should contact the Regional Business Office by email at tuition@perces.org in advance of the due date. If such unusual circumstances exist, the school authorities will arrange for an alternate payment plan. PERCES uses FACTS Tuition Management for collection of tuition. Tuition payments are not accepted in the school office.

If payments for tuition and fees are not made on schedule and parents have not contacted the school, the following steps may occur:

- a. Access to the on-line grading system may be denied.
- b. Report cards may be withheld.
- c. The student may be asked to transfer at the end of the second quarter or at the end of the year.
- d. Student records will not be sent to another school, with the exception of those required by law.
- e. No student may receive a transcript or a diploma until tuition payment amounts have been verified and reconciled by the regional office.

Unless otherwise noted, this policy is in effect for Preschool through 8th grade and is in place if a family chooses to withdraw or if asked to withdraw by the school.

Tuition Subsidy

Each year, all Catholic families submit a Pastor Verification Form to qualify for tuition subsidy. Catholic children must meet three criteria to be eligible for the Catholic tuition rate.

1. They are baptized.
2. The family is registered in a Catholic parish, and
3. The family is practicing their faith through regular Mass attendance and regular use of the parish envelope system.

If approved by the pastors, the subsidized Catholic tuition rates are charged. Otherwise, each child in the family must pay the per pupil cost.

Because parents of non-Catholic children do not support the local parish as parishioners, it is understandable that their tuition rates reflect the per-pupil costs.

Fundraising

The diocesan policy for funding in the elementary Catholic schools calls for each school to have fundraising activities to generate at least 10% of their total operating budget. To the extent possible, families of Divine Mercy Academy are asked to support the school fundraising efforts through participation and volunteering of time. All fundraisers, unless otherwise noted, are for the sole use of Divine Mercy Academy. School parents are expected to participate in these fundraising activities to the best of their ability through monetary donations, purchases and/or volunteer work. Our yearly fundraising goal is **\$100,000**. Although we do not have a fundraising fee, each family is expected to fully participate in fundraising. Our goal for fundraising commitments is \$500 per family. There are many ways that this commitment can be met. Families can purchase gift cards through the SCRIP program, sell fundraising items, participate in fundraising activities, or submit a monetary donation.



2023/2024 SCHOOL YEAR Handbook Confirmation Form

It is important that parents/guardians, students and staff know the policies and procedures of Divine Mercy Academy. To ensure that the process of communication is complete, please review the revised Parent/Student Handbook with your children.

When you have reviewed the contents, please sign and return this form to the school office via your child's homeroom teacher.

Family Name _____

Children's Name(s): _____

I have read and agree to be governed by the Parent/Student Handbook of Divine Mercy Academy Catholic School.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____