



2025-2026

Family & Student Handbook

**25 Fremont Avenue
Park Ridge, New Jersey 07676**

School: (201) 391-3838

www.OLMACADEMY.ORG

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Our Lady of Mercy Academy, located in Park Ridge, New Jersey, is a PreK3 - eighth grade Catholic elementary school within the Archdiocese of Newark. The curriculum stresses academic achievement in a Christian community where children feel loved and respected by their peers as well as their teachers. Catholic students are called to love God and seek Him, love one another as Christ loves them, and follow the precepts and doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information about the various aspects of student life at Our Lady of Mercy Academy. Students who perform best understand what is expected of them, and make responsible decisions. The Handbook is a guide to both parents and students to assist in understanding the policies and procedures of the school and to understand the expectations of the student's conduct in the school. Please note that all information in the Handbook is accurate at the time of distribution. The Administration, under the guidance of the Archdiocese of Newark, has the right to make corrections, additions, and deletions as deemed necessary.

Mission

Our Lady of Mercy Academy is first and foremost an educational community rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition and Gospel values. Our Lady of Mercy Academy provides an education that meets the needs of each student spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and socially. We give witness to our Catholic faith, affirm Christian values, and foster a love of learning.

Accreditation

Our Lady of Mercy Academy is the recipient of the National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Award in 2011 and 2018. Our Lady of Mercy Academy is accredited through the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Reaccreditation was granted most recently in 2018.



Non Discrimination Policy

Our Lady of 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 students at the school. Our Lady of Mercy Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, or national and ethnic origin or any other in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan, and athletic or other school-administered programs. OLMA does not discriminate on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities in compliance with the regulations of Title IX.

Parents, as their children's first teachers, have a serious obligation of providing and supervising the education of their sons and daughters. The family is the first school, but it needs assistance from society as a whole as well as from civil society and from the Church. In the education of salvation, the Church enjoys the original rights, but she is interested in the complete education of mankind for the good of earthly society as well.

Vatican II, The Declaration on Christian Education

Student's Rights

Every student has the right to an atmosphere that is conducive to personal growth and development. At the same, every student has the responsibility to preserve those rights for others. Since no list of rules can cover all possible situations, the administration expects students to use common sense, developmentally appropriate judgment, and Christian charity as guides to measure their actions.

Every student has the right to be treated in a manner worthy of his/her state, as a child of God.

Religious Services and Other Faith Traditions

Students of all Faith traditions are welcome at Our Lady of Mercy Academy. Students of all Faith traditions are expected to understand and accept that OLMA exists to provide an education in the framework of the Roman Catholic Tradition. Our Lady of Mercy Academy accepts students of all Faith traditions whose parents accept the philosophy of OLMA and agree their child will participate in religion classes, daily prayer, retreats, and liturgical services.

Admission Information Requirements

Children entering PreK-3 must be three (3) years of age by October 1st and independent in their toileting.

Children entering PreK-4 must be four (4) years of age by October 1st and independent in their toileting.

Children who have chronic accidents when using the bathroom may be asked to remain home for a period of time to re-train. This decision will be made in partnership with the principal, teacher, and parents.

Children entering kindergarten must be five (5) years of age by October 1st.

The October 1st deadline is non-negotiable per New Jersey state law and Archdiocesan policy. Students will be conditionally accepted into kindergarten with full acceptance contingent on displayed readiness on the Kindergarten Readiness Test (KRT).

Please note: **religious exemption is not accepted** in Catholic Schools under the Archdiocese of Newark. To be eligible for enrollment, all children must be up-to-date on vaccinations or have a set schedule of vaccines signed by the child's pediatrician.

Students applying for admissions in grades 1-8 must complete an on-line application and provide a copy of their most current report card, standardized test results, official birth certificate, and any individualized plan which is supplementing academic or emotional development. These items will be reviewed to determine whether the program at Our Lady of Mercy Academy will meet the educational needs of the student. An interview/tour with parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student is part of the admission process.

The acceptance of new students will be at the discretion of the principal. All new students are admitted on a probationary basis.

NOTE: ALL NEW FAMILIES, PLEASE READ CAREFULLY.

All new students will be given a trial period at the discretion of the administration. If during the trial period any serious academic and/or behavioral concerns become evident, the parent may be asked to withdraw his/her child's attendance from Our Lady of Mercy Academy. OLMA is limited in its human capital resources and will make reasonable accommodations for learning differences when possible. OLMA cannot accommodate students who have extraordinary learning differences. If after admission, the educational and/or behavioral needs of a student exceed what would be considered reasonable, the student may need to be separated from Our Lady of Mercy Academy. This decision will be made for the student's educational and/or behavioral needs to be fully met in another educational setting. If the decision to separate the student from Our Lady of Mercy Academy is made by the school, the student's tuition due would be prorated

Administration/Staff of Our Lady of Mercy Academy:

Theresa Cabrera, Ed.S. Principal
Mary Ellen Logan Administrative Assistant to the Principal
Lakish Fontana Tuition Manager/ Registrar, Transportation Coordinator, Aftercare Coordinator
Maria Archetti Business Manager*
Father Vincent D'Agostino Pastor *

* not an employee of OLMA

Conformity to School Regulations

The conformity of students to the rules of Our Lady of Mercy Academy is essential for maintaining a learning environment in which all students are able to develop their talents to the greatest degree possible. The Administration will insist on the observance of all regulations in order to maintain the excellence and quality of education that students and parents desire. Students and parents are encouraged to give the school their trust and cooperation regarding the Administration's implementation of the school's philosophy. By attending OLMA, students and their parents/guardians agree to conform to all school regulations.

Parent's Role in Education

At Our Lady of Mercy Academy, we believe that the parents are the primary educators. In order to achieve success, we desire a partnership. As partners in the educational process, Our Lady of Mercy Academy asks parents to set rules, times, and limits for their child(ren) so they can reach their full potential. In order to achieve these goals we ask that each student:

- Arrives at school on time and is picked up promptly.
- Has the required supplies.
- Have a good night's sleep.
- Is dressed according to the school dress code.
- Completes all assignments on time.
- Has a healthy breakfast and lunch each day.

We also ask that parents:

- Support and enforce the discipline policies of the school.
- Treat teachers with respect and courtesy when discussing concerns.
- Respect the rights and privacy of other families.
- Actively participate in school activities such as parent teacher conferences.
- Be responsible for any damage to school books or property due to carelessness or neglect of the student.
- Notify the school of any change in phone, email, or address.
- Meet all financial and volunteer obligations of the school.
- Inform the school of any special situation regarding the student's well being, health, and safety.
- Complete and return any information promptly and accurately.
- Read all school notes, newsletters, and/or emails to actively participate in your child's education.
- Support the religious objectives of the school.

Home-School Communication

Parent/Teacher Communication

There are three ways that a parent and teacher can communicate:

- 1) Phone
- 2) Email
- 3) Video conferencing
- 4) In person conference

Phone: Please call the main office at **(201) 391-3838** to contact your child's teacher. Since the teacher's time during the day focuses on the immediate needs of his/her students, it is suggested that the office is called between the hours of 9:00 am and 12:00 pm. **Unless in the case of an emergency, teachers will not be interrupted from their classes during the school day.** Teachers will respond to a phone call within 24 hours.

Email: Teachers can not be expected to be at an electronic device to check emails throughout the day. As professionals, the primary focus is the students in their classroom. Being obligated to check and answer email during a teaching time is not effective or in the best interest of students. Email should be for short, non-emergency concerns. **Teachers are not expected to accept emails about a change of dismissal- this communication should be directed to the Main Office via phone call or email to Mrs. Logan (melogan@olmacademy.org).**

Email responses will be returned by the teacher within 24 hours.

Conference: Conferences will be held upon parent or teacher request. In grades 6-8, the conference should be arranged with the subject teacher, who may or may not be the child's homeroom teacher. Conferences should be held through video conferencing platforms, phone calls, or in-person during appropriate times. **Asking a teacher for a conference or discussion of their child's progress outside of the school (for example, at dismissal) inhibits a comprehensive conversation that a scheduled conference will provide and causes privacy concerns.**

It is strongly recommended that parent(s)/guardian(s) discuss their concern(s) **first with the appropriate teacher.** If a resolution or concern still exists, then administration should be contacted.

Social Media

Engagement in social media such as, but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. may result in disciplinary action if the content of the student or parent's account includes defamatory comments regarding the school, administration, faculty, other students, other parents or Parish/Catholic faith.

No parent, student, or staff member should open a social media account under the name of the school or a particular grade or school-affiliated organization. **The only official social media pages are those created and monitored by OLMA administration under the direction of the Archdiocese of Newark.**

Website

Our Lady of Mercy Academy maintains a website: www.olmacademy.org. Parents and students are encouraged to use the website as it is the primary resource to stay connected and aware of what is going on at Our Lady of Mercy Academy.

Our Lady of Mercy Academy Students in grades PreK-Grade 8 will receive a GOOGLE APPS for Education (GAFE) account. It is required that all parents and students (grades Prek-8) agree to utilizing these applications as part of our learning program. Included but not limited to: the submitting of work through Google Classroom, the use of the email and completion of assessments using such applications as Google Forms. Each family receives a Google email account to access the Google Classrooms.

School-Wide Communication

Our Lady of Mercy Academy will communicate with all parents/guardians through the following:

- School Messenger:
 - Email System for all communications including the Sunday principal's note, weather-related closings, and for School Emergencies
- The school website
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Google Classroom: OLMA NEWS

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to make sure that the school has accurate email and phone number information for the family. It is the parent's responsibility to listen and read all home-school communication in order to be an active, informed member of our learning community. Please review your emails and other means of communication, before calling the school or contacting the teacher.

Home School Association (HSA)

The success of Our Lady of Mercy Academy is due to the close relationship between home and school. Every family is a member of the HSA. The HSA provides parents with an opportunity to be involved with the academic and social aspects of the school. It is an important responsibility of every family to participate in fundraising activities to minimize tuition increases and to help the HSA reach its goals for OLMA. It is equally important for every family to participate in some volunteer activity to further enhance our school as a community.

Our Lady of Mercy Academy is a school that relies heavily on the donation of time and talent from its families to fulfill many of the needs of the school. Each school family is asked to volunteer as follows:

- PreSchool families are asked to volunteer for one (1) School Service/Fundraising Event
- K-8 Families are asked to volunteer for two (2) School Service/Fundraising Event

If you are unable to fulfill any or all of the obligations, there is a fee for each service you are unable to perform. The amounts are as follows:

- School Service/Fundraising Event or \$150.00 payment

Our Lady of Mercy Academy also relies on the fundraising ability of the Home School Association. Each family is required to participate in fundraising as part of the HSA. The commitment may be satisfied in two ways:

1. Raising \$800 (grades K - 8) through HSA-sponsored events and initiatives or paying a \$650 opt-out fee. The opt-out fee may be paid in its entirety at the time of registration. The opt-out payment of \$650 does not negate the service commitment.
2. Pre-K commitment is \$400 per year with an opt-out option of \$350. The opt-out payment does not negate the service commitment.

HSA meetings will be held for the 2025-2026 school year beginning in October of 2025. These meetings are open to ALL OLMA families.

Tuition

Tuition - The first payment was due on July 1, 2025. July through April tuition will be collected using the school tuition payment plan, FACTS TUITION MANAGEMENT. Mail payments to: FACTS Tuition Management PO Box 82527, Lincoln, NE 68501-2527 or visit the Internet at www.factsmgt.com. A direct link can also be found on the homepage of our website. **Questions regarding tuition should be addressed with the tuition manager/registrar, Mrs. Lakisha Fontana at lfontana@olmacademy.org**

TUITION for 2025-2026: Our Lady of Mercy Academy K - 8	Number of Children	Member of an Archdiocese of Newark Parish	Non-member of an Archdiocese of Newark Parish
	1	7,700	8,700
	2	14,700	16,700
	3	20,130	23,130

FEES for 2025-2026 - PreK - Grade 8	Per Student
Registration	\$300.00
Technology	\$175.00
Security Fee	\$100.00 - per family
Home School Association	\$75.00 - per family
Graduation	\$500.00 - Grade 8 only

FUNDRAISING OBLIGATIONS 2025-2026	Grades K - 8	PreSchool (without siblings in K-8)
Family Fundraising Obligation	Raise \$800.00 in HSA sponsored events and initiatives. Families may opt-out by paying \$650.00	Raise \$400.00 in HSA sponsored events and initiatives. Families may opt-out by paying \$325.00
Family Service Obligation	Volunteer to provide 2 school service obligations. Opt-out is \$150.00 each.	Volunteer to provide 1 school service. Opt-out is \$150.00.

Volunteers

All individuals who volunteer in our school must complete Protecting God's Children and will be asked to complete the Archdiocesan mandated background check before volunteering for any event/activity involving children.

School Advisory Board

The purpose of the School Advisory Board is to advise the Principal in the mission of the school. It works with the Pastor and the Principal in providing quality spiritual and academic Catholic education for the students. The Board advises the Principal in the development of policy in the areas of strategic planning, finance, marketing/development, and facilities.

Alcohol Policy

There is to be no alcohol where children are present at **any** event.

Parent Rights to School Records

Our Lady of Mercy Academy abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of noncustodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, a school will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the academic records and other school-related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, **it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the school with an official copy of the court order.**

Court Orders

If there is a court order specifying the rights and responsibilities of individual parents, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide Our Lady of Mercy Academy with an OFFICIAL copy of the court order. The custodial parent may wish to supply the Principal with the "custody section" of the divorce decree if it contains information which may be useful to the school fulfilling its obligations pertaining to the order. If there is no court order on file, all school records will be equally shared with both parents.

School Visitors

No visitors will be allowed to enter the school without being “buzzed in” by the main office. School visitors must sign in at the main office for safety and security reasons. Each person is required to receive a visitor’s pass when he or she enters the building. All visitors are to sign out upon leaving.

Gifts/Party Invitations/Class Parties

Students may not exchange gifts at school. Invitations for parties should be sent to the homes of students via the U.S. Mail or digitally.

In grades k-8, class parties will occur on Halloween, Christmas and Valentine’s Day only. Prekindergarten will follow their own approved schedule. Simply, excess parties take away from valuable instructional time. On Valentine’s Day, students may plan to share Valentine cards or simple items - no candy please. **For a child’s birthday, a SIMPLE, individually wrapped treat may be shared if the teacher is notified at least 48 hours in advance. No goodie bags or gifts may be exchanged in school. NO PARENTS OR FAMILY MEMBERS MAY ATTEND THE CLASS PARTY.** Only class parents will assist IF necessary and at the teacher’s discretion. On the child’s birthday he/she may dress in their “Sunday Best” instead of a uniform except on mass days. On Mass days, all students must be in full uniform.

Academics

Curriculum

OLMA offers the following subjects: Religion, Social Studies, Physical Education, Reading/Literature, Science, Art, Mathematics, Language Arts, Technology and Design, Music/Drama, and Spanish.

Instrumental music instruction is available at OLMA through an outside organization; Paul Effman Music Instruction. For more information, please visit

<https://ed.pemusic.com>.

Religious Education

Students who are not of the Catholic faith are welcome at OLMA. They are expected to understand and agree that the Academy exists to educate within the framework

of Catholic values. All students must participate in religion classes and liturgical services scheduled for the school year.

Student's Progress

The following grading scales and indicators will be used in **grades K - 3:**

- E = Exceeds (High Understanding)
- S = Secure (Understanding Demonstrated)
- D = Developing (Growth Demonstrated)
- B = Beginning (Beginning Stages)
- N = Not Yet Performing (Assistance Required)

This is a standards-based report card. The purpose of standards-based grading is to identify what a student knows, or can do, in relation to pre-established learning targets, as opposed to simply averaging grades/scores over the course of a grading period, which doesn't always communicate clearly what a student has mastered. Standards-based report cards separate academic performance from work habits and behavior to provide parents a more accurate view of a student's progress in both academic and behavioral areas. Variables such as effort, participation, timeliness, cooperation, attitude, homework, and attendance are reported separately, not as an indicator of a student's academic performance.

The following grading scales and indicators will be used in **grades 4-8:**

- | | | |
|-------------|------------|----------------------|
| A+ = 97-100 | B = 83-87 | D = 70-72 |
| A = 92-96 | C+ = 78-82 | U = Below 70 Failure |
| B+ = 88-91 | C = 73-77 | |

This is a traditional report card. Grades reflect an averaging of scores to determine a percentage aligned to a letter grade. Students' scores are derived from combining assignments, tests, quizzes, student behavior, effort, and attitude. Grades from one term are separate from another term. The assessment of a student's personal development and study habits is noted as O, S, I, & U.

Special Electives (art, technology, gym, health, and music) are also graded as O, S, I, or U.

Report Cards

Grades will be recorded on report cards for parent(s) or legal guardian(s) notification. **Report cards will be issued digitally via the PowerSchool portal at the end of**

each trimester. PowerSchool is a tool for parents of students in grades k-8 to monitor their child's academic progress. Grades are updated on a timely basis. No progress reports will be sent home as it is expected that parents are monitoring their child's work via PowerSchool. If there are any concerns or questions, parents are encouraged to contact their child's teacher directly.

No report cards are provided for preschool students.

Honors/Recognition (grades 6-8)

Awarded Upon Receipt of Trimester Report Card

FIRST HONORS:

- No grade less than A in all major subjects* (92-96)
- There may not be an "I" or "U" in Personal Development, Effort or any Special Subject

SECOND HONORS:

- No grade less than a "B" in all major subjects* (83-87)
- There may not be an "I" or "U" in Personal Development, Effort, or any Special Subject

***MAJOR SUBJECTS:** Religion, Reading/Literature, Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science, and Spanish (7th and 8th grade only).

As of the 2019-2020 school year, there will be no valedictorian/salutatorian for the graduating class. This is a mandate from the Archdiocese of Newark.

Students who achieve Honors/Recognition will have his/her name posted on a school bulletin board and on the OLMA News Google Classroom. These students will also be recognized during morning announcements.

It is important to note that grades are earned, not given by the teacher. Any concerns should be addressed prior to the end of the semester.

Salve Regina Honor Society - OLMA chapter of the National Junior Honor Society

Students in grades 7 and 8 are eligible to become members of the Salve Regina Honor Society if they meet the necessary requirements. Candidates for membership will be considered based on their cumulative overall average at the end of their sixth and seventh grade years. They must demonstrate a commitment to service and scholarship through their extra curricular activities.

They must demonstrate good character and be a role model to their fellow OLMA students.

To be invited to apply, students must hold an overall average of 95% or better with no I or U on their report card. The cumulative average is based on the grade earned in the core subjects: math, language arts, reading/literature, Spanish, science, social studies, and religion. Students must receive at least a grade of "S - satisfactory" in their special subjects: art, technology, physical education, and music.

Eligible students will receive an invitation to apply for admission into the Salve Regina Honor Society along with an application. These invitations will go out in the summer and must be completed and returned by the deadline in order to be considered for membership. The applications will be reviewed by the OLMA Honor Society Council and decisions will be made in early September.

Accepted candidates will be inducted into the Salve Regina Honor Society at a special ceremony in the fall. Parents will be invited to attend the ceremony along with the school community.

Cheating/Academic Dishonesty

An educational environment is built upon the trust and respect between the faculty and their students. Academic dishonesty undermines this trust and demonstrates a lack of integrity and character which is inconsistent with an Our Lady of Mercy Academy education. Furthermore, both offenses give the teacher a false understanding of a student's strengths and weaknesses and infringe on the student's educational progress.

Our Lady of Mercy Academy views academic dishonesty as harmful to the school and to the student culture and climate that is based on Christian values. Those students that submit work that is not their own, copy work that is not their own, or lend work to others will be viewed as lacking academic integrity as well as being deceitful. Additional examples of cheating include but are not limited to: sharing work with another student (in class or at home) via digital devices or print, and using improper means to pass an exam, quiz, or test.

First offense: a zero on the assignment and a detention

Second offense: a zero on the assignment, one day of in-school suspension

Third offense: *The cheating will be reviewed by the Administration with possible out of school suspension or dismissal from school.*

Fourth offense: *The cheating offense will be reviewed by the Administration with the likely disciplinary outcome being dismissal from school.*

Homework

The teacher can assign meaningful homework to a student throughout the year. When completed conscientiously, homework has a measurable impact on student motivation and attention in class as well as in the grade. Homework assignments are designed for a variety of reasons:

- To review the day's lesson.
- To prepare students for future lessons.
- To provide practice in developing skills.
- To require creative experiences.
- To show ability to meet an educational standard.

It is the responsibility of the student to complete all required assignments satisfactorily and on time to receive full credit of his/her work. Homework assignments are listed on each teacher's google classroom. The Google Classroom is only a reference and resource; students are still required to write down homework.

If a discrepancy exists between Google Classroom and the information given in class, students should follow what is assigned during class.

Teachers will update Google Classroom homework assignments by 3:30 pm.

Cooperation on the part of the home in supervising homework is imperative in the learning process. It is the parent's responsibility to provide ample time and opportunity for the completion of assignments.

While a parent should guide student assignments completed at home, they ***should not transcribe or complete the work for their child***. If a parent is found completing work for their child, the child will be asked to re-do the work and the parent will be contacted. If there are repeated offenses, the child will earn a zero on the assignment found not to be the student's own work.

When a student is absent, assignments may be picked up in the school office between 2:30 and 3:30 pm. **Homework for absentees must be requested before**

10:00 am. Students have one (1) additional day per day absent to complete any missed assignments.

The suggested amount of time spent on homework each day varies by grade level and subject. If a concern arises, the teacher should be contacted.

Promotion and Retention

All promotion and retention of students will be decided by the principal in consultation with the classroom teacher(s). In February, parents of students who could potentially be retained will be notified and requested to meet with the teacher and the principal. A plan will be discussed that could potentially bring the child up to grade level. The final decision for the pupil's promotion or retention rests with the school principal.

There are times when academic or developmental deficiencies make retention a viable option in order to ensure the continued progress of an individual student.

Parents or legal guardians will be notified by the principal **no later than February 5** if the student appears to be in danger of failing any major subject(s) for the academic year. If a student fails 3 or more classes for the year the student will be retained and repeat the current grade level.

However, the student will be required to pass both Language Arts and Math to be promoted. Eighth graders will not be permitted to walk in the graduation ceremony.

Organizational Tools

It is recommended that students have the necessary supplies as outlined by their teachers. The purpose is to help students understand the importance of organization and apply those techniques on a regular basis.

PowerSchool

With the exception of during the summer months and when the server is being updated, parents/guardians and students will have access to PowerSchool during the school year. At times, during the preparation of semester grades, PowerSchool may not be accessible for parents. *Please note that the server for PowerSchool is provided for all archdiocesan schools by the Archdiocese of Newark.*

PowerSchool Login - All parents/guardians of students in grades k-8, are provided with a login. Please be proactive in logging in and becoming familiar with the Portal

early in the school year. Please keep your login information in a secure place so that you have it for the year. Do not wait until the last day of the semester. PowerSchool has numerous ways to check your child's progress daily, weekly, etc. If you did not receive your login or have misplaced the information, please contact the principal, Mrs. Cabrera, at tcabrera@olmacademy.org.

It is imperative that K-8 parents gain familiarity with Powerschool.

All report cards will be digital.

Attendance

Absences

In accordance with the laws of the State of New Jersey, pupils enrolled in Our Lady of Mercy Academy are required to attend school regularly. The educational program offered by our school is predicated on the presence of the pupil and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation. The regular contact of pupils with one another in the classroom and their participation in a well-planned instructional activity under the tutelage of a competent teacher are vital to this purpose.

Prolonged or repeated absences, excused or unexcused, from school or from class, deprive the pupil of the classroom experience deemed essential to learning and may result in retention at grade level.

Pupils absent from school for any reason **are responsible for the completion of assignments missed because of their absence.**

“Attendance” is a pupil's presence in the classroom to which he/she is assigned at the times assigned for instruction or other school activities. A pupil will be considered to have attended school if he/she has been present at least four hours, excluding lunch, during the school day.

A pupil who is absent from school may NOT participate in extracurricular activities or school-sponsored events on the day(s) of the absence(s).

Student absenteeism can lead to low academic achievement, dropping out of school, delinquency and inappropriate social involvement. The compulsory education law (N.J.S.A. 18A:38-28 through 31) requires all children between the ages of 6-16 to attend school. The attendance regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6), require a school “to develop, adopt and implement policies and procedures regarding the attendance of students, including the adoption of a definition of “unexcused

absence. OLMA will work with parents, and may require social service workers/counselors to become involved due to excessive absences.

Any student, ages 6 and up, with more than 18 unexcused absences in the 24-25 school year risks retention and may not be promoted to the next grade.

Readmission to School After the Absence

As a reminder, Our Lady of Mercy Academy will be following the guidelines set forth by the State of New Jersey and the Archdiocese of Newark for proper safety measures and protocols during the 2024-2025 school year.

A note explaining the pupil's absence for non-communicable illness for a period of more than three(3) school days must be accompanied by a physician's statement of the pupil's illness. **If a note is found to be fraudulent then the child will be asked to withdraw from the school.**

A pupil who has been absent by reason of having or being suspected of having a communicable illness must present to the school nurse written evidence of being free of communicable illness.

Readmission to School After an Injury

1. A pupil returning from an absence of any length that has not previously been reported on the absentee list must present to the principal a written statement, dated and signed by the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) with the reason for the absence.
2. Any student with an injury (or illness) that prohibits them from participating in physical education classes must have a valid written excuse from the physician. **This excuse must have a return to physical education classes date.** If the student is excused from actively participating in physical education classes for a full week or more, the student will be responsible for alternate assignments that will be assigned by the Physical Education teacher.

Make-Up of School Work

Students who are not in school/class due to an excused absence will need to make up work they miss. It is the student's obligation to seek make-up work on the first day back to school after an absence.

Pupils will be allowed **one (1) day to make up missed work for each day of absence. Long term assignments scheduled prior to an absence are due on the assigned date regardless of the attendance.**

Family trips or vacation are regarded as unexcused absences and it is the family's responsibility to make sure missed assignments are made up and returned to the teacher(s). **Students are responsible to meet any deadlines assigned by the teacher before leaving on vacation.**

Vacations during the school year are **STRONGLY DISCOURAGED** and are not excused. **Please do not ask for work to be given prior to an absence.**

Under no circumstances will work be given due to a vacation. In keeping with Our Lady of Mercy Academy's commitment to academic excellence, we strongly encourage our students to make every effort to attend class unless they are ill. Prolonged or repeated absences from school deprive the pupil of the classroom experience deemed essential to learning. Please consult the annual school calendar that is provided the spring prior to the current school year when planning family vacations. Plan around the school calendar.

Consistent attendance is important to the continuity of a student's academic program. Student success is enhanced when absences are kept to a minimum while poor attendance too often results in poor achievement. New Jersey students are required by State law to attend school every day that school is in session.

Excused absences include the following: notification of a child's illness, the observance of a recognized holiday, a family emergency. A doctor's note is required and may be requested at any time by the administration and/or school nurse.

Parents will be notified by mail when their child's absences are considered excessive by the administration. Please note that the student's ability to master the required material is the only criterion for academic movement. Judicious examination of that ability will take place before any decision is made to grant or withhold promotion due to excessive absences. **We encourage students to stay home when ill. Do not come back to school until you are well.**

Early Dismissal (during the school day)

All students are expected to remain in school for the entire day. If a student must leave the building, the school must receive advance parental notice. Parents who indicate that another adult will be arriving to pick up the students must specify that adult's name and his/her relationship to the student. The student must go online to Google Classroom to get their missed assignments.

Parents or their designees must report to the Main Office in order to accompany the student from the building. If a student does not have a note, they will be dismissed at the end of the class period. Classes will not be interrupted for this purpose. **There will NOT be dismissals between 1:45 pm- 2:15 pm**; these students will be required to wait until after PM prayers are concluded and will be dismissed at 2:15 pm.

Tardiness

Tardiness to school and classes is disruptive and discouraged. School hours are 7:30 am to 2:30 pm every day unless otherwise notified. **Students are considered tardy if they arrive at 7:50 am or later.** If a student must be tardy he or she must adhere to the following procedures:

Tardy to School:

- ❑ Students must enter the building at the main entrance to receive a late pass.
- ❑ Students must report directly to class.
- ❑ **For every seven recorded tardy days an after school detention will be served by the student (grades K-8). Parents must model the importance of attending school on time each day.**

Health Services

Our Lady of Mercy Academy has a nurse on duty during the regular school hours.. Students should follow the directive of their teacher when in need of the nurse.

According to the New Jersey State Department of Health, no child may be admitted into school without proper verification of all required vaccinations .

Physical exams are required of students in grades: preschool, kindergarten, third (3) grade, and sixth (6) grade. Annual dental exams are required for all students in grades Kindergarten through eighth.

Screenings, as required by law, will be conducted during the school year:

1. Height, weight, and blood pressure (all grades)
2. Vision (all grades)
3. Hearing (all grades)
4. Scoliosis (grades 4, 6, and 8) - For scoliosis screening, students are to wear their gym uniform. Parents will be given advance notice of the screening.

Emergencies

Emergency care will be provided for students who are injured or become ill during the school day. Names and telephone numbers (cell phones included) of parents or designated persons, in the event of an emergency, must be updated and on file with the school nurse. **The parent or the designated person on the emergency card MUST BE ABLE TO ARRIVE AT THE SCHOOL WITHIN 20 MINUTES. Students can not stay at the school until a parent is done with work or an errand. This leaves others in the school vulnerable to illness.**

Any injury or illness shall be reported to the school nurse or, in the absence of the school nurse, the Building Administration, will determine whether an emergency exists. Immediate steps may be taken as necessary to remove the injured or ill person from imminent danger and/or prevent exacerbation of the disability. Routine first aid will be administered by district personnel as necessary to ensure the safety and comfort of the injured or ill person.

Medication

Medication will only be administered to pupils in school by the school nurse, the pupil's parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and school employees who have been trained and designated by the school nurse to administer epinephrine in an emergency.

- a. The school nurse may designate another employee of the school, who has been properly trained to administer epinephrine via epi-pen to a pupil for anaphylaxis when the nurse is not physically present at the scene;
- b. The parents or guardians of the pupil, after receiving written notification of the procedures, must sign a statement acknowledging their understanding that if the procedures specified in this section are followed, the school will have no liability as a result of any injury arising from the administration of the Epi-pen to the pupil and that the parents or guardians shall indemnify and hold harmless the school and its employees or agents any claims arising out of the administration of the Epi-pen to the pupil;
- c. The permission is effective for the school year for which it is granted and must be renewed for each subsequent school year.

Medication prescribed by a licensed physician may be administered at the written request of a parent or guardian and written prescription by the physician. The medication must be brought to the school only by a parent or guardian in the original container and labeled to the doctor's orders. **Prescription medication cannot be given without an authorization form signed by both the parent and the physician.**

Over the Counter Medication

Tylenol, Advil, cough remedies, antihistamines, and OTC medications may only be given with written authorization by the parent or legal guardian. The nurse will administer the medicine as directed. **Students may NOT self-administer any medication without a note and review by the school nurse.**

PLEASE DO NOT SEND A CHILD IN WHO HAS TAKEN any of these medications for school in order to reduce a fever or relieve symptoms. Students should stay home if sick. The nurse should always be aware of ANY medicine a child takes.

Allergies

Our Lady of Mercy Academy recognizes life-threatening food and other allergies. In order to minimize the incident of life-threatening allergic reactions, OLMA will maintain an Emergency Action Plan for students whose parent/guardian, and physicians have informed the school in writing of the student(s) potentially life-threatening allergy.

Teachers must be familiar with the Emergency Action Plan of students in their classes and will respond to emergencies as per the emergency protocol documented in the Emergency Action Plan. In the event of a suspected allergic reaction (where there is no known allergy history), the school nurse will be called immediately. The classrooms have communication with the school nurse. Information will be kept about the student's food allergies in the classroom and in the substitute emergency folder accessible by teachers, substitute teachers, and other responsible adults. All teachers and substitutes will be educated about the risk of food allergies.

A parent or guardian of a student with food allergies is responsible for providing all food for his/her own child. Snacks will be kept in a separate snack box or chest provided by the parent/guardian. Tables will be washed with soap and water following any food-related events in the classroom. Proper hand cleaning techniques will be taught and encouraged before and after the handling/consumption of food.

Substance Abuse

Our Lady of Mercy Academy prohibits the use, possession, and/or distribution of alcohol or other drugs on school grounds, including on school buses or at school-sponsored functions. Any educational staff member or other professional to whom it appears that a pupil may be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs

on school grounds, including the school bus or at a school-sponsored function shall report the matter.

The Principal shall report pupils to law enforcement authorities if needed. A pupil who uses, possesses, or distributes a substance, on or off school premises, will be subject to discipline. Discipline will be graded to the severity of the offenses, the nature of the problems and the pupil's needs. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion.

Sexuality

The learning environment and religious nature of Catholic schools are guided by the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church can be found at the website for the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (usccb.org).

Among other things, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "By creating the human being man and woman, God gives personal dignity equally to the one and the other. Each of them, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity." (§2392, Catechism of the Catholic Church).

"Except within a valid marriage between a man and a woman (see, e.g. Sections 2360-2362, Catechism of the Catholic Church), Christ is the model of chastity, which all are called upon to emulate. See, e.g. Sections 2392-2397, Catechism of the Catholic Church."

If a student's expression of gender, sexual identity or sexuality should cause confusion or disruption at the Catholic school if it should mislead others, cause scandal or have the potential for causing scandal, then the matter will be discussed with the student and his/her parents. If not resolved to the satisfaction of the School, which is seeking to uphold Catholic principles, then the student will be expelled from the Catholic School after the parents are first given the option to immediately withdraw the student from the School.

As in the case of students, if serious concerns arise as to a parent's or guardian's (herein "parent's") position or action with respect to the tenets of the Catholic faith, then he/she will be counselled by the School. If the matter involving the parent/student(s) is not resolved to the satisfaction of the School, which is seeking to uphold Catholic principles, then the parent will be asked to withdraw child(ren) from School and they agree to do so immediately. If they fail to do so parents understand that child(ren) will be expelled from the Catholic school.

Bus Procedures

Busing is pending the students' home district's decision for the 25-26 school year. All students who are eligible for school bus transportation must apply to the local public school district whether they intend to use the bus or not.

Please stress the following safety rules to your child when using the bus:

1. Students must remain seated with seatbelts fastened at all times.
2. Students must cooperate with the bus driver and not distract him/her while driving.
3. Students must keep the aisles clear at all times.
4. Students must keep their head, arms, and hands inside the bus and remain seated until the driver gives the signal to get off.
5. NO food, drink, or gum is permitted on the bus.
6. Students must NOT throw any object out of the window of the bus at any time.

Students will lose their bus privileges if they do not behave in a responsible manner.

NO STUDENT IS ALLOWED TO RIDE ON ANOTHER STUDENT'S BUS.

Inclement Weather and Bus Riders:

In the event of inclement weather, students who ride the bus **should follow the decision of their local public school district.** Therefore, if your school district is closed, and OLMA is NOT closed a student may decide to be absent without an unexcused absence. The safety of our students is most important.

Student Life

Announcements

School wide prayer is done at the start and end of each day using the school public address system. Announcements concerning school activities are also made over the public address system during the morning's homeroom. During these times all students are expected to stand silently behind their assigned desk/table. All faculty and staff are expected to remain silent and still during announcements and prayers as well.

Policies and Regulations: Use of Technology

The use of technology can optimize the learning environment. However, the blatant misuse of cell phone cameras/videos is counterproductive to our goals. At the start of the day students will be asked to store their cell phones/smart watches in their homeroom in a secure location until the end of the day. At dismissal students will collect their phones and keep them in their backpacks until they have left the building.

Students found to have an electronic device will have the device confiscated and his/her parents notified. **A parent or designated adult will need to come to the school to take possession of the device. It will not be returned to the student otherwise.**

The unacceptable use of Electronic Communication Recording Devices (cell phones, smartwatches, iPads, iPods, etc.) are:

- 1) Cell phones or similar devices(including new smart watches) may not be used in school buildings or on school buses nor may they be used at any time in bathrooms. Students with personal devices are required to keep them in their backpacks and turned off while on school grounds.
- 2) Students are not allowed to take photographs or videos of students or staff without their knowledge or permission, on any device.
- 3) Students may not post or distribute photos of any faculty, staff, or other students without express written permission from the person photographed.
- 4) The transmission, storing, or sharing of photographs taken on cell phones or similar devices may constitute criminal behavior and will be reported to proper authorities.

Disciplinary Consequences for the violation of the above:

- 1-10 day suspension for Pre-Kindergarten-Grade 8 students
- Referral to appropriate agency
- Referral to law enforcement
- Possible expulsion from the school depending on the severity of the personal invasion. Expulsion is determined by the administration of Our Lady of Mercy Academy.

Staff members reserve the right to confiscate any electronic device if there is good reason to believe that any violation of this policy has taken place.

Students and Staff are required to sign the Acceptable Use Policy no later than September 15, 2025.

Care of School Property

The school should help pupils learn to respect property and to develop feelings of pride in the community. OLMA charges each pupil enrolled in our school with the responsibility for the proper care of school property and the school supplies and equipment to his/her use.

1. Pupils shall not deface the school building, furnishings, or equipment in any manner.
2. Pupils shall not use school furnishings or equipment for purposes other than those for which the furnishings or equipment was designed and intended.
3. Pupils will care for textbooks. A lost textbook must be promptly reported to the teacher who issued the book. A replacement textbook will be provided.
4. Fines will be assessed as follows for any lost textbooks or textbook damaged beyond normal wear.

<u>New Books</u>	<u>FULL PRICE</u>
Good Condition	80%
Fair Condition	60%
Poor Condition	20%

b. For Damaged Books

Bindings- complete separation of cover from text- \$10.00
Seriously damaged books - such that the book cannot be used again - will be fined as if it was a LOST BOOK.

- 5. Any damage to a technological device (such as a chromebook, calculator, or tablet) by a student will be charged to the parent at current market value.**

Lockers/Desks

Lockers are provided for students in grades 6 - 8 and will be assigned by the homeroom teacher. While OLMA respects the right of privacy, lockers are the property of the school. Therefore, OLMA reserves the right to open any locker in any situation deemed an emergency by the school. OLMA prohibits students from sharing combinations and insists that all lockers remain locked. Students are not permitted to store their books on top of the lockers.

STUDENTS ARE TO ONLY USE THEIR ASSIGNED LOCKERS AND DESKS. There is no exception to this rule. Students will be disciplined for using spaces that are not assigned to them or going into the locker, desk, etc. that is assigned to another student.

Drop-Off/Pick-up

When transporting a student to or from school, please consult the website for any changes. **Students will not be permitted in the school building before 7:30am, unless prearranged by a teacher or attending the Before Care program.** We appreciate your cooperation in this matter. Students CAN NOT be dropped off prior to 7:30 am- **there are no exceptions as there is no supervision.**

As you can certainly understand, the Main Office is extremely busy at dismissal time, **therefore no child will be dismissed during the school day unless under extreme necessity (going home from the nurse, necessary medical appointment, family emergency).**

Half Days

There are half-day dismissal days on the school calendar. Dismissal on these days is at 12 NOON. Please make sure to check the annual calendar.

Emergency Closings/Delays

In the event of inclement weather or other emergency, the school may close, beginning on a delayed schedule, or dismiss early. Emergency closing notices will be posted on the website, www.olmacademy.org and on social media. Most importantly, our School Messenger alert feature will provide a message directly to you. **Please**

make sure to keep all information current in your Powerschool account, as these applications link to one another. Should you have any questions, please contact the school.

Emergency Preparedness

The school has developed and implements a plan for emergency preparedness that safeguards the health and wellbeing of pupils and staff, permits minimum disruption to the educational program, and helps pupils learn self-reliance and a prudent response to emergency situations. The plan provides that all threats to the safety of the school are identified and promptly responded to by appropriate personnel. The plan includes:

- ❑ A plan for prompt and safe evacuation of the school.
- ❑ In accordance with state law, fire drills and school security drills are conducted monthly.
- ❑ Bus evacuation drills are conducted in accordance with the rules of the State of New Jersey and the State of New York districts.

Emergency Procedures

In case of the need to evacuate the building, an announcement will be made by the Administration. Students should stop talking immediately and obey any instructions that may be given. The exits to be used are posted in each room and should be observed.

Fire drills are simulations of an activity of which perfection may save students' and teachers' lives. Students are to walk quickly and in a single file to the designated area using social distancing when possible. There is to be absolute silence so as to hear any teachers' instructions. Silence will also be maintained during the time that students are returning to class.

Field Trips/On site Enrichment/Clubs

With the exception of 8th grade students who partake in numerous off site activities, all other grades (PreK-Grade 7) will enjoy at a minimum one field trip. All school rules found in the Handbook are in effect during field trips. Field trips are a privilege, and the school Principal reserves the right to ban field trip participation of a student should he/she be a behavioral/safety concern.

Media Consent/ “Photo Release”

OLMA will not release any personally identifiable information without prior written consent from you as parent or guardian. This includes student names, photos, and information in a related story. Residential addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers will NEVER be published. In the case of a group picture of students, we will not publish the photo and/or video unless permission is granted for ALL students in the photo and/or video.

Parents must complete a Media Consent Form no later than September 8, 2025.

These forms were sent digitally to the email on record. This information will become part of your child’s school records. Your choice will remain in effect during the duration of the school year. If you, as the parent or guardian, decide to rescind the agreement, you may do so at any time by sending a letter to the Principal.

Pupil Right of Privacy

This Handbook will serve as notification that inspections of student lockers, desks, and other storage facilities on school property may be conducted. The school Principal or designee will conduct, without further notice, the regular inspection of such facilities provided to pupils for the storage of property.

Conduct

A Code of Conduct covering parents/guardians and families:

Students can best receive quality, faith-based education when parents/guardians and school personnel work together. As critical members of the school community, parents/guardians are not only examples for their own children but are also role models for all OLMA students preparing to take their place as faith-filled stewards in the Church and world. **Our Lady of Mercy Academy** expects parents/guardians to conduct themselves in school-related interactions in a way that honors the Catholic values promoted at our school.

As partners in the educational process at Our Lady of Mercy Academy, we ask parents:

- To set rules, times, and limits so that your child(ren)
 - Goes to bed early on school nights

- Arrives at school on time and is picked up on time at the end of the day
- Is dressed according to the school dress code
- Completes assignments on time and to the best of his/her ability
- Has a snack and lunch every day
- To inform the school of any unique situation regarding the student's well-being, safety, and health
- To support the religious and educational goals of the school
- To attend mass as a family and teach the Catholic faith by word and example
- To support and cooperate with the discipline policy of the school
- To treat teachers with respect and courtesy
- To not post negative comments about teachers, students, or the administration of social media
- To actively participate in school activities such as fundraisers and Parent-Teacher conferences
- To notify the school office of any changes of addresses or essential contact phone numbers
- To meet all financial obligations of the school
- To complete and return any and all requested information promptly
- To regularly access the PowerSchool parent portal to keep informed of your child(ren)'s academic standing
- To read school notes and newsletters, and to show an interest in the student's total education.
- To accept and support the authority of school personnel, whether it be at school events, on or off campus, on social media, or in other public forums.

Parents/guardians as well as other family members are expected to comply with all school rules and policies, and to accept and support the authority of school personnel, whether it be at school events, on or off school campus, on social media, or in other public forums. Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that other family members abide by all applicable rules and policies, including this **Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct**.

As an express condition of enrollment, parents/guardians shall follow standards of conduct that are consistent with the Catholic Christian values, as determined by the school in its discretion. These standards include, but are not limited to:

- Parents/guardians are expected to work courteously and cooperatively with the school to assist the student in meeting the academic, moral, and behavioral expectations of the school.

- Parents/guardians may respectfully express their concerns about the school operation and its personnel. However, they may not do so in a manner that is discourteous, scandalous, rumor-driven, disruptive, threatening, hostile, defamatory, or divisive.
- Parents/guardians are expected to always conduct themselves in a respectful and non-disruptive manner when interacting with, or communicating about, school personnel, other parents/guardians and their family members, and students.
- Parents/guardians must be respectful of privacy concerns when communicating about other students, and be careful not to disclose personal, academic, or medical information to others when doing so is not authorized or otherwise appropriate.

These standards and expectations apply to all school-sponsored programs and events (i.e. drop off/pick up, extended care, athletics, and field trips). Compliance with these standards and expectations is determined by the school's administration in its sole discretion.

Student Code of Conduct

A spirit of Christ-like charity, respect for authority, and mutual cooperation are essential elements of the learning environment at Our Lady of Mercy Academy. All Students are expected to cooperate with the spirit and policies of the school, which are designed to foster mature development and personal responsibility. This requires courtesy and respect in all personal relationships, promptness in fulfilling obligations, concern for the environment, and many other factors which the students' sense of appropriateness will indicate to them.

All Our Lady of Mercy Academy students shall follow all school rules and policies, and to accept and support the authority of school personnel, whether it be during school hours, at school events on or off school campus, on social media, or in other public forums. Students shall follow standards of conduct that are consistent with the Catholic Christian values, as determined by the school in its discretion.

These standards of conduct, include, but are not limited to:

- treat everyone in a Christian manner, showing respect and courtesy in their speech and actions at all times.

- accept responsibility for their own actions.
- respect the opinions and property of others and to care for the school's materials.
- conform to the school's regulations for conduct and for dress.
- exercise self-control on all occasions.
- observe the rules for safety and quiet in the halls, on the stairs, during safety drills, etc.
- recall that their conduct reflects the education received from their home and their school. This includes their conduct at extra-curricular activities.
- learn and to conduct themselves so as to allow others to learn while in school.

Hallway Conduct

Students should speak in quiet or low volume voices when walking in the hallways. Students should regularly keep to the right when walking in the hallways. There is to be no running and no physical contact.

GRADES 6 - 8: All students shall wait quietly in the hallway outside the classroom until their teacher arrives. **No student may enter a classroom or wait in a classroom without a teacher present.**

The principal reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of an action if any doubt arises.

The school administration, in accordance with state laws, will determine the appropriate disciplinary measures to be taken concerning the presence of the following items in the school.

Items such as, but not limited to:

- Vape, cigarettes, matches, or any other paraphernalia related to smoking
- Questionable books or pictures
- Knives, guns, or other types of weaponry
- Drugs of any kind (prescription, OTC, or recreational)
- Any item deemed dangerous
- Any item that will detract from a learning situation is not allowed at school.

Criminal Incidents: if the possibility of danger or criminal activity exists to persons or property within the grounds of Our Lady of Mercy Academy building or grounds, the Principal has the right to search the contents of any/all students' backpacks, purses, or other bags as well as their desk and locker. The principal may request that students empty their pockets. At such time a principal and designee shall be present. **Any threat against a person's property is considered a terroristic threat (NJS 2C:12:12-3).**

Any students who threatens the safety of another student or adult will be brought to the Principal's office and the parents and Park Ridge Police department will be immediately notified,

Actions that violate state law, threaten or cause harm to other students or faculty and staff, or disrupt the immediate welfare and progress of the school will not be tolerated. Such actions may result in the following:

- **Loss of privileges**
- **Removal from school clubs, societies, events**
- **Detention**
- **Suspension**
- **Expulsion**

After Care Program/Clubs/Enrichment

All the rules of the Handbook apply to aftercare programs, clubs, and enrichment programs offered in-person and online. All school activities follow the Handbook rules.

Bus Conduct

Students must obey all school rules while on a school bus. The following rules of conduct must be adhered to in order to ensure safety:

- Wear seat belts and remain seated while the bus is in motion
- Show respect for the driver and each other at all times
- Refrain from eating and drinking on the bus
- Extend no portion of the body or other object out a bus window
- Obey all school rules while at the bus stop

The following disciplinary measures may be applied as appropriate to the pupil's violation of the rules of conduct:

First offense: Warning to student, notification to parent/guardian

Second offense: Notifying of parents of possible suspension of riding privileges and appropriate discipline (detention).

Third Offense: Additional suspension for up to five days to permanent Suspension of riding privileges

The administration may immediately suspend riding privileges for serious infractions. Riding the bus is a privilege not a right.

Cellular Telephones/Smart Watches and Similar Personal Devices

Pupils are not permitted to use cellular telephones, smartwatches, or similar devices on school campus. Cellular telephones, smartwatches, and similar devices must be turned off and put away while the pupil is in the school building. **Students who use cell phones while at school will be subject to disciplinary action. Student use of personal telecommunications devices is strictly prohibited on campus.**

Improper use of cell phones includes using the cell phone for malicious purposes. When the use of a cell phone for inappropriate use becomes an issue in school and disrupts a positive learning environment of the school there can be administrative disciplinary action as well as potentially legal implications including reporting actions to local law enforcement authorities.

This Handbook serves as acceptance of the use of cell phones, smartwatches and similar devices for all OLMA students. Signing the Acknowledgement Receipt of this Handbook constitutes parental permission to allow a child to have a cell phone, smartwatch, (or any other similar technical device), and take the risk on themselves if it is lost or stolen.

Telephone

A request to call home is NOT to be used to get parental permission to stay after school or to visit friends instead of going directly home. Any such arrangements are to be made prior to coming to school. Students may not use their cell phones to text or phone their parents about going home during regular school hours.

Discipline Policy

This policy will be strictly enforced during school hours and school-sponsored events. All consequences are at the discretion of the administration.

- Step One: Verbal warning by teacher
- Step Two: Written warning sent home. It must be signed by the parent/guardian and returned to the teacher.
- Step 3: Parent contacted. Principal's detention or other consequence as deemed appropriate.
 - Possible consequences:
 - A written apology
 - Staying in at recess
 - Loss of privileges
 - Removal from school clubs, societies, events
 - Detention
 - Suspension
 - Expulsion

DETENTION POLICY

Detention will be held on Friday. The length of time served is as follows: 2:30 to 3:30 pm on a full day dismissal, 12:00-1 pm on a half-day dismissal. At the end of detention, students must be picked up by a parent/guardian at the main entrance/exit.

Detention will be served for infractions to academic rules, school policy, and for other behavior as deemed necessary by the faculty and/or Principal.

Parents will be notified of detentions by a detention slip provided with the following information:

- The reason for the detention
- When the detention is to be served

The detention slip must be signed by the parent or guardian upon receipt and returned to the Main Office.

After the third detention in a trimester, the student and the parent/guardian will meet with the Principal to discuss. A behavior contract may be devised and signed by both the parent/guardian and the student.

If another detention is assigned for the same infraction, *then the student will serve a one-day suspension.*

Parents/Guardians are expected to support the idea that detention is a serious situation and encourage the student to make better choices in the future.

SUSPENSION

This action involves a suspension from attending classes for the duration of school hours as assigned by the Administration. The Principal will inform the parents/guardians of the seriousness of suspension.

In-School Suspension: the student comes to school and sits in a designated area with a proctor and completes all work assigned to them by their teachers. They do not go to any classes, do not go to recess, and eat their lunch in the designated area with a proctor.

Out-of-School Suspension: Students may not attend school for the stated time frame. Students will complete all assigned work asynchronously while on suspension. Students return to school on the stated day and time.

While on suspension, students are responsible for completing all work assigned to them by their teachers.

A parent conference may be required with administration before the student can be reinstated into school. Any students suspended from school may not attend or participate in any school activities until reinstated and may not appear on school grounds during the time of suspension without prior administrative permission.

A suspension will result in a grade of *Unsatisfactory* in the *Obeys School Rules* section of the report card.

All suspensions will be reported to the Schools' Office of the Archdiocese of Newark.

EXPULSION

Expulsion is an extremely serious matter. Students who pose a threat to themselves or to others may be expelled from Our Lady of Mercy Academy. The Principal reserves the right to determine the necessity of expulsion.

Harassment, Bullying and Intimidation

OLMA has established that bullying will not be tolerated. Our Christian values teach us to respect others, regardless of our differences. Serious disciplinary action will be taken against any student found to engage in bullying practices of any kind.

Any gesture or written or verbal or physical act that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by an actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, or a mental, physical, or sensory handicap or by any distinguishing characteristic, that takes place on school property or any school-sponsored function or on the school bus and that:

- ❑ A reasonable person should know the circumstances that will have the effect of harming a student or damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to his person or damage to his property,

OR

- ❑ Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students in such a way as to cause substantial disruption in, or substantial interference with, the orderly operation of the school (NJSA 18A:37-15(3)(b)(2))

The Principal is responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes harassment, bullying and intimidation. In doing so the Principal shall conduct a prompt, thorough and complete investigation of the alleged incident or incidents.

The Principal must consider the age of the individual, the nature and circumstances of the act, the level of harm, the nature of the behavior, past incidents, or past or continuing patterns of behavior, and the context in which the alleged incident occurred.

Consequences and appropriate remedial action for pupils who commit acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, as set forth in the Student Discipline/Code of Conduct Policy. Remedial measures shall be designed to correct the problem behavior, prevent another occurrence of the problem, and protect the victim of the act.

Consequences and appropriate remedial actions for pupils who commit an act of cyber-bullying range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, as permitted under **N.J.S.A. 18A:37-1**, Discipline of Pupils. In addition, cyber-bullying using school technology is in violation of the OLMA Acceptable Use of Computer Network/Computer and Resources, and subjects the pupil to discipline and sanctions.

Instruction

Our Lady of Mercy Academy will periodically provide students with grade-level appropriate programs of instruction, expectations of student conduct, and bullying prevention.

Reporting Guidelines

Any student having witnessed or having reliable information that a student has been subjected to bullying, harassment or intimidation must report the incident verbally or in writing to a faculty member, school nurse, or the Principal. All staff members, volunteers and other adult members of the school community having witnessed or having reliable information that a student has been subjected to bullying, harassment or intimidation must report the incident verbally or in writing to the principal.

The principal and staff can only address concerns that they have been made aware of, therefore it is expected that all students and adults take the responsibility to report acts that may be in violation of this policy immediately so all concerns may be given the proper attention. All complaints and concerns will be recorded and promptly acknowledged and investigated. This will be done with sensitivity to the subject matter, and the need for confidentiality.

Reporting of/ or communication regarding incidents of bullying, harassment or intimidation will not affect the student's grades or status.

We encourage all students to look out for each other. If any student becomes aware of another student being bullied, he/she should report it to a teacher or the principal immediately. Many students who are bullied are scared to tell an adult for fear that the situation will get worse. We are all called to care about others and help our brothers and sisters in need.

Dress and Grooming

The school uniform confirms a pupil's attendance at Our Lady of Mercy Academy and is a symbol of the school community. It minimizes distractions in the learning process. It is important that students take pride in their appearance by wearing our school uniform. Students should always remember that when wearing the school uniform they are representing Our Lady of Mercy Academy and thus the student's behavior should be a credit to him/her and the school community.

NOTE: NO sweatshirts are permitted except for the official eighth-grade sweatshirt.

N.U.T. (NO UNIFORM TODAY) DAYS

N.U.T. days are dress-down days. Students are expected to follow the guidelines for each N.U.T. day. Some N.U.T. days may be thematic. N.U.T. Days are \$5 dollars for one child, \$10 dollars for two or more children. Students are allowed to dress up for their birthday. Please let the homeroom teacher know in advance that the student would like to celebrate their birthday and wear their Sunday Best clothes to school.

NO DRESS DOWN/UP IS PERMITTED ON A CHURCH DAY. STUDENTS MUST BE IN THEIR REGULAR UNIFORM (NO GYM UNIFORM) TO ATTEND MASS.

Students must adhere to the following dress code on N.U.T. DAYS:

- NO ripped or stained jeans.
- Leggings are allowed only when worn with a tunic style top that falls below the hips.
- NO clothing with inappropriate sayings or illustrations.
- NO short dresses, shorts, mini-skirts or rompers (must sit at or below the knee)
- NO off the shoulder or "cold-shoulder" style tops. Tank-style shirts must have a one-inch minimum strap width.

- ❑ NO crop tops or tight revealing clothing.
- ❑ NO crocs, flip flops, or open-back sandals.
- ❑ NO hats (unless specifically mentioned in the “theme”)
- ❑ NO shorts unless they are dress “bermuda” style shorts that sit at or below the knees (only during summer uniform months).

Cosmetics, Jewelry, Hair and Nails (applicable for all school days)

Makeup is not in keeping with a school uniform and should not be worn. Hair not of a natural shade is not in keeping with the uniform. Nails should be trim, with pale polish colors only. Religious crosses or medals are the only form of necklaces permitted; only small earrings can be worn. Hair should be clean, combed, and tidy at all times. Hair should not cover the eyes for any reason.

No Gum chewing is allowed in school or church.

PLEASE CONSIDER SHOES WITH NO LACES IF YOUR CHILD CAN NOT TIE HIS OR HER SHOES. Students in grades 1 and up should be proficient in tying their shoes without assistance. Students should be proficient in tying shoes by kindergarten.

Store: Flynn O’Hara, 489 Old Hook Road, Emerson, NJ or online at: flynnohara.com

The uniform and dress code will be strictly enforced for both uniform and NUT days.

Our Lady of Mercy Uniforms for 2025-2026

**** Please note: Returning 7th and 8th graders may continue to wear the old uniforms so long as they fit appropriately and are in like new condition. ALL other students must purchase the new uniforms.****

Girls PreK to Grade 2 - YEAR-ROUND UNIFORM

Blue Plaid Skort or
 Plaid drop Waist Jumper or
 Girls Navy Flat Front Slacks with black belt
 Royal Blue Short Sleeve Polo Shirt with School Logo
 Royal Blue Long Sleeve Polo Shirt with School Logo
 Royal Blue Full Zip Fleece Jacket with School Logo
 Navy Crew Neck Sweater with School Logo

Navy Opaque Tights or Blue
 Navy Ribbed Tights or
 Navy Knee Hi Socks
 Black Mary Jane Shoe or
 Black Penny Loafer or (no
 ALL-BLACK shoe
 (no markings or white soles)

Girls Grade 3 to Grade 8 - YEAR-ROUND UNIFORM

Blue Plaid Skort or
Girls Navy Flat Front Slacks with black Belt
Royal Blue Short Sleeve Polo Shirt with School Logo
Royal Blue Long Sleeve Polo Shirt with School Logo
Navy Crew Neck Sweater with School Logo
Royal Blue Full Zip Fleece Jacket with School Logo

Navy Opaque Tights or Navy Ribbed
Tights or Navy Knee Hi Socks

Black Penny Loafer or
ALL-BLACK shoe
(no markings or white soles)

Boys PreK to Grade 8

YEAR-ROUND UNIFORM

Navy Twill Pants or
Navy Pull-On Elastic Waist Pants
Black Belt (shirts are tucked in)
Royal Blue Short Sleeve Polo Shirt with School Logo
Royal Blue Long Sleeve Polo Shirt with School Logo
Navy Crew Neck Sweater with School Logo
Royal Blue Full Zip Fleece Jacket with School Logo

Navy or Black Crew Socks

Black Oxford Shoe
or Black Penny Loafer
or ALL-BLACK shoe
(no markings or white soles)

Boys/Girls PreK - 8

Spring/Fall Uniform

(September to October and May to June)

Navy Girls Twill Walking Shorts with black belt or Blue Plaid Walking Skort
Navy Boys Twill Walking Shorts with black belt
Royal Blue Short Sleeve Polo Shirt with School Logo
All white sneakers with all white crew socks

GymWear PreK - 8

YEAR-ROUND

Light Steel Short Sleeve Logo T-shirt
Royal Blue Logo Sweatpants
Royal Short Sleeve Logo T-shirt
Sneakers - any color/style so long as they are true athletic shoes

Gray Crewneck Logo Sweatshirt
White crew socks

Dress Infractions

Uniform Infractions

- First offense: warning, note sent to parent/guardian
- Second offense: detention, note sent to parent/ guardian - student may be sent home to change

- ❑ Third offense: detention, note sent to guardian, parent/guardian phone conference with principal, student is sent home to change

Additional Information

Insurance

The Archdiocese of Newark provides a student and sports accident insurance program, which covers all students enrolled in Our Lady of Mercy Academy during school hours and school activities. There is no cost to parents/guardians for this coverage.

Supervision

The school's responsibility for supervision of students begins at 7:30 am and ends at 2:30 pm. For children registered in the aftercare program the school's responsibility ends at the end time for the program. **Our Lady of Mercy Academy is NOT responsible for students prior to 7:30 am. Please do not drop off your child(ren) unattended, as no supervision is available on the campus unless your student is enrolled in before care. This will be strictly enforced for the safety and wellbeing of our students.**

Principal's Right to Amend Handbook

The Principal and the school administration reserves the right to amend any of the provisions contained in the Our Lady of Mercy Academy Family Handbook, including provisions related to discipline upon written notice being provided.

Updated 8/2025



2025-2026

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND RECEIPT

Family Handbook

This signed acknowledgement must be returned to school by September 9, 2025.

I acknowledge receipt of the Handbook containing the policies, rules and regulations for Our Lady of Mercy Academy. I have read the Handbook for the 2025-2026 school year. I understand and agree that the Handbook is binding on the students and parents during the current academic year, 2025-2026, and I agree that we will abide by its provisions and content.

I understand that the policies, rules, and regulations contained in the Handbook are established for the welfare and benefit of all students. I understand my responsibility to support school policies and to see that my child adheres to the rules and regulations set forth in the Handbook.

I also understand and acknowledge that the policy and doctrine of Catholic Schools are firmly rooted in the Catholic Faith. Accordingly, parents/guardians acknowledge and agree that in the case of disagreement as to parents' or students' obligations hereunder, or regarding the tenets of the Catholic Church, the matter will be presented to the Archbishop or his designee for interpretation and/or decision. Any decision of the Archbishop or his designee shall be final, conclusive and binding.

I agree to abide by the policies of Our Lady of Mercy Academy and the standards stated therein. My signature indicates that I have read and agree to the OLMA Family Handbook policies, and that this is required before attending the first day of school.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____