



# Divine Mercy Academy

## Parent-Student Handbook 2020-2021

**Please note: Although some areas of the handbook refer specifically to COVID-19 limitations, the 2020-2021 Parent-Student Handbook reflects a “normal” school year. COVID-19 restrictions have placed limits on student activities, parent involvement and scheduling. Thank you for your understanding.**

**The school reserves the right to amend the Parent-Student Handbook at any time. Families will be given prompt notice of any amendment.**

**Revised 10/2020**

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### DIVINE MERCY ACADEMY SCHOOL STAFF

Teachers are NOT available for calls during the school day. It is also the policy of the school that teacher's home phone numbers are not released to the school community through the school office. Parents wishing to contact teachers may do so by sending a note with their child, email address listed below, or call the office and leave 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. Angela Manchini	Principal		<a href="mailto:Angela.manchini@dmapgh.org">Angela.manchini@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Erin Bozicevic	Administrative Assistant (Tuition)		<a href="mailto:schooloffice@dmapgh.org">schooloffice@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Francine Pochciol	Administrative Assistant (Safe environment – volunteers/Transportation)		<a href="mailto:Francine.pochciol@dmapgh.org">Francine.pochciol@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Monica Rodrigues	Preschool	104	<a href="mailto:Monica.rodrigues@dmapgh.org">Monica.rodrigues@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Melissa Seech	Preschool	101	<a href="mailto:Melissa.seech@dmapgh.org">Melissa.seech@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Bonnie Benacquista	Preschool Aide 5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Aide	101 203	<a href="mailto:Bonnie.Benacquista@dmapgh.org">Bonnie.Benacquista@dmapgh.org</a>
Ms. Kimberly Rossetti	Kindergarten	305	<a href="mailto:Kim.rossetti@dmapgh.org">Kim.rossetti@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Nicole Scarpino	First Grade	301	<a href="mailto:Nicole.scarpino@dmapgh.org">Nicole.scarpino@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Lisa Genton	Second Grade	300	<a href="mailto:Lisa.genton@dmapgh.org">Lisa.genton@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Nikole Laubham	Third Grade	304	<a href="mailto:Nikole.laubham@dmapgh.org">Nikole.laubham@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Samantha Rathjen	Third Grade Academic Support Coordinator	302	<a href="mailto:Samantha.rathjen@dmapgh.org">Samantha.rathjen@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Donna Kozusko	Fourth Grade	202	<a href="mailto:Donna.kozusko@dmapgh.org">Donna.kozusko@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Erin Zeigler	Fourth Grade	204	<a href="mailto:Erin.zeigler@dmapgh.org">Erin.zeigler@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Lisa Rettig	Fifth Grade SAP Coordinator	201	<a href="mailto:Lisa.Rettig@dmapgh.org">Lisa.Rettig@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Deanna Supancic	Fifth Grade Aide	203	<a href="mailto:Deanna.supancic@dmapgh.org">Deanna.supancic@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Loretta Marrone	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade ELA 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Homeroom	402	<a href="mailto:loretta.marrone@dmapgh.org">loretta.marrone@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Lisa Stough	Middle School Science 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Homeroom	404	<a href="mailto:lisa.stough@dmapgh.org">lisa.stough@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Brittany Diebold	Middle School Soc. St. 7 <sup>th</sup> Grade A Homeroom	403	<a href="mailto:Brittany.diebold@dmapgh.org">Brittany.diebold@dmapgh.org</a>
Mr. Zachary Legas	Middle School Math 7 <sup>th</sup> Grade B Homeroom	400	<a href="mailto:Zach.legas@dmapgh.org">Zach.legas@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Jennifer Weaver	Middle School ELA 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Homeroom	401	<a href="mailto:Jennifer.weaver@dmapgh.org">Jennifer.weaver@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Mary Burke	Art	106	<a href="mailto:Mary.burke@dmapgh.org">Mary.burke@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Barbara Groba	Band Music	2	<a href="mailto:Barbara.groba@dmapgh.org">Barbara.groba@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Heather Jobkar	Gym K-8 Computer 6 – 8 Spanish K-3	200	<a href="mailto:heather.jobkar@dmapgh.org">heather.jobkar@dmapgh.org</a>
Mrs. Solimar Iorio	Spanish 4 - 8		<a href="mailto:solimar.iorio@dmapgh.org">solimar.iorio@dmapgh.org</a>

## INTRODUCTION

### 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.

### DIVINE MERCY ACADEMY MISSION STATEMENT

Divine Mercy Academy is a Roman Catholic elementary school serving students in Pre-K through Grade 8. Inspired in faith and rooted in Gospel values, Divine Mercy Academy, as a ministry of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, is dedicated to excellence in Catholic education.

In partnership with each family, neighboring parish and faith community, our principal, faculty and staff endeavor to instill in each child a life-long commitment to learning, service to others and trust in God. Divine Mercy Academy provides the foundation for each child to grow in spiritual development, wisdom, faith and integrity to prepare them to meet any future challenges.

### PHILOSOPHY AND BELIEFS OF DIVINE MERCY ACADEMY

Divine Mercy Academy is the extension of Christ the Divine Shepherd Parish grouping of churches', educational ministry. It reflects the desire of our faith community to educate the total child. All those creating the school environment serve as models and integrating forces for the child's spiritual, intellectual growth within the framework of a solid Catholic tradition. Excellence informs every area of the curriculum while individual's needs are identified and respected. It is the intent of our faith community to gently challenge the children to become hope-filled competent and contributing members of a Christ-centered society.

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.

### 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. Due to the merger of North American Martyrs School and St. Bernadette's School, the Middle States board granted the newly formed Divine Mercy Academy an extension to begin the accreditation process. We will begin the re-evaluation process in 2020.

### CATECHETICS (Religious Formation)

Catechetics is the center of the Catholic school. A conscious effort is made to create a Christ-centered

atmosphere by stressing Christian values and morality in the classroom as well as throughout the school. A conscious effort is made 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 skills and a love for the Church's daily worship. Prayer includes a prayer service each morning with simple prayers for before lunch and at the end of the day.

An introduction each morning 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, and to the civil holidays that have significance for our children.

Faith experiences are an integral part of catechetics. Opportunities for Eucharistic Liturgies, Reconciliation, Stations of the Cross, Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary, and other Catholic prayers, classroom prayer and service to others are to be included. Community is at the heart of Catholic education, not simply as a concept to be learned, but as a reality to be lived.

The principal, in conjunction with the Pastor and the Catechetical Administrator, work with the teachers in the religious development and sacramental preparation of the students. **Mandatory 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.

## 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 expectation 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

## ACADEMIC SUPPORT

We strive 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. Parents may request information from the principal or the child's teacher.

## CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

In the Catholic schools, quality academic education is dependent on an organized plan of basic content with special attention given to the integration of Gospel values.

Curriculum Guidelines for all subject areas are utilized by all Catholic elementary schools and are aligned to meet or exceed the Common Core Standards. The guidelines endeavor to give continuity to the teaching/learning process, and are geared to meet the individual needs of students and to guide the teaching/learning process.

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.

To access the Diocese of Pittsburgh curriculum go to:

<http://www.diopitt.org/catholic-education/department-catholic-schools/elementary/curriculum>

## SUBJECT AREAS

### [Catechetics/Religious Education](#)

The Catholic Church recognizes parents/guardians as the primary educators of their children. The role of the parish 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, 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 provide 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 prepare 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. It also incorporates 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to help students prepare for our ever-changing world. 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 K-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 Health for Success 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.

## 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 integrated approach permits students to develop library skills as the need for these skills naturally emerge from the curriculum. The librarian and classroom teacher are partners in the instructional process. They plan and implement these activities so that the goals of both the content area and the library program are achieved.

\*\*\*The school library is open daily. Lost or damaged books must be paid for.

\*\*\*At this time due to COVID-19 restrictions our school library is not accessible for checking out materials.

## HONOR ROLL

The Honor Roll includes students in 6th, 7th and 8th grades. To qualify for the Honor Roll, a student must have a minimum of a C grade in all subjects and attain the following based on the weighted grading scale.

- Highest Honor: 3.8 to 4.0 GPA
- High Honor: 3.5 to 3.79 GPA
- Honor: 3.2 to 3.49

## GPA GRADE POINTS

- A = 4.0
- B = 3.0
- C = 2.0

## CLASS CREDITS

• Religion	= 1	Health	= .25
• Reading	= 1	Phys. Ed	= .25
• English	= 1	Computer	= .25
• Spelling	= 1	Art	= .25
• Social Studies	= 1	Music	= .25
• Science	= 1	Spanish	= .25
• Math	= 1	Handwriting	= .25

## Example

Religion	B 3 x 1	Health	C 2 x .25
Reading	B 3 x 1	Phys. Ed	B 3 x .25
English	B 3 x 1	Computer	B 3 x .25
Spelling	B 3 x 1	Art	C 2 x .25
Soc. Studies	A 4 x 1	Music	B 3 x .25
Science	B 3 x 1	Spanish	A 4 x .25
Math	A 4 x 1	Handwriting	B 3 x .25
<b>Total:</b>	<b>23.00</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>5.00</b>

$$23.00 + 5.00 = 28.00$$

Total Credits: 8.75

Points Achieved: 28.25

$$28.25 \div 8.75 = 3.2; \text{ Honor Roll}$$



## Technology

Technology instruction is essential in today's educational process. This instruction includes computer awareness and computer literacy. When this instruction and awareness are mastered, the computer becomes a basic tool for teaching logical thinking and problem-solving, creative writing, communication, the handling of information, and many other aspects of the curriculum.

Since the Continuous Growth Philosophy guides instruction in schools of the Diocese, students are led into phases of computer instruction according to needs and abilities.

Teachers of computer literacy look beyond hardware and 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.

## Internet Use Policy

### Guidelines for Implementation and Practice

This guideline is established to ensure understanding and application of Divine Mercy Academy Internet Use Policy. The school reserves the right to amend these guidelines at any time. It is understood that the administration will inform parents/guardians of any changes made in these guidelines. **Students' parents and/or guardians are required to review these guidelines with their child(ren) and complete and return the parent/guardian consent form.**

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.

## Etiquette

All Students are required to:

- Be polite when sending written messages to others
- Use of appropriate language is expected 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:

- Placing unlawful information on the Internet
- Using the Internet for non-school related activities
- 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 the Internet to harass another person.

**An Internet Use Agreement must be signed annually and returned to the school before Internet privileges will be granted.**

## CYBER-HARASSMENT

**Pennsylvania Act 26** (effective September 28, 2015) is a new law signed by Governor Wolf on July 10, 2015.

The Act may be read in its entirety at:

<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/li/uconsCheck.cfm?yr=2015&sessInd=0&act=26#>

**What is at Issue?: Act 26 makes it a criminal offense for a person to:**

- Intend to harass, annoy, or alarm a child
- Use electronic means to directly address a child or indirectly through social media; and
- Engage in a continuing course or conduct which either
  - \***Makes a seriously disparaging statement or opinion about a child's**
    - Physical Characteristics,
    - Sexuality,
    - Sexual activity, or
    - Mental or physical health
  - \***Threatens to inflict harm on the child**

**PUNISHMENT: A third degree misdemeanor**, punishable by a maximum \$2500 fine and/ or one year in prison.

**\*Juveniles charged with the crime may be referred to a diversionary program, which might include an education program on cyber-harassment. Once completed, the juvenile's record may be expunged.**

**WHERE is the Crime Committed?:** The crime may be deemed to have been committed where the victim child resides. Cyber-bullying complaints should be directed to law enforcement in the area in which the child lives.

**HOW does this affect Schools?:** The law does not place any duty, mandatory reporting or otherwise, upon schools; however, schools should:

- Educate students and families that cyber-bullying is now a criminal offense ("cyber-harassment");
- Refer families complaining of out-of- school cyber-bullying incidents to law enforcement in their hometown; and
- Contact police and advise of any cyber-harassment occurring on school grounds and refer the victim's family to do the same.

### Anti-Bullying Curriculum

Any form of bullying, teasing or picking on a student by another student or group of students will be brought to the attention of the student(s) parents. Any form of the above mentioned infractions will be considered a Level II infraction (see discipline policy page 33).

### **Definition of Bullying:**

A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending him or herself. Bullying can be defined as causing harm to a person's body or property, causing harm to a person's self-worth, or causing harm to a person's ability to be accepted by a group or groups.

### Our School's Anti-Bullying Rules

1. We will not bully others.
2. We will try to help students who are bullied.
3. We will try to include students who are left out.
4. If we know that somebody is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

**EXAMPLES:** Taunting, making threatening gestures, hitting, kicking, pushing, shoving, taking things from someone, initiating fights, scratching, biting, tripping or causing falls, threatening harm to a person, blaming a victim, extortion, making threats to secure silence, destroying or defacing property, physical cruelty, insulting remarks, calling names, teasing, saying someone has germs or is unclean, insulting family members, harassing phone calls, emails, or Instant Messages, insulting intelligence, challenging someone in public to force a reaction, giving dirty looks, holding nose or other insulting gestures, falsifying schoolwork, defacing schoolwork, ostracizing, gossiping, starting/spreading/increasing rumors, teasing publicly, insulting race or gender, undermining relationships/friendships, threatening/creating total exclusion, arranging group exclusion, passively not including in a group, playing mean tricks or jokes, making someone look foolish, arranging public humiliation, causing public humiliation, total group rejection, exclusion from a group.

**Cyber-bullying includes but is not limited to, the following misuses of Technology: Harassing, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another student or personnel employed by the school by sending or posting inappropriate or derogatory email messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs, tweets, etc.). All forms of cyber bullying are unacceptable and to the extent such actions are disruptive of the educational process of the school, offenders shall be the subject of appropriate consequences.**

### **DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH ANTI-HAZING POLICY**

Hazing violates the purpose and mission of Catholic education, wherein students are called to grow in their commitment to God, one another, the Church, and the wider community.

Hazing is defined as any intentional, knowing or reckless act meant to induce pain, embarrassment, humiliation, deprivation of rights or that creates physical or mental discomfort, and is directed against a student for the purpose of being initiated into, affiliated with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in any organization, club, athletic team sponsored or

supported by any parish, elementary or secondary school in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, whether such hazing practices were mandatory or voluntarily entered into by any student or organization in question.

Examples of hazing include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Recklessly or intentionally endangering the physical health, mental health, safety, or dignity of a person
- Willful destruction or removal of public or private property for initiation or admission into affiliation with, or as a condition of continued membership in any organization
- Forcing or requiring the drinking of alcohol or any other substance
- Forcing or requiring the eating of food or anything an individual refuses to eat
- Calisthenics such as push-ups, sit-ups, jogging, etc.
- Paddling or striking in any manner
- Treasure or scavenger hunts, road trips
- Marking, branding, or shaving the head or body hair
- Preventing/restricting normal personal hygiene
- Sexual harassment causing indecent exposure or nudity at any time
- Physical harassment such as pushing, cursing, shouting, etc.
- Requiring uncomfortable, ridiculous, or embarrassing dress
- Requiring the carrying of items
- Requiring personal service or acts of servitude
- Treating a person in a degrading or demeaning manner
- Requiring new members to practice periods of silence
- Conducting interrogations or any other types of questioning

Students and supervising adults must not remain silent if they observe hazing. Silence condones these activities and may make the observer as guilty as the hazers themselves. Any hazing incident witnessed by a student or supervising adult should be immediately reported to the Principal.

Individuals or groups found in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action that could include suspension or expulsion from the school.

## **DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH POLICY REGARDING GENDER**

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 a student's birth certificate.

***“Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology.”*** (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* #155)

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:**

1. Administrators will maintain student permanent records and other legal records and documents using the student's legal name and gender.
2. School personnel may honor requests of parents/guardians to address a student by a preferred name or nickname.
3. 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.
4. In all other circumstances students are expected to comply according to their God-given gender.

## **TESTING PROGRAM**

Standardized tests, textbook tests, and teacher-made tests are administered to students throughout the year. These assessments require students to synthesize information, apply what they have learned and demonstrate their understanding of what has been taught.

### Achievement Tests

Students in grades K-8 are administered a standardized test to measure progress from one year to another. A component of the standardized testing program for grades 2-8 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 is absent due to illness, every attempt will be made to enable the child to make-up the tests. However, since the tests must be returned within a two-week period, make-up testing often necessitates taking more tests daily than is ideal. To prevent this, we ask parents not to schedule trips or appointments during the time of standardized testing.

### Writing Assessment

Each child in grades K-8 participates in a Writing Assessment. This allows students to respond to a writing prompt and to select and organize content, develop a style and follow standard conventions. Students in Grade 6-8 use a technology program during the year to provide additional opportunities for written expression. The program provides guidance on the first and subsequent drafts to allow the students to practice rewriting and learn its value.

### Math Benchmark Assessment

Math Benchmark Tests are administered quarterly to students in Grades K-8. These tests determine if the student is making progress towards grade-level expectation.

## **AUXILIARY SERVICES**

The following services are offered through the Intermediate Unit:

### Remedial Reading and Math (Title I)

The federally-funded Title I program is designed to provide additional assistance to students who are not demonstrating grade level proficiency in reading and/or math. Referrals for the program are based on teacher referrals, standardized test results, and parent approval. Alternate strategies are planned

for students in accordance with individual instructional goals and in support of the classroom curriculum to help students develop mastery of basic skills.

### [Act 89 Services](#)

Intermediate Unit personnel work with and provide support to students in remedial math and reading. These teachers, in collaboration with the classroom teacher, identify educational needs and design educational interventions and strategies to help a child succeed.

### [Speech/Language](#)

Speech and language services are also provided through Act 89 funding. This is a special service offered to students to enhance communication skills, which directly impact social and academic interactions.

### [Educational Psychological Testing](#)

Educational Psychological testing is available through the student's school district by parent request or at the recommendation of the teacher in consultation with the principal. Results are formally reported to parents, principal and teachers along with a list of recommendations made by the psychologist. **This information is kept confidential** and is not shared with anyone without parent permission.

### [Counseling](#)

A certified counselor provides individual and small group counseling sessions to children in grades K-8. Children are referred by parents, principal, teacher and through self-referral. Children may see a counselor once without parent permission or knowledge. After that, individual counseling requires parent permission.

### [Developmental Guidance Program](#)

At Divine Mercy Academy, we value the social and emotional development of your child as much as their academic growth and success. Throughout the school year, counselors from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit will be visiting classrooms to present lessons on topics including character education, conflict resolution, anger management, feelings, social skills, etc. The topics and grade levels chosen will be based on the needs of the building by the administrator and counselor. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your building administrator.

## **OTHER AVAILABLE PROGRAMS**

### [Student Assistance Program](#)

The Student Assistance Program (SAP) was established by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by Act 211 of 1990. It is a 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 behavior difficulties which impact their social, emotional, and educational progress.

Referrals for the program are made by faculty and/or parents. Once a referral has been received by the team, 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, conveys this information to classroom teachers, parents/guardians and evaluates the results. If necessary, after consultation with parents, appropriate referrals are made to outside agencies.

Team members 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, faculty, and the PTG 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.

Guidelines for both students and chaperones are in effect for each field trip. A copy of the student guidelines will be sent home by the teacher so that the parent may help reinforce the guidelines presented.

### Homework

A reasonable amount of homework, according to grade level, is of great educational value and so is assigned every day. Assignments are not always written. Study and memory work are frequently given. Homework is assigned on a regular basis for the following reasons:

- 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 the television, telephone, or other 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;
- If the child says there is no homework too often, the parent/guardian should consult the online grading system or contact the child's teacher.

The Diocese recommends the following time schedule for home study: (Total Time)

Primary (Grades K-2)

10-30 minutes

Intermediate (Grades 3-5)  
Upper Elementary (Grades 6-8)

40-60 minutes  
70-90 minutes

At the discretion of the teacher, homework is not generally assigned on weekends.

## DAILY PRACTICES AND POLICIES

### ADMISSIONS/REGISTRATION POLICIES

Divine Mercy Academy admits students of any race, gender, or national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to all students formally accepted into the school. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of our educational policies, admission policies, athletic or other school administered programs. Students can be admitted with a disability, if with reasonable accommodation, the student can meet program requirements. Children who are not Catholic are expected to participate in religion classes and to attend all religious functions of the school/church.

Official certificates of birth and baptism are required at the time of registration. Students entering Kindergarten must be five years of age by September 1. Those registering for grades 1-8 must fulfill the age requirement for the desired grade and present letters of recommendation from the previous school. Grade level and academic group determinations are made on the basis of school records.

Immunization records must be complete before any child may enter school. The requirements are as follows:

- 4 doses of diphtheria and tetanus
- 3 doses of polio vaccine
- 3 properly spaced doses of hepatitis B vaccine
- 2 doses of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine after the first birthday or proof by blood test of having had the illness
- 2 doses of varicella
- 1 dose of meningococcal for entry into seventh grade
- 1 dose of tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis for entry into seventh grade

### ATTENDANCE

Punctuality and regular attendance at school 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. **Students are responsible for making up work missed due to 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 death in the family or court appearance.

The state guidelines also permit an excused absence for educational trips if a request is sent to the school prior to dates of the trip. If no prior notice is received, the absence is classified as Unexcused.

***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. A student's absence must be reported to the school via the form on the website or by telephone prior to 8:30 AM in the morning.
  - b. After 10 absences, a letter will be sent to parents and a doctor's excuse must be provided for absences.
  - c. After 20 days, a meeting will be set with the principal, homeroom teacher, and the parents to discuss retaining the child.
  - d. After 30 days, the child will be retained EXCEPT in extenuating circumstances. The local magistrate will also be notified.
2. Upon returning to school, a student must present a dated and signed note to the homeroom teacher confirming the reason for his/her absence within three school days. This note is kept on file at the school for the entire school year. **Following a communicable disease or extended absence**, a note must be presented from the doctor stating the nature of the student's illness and certifying that the student is able to return to school.
  3. Students who leave school early for reasons other than illness MUST have a **WRITTEN REQUEST** from a parent 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 meet the student **in the school office** where they will be asked to **sign the student out of the building.**
  4. **\*\*\*No early dismissals after 2:50 p.m. Please plan appointments accordingly. After 2:50 p.m. student must wait for regular dismissal time.\*\*\***
  5. If at all possible, all doctor/dentist appointments should be made for after-school hours or for days of early dismissals or no school. If an appointment is made for early in the day, it is important to have the student return to school as soon as possible.
  6. Students arriving after, or leaving before 11:20 a.m. are marked absent for a half-day.
  7. Students arriving after 8:43 AM are considered late and must report to the school office for a late slip. **Ten days of tardiness will be considered as 1 day absent.**
  8. Parents are strongly encouraged to plan vacations and trips around school holidays. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain the work they will miss prior to leaving for vacation.

A written note should be given to the teacher/principal for the following reasons:

- Following an absence
- Excuse from gym class
- Permission for out of school appointments (Child is expected to return as soon as 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 may be required to provide documentation from a physician indicating that the absences are relating to an existing medical condition.

### Early Dismissals/Early Arrival/Late Pick-up

Parents should make every effort to schedule appointments at a time that school is not in session. However, if a child must have an early dismissal, he/she must submit a written note for the principal's approval. For these dismissals, parents or an authorized adult must come to the office and sign the child out at the authorized time. When a student must miss school for an appointment he/she may be marked absent for a half day depending on the time the student arrives at school or the time the students leaves school. Students arriving in the school at 8:43 am will be marked tardy. Students who arrive at 8:43 am must be signed in at the main office **by a parent/guardian. Please walk your child into the school if it is 8:43 a.m. or later.**

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

### **DAILY SCHEDULE**

8:20	School doors open. All students enter via blue doors located near the shrine.
8:20 – 8:43	Students must be in classrooms for attendance, lunch count, etc.
<b>8:43</b>	<b>Students considered tardy:</b> Opening prayer/Announcements
8:45	First class
10:54	Lunch: Grades ~K,1,2 & 8
11:35	Lunch: Grades 3, 4, 5
12:15	Lunch: Grades 6,7
3:01	Homeroom: Closing prayer/Announcements
3:05	Dismissal

### Lunch

All students must bring or buy a lunch. **Students wishing to purchase lunch regularly must buy a lunch card.** Lunch cards are \$33.00 for 10 lunches. One individual lunch is \$3.50 (in the event your child wishes to purchase just a single lunch. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic individual milk is not being sold.

### Cafeteria Rules

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.
- Discard all papers, scraps of food, etc. at your place and dispose of them properly.
- Obey cafeteria monitors at all times.
- Speak in a conversational tone.
- Walk at all times.

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

## DIVINE MERCY ACADEMY 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. This Dress Code was developed for the following reasons:

- **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 attractive. All students in grades K-8 must follow the school dress code which is described below:

Parents are strongly urged to 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 area is located in the school office. Parents and children are encouraged to look for lost clothing items there. More valuable lost items, such as glasses, watches and purses, are to be turned in to the office. Items that are not claimed by the end of each school year are donated to charity.

The goal of a dress code is to emphasize neatness and care appropriate to serious pursuits such as learning. All students are required to be in uniform during each school day (see Gym Uniform Policy for students' designated gym day). The complete uniform policy follows this Quick Reference of permitted items:

Each student is required to purchase one (1) **DMA-embroidered, Navy Blue polo** for Friday School Mass days, or as directed. These and all other embroidered items may be purchased through Log Cabin Embroidery [www.logcabinembroidery.com](http://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.

Please go to <https://dmapgh.org/uniform-policy-order-form> and click on the uniform policy to view the example pictures of the uniform.

## School Uniform – Quick Reference

Uniform Tops	Uniform Bottoms	Accessories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● DMA-embroidered Navy polo shirt, available for purchase through Log Cabin Embroidery.</li> <li>● Long- or short-sleeved, polo-style shirt in Red, White, or Light or Navy Blue. No pockets or brand logos.</li> <li>● Collared, button-front, long- or short-sleeved dress shirt in Red, White, or Navy.</li> <li>● Sweater in Red, White, or Navy, in a button-front or full-zip cardigan style, or pullover sweater vest, only.</li> <li>● DMA-embroidered, full zip fleece or zip-up wicking jacket in Navy Blue, available for purchase through Log Cabin Embroidery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pleated or flat skirts or skorts (girls in grades K-8), jumpers (K-2), pants, or shorts in Khaki or Navy</li> <li>● DMA school-designated Navy/Red Plaid skirts, skorts, or jumpers may be purchased through various retailers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Girls' hair accessories must be Red, White, Navy, or School Plaid.</li> <li>● Neckties in Red or Navy solid or prints, or School Plaid, may be worn with dress shirts.</li> <li>● Belts must be worn with belt loops (for grades 2-8) in Navy, Brown, or Black.</li> <li>● Socks for girls in Red, White, or Navy; for boys in White, Navy, Tan, or Black.</li> <li>● Shoes must be Brown, Tan, Black or Navy.</li> </ul>

### School Uniform Policy

- The uniform should be neat, clean, and modest. No oversized (more than one size larger than the student normally wears) clothing permitted. Underwear, including camisoles, should not be visible.
- Uniform shirts may be solid Red, White, Light or Navy Blue, long- or short-sleeved, in a polo (without pockets) or button-front dress style; no logos, patterns, ribbing, or texturing.
- Neckties (Red, Navy Blue, or school Plaid) may be worn with dress shirts, if desired.
- All shirts must be tucked in to the bottom. Banded-bottom polo shirts are permitted.
- If wearing a jumper or sweater, a collared shirt must be worn underneath.
- Uniform pants and shorts must be a dress style, flat or pleated; no cargo pockets, rivets, double seems/patch pockets, or designs. No carpenter pants, leggings (without a skirt), or skinny pants.
- Uniform shorts must be between knee length and two inches above the knee. **Shorts are permitted only from April 15-October 14.**
- Girls' jumpers (K – 2nd, only) and skirts/skorts (all grades) may be Khaki, Navy Blue, or DMA's Navy/Red Plaid; pleated or flat-front; scoop- or V-neck. No stretchy styles or polo-style dresses are permitted.
- Skirts, jumpers, and skorts must be no shorter than two inches above the knee. Solid-color shorts, opaque tights, or full-length leggings must be worn under skirts/jumpers. Shirts must not be longer than the skirt. Leggings must match the color of the socks worn. **No shorts from October 15-April 14.**
- All socks must be visible in shoes (no "no-show"). Girls' socks or opaque tights may be worn in Red, White, or Navy; boys' socks in White, Navy, Tan, or Black. Solid colors, only.
- Belts are required in Navy, Brown, or Black for girls and boys in 2nd -8th grade, if belt loops are present.
- Shoes must be flat, closed-toe, in leather or a leather-like material or a boat shoe style canvas.

Shoes may be Brown, Tan, Black, or Navy. Velcro or easy-on/off shoes for younger students are preferred; laces must be worn if shoes have eyelets. Tennis shoes may be worn and are mandatory on gym days. **Starting next year in the 2021-2022 school year tennis shoes must be a solid color and free from logos or designs.** No heels, platforms, clogs, flip-flops, light-up shoes, Heelys, or boots with heels may be worn. If weather-appropriate boots are worn to school, students must change into uniform shoes upon entry.

- Body piercings (except for ears) and tattoos of any kind, including temporary ones, are not permitted.
- Excessive, oversized jewelry is not permitted. Necklaces must be tucked inside the uniform shirt. Girls may wear small earrings; no hoop or dangling earrings or more than one pair of earrings. Necklaces, bracelets, or clip earrings must not be worn in gym class.
- Students' hair should be neat, clean, and its natural color. Hair should never be in a student's eyes. Boys' hair must not extend past the bottom edge of the shirt collar.
- Girls may wear subtle hair accessories that blend with their hair color or are in line with the school colors (Red, White, or Navy, and the school-designated Plaid). No bandanas or head scarves. Headbands, whether soft or rigid, may not have cat ears, slogans, or anything different from a flat, normal-style headband.
- Make-up, except for girls' nail polish, is not permitted. If nail polish is worn, it should not be excessively chipped.
- **Hats, coats, jackets, and hoodies are not to be worn in school. Only DMA or Saber items may be worn. Such as a sweater (as described in the Quick Reference), the DMA-embroidered full zip fleece, the DMA-embroidered wicking zip-up jacket is permitted to be worn over the uniform in the classroom setting, or a Saber/DMA sweatshirt.**
- Sweatshirts (see gym, below), sweaters, jackets, hats, gloves, etc. should be clearly labeled inside with the student's or family's name. Any uniform questions/exceptions may be directed to the school office.

## School Liturgies

A DMA-embroidered, Navy Blue polo - purchased via the Log Cabin Embroidery Website - is the required uniform for all students for Friday school Mass days or any other special liturgies (or for school activities as the principal may direct). The only students exempt from wearing the school approved mass shirt are students who have gym on mass day. Any approved uniform bottoms (excluding jumpers) may be worn with the polo for Mass.

## Masks

**Mask letters, logos, and prints** – Masks must adhere to the following uniform requirements:

- **Must be free of letters** (with the exception of their names and DMA-related words, like the name of their team or the word "Sabers", or college/professional team names, which we have added as acceptable mask designs)
- **Must be free of logos** (with the exception of DMA-related logos or college/professional team logos which we have added as acceptable mask designs)
- May have a print (like stripes, flowers, polka dots, etc.)
- May have sequins, glitter, etc.
- May be a solid color

**Afterhours** - Masks should be worn at all times when on campus, even after the school day has ended and students are waiting for sporting events or other activities to start! Please remind your child it is each of our jobs to protect our Saber family by responsibly wearing our masks.

**\*\*Students who do not comply with mask policies will be asked to participate in our virtual learning platform.**

### Gym Uniform Policy

- All Students shall wear a gym uniform to school on their class' designated gym day; no students are permitted to participate in gym class without gym apparel.
- All gym tops and bottoms must be purchased through the Log Cabin Embroidery.
- Gym T-shirts must be worn either completely tucked-in or completely untucked.
- Necklaces, bracelets, or clip earrings must not be worn in gym class.
- As with the school uniform, gym shorts are only permitted from April 15-October 14.
- **A DMA or Sabers sweatshirt or DMA wicking/fleece jacket is required for gym from October 15-April 14.**  
**No hoodies will be worn in lieu of the dress code sweatshirt or jacket.**

Gym Tops	Gym Bottoms	Gym Shoes and Socks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short- or long-sleeved T-shirt in Red or Navy with DMA logo in cotton or dri-fit options.</li> <li>• Crewneck sweatshirt in Red or Blue with DMA logo or a DMA Saber Sweatshirt.</li> <li>• Wicking zip-up jacket or full zip fleece jacket in Navy with DMA logo.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cotton or mesh shorts in Navy with DMA logo.</li> <li>• Jogger style sweatpants or wicking pant in Navy with DMA logo.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closed-toe tennis shoes with laces or Velcro closure.</li> <li>• Socks as per school uniform instruction.</li> </ul>

### Picture Day

On picture day, students may wear clothes that do not fall under the uniform dress code, but reflect at least the same level of formality as the school uniforms. E.g., shirts, dresses, skirts, or pants that are a different color and style than the uniform may be worn; shorts and skirts must still not be shorter than two inches above the knee. No jeans, t-shirts, heels, clogs, or sandals without socks are permitted to be worn by students on picture day.

### Dress Down Days

Whatever students choose to wear must reflect our Catholic School Values. Shirts must have sleeves; spaghetti straps are not permitted; no inappropriate graphics or sayings. No cut-offs or short-shorts; no oversized or ripped clothes. If yoga pants are worn, skirts or tunic tops must be worn with them to completely cover the backside. Socks must be worn with shoes. No flip-flops, heels, or boots with heels.

**If you have any questions about whether or not your child is properly dressed for school – Call and ask.**

## EMERGENCIES

### Emergency Cards

At the beginning of each school year, parents are required to complete a Student Emergency Card. It is imperative that the school be able to reach a parent in case of illness or an emergency. It is also important to list the names of others who can be contacted should a parent be unavailable. Please keep the card updated by notifying the office of changes.

### Emergency 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 (OptionC Parent Alert System), radio, and/or television. We currently follow Gateway School District's closing and delays for inclement weather. **PLEASE DO NOT CALL THE SCHOOL OR RECTORY FOR THIS INFORMATION.**

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 busing when school is in session 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 via television, and/or parent notification system (OptionC Parent Alert System).

## EXTENDED CARE

For an additional fee, Divine Mercy Academy offers before and after school programs for parents who need child care. Morning extended day is available beginning at 7:00 a.m. and afternoon extended day is available immediately after dismissal until 6:00 p.m.

1. Parents are required to register each child **IN ADVANCE** regardless of the time the program will be used.
2. Parents must fill out an emergency **Care Card** for each child using the program **BEFORE** the program can be used.
3. Children **cannot** be dismissed to parents in the parking lot. Parents **MUST** come in and **sign-out** their child(ren).
4. The After School Extended Day hours end at 6:00 p.m. Parents must be on time for pick-up. Parents will be charged additional fees for parents who arrive after 6:00 p.m.

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

## TEXTBOOKS/SCHOOL SUPPLIES

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

For the convenience of families, supply lists are available each August for the following year. Students provide their own school supplies but, are expected to comply with individual teacher requirements. Some items, such as planners, will be available for purchase through the school office.

## DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

It is important that the school know the ordinary means by which each child arrives and departs daily. A note is to be sent when a change is necessary. For reasons of safety and insurance, each child is to ride his/her assigned bus.

Dismissal should be calm and orderly. Attention should be given to announcements.

**Written requests** for early dismissals must be taken to the office for approval by the principal **in the morning**. All students with early dismissals **MUST** be picked up at the office. Parents/Guardians or designated persons assigned to pick up a student from school will be asked to sign the student out at the main office lobby via the Ident-a-kid system and **photo id is required**. **Please do not go to the classroom to pick up your child. No Early dismissals after 2:50 p.m. Please plan appointments accordingly. Anything after 2:50 p.m. must wait for regular dismissal time.**

### **CAR RIDERS' DISMISSAL-PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!**

**Any parent/guardian** picking up a student from school at dismissal must drive in the upper lot and line up and remain either directly next to your vehicle (so that small children may see you) or remain in your vehicle. Wait until your child is dismissed to you. 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. If your child requires additional help getting into your vehicle, and or requires assistance with a seat belt, please park in the lower lot and wait for your child. Please do not wait in the dismissal car line and get out of your vehicle to assist the child. This holds up the line and makes it unsafe.

## Bus

Students who live more than a 1.5 mile radius from Divine Mercy Academy are eligible to be bused 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 in route on the bus. Every bus follows the guidelines that are within our 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's 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 of the bus.
- In vehicles where seat belts are available, use them properly.
- Observe the same conduct as in the classroom. 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.
- Keep the bus clean; do not eat, drink, or chew gum on the bus.
- Cooperate with the driver. Any directives of the bus driver in addition to the above are to be followed.
- Mask must be worn and social distancing observed.

## 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.

Altar Servers	Art Club	Band
Basketball	Cantor Choir	Cheerleading
Chimbote, Peru (Service)	Cross Country	Drama Club
English Festival	Future Cities	English Festival
Out of the Box Science Labs	PJAS –Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science	PRSEF – Pittsburgh Regional Science and Engineering Fair
Robotics	Spelling Bee	Student Council
Track/Field	Volleyball	Yearbook

\*\*We are always looking to add new and exciting activities for our students. If you have a unique talent and would like to volunteer to sponsor or teach a club or class, please let us know. We would love to offer additional opportunities for our students.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

### HEALTH ISSUES

#### School Nurse/Nurse Practitioner

A school nurse is assigned to Divine Mercy Academy. The nurse has the following responsibilities:

- Maintain updated health records
- Make sure all immunizations are current
- Conduct vision screening
- Conduct scoliosis screening
- Work in conjunction with the speech therapist for hearing and speech screening
- Assist the school in appropriate health education
- Contact parents/guardians if any health problems arise

- Make arrangements for physical exams for 6th graders

It is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to secure proper medical treatment, as it is needed.

### Illness

It is often difficult to decide if a child should stay home from school when complaining of illness, especially during the current COVID-19 pandemic. An objective sign is an elevated temperature. According to current CDC guidelines a child must be kept home from school if the child's temperature is 100°F or higher. In addition, a child should be kept home if experiencing any of the following COVID-19 symptoms:

Signs of illness:

- ○ A temperature above 100 degrees F.
- ○ Cough
- ○ Shortness of breath
- ○ Difficulty breathing
- ○ Or- (2 or more of the following symptoms)
  - Lack of smell or taste (without congestion)
  - Sore throat
  - Chills
  - Muscle Pain
  - Headache
  - Congestion or Runny nose
  - Nausea or vomiting
  - Diarrhea

For specific information regarding symptoms of Corona virus please use the following link.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

If a child has a temperature of 100° or more, shortness of breath, sever cough, difficulty breathing, skin rash, diarrhea/vomiting, strep throat, evidence of lice, or two or more of the following: lack of smell or taste (without congestion), chills, muscle pain, headache, congestion/runny nose, the child will be sent home. Parents are asked to use discretion in sending 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.

**\*If you are unsure of whether or not your child should stay home please email or call the school office.**

For additional information on our Health and Safety plan in response to COVID-19, please refer to our school's website.

### Accident and Injury

In the case of accident or illness at school, parents are contacted to take the child home, to the doctor, or 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 is available for each child and that this

information is kept up-to-date by parents.

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. All cases of head lice should be reported immediately.

### Medication

Whenever possible, medicine is to be given at home, and parents are to request the physician to adjust the schedule for administration so that it can be given before and after school hours.

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

- The medication must be delivered to the school by a responsible adult along with a physician's written request for distribution by school personnel.
- 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.
- Parents must sign a Medicine Permission Form.

### **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.

#### Fire Drills

Fire drills are held monthly. Exit directions, which are posted in prominent places in each room, are to be followed. 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. Students remain outside until summoned back to class.

Students are to remain in absolute silence during all fire drills. Misconduct of any nature is to be reported to the principal. Misbehavior during fire drills is a very serious offense and will be dealt with immediately.

#### Weather Emergency Drills

Weather emergency drills are practiced yearly. Teachers follow the policy governing weather emergencies for student safety. Students must maintain silence at all times during a weather emergency drill. Staff assists handicapped students.

## Safe Environment Program

The purpose of the Safe Environment Program (SEP) of the Diocese of Pittsburgh is to take reasonable measures to assure that adults who have contact with minors (1) are committed to providing a safe environment for children and youth and (2) are capable of identifying and preventing abuse of children and (3) have no personal history of behavior that would be a threat to children.

Adults (18 or older) volunteering with children at Divine Mercy Academy must be compliant in the requirements of the safe environment policy:

### **Complete application at <https://diopitt.org/school-volunteers>**

which processes the PA State Police Criminal Record Clearance;

- Read and sign the Code of Pastoral Conduct;
- Obtain the Department of Public Welfare Child Abuse History Clearance;
- FBI Clearance Waiver (If a resident of PA for at least 10 years) or obtain FBI Clearances
- Attend the Protecting God's Children Program (Online)
- Attend Mandated Reporter Training (Online)

## VOLUNTEERS

The help of volunteers is always appreciated 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 Parent Teacher Guild, athletics, fund-raising activities, homeroom parents, playground/lunchroom monitors and field trip chaperones. This partnership is invaluable to the success of our school.

## Security/Visitors

All doors to the school will be closed and locked during school hours. Parents and visitors should use the buzzer on the main school door to gain entrance to the building. For security reasons, anyone entering Divine Mercy Academy is to report to the office or receptionist immediately regardless of the purpose of the visit. For the safety of all students, visitor's must sign-in through the Ident-a-Kid security system and a visitor's badge must be worn. 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, an appointment must be made in advance.

Any articles or items to be left for a student should be left on the table located in the school lobby. This will eliminate any unnecessary interruptions to classes and instruction as well as limit the number of visitors to our building during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Playground

Every school day, weather permitting, the students enjoy an outside break supervised by a staff member and/or volunteer monitors. Organized play is encouraged. Rough games, water guns, and snowballing are not permitted.

Students are never to leave the playground area without the permission of the principal and the knowledge of the playground monitor. In case of illness or accident, the student is to report to the school office.

Lunch monitors have the responsibility of enforcing rules. They are to be obeyed and treated respectfully.

When the playground session ends, the students will be met by a teacher and taken to their classrooms in silence.

The following rules are to be observed on the playground:

- Not to re-enter the building unless for an emergency.
- Display good sportsmanship and exercise self-control.
- Play in assigned areas.
- Stay on school grounds (This includes not retrieving a ball that has gone off school grounds.)
- Obey the directives of the playground monitors, courteously and promptly.
- Stop playing with the first whistle and walk quietly to line when the second bell rings.

If inclement weather makes it necessary to stay indoors at lunchtime, classroom rules are to be observed:

- Engage in quiet activities

## **DISCIPLINE**

### Introduction

Divine Mercy Academy administration and faculty 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 Teachings of the Church. Discipline is considered an element of moral guidance, not 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 involving school and parish community
- Developing a sense of rights and responsibilities and commitment to the entire school and parish 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 behave in the following manner:

#### Before school

- dress according to the school dress code
- arrive after 8:20 a.m. and before 8:43 except to attend the extended care program
- gather in the designated area
- engage in quiet conversation
- obey adults on entrance duty

#### In school

- walk quietly through the halls
- use proper language at all times
- follow the dress code for school days and dress up/down days
- respect school property and the property of other students
- have a note from their parent/guardian if they change their mode of school transportation

#### In the classroom

- follow the classroom rules of each teacher
- be responsible for submitting homework on time and making up assignments missed within a reasonable amount of time
- have a respectful attitude toward teachers and one another
- be responsible for appropriate supplies
- be honest in all communications
- use computers and school equipment appropriately
- refrain from chewing gum
- only drinking of water is permitted in the classroom and only when allowed by the teacher
- leave or do not enter a classroom at any time without a teacher or designated adult present

#### During recess

- refrain from re-entering the building unless for an emergency
- display good sportsmanship and exercise self control
- include all classmates in play activities
- play in assigned areas only

- stay on school grounds at all times (This includes not retrieving a ball that has gone off school grounds.)
- use equipment properly
- avoid throwing harmful objects
- obey the directives of playground monitors, courteously and promptly.
- stop playing at the first whistle and walk quietly to the designated area when the second whistle rings

#### During lunch

- remain seated while eating, raise hand to get out of seat
- clean up, pick up all papers, scraps of food, etc., and dispose of them properly
- obey cafeteria monitors at all times
- speak in a conversational tone
- walk at all times

#### After school

- follow dismissal procedures
- walk to assigned place to wait until bus or car ride arrives
- avoid running or playing games on the school grounds
- leave the school grounds immediately
- do not return to the classroom for forgotten items unless accompanied by a teacher or staff member
- sign in at the extended care program if not picked up by 3:20 p.m.

#### At athletic events and assemblies

- practice good sportsmanship as spectators and participants
- show respect towards coaches, referees, and visiting teams
- maintain an appropriate silence during special performances

#### Outside school

- to 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 students' 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.
- 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 noise
- 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 window

\*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 will result in loss of bus transportation

privileges.

### Fire Drill

- walk quickly in a single file
- keep arms at sides
- observe silence!

Any staff member will correct students who do not follow expectations. Not following these directives during a fire drill is a serious offense because it affects the safety of all students and will be dealt with according to the discipline policy.

### Infractions

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 repetition of non-compliance will determine the appropriate consequences.

#### Minor Infractions:

- Name-calling, peer ridicule, teasing in a hurtful way
- Being late for school or class 3 times without a written excuse
- Loitering in the hall and/or bathroom
- Chewing gum or eating outside of the cafeteria
- Consistent lack of preparation for class, including incomplete or missing homework, materials, or items requiring parent signature
- Disrupting instructional time; writing or passing notes in class
- Failing to care for school property, such as computers, lockers, desks, books (including not covering books)
- Consistent dress violations, e.g. unkempt appearance, short skirts, untucked shirts, missing belt, etc.
- Not conforming to the uniform code relating to make-up, shoes, jewelry, hair
- Failure to return discipline report
- Any behavior which the principal deems to be contrary to the school values

#### Major Infractions:

- Disrespectful behavior during prayer and worship
- Fighting: violent or threatening behavior; harassment
- Bullying of any kind
- Cheating; plagiarism; dishonest representation; lying
- Profane or foul language, gestures, actions, or material
- Stealing, extortion,
- Destruction of school or other's personal property, vandalism (in addition to the punishment the student will also have to make monetary reparation and/or clean the area involved)
- Using school equipment and/or facilities without permission
- Using a cell phone or electronic device when not permitted to do so
- Refusal to comply with directions from an adult
- Truancy
- Throwing or tossing food or other items
- Leaving school without permission; cutting class
- Physical or verbal abuse to other students, faculty, staff or adult volunteers.

- Dangerous horseplay
- Any other behavior which the principal deems to be contrary to the school values

## **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES/CONSEQUENCES**

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 choices. When this happens, a student may be issued a Student Discipline Report (SDR) for different violations of school policy and will receive consequences (at the discretion of teachers and administration) based on the severity of the infraction.

### Minor Infractions:

To remediate unacceptable minor behavior infractions the following actions may 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.
- Following consequences may be distributed to the student and will increase in severity depending on the repetitiveness of the action(s):
  - Loss of recess
  - Time-out of activity
  - Letter of Apology
  - Lunch Detention
  - After-School Detention
  - In or out of school suspension
  - Referral to the E-SAP team
  - Denial of participation in school activities, including sports
  - Meeting with parents/guardians and teacher(s) and may include principal and regional administration
  - Expulsion

### Major Infractions:

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 is an immediate consequence of a major infraction.**

First Major Offense:

- The student is to write an analysis of the improper behavior and determine what steps can be taken to avoid reoccurrence. Student will serve a Lunch detention.

#### Second 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. Student will serve a one hour after school detention.

#### Third Major Offense:

- In addition to the above, the student will receive an in-school suspension supervised by a substitute teacher employed by the school. The student or parent/guardian must pay the substitute a per diem salary of \$90.

#### Fourth Major Offense:

- In addition to the above, the student will receive an out-of-school suspension for the fourth offense.

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.

### EXPULSION

A student may be expelled for the following:

1. Chronic undesirable conduct detrimental to the physical and/or moral well-being of self or other students as evidenced by an accumulation of (3) suspensions.
2. A single serious incident, event, or situation involving disregard for, or a clear violation of a school rule or regulation, such as violating the weapons policy.
3. 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.

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 is the final recourse in all disciplinary situations and may waive any regulation for just cause, at his or her discretion.**

## **PARENTS**

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**

#### Parent/Teacher Guild (PTG)

The Parent Teacher Guild, as an advisory body, 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 teacher guild consists of the parents/guardians, pastor, principal, and the faculty of the school. It is not intended to replace the Education Committee of the Parish Council, nor the School Advisory Committee.

The objectives of the organization are the following:

- offer opportunities for parents to understand the Catholic Philosophy of education and the Diocesan School Program(s);
- 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;
- maximize financial resources available to the school through well-planned fund-raising activities, volunteer services, and contributions from the business community.

### Social Activities

The PTG sponsors social activities for special occasions during the school year. No other instructional time should be used for these events without the principal's permission.

### Birthday Party Invitations

Please do not send party invitations to school to be distributed for your child's birthday. This may cause hurt feelings among the students who are not invited. The only exception to this is if every boy or every girl or all students in your child's room are invited.

### Birthday Treats

Class treats for birthdays must be pre-packaged and individually wrapped. No home-made treats are allowed. Whole cakes/cookie cakes should not be brought in as teachers do not have all of the supplies necessary to serve and it takes away from valuable instructional time. Consideration must be given to students with allergies. A note should be sent to the homeroom teacher the day before the treat will be sent to school. In lieu of birthday treats, parents/guardians may purchase a dress down day for the entire homeroom, which all must be used on a date decided on by the teacher. **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.**

### Athletic Association

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 Pastor/Principal and serve on a volunteer basis. All coaches and volunteers for Athletic Programs MUST have all diocesan required clearances. The Diocesan Guidelines for Elementary Catholic Schools Sports programs guide the policies. Parent interest and willingness to serve on the Athletic Association are vital to the continued success of the program, but all school associations and advisory boards are under the supervision of the principal.

## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

### Scholarship Monies

Scholarship monies are available for eligible families. The FACTS application is used and assessed by an independent evaluator. The same application is used for Scholastic Opportunities Scholarships, Bishop's Education Fund and the Angel Fund and must be filed by March 15<sup>th</sup>. Applications are completed online. There is a link on the DMAPGH.org website.

## Tuition

Parents who register a student enter into a contractual obligation with the school. The parents are reminded that the operational budget of the school is dependent on timely fulfillment of this obligation. Parents whose tuition is in arrears will receive a notice indicating the past due amount. Parents/Guardians who do not make timely payments may be asked at any time to withdraw his or her child. Registration for the next school year, final grades, and transfers of academic records will not be processed if there is an outstanding balance. It is Diocesan policy that no student be readmitted to a new school year if there is an outstanding tuition from the previous year.

## Fundraising

The Diocesan policy for funding elementary Catholic schools calls for each school to have fundraising activities to generate a minimum of 10% of the total operating budget. This enables tuition rates to remain at 60% of the total cost. School parents are expected to participate in these fundraising activities to the best of their ability through monetary donations, purchases and/or volunteer work.

## **HOME/SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS**

### Ongoing Communication

The "**School News**" section of the parish Sunday bulletin also contains information for parents and includes a feature article about events happening in the school.

**OptionC Email** is sent with daily updates and communications as needed and will be sent in an emergency situation.

Parents are informed of the student's progress.

- **OptionC:** On-line grading system. Parents will receive a login and password that is needed to access their child's(ren's) grades. Parents are encouraged to check the system frequently.
- Mid-Quarter Progress Reports
- Quarterly Report Cards
- Parent/student/teacher conferences
- Conferences on request
- Conduct referrals

**Any questions concerning your child should be directed to the teacher.** Please call the school office and the teacher will be notified to contact you. Positive communication between teacher and parent is vital to our total educational program. Parents are asked not to call teachers at their homes.

### Reports 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 written reports of a student's progress. Written reports 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 meeting with parents. Evening conferences may be scheduled.

### 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.

### 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 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** with them while in school. If a student needs to bring a cell phone 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 the school's SAP Team.

Teachers that use or allow personal technology devices for use in the classroom for educational purposes will inform the students when that need arises. **The school will not assume or accept responsibility for devices lost, damaged or stolen.**

**Diocese of Pittsburgh**  
**School Weapon Policy - 560.04**

**PURPOSE:** To protect students from physical harm caused by another with a weapon

**APPLICABILITY:** All Catholic elementary and secondary schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh

**DEFINITION:** Weapon- Gun, knife or any article which may be used to cause bodily harm to another individual

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

A. Any person carrying 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 other students and staff.

A.1. If a student is found to be in possession of a weapon, his/her parents will be immediately notified.

A.2. The matter will be referred to local police authorities if, in the sole discretion of the school administration, such a referral is appropriate.

A.3. If the school will decide upon the appropriate disciplinary measures to be taken.

A.4. The disciplinary action taken may result in expulsion.(cf. Catholic School Safety and Security Manual, Chapter Seven)

**Diocese of Pittsburgh**  
**School Anti-Sexting Policy - 550.16 Page 1 of 2**

**PURPOSE:** to help protect students from the consequences of sexting

**APPLICABILITY:** All Catholic schools in the Diocese.

**DEFINITIONS:** Sexting – to intentionally or knowingly record, view, possess or transmit images of a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct.

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE:**

D. 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.

D.1. Sexting can have serious moral, social and legal consequences. Students and parents need to be aware of the consequences of having sexting.

D.1.a. Currently, under the Pennsylvania’s 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:

D1.a.i. Photograph, videotape, depict on computer or film sexual acts by a child under the age of 18 years.

D1.a.ii. Disseminate photographs, videotapes, computer depictions and films of a minor engaged in a sexual act.

D1.a.iii. 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 in the simulation of such act.

D1.a.iv. 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.

D.1.b. Students may also 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.

D.2. If anyone suspects or is made aware that such activity is happening in the school, the administrator should be notified.

### **Anti-Sexting Policy - 550.16 Page: 2**

D.3. Anyone that has intercepted any content which may constitute child pornography, should not interact with the information, forward or share it in any way, including to school authorities. Immediately seek guidance from local police.

D.4. School authorities are to notify the police whenever they have been made aware that sexting has occurred. D.5. Students in violation of this policy are subject to school discipline, including suspension and possible expulsion.

### **Diocese of Pittsburgh School Harassment Policy - 550.13 Page: 1 of 2**

**PURPOSE:** To promote the dignity of all. All demeaning behavior of any type is contrary to the teaching of Christ.

**APPLICABILITY:** All Catholic elementary and secondary principals, faculty, staff, and students in the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Pittsburgh

#### **DEFINITIONS:**

**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

- To engage in a continuing course or conduct which
    - o Makes a seriously disparaging statement or opinion about the child, or
    - o 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.

### **School Harassment Policy - 550.13 Page: 2 of 2**

Schools should educate students and families that cyber bullying is now a criminal offense. Otherwise, the law does not place any duty on the school.

#### **POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

A. Educators have five main duties under the broad, general category of demeaning behavior.

A.1. Duty to minimize risks.

Teachers should periodically examine practices and routines to see if there are times and places when bullying and harassment are more likely to occur and should take appropriate actions to minimize the likelihood of occurrence.

A.2. Duty to educate students.

Educators need to show in word and deed that all demeaning behavior is not appropriate and never “funny.”

A.3. Duty to investigate.

If a student expresses discomfort, the educator should carefully investigate the situation while remembering that things might not always be what they seem.

A.4. Duty to remedy violations.

Teachers should swiftly and firmly correct students who engage in demeaning behaviors.

A.5. Duty to monitor students and situations.

Teachers should remember the old “eyes in the back of the head” image and pay careful attention to students at all times.

B. The following suggestions relate to the ethical principles behind the law:

B.1. Create a climate where all students are valued.

B.2. Observe students at times when you’re not in charge.

B.3. Watch for the warning signs of isolation, depression, and suppressed anger.

B.4. Err on the side of caution when expressing concerns about student behaviors and attitudes.

B.5. Do not keep secrets.

B.6. Tell students that you will keep confidences only if health, life, safety, and criminal activity are not at issue.

B.7. When assigning students to groups, use random methods rather than self-selection.

B.8. Do not allow name-calling or demeaning comments.

B.9. Listen to what students don’t say as well as to what they do say.

B.10. Remember that supervision is a mental as well as a physical act.

**Diocese of Pittsburgh**  
**School Anti-Bullying Policy - 550.14 Page: 1 of 3**

**PURPOSE:**

All members of the Catholic School Community are expected to use non-violent means to resolve conflict as reflected in the Gospel values

**APPLICABILITY:**

- Bullying behaviors contradict Gospel values.
- Bullying may contribute to short-term problems for the targets (i.e. a change in behavior, drop in grades, frequent absences).
- Persistent bullying may cause long-term psychological problems (i.e. depression, dropping out, suicide ideation.)
- Bullying may contribute to involvement in other antisocial activities (i.e. alcohol/drug abuse, gangs) and threatens the physical safety of others.
- Bullying may contribute to a negative school climate, which interferes with spiritual development, academic learning, and social responsibility.

**DEFINITIONS:**

A. Bullying - An intentional electronic, written, verbal, or physical act, or a series of acts which includes all of the following:

- it is directed at another student or any school community member;
- it occurs in or negatively impacts a school setting;
- it is severe, persistent or pervasive; and
- it has the effect of doing any of the following:
  - ♣ substantially interfering with a student's education;
  - ♣ creating a threatening environment; or
  - ♣ substantially disrupting the orderly operation of a school

B. School Setting: shall mean 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. Bullying may encompass acts that occur outside a school setting if those acts meet the other requirements specified in the definition of bullying.

C. Cyber-bullying includes but is not limited to, the following misuses of Technology: Harassing, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another student or personnel employed by the school by sending or posting inappropriate or derogatory email messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs, tweets, etc.). All forms of cyber bullying are unacceptable and to the extent such actions are disruptive of the educational process of the school, offenders shall be the subject of appropriate consequences as per Act 26 of 2015 – Cyber-harassment.

## Anti-Bullying Policy - 550.14 Page 2 of 3

### POLICY AND PROCEDURE

#### A. Catholic Schools and Staff are expected to:

A.1. provide a supportive environment that upholds Gospel values and encourages positive relationships between students, staff and parent.

A.2. increase awareness and understanding of the dynamics of bullying and develop a plan to implement evidenced-based anti-bullying strategies and programs within their schools.

A.3. educate students and families on “cyber harassment” and legal implications of electronic bullying.

A.4. maintain an environment where bullying will be addressed age appropriately in a manner characterized by respect and civility.

A.5. use resources that will assist in developing appropriate social skills, positive relationships and discourage bullying as unacceptable behaviors.

A.6. encourage all members of the learning community to report incidents of bullying and support students in dealing with conflict resolution.

A.7. support, monitor and act upon all reported incidents of bullying to ensure the safety of all individuals.

A.8. model appropriate language and actions for all individuals

A.9. emphasize intervention strategies that are preventative in nature.

A.10. recognize that some bullying behaviors may be more serious and require more comprehensive

A.11. keep open lines of communication between the home, school and parish.

#### B. Students are expected to:

B.1. promote a positive and caring environment for all by developing an awareness of bully issues.

B.2. refuse to bully others or to be a bystander to acts of bullying.

B.3. report all acts of bullying that they may experience or observe to appropriate school personnel.

B.4. assist and co-operate in the implementation of school-wide anti-bullying initiatives.

#### C. Parents/Visitors are expected to:

C.1. promote a positive and caring environment for all by developing an awareness of bullying issues.

C.2. inform the school if bullying is suspected.

C.3. encourage students to discuss any incidents of bullying and reinforce the need to speak out.

C.4. support the school when resolving identified incidents of bullying.

### Anti-Bullying Policy - 550.14 Page 3 of 3

C.5. support the school through Catholic School Councils or the Student Assistance Programs (SAP) in promoting local school anti-bullying initiatives.

C.6. report incidents of “cyberharassment” to law enforcement

D. All schools are required to develop a local discipline policy to be placed in Student Handbooks and classrooms in each Elementary and High School in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

D.1. Each school will establish written procedures for:

D.1.a. Reporting instances to the appropriate personnel

D.1.b. Investigating bullying behaviors

D.1.c. Consequences for such behaviors

D.1.d. A student who violates this policy shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action consistent with the Code of Student Conduct which may include: Anti-Bullying Policy - 550.14

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

E. All schools will include and address the following anti-bullying statement in the school discipline policy: In keeping with the teachings of Christ, Divine Mercy Catholic School will provide a safe, caring and supportive school environment, free of bullying, for all members of the school community.



**2020-2021 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**  
\_\_\_\_\_ **School.**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_