

PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK

2020– 2021

Revised July 2020



NATIVITY B.V.M. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1046 Beach Boulevard

BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI 39530

PHONE (228) 432-2269 FAX (228) 432-9421

www.nativitybvm.org

NATIVITY B.V.M. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

2020-2021 PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK

This handbook is designed to be a synopsis of the policies and procedures of this school and it is not intended to be all inclusive. General policies applicable to all schools within the Catholic Diocese of Biloxi as well as local school policies govern the school. These are available for your review in the school office. It is expected that the handbook, local policies and general diocesan policies are consistent, however, at certain times due to human error and/or amendments to various parts, conflicts could arise. To the extent that a conflict exists, general diocesan policies shall take precedence followed by local school policies and finally, this handbook.

The Handbook for Pastors, Principals, and School Advisory Councils dated August, 2013, identifies the roles of pastors, principals, school advisory councils and parent/teacher organizations.

THE PRINCIPAL RETAINS THE RIGHT TO AMEND THIS HANDBOOK FOR JUST CAUSE. PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN PROMPT NOTIFICATION IF CHANGES ARE MADE.

Nativity B.V.M. Elementary School is accredited by the State of Mississippi and by AdvancED (formerly Southern Association of Colleges and Schools). The school is an institutional member of the National Educational Association (NEEA) which includes over 7,100 Catholic elementary schools nationwide. All teachers hold valid certification from the State of Mississippi.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	
Welcome	6
Diocesan Mission Statement	6
School Mission Statement	6
School Philosophy	6
History of Nativity B.V.M. Elementary School	7
PARISH/SCHOOL FACULTY AND STAFF	8
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	
Parent/School Partnership	9
COVID-19	9
Distance Learning	9
School Name, Logo, Motto, Mascot	10
Admission Policy	10
Withdrawals	10
Nondiscriminatory Policy	10
Confidentiality Statement	11
Custodial Agreements	11
Cell Phones/Electronic Games	11
Lost and Found	11
Special Celebrations	11
Invitations	12
Professional Development	12
Field Trips	12
Free and Reduced Lunch Program	12
Federal Lunch Requirement Notice	13
Hot Lunches	13
Recess Milk/Additional Sales	13
Bingo	13
Notification regarding Asbestos-Containing Materials and Management Plan	14
INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/FAMILIES	
School Advisory Council Members	15
Nativity Parent Association (NPA)	15
Grandparent Club	15
Parent/Family Involvement	15-17
SCHOOL CALENDAR AND IMPORTANT DATES	18-19
TUITION/FEEES	
Pre-K Tuition and Fee Information	20-21
K through Grade 6 Tuition and Fee Information	22-23
ACADEMIC INFORMATION	
Awards Program	24
Grading Scale	24

Homework	24
Report Cards	24
Promotion/Retention Policy	25
Testing	25
Textbooks	25
ACADEMIC/SPECIAL CLASSES	
Religious Formation	26
Library/Computer Education	26
Resource Class	26-27
Speech Therapy	27
Explore	27
ATTENDANCE	
Excused Absences	28
Student Tardiness	28
Extended Absences	28
Excessive Absences	28
Sign-out for Students	28-29
Early Dismissal	29
Appointments	29
Morning Care	29
After School Care	29
SCHOOL UNIFORMS	
Free Dress Days	31
DISCIPLINE AND BEHAVIOR	
School-wide Discipline Policy	32
Pre-K3 through 1 st Grade Students	33
2 nd through 6 th Grade Students	34
Conduct Grading	35
SCHOOL SAFETY	
Policies for Child Safety	36
Emergency Closing	36
Emergency Drills/Situations	36
Rainy Day Dismissal	36
Playground and Traffic Safety	36-37
Entrance to Nativity School Property	37
Visitors to School	37
Telephone	37
Family Information	37
Health	37-38
Administration of Medication to Students	38-39
APPENDIX	
Student/Parent Contract	40



Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Cathedral Parish

Cathedra of Bishop Louis F. Kihneman, III

Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Elementary School
1046 Beach Boulevard
Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

“Now they were even bringing children to Jesus that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him, saying, ‘Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it’” (Luke 18: 15-17).

Oftentimes it’s reckoned that we as parents, guardians, and grandparents...indeed, we as Nativity Cathedral Parish...do well to support Catholic education at Nativity Elementary School. We pat ourselves on the back thinking that we’re giving our children the best of the best in developmental matters of intellect, morality, ethics, and physical & spiritual education. And indeed we are. We all know that providing a Catholic education is sacrificial. Expending our hard earned funds on tuition usually means putting off getting those nice extra things with all the buttons and lights. But perhaps there is a much richer approach, another angle of viewing our support of the children God has given and placed within lives.

To give our kids the presence of Jesus Christ is to live the preference of God himself. There is much in our post-modern secular culture that wants to keep kids away from God. We all know that the infinite holiness and mercy of Christ is not a high priority in our pop-rock-rap-texting culture. Yet, graciously we counter the popular trends and instead do as the gospel: “Jesus called the children to him...for to such belongs the kingdom of the Father.”

So yes, although we parents and priests and teachers think we are doing such a great thing in providing a Catholic education...perhaps it is our children who are actually teaching us! They remind us of our original innocence, they show us fascination in discovery and they tell us, simply by who they are, that we are destined to a place in which all things will be provided in youth, joy, happiness and incredible beauty.

Thanks be to God the Father!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Very Rev. Dennis J. Carver
Rector

870 Howard Avenue, Biloxi, Mississippi, 39530
Phone: (228) 374-1717 Fax: (228) 374-1773 Email: jhewitt@nativitybvm.org Website: nativitybvmcathedral.org

Welcome to a new school year! The Nativity faculty and staff are looking forward to working with you and your children to make this a successful and blessed year. You, as the parents and first teachers of your children, play an integral role in our school. We are so blessed to have an active parent association and grandparent club. Thank you for everything you do to make our school a place where students are nurtured...mind, body, and soul.

We are also grateful to the parishes of Nativity B.V.M. Cathedral, Blessed Seelos, Church of the Vietnamese Martyrs, Our Mother of Sorrows, St. Michael, and the other parishes of our diocese for their support of our school. We pray for their clergy and parishioners daily and thank God for their generosity.

DIOCESAN MISSION STATEMENT FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Catholic school community within the Diocese of Biloxi, a ministry of the Catholic Church, embracing the teachings and traditions of the past, accepting the challenges and opportunities of the present, and preparing for the demands of the future, provides an education based on Christ's teaching and Catholic values which focus on the formation of strong moral character, the furtherance of academic excellence, the inspiration to serve others, and the motivation to achieve God-given potential in the local and the world communities.

SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

Nativity B.V.M. Elementary School, part of Nativity B.V.M. Cathedral Parish, serves the children of the Gulf Coast area. As a Catholic school, we strive to help our students develop into fully integrated human persons who are creative and Christ-centered. In an environment of love, prayerfulness, justice and peace, we provide a high-quality education that has, as its goal, the development of each child's spiritual, intellectual, cultural, social, psychological and physical capabilities and a willingness to share these gifts with others.

SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

The Christian community of Nativity B.V.M. School strives to help its students develop into creative, Christ-centered persons. We provide for them an environment where the Gospel message is proclaimed and lived. Love, prayerfulness, justice and peace are fostered, and a generous spirit of service to the entire human family is encouraged.

We recognize parents as the primary educators of their children and, in cooperation with them, we strive to help each child grow into a fully integrated human person. We do this by providing an education that has as its goal the development of each child's spiritual, intellectual, cultural, social, psychological and physical capacities.

HISTORY OF NATIVITY B.V.M. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Nativity B.V.M. is one of the State accredited elementary schools administered by the Catholic Diocese of Biloxi. Its history connects with that of Sacred Heart Academy which began in 1875, under the direction of the Sisters of Mercy. By 1956 Biloxi had more children than Sacred Heart Academy could accommodate, so the newly constructed Nativity B.V.M. Elementary School opened its doors to 600 students in Kindergarten through Grade 6.

The distinctive “Nativity S” was created in the 1980’s by Chris Jenkins, a third grader at the time. We are grateful that this talented individual was able to create such a long-lasting and recognizable symbol for our school.

Responding to a need for extended care, Nativity B.V.M. School began its After School Program in 1988.

A dream came true in early 1995. An anonymous donor purchased a building on Porter Avenue for use by the school. During the summer months renovations were completed and Nativity's pre-school program for children ages three and four opened its doors on August 16, 1995. The pre-school classrooms were incorporated into the main building beginning with the 2004 – 2005 school year.

Work began during the summer of 2001 on the Antonia Mavar Talijancich, R.N. Learning Center. The Resource Center, graciously donated by Mr. and Mrs. Victor Mavar, provides a special place for the Learning Resource Program as well as for speech therapy, psychological/counseling services and tutoring programs. That same year, through the efforts of many, the gym was air conditioned.

Nativity B.V.M. Elementary School was spared total destruction by Hurricane Katrina (August 29, 2005), although the school gym was badly damaged. Through the generosity of the Imperial Palace Mississippi Charities, a complete restoration of the space was completed in June 2006. Renovations of the offices, library, cafeteria, first floor bathrooms and hallway flooring were completed during June/July 2006.

During the summer of 2007 the upstairs bathrooms were renovated, the gym awning was replaced, exterior lighting was upgraded and the school hallways were painted. Upgrades to the heating/cooling system (eliminating window ac units) were completed during the summer of 2008. Hallway ceilings were lowered and new lighting was installed.

Two grants provided improved playground facilities for our students. A Project Fit Playground, sponsored by Blue Cross of Mississippi, was installed in the summer of 2009 and in the summer of 2010, a new playground for Preschool and Kindergarten was installed through a Gulf Coast Foundation Grant.

A gifted program (Explore) began in August, 2012. The Summer Saints program was initiated in June, 2016 for children in Pre-K through grade 6.

PARISH/SCHOOL FACULTY AND STAFF

Rector	Very Rev. Dennis_Carver
Principal	Mrs. Traci Kessler
Secretary	Mrs. Cheryl Steinwinder
Business/Social Media Manager	Mrs. Allison Watts
Pre-School 3	Mrs. Mary Rodrigue
Assistant	Ms. Jackie Murphy
Pre-School 3	Mrs. Kimberly Audo
Pre-School 4	Mrs. Marie Papale
Assistant	Mrs. Lorena Fulton
Kindergarten	Mrs. Lehwmon Skrmetti
Assistant	Mrs. Bonnie Fountain
Grade 1	Mrs. Naomi Foster
Assistant	Mrs. Jen Byers
Grade 2	Mrs. Tahler Glisson
Grade 3	Ms. Cheryl Gruich
Grade 4	Mrs. NiCole Talley
Grade 5	Mrs. Kimberly Lyons
Grade 6	Mrs. Colleen Kavanagh
Library/Computer Lab	Mrs. Kelly Pennell
Physical Education	Mrs. Alexandra Smith
Learning Resource	Mrs. Patti Thompson
Explore/Art	Mrs. Zina Puzz
Music/Choir/Band	Mr. Terry Maddox
Speech Services	Provided by Biloxi Public School District
Child Nutrition Supervisor/Manager	Mrs. Martha Montiforte
Cafeteria Staff	Mrs. Lois Kostmayer
	Mrs. Erica Gnapp,
	Mrs. Sherry Eleuterius,
	Mrs. Patty Brady
After-School Care Staff	
Pre-K	Mrs. Marie Papale
	Ms. Rachel DiMauro Carson
	Miss Miya Audo
K - 6 th	Mrs. Erica Gnapp
	Miss Kyleigh Louviere
	Miss Aimee Sims

PARENT/SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

At Nativity B.V.M. Elementary School, we work very hard as a school family to provide the highest level of academics and to form intentional disciples of Jesus Christ. The education of a child is a partnership between the parents and the school. If, in the opinion of the school administration, that partnership is irreparably broken, parents may be required to withdraw their child(ren) from our Catholic school. This conduct includes, but is not limited to, physical behavior, social media activities, internet posts, and interaction with local and national media. There are channels to discuss issues that may arise. Social media is not the appropriate forum and only serves to damage the school and the relationship between all parties.

COVID-19

The novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has been declared a worldwide pandemic and is extremely contagious. As a result, in order to resume school activities, social distancing, and other essential safety measures at Nativity BVM Catholic School have been established. The school has put in place reasonable preventative measures and standards of behavior to reduce the spread of COVID-19 at school and school activities.

Students and faculty/staff must stay home for any one of the following criteria:

1. Positive test for COVID-19
2. Individual or any member of the household experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 whether they have a positive test or not
3. Known close contact (within the last 14 days) with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19. Close contact is defined as within 6 feet for a period of over 15 minutes.

Student absences for the above reasons will be counted as excused.

If a child develops symptoms or suspected symptoms of COVID-19, the parent/guardian will be contacted by school staff and will make immediate preparations to have the child picked up from school. In the event of a medical emergency, school staff may call 9-1-1 and have the child transported to a hospital or healthcare facility.

If a staff member or student suspects or knows they had COVID-19, and had symptoms, they may return to school after:

1. 14 days have passed since the onset of symptoms (or test if no symptoms)
2. Symptoms improve, and
3. Fever free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication

In the case of an employee or student who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the individual is assumed to have COVID-19. The individual may not return to work/school until the individual has completed the same three step criteria listed above.

If the employee or student has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work/school before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis or receipt of two separate confirmations, at least 24 hours apart, that they are free of COVID-19 via testing at an approved COVID-19 testing location.

DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY

In the event of a natural disaster, disease outbreak, or any other circumstances which, in the judgment of the school administration, make it infeasible, unsafe, or otherwise imprudent to continue campus-based education,

school shall resume as soon as practical via distance learning and/or other methods adopted and/or developed by the school administration and faculty. Due to continuing financial obligations relating to operational costs, including administrative, faculty, and staff salaries, there shall be no suspension, reduction, or refund of tuition or applicable fees.

SCHOOL NAME, LOGO, MOTTO, MASCOT

The school name, logo, motto, or mascot may not be used in any form without the permission of the principal. If permission is given, the principal is responsible for ensuring all policies of the school and the Diocese of Biloxi are followed, including background checks and safe environment training for all adults involved.

ADMISSION POLICY

Nativity B.V.M. School accepts Catholic students from Nativity B.V.M. Parish as well as other parishes, including Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, Keesler AFB, Our Mother of Sorrows, St. Michael, and Vietnamese Martyrs. New families, who provide verification of membership in Nativity B.V.M. Cathedral parish, will be priority. Applications for enrollment are completed online.

- Students of other faiths are accepted on a space available basis.
- A student registering for the 3-year-old program must be 3 years old on or before September 1st while a child registering for the 4-year-old program must be 4 years old on or before September 1st of that school year. Children must be fully toilet trained.
- A student registering for Kindergarten must be 5 years old on or before September 1st of that school year.
- A student registering for 1st grade must be 6 years old on or before September 1st of that school year.
- Students transferring from another school after the beginning of the school year are generally accepted if the transfer is from a school outside the local school district and is the result of a major change for the family. Students within the school district are generally accepted only at the end of the marking period once the school year has begun. When special circumstances present themselves, the decision to admit the student is at the discretion of the principal.

WITHDRAWALS

Please notify the school office at least one week prior to the withdrawal of a student. A formal withdrawal form must be completed by the parent/guardian before a child is considered to be officially withdrawn. Records will be mailed to the next school upon their written request.

ALL FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS MUST BE SATISFIED BEFORE SCHOOL RECORDS WILL BE RELEASED.

NONDISCRIMINATORY POLICY

In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1962, Title IV of the Educational Amendments of 1972 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1972, Nativity B.V.M. School's Policy assures that no one shall, on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination in any program or activity of the school.

Nativity B.V.M. Elementary School reaffirms that it has a Nondiscriminatory Policy with regard to race and sex, both in the enrollment of students and in the employment of teachers and staff.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Nativity B.V.M. School will protect the confidentiality of all data in its records of all children, and particularly, any records relative to special education programs.

Information which could identify an individual child will be maintained by this agency and will be provided to other agencies only in accord with the Family Rights and Privacy Act and EHA-B. As a parent, you are guaranteed the right to inspect any such information about your child and to challenge its accuracy. Access to this information is forbidden to any unauthorized person, without informed consent.

If you have any questions regarding the collection, maintenance and use of data about your child, please contact the Principal during office hours, 7:30-3:30, at the following address:

Nativity B.V.M. Elementary School
1046 Beach Boulevard
Biloxi, MS 39530
Telephone: (228) 432-2269

CUSTODIAL AGREEMENTS

The Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Biloxi adhere to the Buckley Amendment (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act) in regard to privacy of student records and the rights of non-custodial parents. It is the responsibility of the parents to share any official custodial information decided through the courts. Official custodial agreements will be kept in a confidential file. In the absence of any court document, the school will view each parent as having full legal custody of his/her child. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, non-custodial parents have the right to receive records about their child's academic progress or lack thereof.

Be advised that if a teacher is subpoenaed to testify in a child custody case, the parent will need to pay the cost of a substitute teacher and any other costs associated with the testimony (mileage, parking, food, etc.)

CELL PHONES/ELECTRONIC GAMES

Students at Nativity B.V.M. School are not allowed to have cell phones or other electronic devices in their possession. This includes keeping a cell phone or other device in a backpack or purse even if it is turned off. If these items are found, they will be confiscated and held by the principal until a parent meets with her. Any cell phone or electronic device brought to school for use outside of school hours **MUST** be kept in the main school office during the school day.

Electronic devices such as Apple Watches/ iPads/Tablets/Mp3 Players/Video Gaming Systems, etc. are not permitted on the school grounds unless requested by the classroom teacher for a specific day/activity. These must be brought to the office or they will be confiscated by the teacher or principal and held until the end of the school day and returned to the parent.

FOR THE SAFETY OF ALL, PLEASE DO NOT USE CELL PHONES WHILE DRIVING ON THE SCHOOL GROUNDS.

LOST AND FOUND

Lost articles may be retrieved from the lost and found container found near the school gym.

SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS

It is acceptable to send a treat for a child's birthday or a special celebration day. As a staff we ask that the treat follow the guidelines of the Child Nutrition Office, and be easily served and eaten. Please see Mrs. Martha for

questions about acceptable treats. It is best if the teacher is contacted in advance to determine the best time to bring the treat. Due to COVID-19, we request that only pre-packaged, store-bought items be sent to the school until further notice.

Holiday celebrations are generally coordinated by one or two parents with the classroom teacher.

Pick-up by limousine or taxi cab is something that should be discussed with the principal prior to the arrival of the vehicle. Special arrangements for parking and for student pick-up are needed for these types of service.

INVITATIONS

Children will be allowed to distribute party invitations (birthday, etc.) at school or on school grounds only if all the children in the classroom are invited or if all the boys or all the girls are invited. Since issuing invitations to a select few often results in hurt feelings, the school requests that invitations for only some of the students be given out away from school grounds.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Development is required by the State of Mississippi for ongoing school accreditation and for professional growth. Dismissal will generally be on the **first Wednesday** of the month at 2:00 PM to allow for Professional Development. Families will be notified of any changes or additional professional development days well in advance. Afterschool care is generally available.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips, as learning experiences, are encouraged since they can do much to emphasize and build on information learned in the classroom setting. Places are chosen at the discretion of the classroom teacher in order to be appropriate for the age and interest of the students.

Parents or guardians will be requested to sign a permission form for their child. Only the signature of the custodial parent(s) or guardian will be accepted as valid. Parents or guardians driving for field trips are required to possess a valid driver's license. According to Diocese of Biloxi policies, anyone driving students for a field trip must have a level of \$100,000 per person/\$300,000 per accident liability insurance or a minimum of \$300,000 single liability insurance. A copy of both must be on file in the school office. The vehicle must have a current license plate.

Because a field trip is seen as a privilege and as an opportunity to learn in another way, students are expected to behave appropriately. If the principal (or designee) is contacted because of inappropriate behavior, the parents will be notified and will be required to remove the child from the field trip. Following a meeting with the principal and parents, the child will be suspended for a minimum of two days and will be excluded from future field trips. (Field Trip Policy-4/11/16)

FREE AND REDUCED MEAL BENEFIT PROGRAM

As part of the National School Lunch Program, applications for free and reduced lunches are available to all families at the beginning of the school year. We encourage each family to complete the application at the beginning of each school year as the federal guidelines change from year to year. Notification regarding free/reduced lunches will be sent home when approved. **Although a family may qualify for free/reduced lunch, any prior balances for school lunches/recess milk must be paid.** A random audit of these applications is conducted each October according to Federal guidelines. Free or reduced lunch qualification only refers to the lunch/lunch beverage.

FEDERAL LUNCH REQUIREMENTS NOTICE

The school must offer students in elementary schools, when approved by the local School Food Authority, all five food items contained within the four food components of the lunch. Under Offer vs. Serv, students are not required to choose all five meal components. They can choose three, four, or all five, but they must take a half-cup of fruit or vegetables. The choice of fewer than all five items will not affect the charge for the lunch.

Students who bring sack lunches from home may purchase milk to drink with their lunch. If candy is included in a child's lunch, it should only be in a small amount. Chewing gum is not allowed in school at any time.

Students with food allergies must have a doctor's note indicating the specific food allergies. This note must be on file with the Cafeteria Manager by the start of the first full week of school.

Children will not be allowed to "skip lunch" without communication between the parent and principal. ALL children are expected to eat a well-balanced meal. Menus are sent home at the beginning of each month so that students and families are aware of what is being served.

Table manners and appropriate behaviors are emphasized at all times. As in other situations, failure to meet expectations will be addressed appropriately

The school's wellness policy can be found on our website at www.nativitybvm.org.

HOT LUNCHESES

All students are encouraged to participate in the Federal Lunch Program. The cost of student lunches will be \$3.50 per day and includes milk. The cost of adult lunches will be \$4.25 per day. These prices are subject to change pending notification from the Federal Lunch Program Office. Payment for school lunches may be made daily, weekly or monthly. All checks should be made payable to Nativity BVM Cafeteria and should be turned in to the classroom teacher in an envelope with Lunch Money and the student's name and grade on the outside of the envelope. According to mandates of the Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition, students are not allowed to charge their lunches.

RECESS MILK/ADDITIONAL SALES

The Nativity BVM Cafeteria provides milk, juice, and water for sale each day as a recess drink. The cost is \$.50 per beverage. Families who are eligible for free/reduced lunches are required to pay the cost of the recess drink.

Nativity BVM Cafeteria sells ice cream on designated days. All items that are sold are within the guidelines of the Mississippi Office of Child Nutrition and range in price from \$0.50 to \$1.00 depending upon the item chosen.

BINGO

The Nativity Parish Bingo program supports Nativity BVM School. The Bingo is run by a group of interested parishioners and parents who work weekly as callers and supervisors. Parents of Nativity Students are asked to work as floor workers or kitchen workers each week. Each parent/family works approximately three times per year. If a parent/ guardian is unable to work the assigned date, they will need to secure a substitute worker. Workers must be 21 years of age or older. Bingo is held each Tuesday evening with Early Bird games beginning at 6:00 p.m. and regular games beginning at 7:00 p.m. Workers are asked to report at 5:30 p.m. The Bingo Mania Hall is located immediately behind the Nativity Sacred Heart Center which is behind Nativity BVM Cathedral.

NOTIFICATION REGARDING ASBESTOS-CONTAINING MATERIALS AND MANAGEMENT PLAN:

As you may be aware, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S.E.P.A.) has regulations regarding asbestos-containing materials in school buildings. These regulations require that all schools conduct surveys to identify the presence of friable and non-friable asbestos in their building and implement appropriate response actions, as necessary.

An inspection was performed at Nativity B.V.M. Elementary School in compliance with these regulations, furthermore, a site-specific asbestos management plan was developed, reviewed by the Mississippi Department of Public Health, and has been implemented. This plan describes in great detail how any asbestos exposures will be minimized.

Many years ago, extensive work was done on the Nativity B.V.M. School building in order to bring it into compliance with directives. All ceiling areas in the school building were re-done in 1984 in order to be free of asbestos-containing materials. The suspect-asbestos floor tile in the hallways, offices and library was removed in June 2006.

PARENT/FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Parents, teachers, or others are invited to review the inspection and management plan Monday through Friday between 8:00 AM and 3:00 PM at the school's administrative office. Should you have any questions, or desire further information, please address those questions to the principal.

SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Rev. Dennis Carver, Pastor

Traci Kessler, Principal

Melissa Williams, President

Bryan Stoddard, Vice President

Dana Lamey, Secretary

Kimberly Rasmussen, NPA Representative

Jay Corley

Susie Davis

Katie O'Grady

Shanel Williams

NATIVITY PARENT ASSOCIATION

NiCole Talley, President

Kimberly Rasmussen, Vice President

April Croncich, Secretary

Committee Chairs, identified for each major event, will provide leadership for special projects and events. All parents/guardians are members of this organization.

The Nativity Parent Association (NPA) is comprised of all parents and guardians of the students of Nativity Elementary School. Meetings are generally held on the first Wednesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the cafeteria. This year, the meetings may be held virtually. Parents will be notified in advance of the meetings when and where they will be conducted.

The main purpose of the NPA is to raise money for the benefit of the school and its students. Funds raised through NPA efforts are incorporated into the school's annual budget in an effort to keep tuition affordable for our families and to keep our school competitive with its offerings.

Our two main fundraisers each year are:

1. \$30,000 Raffle (a monthly raffle drawing of \$3,000 for ten (10) months)
2. Halloween Carnival

In addition to these fundraisers, our school has smaller, but equally important, fundraisers throughout the year.

Outside of fundraising efforts, the NPA coordinates a teacher appreciation events for the faculty and staff of our school; The Peace, Love and Saints fun day in May of each year, and t-shirt sales. Volunteers are always welcome to help with any of the events!

GRANDPARENT CLUB

The Grandparent Club was formed during the 2011-2012 school year in an effort to provide support for and further involve family members in the "life" of the school. Information about the club is sent home through the school newsletter or by other means of communication. We welcome all grandparents to participate.

PARENT/FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Additional Parent Meetings:

Within the first three weeks of school, a school information night is scheduled for parents/guardians of all students. The content of the meeting includes an overview of programs and procedures of the school, services

which are provided, curriculum information and classroom expectations. This meeting may be held virtually due to COVID-19.

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled throughout the school year. Other parent meetings with the teacher(s) and/or principal are scheduled as convenient for all involved. Email, telephone calls and face-to-face conversations are always encouraged.

On-going Planning and Review of Programs:

A weekly newsletter is the major communication vehicle for parents/guardians of Nativity BVM School. The newsletter is will be sent by email to each family, typically on Mondays. The newsletter may also be found on the school’s website – www.nativitybvm.org.

The school’s website, closed Facebook page, parish bulletin, sign board and additional notes are used to share information with parents/guardians. Surveys, questionnaires and response sheets are used to periodically gather information about the effectiveness of the school and its programs and to provide input for planning.

On-going Communication:

In addition to the newsletter, conferences, and telephone calls, other forms of communication may be used. The sign board, located at the exit of the school, is used for last minute reminders.

Public media (newspapers) and parish publications are often used as ways to communicate with parents/general public about the school and its programs.

SchoolMessenger, an automated phone contact program, is used by the principal or designated person to provide telephone/email/text contact with families. It is used as a means to communicate important information to groups of families or to the entire student body.

The PowerSchool program is used for student information and student records. Parents are encouraged to access their child’s grades regularly, using the special parent pass code that is issued at the beginning of the school year.

A homework assignment book is used in grades 2nd – 6th. The classroom teachers use this as a way of communicating with parents on a daily/weekly basis. Pre-K-1st grade teachers use some sort of daily communication to indicate not only behavior but homework, commitment to work, and completion of tasks.

Interim progress report cards are distributed halfway through each nine-week marking period for grades 1-6. Report cards are issued quarterly for all students. Written or verbal communication is ongoing between the school and faculty.

Parents/guardians are invited to participate in the formulation of the State of the School report which provides an annual review of the school year and highlights particular areas...religious identity, academics, curriculum, staffing, finances, school growth, successes and opportunities for improvement.

Shared Responsibility for Student Achievement:

The school’s student/parent handbook is distributed via email or paper copy upon request, to each family and is available on the school’s website. Parents/guardians are required to sign the contract found at the end of the handbook. The student, classroom teacher, and the principal sign this as well.

Learning Accessibility:

Nativity BVM School is blessed to have an Educable Child program that is partially funded through a trust fund that was established many years ago. The school works closely with the Biloxi Public School District and our own teachers and specialized staff members –special education teacher and Speech Therapist—to identify needs, to determine that Nativity BVM School is, or could be, the appropriate placement for the child, and to follow through with the process of evaluation and setting of goals. Nativity’s special education teacher writes the Individual Service Plans (ISPs).

As the need arises, translation services are provided for parents. These services are provided by staff members, family members, or qualified resource people.

Because Nativity BVM School is a two-story building without an elevator, meetings are generally held on the first floor of the school building.

Questions or Concerns:

If a question or concern arises, parents are encouraged to contact the classroom teacher or appropriate adult who is directly involved in person, in writing, electronically or by telephone. The teacher, principal, or other adult involved will respond in a timely manner. If further discussion is needed, the parent/guardian will be referred to the Rector of the Cathedral.

Appeals Process

Appeals to the Diocesan School Advisory Council are for cases of expulsion only. No appeals of a Principal’s decision can be made to local School Advisory Councils. In the event of a serious situation, after discussion, prayer and reflection, the decisions made by the Nativity B.V.M. Elementary School Principal are final. If further discussion is needed, the parent/guardian will be referred to the Rector of the Cathedral.

SCHOOL CALENDAR AND IMPORTANT DATES

August

Opening Day of School	August 6	
School Advisory Council Meeting	August 13	5:00 p.m.
	Number of days	18 days

September

Early Dismissal/Prof. Dev.	September 2	2:00
NPA Meeting/Raffle Drawing	September 2	6:00 p.m.
Labor Day Holiday – No School	September 7	
Interim Progress Reports	September 9	
School Advisory Council Meeting	September 10	5:00 p.m.
	Number of days	21 days

October

Early Dismissal/Prof. Dev.	October 7	2:00 p.m.
NPA Meeting/Raffle Drawing	October 7	6:00 p.m.
End of 1 st Quarter	October 8	
School Advisory Council Meeting	October 8	5:00 p.m.
Fall Holiday – No school	October 12	
Halloween Carnival (If permitted)	October 17	
Report Cards Sent Home	October 21	
	Number of days	21 days

November

Early Dismissal/Prof. Dev.	November 4	2:00 p.m.
NPA Meeting/Raffle Drawing	November 4	6:00 p.m.
Interim Progress Reports	November 11	
School Advisory Council Meeting	November 12	5:00 p.m.
Thanksgiving Holiday – No School	November 23 -27	
	Number of days	16 days

December

Early Dismissal/Prof. Dev.	December 2	2:00 p.m.
NPA Meeting/Raffle Drawing	December 2	6:00 p.m.
School Advisory Council Meeting	December 10	5:00 p.m.
End of 2 nd Quarter and 1 st Semester	December 18	
Christmas Holiday - No School	December 21-31	
	Number of days	14 days

January

Christmas Holiday - No School	January 1-4	
Return to School	January 5	
NPA Meeting/Raffle Drawing	January 6	6:00 p.m.
Report Cards Sent Home	January 13	
Early Dismissal/Prof. Dev.	January 13	2:00 p.m.
School Advisory Council Meeting	January 14	5:00 p.m.
MLK Jr. Holiday – No School	January 18	
	Number of days	18 days

February

Catholic School's Week	February 1-5	
Early Dismissal/Prof. Dev.	February 3	2:00 p.m.
NPA Meeting/Raffle Drawing	February 3	6:00 p.m.
Interim Reports	February 10	
School Advisory Council Meeting	February 11	5:00 p.m.
Mardi Gras Holidays – No School	February 15-16	

Number of days **18 days**

March

Early Dismissal/Prof. Dev.	March 3	2:00 p.m.
NPA Meeting/Raffle Drawing	March 3	6:00 p.m.
School Advisory Council Meeting	March 11	5:00 p.m.
End of 3 rd Quarter	March 11	
March Break – No School	March 15-16	
Report Cards Distributed	March 24	

Number of days **21 days**

April

Easter Holidays – No School	April 2-9	
Return to School	April 12	
Early Dismissal/Prof. Dev.	April 14	2:00 p.m.
Progress Reports	April 14	
NPA Meeting/Raffle Drawing	April 14	6:00 p.m.
School Advisory Council Meeting	April 15	5:00 p.m.
Iowa Assessment (ITBS)	April 19-23	

Number of days **16 days**

May

Early Dismissal/Prof. Dev.	May 5	2:00 p.m.
NPA Meeting/Raffle Drawing	May 5	6:00 p.m.
School Advisory Council Meeting	May 13	5:00 p.m.
Pre-School/Kindergarten Celebration	TBD	
6 th Grade Graduation Mass (Cathedral)	TBD	
Last Day of School - Dismissal at Noon –No AFS	May 25	
Teacher/Staff Work Day	May 26	

Number of days **16 days**

June

Report Cards Mailed	June 4	
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Emergency days

October 12, March 15, and March 16

PRE-K TUITION AND FEE INFORMATION

There are no tuition discounts given for multiple children in preschool.

Registration fee

The registration fee for one child is \$250.00. The registration fee for each additional child in the family is \$200.00. The registration fee is non-refundable and is required at the time of registration. *This fee reserves the child's place in the classroom.*

General fees/Technology fee

The General Fee/Technology Fee is \$300.00 per child and is non-refundable. The fee is used to purchase religion books, consumable books, art and learning materials, as well as, student insurance, access to PowerSchool and SchoolMessenger. This fee may be paid at the time of registration, at the time of final registration, or may be included into FACTS payments.

NPA Fee

The Nativity Parent Association Fee is \$50.00 per child and is non-refundable. This fee is used to purchase Nativity spirit shirt, Halloween Carnival class decorations, Halloween Carnival drinks, and in place of donations for Teacher Appreciation celebrations.

Raffle Tickets

Each Nativity School family is asked to sell four (4) \$100 raffle tickets. Monthly drawings for \$3,000 take place for ten months. Tickets may be purchased by the family or may be sold. Starting with the fifth ticket sold, and for each additional ticket sold, a \$20 credit will be applied to tuition/fees owed. Each family is responsible for any lost tickets.

Tuition

Full-day tuition per child is \$664.40 per month for ten months.
Half-day tuition per child is \$509.07 per month for ten months.
Tuition fees are non-refundable once a new month has started.

This fee includes the cost of:

Snacks

Drinks

Lunches (approximately \$540 for the year)

Before school care

After school care (approximately \$1440 for the year)

School Supplies

Instructional Materials

Each family is asked to supply their child with a nap mat, a backpack, and a package of 6 plain white t-shirts to be decorated for various holidays.

Half Day Students

The half day preschool program lasts until noon. Children remaining after the noon dismissal will be charged the \$30.00 afternoon fee.

Space in the half day program is based on classroom availability. Full time students will receive preference in enrollment through the first day of school.

Tuition Payment Options

Families have two options for payment of tuition:

1. Pay in full on or before the time of final registration.
2. Monthly payments through the FACTS tuition program. Payment will be due on either the 5th or 20th day of each month, as designated by the family.

Please note that any tuition payments made by credit card will be subject to a 3% fee.

Enrollment Once the School Year Has Begun

The registration fees, NPA fee, and general/technology fees remain the same.

Tuition is paid for the full month, regardless of the first day of classes.

Parish Subsidy and Tuition Classification

The parish staff of our Cathedral parish, in conjunction with the Pastoral Council, wishes to reiterate the already established policy concerning subsidy of our young people at Nativity BVM Elementary School and St. Patrick High School. The Catholic Tuition rate is for Catholic children and their families who are members of a Catholic parish. A baptismal certificate must be on file and the school must receive a signed subsidy form from the pastor of the parish.

Tuition Assistance

Tuition Assistance is available for families through their individual parishes. A family interested in applying for tuition assistance from Nativity Parish must request an application and return the completed application to the school. Requests for tuition assistance from other Catholic parishes must be made directly to that pastor.

Procedure for Delinquent Tuition

If a payment is thirty (30) days late, the responsible party will be contacted by a school official. A \$30 late fee may be assessed. If a payment is forty-five (45) days late, the responsible party will be contacted by the pastor of the parish. A \$45 late fee may be assessed. If a payment is sixty (60) days late, the responsible party may be turned over to a collection agency. A \$60 late fee will be assessed by Nativity BVM School. The family may be asked to leave the school.

NSF Checks

If the school has received two (2) NSF checks for payment of any fees, then payment by check will no longer be acceptable. Future payments must be made by cash or money order. A \$35 NSF fee may be assessed per returned check.

Before School Care

Before school care begins at 6:45 a.m. and is included in the tuition fee.

After School Care

After school care begins at 3:15 p.m. and ends at 5:30 p.m. The fee is \$8.00 per day for one child, \$13 per day for two children, and \$18 per day for three children. A significant late fee will be charged for any children picked up after 5:30 p.m. Please refer to page 29 for a list of fees.

K THROUGH GRADE 6 TUITION AND FEE INFORMATION

Registration Fee

The registration fee for one child is \$250.00. The registration fee for each additional child in the family is \$200.00. The registration fee is non-refundable and is required at the time of registration. *This fee reserves the child's place in the classroom.*

General/Technology Fee

The General/Technology Fee is \$300.00 per child and is non-refundable. The fee is used to purchase Religion books, consumable books, art and learning materials as well as student insurance, access to Power School and SchoolMessenger. This fee may be paid at the time of registration, at the time of final registration or may be included into FACTS payments.

NPA Fee

The Nativity Parent Association Fee is \$50.00 per child. This fee will be in place of various collections for activities throughout the year including: The Nativity Spirit shirt and field day shirt, Halloween Carnival class decorating fee, Halloween Carnival drinks and donation for Teacher Appreciation celebration.

Raffle Tickets

Each Nativity School family is asked to sell four (4) \$100 raffle tickets. Monthly drawings for \$3,000 take place for ten months. Tickets may be purchased by the family or may be sold. Starting with the fifth ticket sold, a family may earn \$20 for each additional ticket sold toward tuition/fees. Each family is responsible for any lost tickets.

Tuition – Catholic Families

One child	\$407.21	per month for 10 months
Two children	\$712.67	per month for 10 months
Three children	\$1038.42	per month for 10 months

A form, verifying parish membership and signed by the pastor, must be submitted to the school prior to final registration.

Tuition – Non-Catholic Families

One child	\$609.67	per month for 10 months
Two children	\$1067.45	per month for 10 months
Three children	\$1555.40	per month for 10 months

Bingo

In order to qualify for the Catholic rate of tuition and/or tuition assistance, families must agree to work Bingo as scheduled. Because of the number of families, this may be several times during the year. Families who are not Catholic but who receive tuition assistance will also be required to work the Bingo program. Families who fail to honor the requirement to work Bingo may have tuition subsidy/assistance revoked after consultation with the pastor. Families who are not Catholic and do not receive tuition assistance may volunteer to work Bingo but are not required to do so.

Tuition Payment Options

Families have two options for payment of tuition:

1. Paid in full on or before the time of final registration.

2. Monthly payments through the FACTS tuition program. Payment will be due on either the 5th or 20th day of each month, as designated by the family.
Please note that any tuition payments made by credit card will be subject to a 3% fee.

Refund of Fees

Registration and General/Technology fees are non-refundable.
Tuition fees are non-refundable once a new month has begun.

Enrollment Once the School Year Has Begun

The registration fees and general/technology fees remain the same.
Tuition is paid for the full month, regardless of the first day of classes.

Parish Subsidy and Tuition Classification

The parish staff of our Cathedral parish, in conjunction with the Pastoral Council, wishes to reiterate the already established policy concerning subsidy of our young people at Nativity BVM Elementary School and St. Patrick High School. The Catholic Tuition rate is for Catholic children and their families who are members of a Catholic parish. A baptismal certificate must be on file and the school must receive a signed subsidy form from the pastor of the parish.

Tuition Assistance

Tuition Assistance is available for families through their individual parishes or through Nativity School's Evangelization Grant. A family interested in applying for tuition assistance from Nativity School or Nativity Parish must request an application and return the completed application to the school. Requests for tuition assistance from other Catholic parishes must be made directly to that pastor.

Procedure for Delinquent Tuition

If a payment is thirty (30) days late, the responsible party will be contacted by the principal of the school. A \$30 late fee may be assessed. If a payment is forty-five (45) days late, the responsible party will be contacted by the pastor of the parish. A \$45 late fee may be assessed. If a payment is sixty (60) days late, the responsible party may be turned over to a collection agency. A \$60 late fee will be assessed by Nativity BVM School. The family may be asked to leave the school.

NSF Checks

When the school has received two (2) NSF checks for payment of any fees, then payment by check will no longer be acceptable. Future payments must be made by cash or money order. A \$35 NSF fee may be assessed per returned check.

Before School Care

Before school care begins at 6:45. There is no fee charged for before school care.

After School Care

After school care begins at 3:15 and ends at 5:30. The fee is \$8.00 per day for one child, \$13 per day for two children, \$18 per day for three children and \$23 for four children. A significant late fee will be charged for any children picked up after 5:30 p.m. Please refer to page 29 for a list of these fees.

AWARDS PROGRAM

Helping a child reach full potential is the aim of each person at Nativity School. We feel strongly that academic achievement and appropriate behavior are closely linked. We believe that the Nativity Awards Program supports this belief.

The NATIVITY HONOR ROLL AWARD is given each of the four marking periods. Children in grades 2 through 6 will be eligible for the award. Subjects to be considered are all that receive a number grade. The child's conduct grade is not considered for this award. An award ribbon will be given at the end of each term. A certificate will be given at the end of the year for students who qualified for all four terms.

A-B Honor Roll: Children must have all A's and B's in the academic subjects to qualify for the A/B Achievement Award.

All A Honor Roll: Children must have all A's to qualify for the A Achievement Award.

The PRESIDENTIAL ACADEMIC AWARD is given to sixth grade students at the end of the school year. The award is based on academic grades and standardized test scores for grades 4, 5 and 6.

GRADING SCALE

A	93 – 100	4.0
A-	90 – 92	3.5
B	85 – 89	3.0
B-	80 – 84	2.5
C	75 – 79	2.0
D	70 – 74	1.0
F	0 – 69	0.0

HOMEWORK

As a faculty we are firmly convinced that homework is a necessary part of the child's education in so far as it affords an opportunity for independent personal application of something learned at school each day. Children are responsible for copying down and completing homework. A parent's signature on the assignment pad will be our way of knowing that the parent or an adult supervised the study and are aware of the quality of work produced by the child.

In an effort to encourage responsibility, no child is allowed to return to the classrooms after 2:45 without the permission of the principal or an adult from the After-School Program.

REPORT CARDS

Report cards are distributed every nine weeks to students in preschool through sixth grade. An interim report is given halfway through the quarter to students in first through sixth grade.

REPORT CARD CONFERENCES

Parents/guardians wishing to conference with the teacher are asked to do so at a pre-arranged and mutually agreed upon time and place. Parents are strongly discouraged from initiating a conference in the classroom or on the playground while the teacher is responsible for the safety and well-being of the class or a group of children. At those times, the teacher is unable to give the question or concern full attention and is unable to fully supervise the children appropriately.

PROMOTION/RETENTION POLICY

At Nativity B.V.M. Elementary, teachers follow Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards (MCCRS.) Minimum proficiency requirements are necessary for students to progress to the next grade level.

- A. Considerations for promotion are:
 - 1. A minimum average of 70 in current subject/grade level.
 - 2. Potential for doing work in the next grade level.
 - 3. Regular attendance.
 - 4. Willingness to complete work.
 - 5. Mastery of the MCCRS at 70% mastery after necessary re-teaching, re-testing.
 - 6. For students in Grades 1 through 6, four (4) of the five (5) major subjects (Reading, English, Mathematics, Science/Health and Social Studies) must be passed in order to be promoted.
- B. Several factors influence a decision to retain a student.
 - 1. Parents will be notified in writing, at mid-year, if the child is failing in more than one subject.
 - 2. Parents will subsequently be notified at least six (6) weeks prior to the closure of school if retention of that child at that grade level is probable.
 - 3. The decision to promote (or retain) a student shall be a joint decision made by the parent, teacher and principal, based on the established criteria and other factors.
 - 4. In the event that an agreement regarding placement cannot be reached, every avenue of discussion will be pursued.
 - 5. If an agreement still cannot be made, the principal, in consultation with the teacher and other personnel, will make the final decision.
 - 6. Documentation of this will be included in the child's cumulative file.

TEXTBOOKS

Textbooks used by students are either purchased by Nativity School or are purchased and LOANED to Nativity B.V.M. School by the State of Mississippi Department of Education. Each student is assigned specific textbooks for the year and it is the responsibility of each child to maintain the book properly. At the end of the year, fines may be assessed for such book damages as: spills, writing/markings in non-consumable texts, numerous tears or damage. Fines are determined by criteria of the State of Mississippi Department of Education.

TESTING

The Iowa Assessment is administered each spring to students in Grades 2-6. The results of this nationally normed test are shared with the parents/guardians and are used, by the staff, to better identify areas of academic strength and areas of academic concern. Because of the scope of the testing, it is extremely important that all children in those grades are in attendance during the entire testing period.

As students in an accredited school, Nativity B.V.M. children experience and participate in a wide range of learning activities. Students in all grades study Science, Math, Social Studies, Language Arts, Religion, Art, Music and Physical Education. Experimentation, "hands-on-learning", differentiated instruction, individual, small group and large group instruction, and the use of technology all assist the child in developing potential and in learning necessary skills.

RELIGIOUS FORMATION

Our goal as Catholic educators is to guide each child to live so that he/she may attain the happiness that comes with the living of a fully Christian life. Parents/guardians are the first teachers. We believe that we continue the faith development begun in the home and build on that foundation. Families are encouraged to pray together daily and to worship together as a family with their parish.

Students who are Catholic and are in the second grade are prepared to receive the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation for the first time. Parents/guardians are expected to participate in adult preparation sessions that are given by members of the parish staff in the months prior to the reception of the sacraments. Information regarding the specific dates for the adult education programs will be given prior to the meetings and will appear on the monthly school calendar.

Parents of Catholic children in third through sixth grade who have not received the sacraments of Eucharist or Reconciliation may meet with the Principal to make arrangements to be included in the preparation.

Family members are always welcome to attend any religious celebration with the children. Due to COVID-19, mass will be live-streamed on the school's Facebook page so that our family members can celebrate in spiritual communion with us. A school Mass or prayer service is celebrated a couple of times each month. Children are encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly.

Children attending Nativity B.V.M. Elementary School who are of other religious traditions are included in all school religious celebrations. They are invited to participate as much as possible.

LIBRARY

Nativity B.V.M. Library is staffed by a certified librarian/media specialist and houses an excellent selection of library books and materials. Students and teachers have access to the materials throughout the school day. Students in preschool through grade six have a weekly time scheduled as a library period.

COMPUTER EDUCATION

A computer lab, adjacent to the Library, was re-established in August 2008. The computers in the lab and throughout the school were updated in August, 2016 through a massive fundraising effort organized by the parents of Nativity BVM School. Chrome books are available to all students.

Children in Pre-School through Grade 6 have regular access to computers and computer instruction in their classroom. Additional exposure to computers is provided through the library program, including the Accelerated Reading program, and in the computer lab itself.

RESOURCE CLASS

Students who have a special education ruling receive special services in the Learning Resource Room. Classes are taught by a certified special education teacher.

If a child is experiencing difficulties, the teacher or parent may request screening. Typically, this screening is done by Nativity BVM personnel. If the results of the screening indicate a need for further intervention, then the Nativity School Resource Procedure is implemented. Communication with the parent/guardian, classroom teacher and other resource personnel is ongoing throughout the process. Hearing and vision screening may also be requested for any students.

SPEECH THERAPY

Speech therapy is provided through the Biloxi Public School District for those students who qualify for the services in Kindergarten through Grade 6. The screening process, initiated at the local school, determines what services are needed. Speech therapy is given at Nativity BVM School on a designated day of the week for these children.

Pre-School children, residing in the Biloxi Public School District zone, receive speech services at Nativity School through Biloxi Public Schools. Pre-School students residing outside of the Biloxi City School District, receive speech services through their home district.

EXPLORE

The EXPLORE program is available to students in grades 3-6 who have achieved a certain level of academic performance. Students in grade 2 begin classes 2nd semester. Classes, held every other week, challenge the thinking, creativity and performance of the participants. For specific academic requirements, please speak with the principal.

ATTENDANCE

It is imperative that every student attend school each and every day of the school year. Students are afforded the best opportunity to become successful when parents ensure their child attends school on a regular basis. The ultimate responsibility for attendance of all children belongs to the parents/guardians. Regular attendance includes on time arrival and attendance for the entire length of the school day. Families of students who are not in school are asked to contact the **school office** by 9:00 each morning. If no one has contacted the school, the secretary will attempt to contact the family. If a child is absent due to illness for an extended period of time, please supply the school with a doctor's excuse.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

An absence may be excused when:

- it results from the student's attendance at an authorized school activity, with prior approval of the principal
- it results from an injury or illness that prevents the student's presence at school
- it results from isolation of the student as ordered by the county health officer, the State Board of Health, or appropriate school official
- it is the result of a serious illness or death of an immediate family member including parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, and step brothers or sisters
- it results from an official medical or dental appointment
- it results from an appearance in court or administrative tribunal if the student is a party to the action or under subpoena as a witness
- it results from some type of religious celebration which the parents observe and requests the presence of their child. Requires principal approval.
- it can be demonstrated to the principal that the absence is to take advantage of an educational opportunity including vacations or other family travel. Requires principal approval.

STUDENT TARDINESS

Being able to begin the day with the rest of the class is important for students. Feeling rushed or behind starts them off in the wrong direction. It is a disruption to the class and the teacher when the routine/instruction must stop for tardy students. A child is considered tardy if he/she is not in the classroom by 8:00 AM. Students must be admitted into the school at the office doors if they are late. If morning prayer has started, please remain in your vehicle. The door will be opened after prayer has concluded. Students arriving after 8:00 AM will be issued a tardy slip in the office before being admitted to the classroom.

EXTENDED ABSENCES

If a child is absent due to a family vacation (2 days or more) or outing, an extended absence form must be completed prior to the absence. Work will be given in advance, if the teacher is able to do so. Missing work must be completed within the timeframe given by the teacher in order to receive full credit for the work. Depending upon the nature of the absence, the principal will determine if the absence is excused or unexcused.

EXCESSIVE ABSENCES

When a student misses a significant amount of school, defined as 25 accumulated days, the school will devise a plan that is appropriate to the circumstances. The principal may determine that the family needs to make arrangements for tutoring or homebound services at the expense of the parents/guardians.

SIGN-OUT FOR STUDENTS

Students are not allowed to leave the school grounds without school permission and that of the parent/guardian. **All students must be signed out through the school office.**

The school can only release a child to those having a legal right to remove a child or someone who was previously authorized by a parent or legal guardian. Absent a court document stating otherwise, both legal parents have the right to pick up a child. During registration, parents listed individuals who are authorized to pick up and check out the students. If at any time additional people need to be added to the list, please see Ms. Cheryl in the office.

If a person who is not on the school's list for authorized pick up attempts to pick up a student, and in so doing violated Diocesan policy, disturbs the peace, or violated local, state, or federal law, the school reserves the right to contact law enforcement.

EARLY DISMISSAL

Parents/guardians are strongly discouraged from taking their child out of school before the final dismissal bell at 2:45 PM. Leaving before that time is extremely disruptive to the education of that child as well as to the entire class. Early dismissal should only be used in rare and extreme circumstances. **All children must be checked out through the school office. No checks outs will be allowed after 2:30. The teachers and students are preparing for dismissal and this would cause a significant disruption.**

APPOINTMENTS

A child will be called to the school office to be checked out for an outside appointment of any kind. The parent/guardian or designated person will sign the child out of school at that time. If a student is going to be late for school because of a dental or doctor appointment, the school office must be notified in advance. When at all possible, **appointments should be made after school hours. Please submit a doctor's excuse for all appointments.**

MORNING CARE

Morning care is provided by school personnel from 6:45 AM until 7:30 AM. Children arriving between 7:30 AM and 8:00 AM proceed directly to their classrooms. Anyone arriving after the 8:00 a.m. bell is tardy and must report to the school office for a tardy slip.

AFTER SCHOOL CARE

The After-School Program will begin on the first day of school. Any child in Pre-Kindergarten - Grade 6 who attends Nativity B.V.M. Elementary School is eligible to attend the After-School Program.

Hours of Service: 3:15 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Cost of Program: One child - \$8.00 per day; two children - \$13.00; three children - \$18.00 per day. Children will be checked in at 3:15 p.m. at which time charges will begin. There is no cost for students in PK3 and PK4.

Late charges: Pick-up between 5:30 p.m. and 5:40 p.m. - \$20.00 late fee
Pick-up between 5:40 p.m. and 5:50 p.m. - \$35.00 late fee
Pick-up after 5:50 p.m. - \$50.00 late fee

If no authorized adult is able to be reached and the child is still at school at 6:00 p.m., the Biloxi Police Department and the Department of Child Protective Services will be notified.

SCHOOL UNIFORMS

Uniforms teach students responsibility, to take pride in their appearance, and the importance of cleanliness. Uniforms also reduce distractions, downplay materialism, and reduce the concern of inappropriate attire. Whenever students are dressed in the school uniform it is expected that they represent the school in a positive way. Students are asked to adhere to the entire dress code when dressed in any portion of the uniform, regardless of whether or not on campus. This includes jewelry and other accessories. Please ensure that your child/children conform to the rules below. For the 20-21 school year, students may either wear the uniforms listed below or the new uniforms. Beginning in the 21-22 school year, only the new uniforms may be worn.

GIRL'S UNIFORM

Bottoms: Solid Navy walking shorts, pants, skirts or skorts or the designated green plaid skirt or skort. Shorts must be worn under skirts, but should not be visible below the hem. If there are belt loops, a plain navy or black belt **MUST** be worn.

Tops: Plain white or navy short or long-sleeved blouse with collar, or short/long-sleeved knit shirt with collar is required. Any undershirt worn must be completely white. Shirts must always be tucked in. The embroidered school logo on shirts is not required at this time, but it is encouraged.

Jumpers/Dresses: The designated green plaid or solid navy jumpers can be worn. They must be worn with a uniform white or navy shirt. If solid navy dresses are worn, they must have a collar or a collared shirt must be worn under them.

Although a specific uniform company is not required, any of the plaid items must be purchased through a uniform company to ensure that the proper plaid is worn.

BOY'S UNIFORM

Bottoms: Plain navy walking shorts or pants. If there are belt loops, a plain navy or black belt must be worn.

Tops: A plain white or navy shirt short/long-sleeved oxford shirt or short/long-sleeved knit shirt with collar must be worn. Any undershirt worn must be completely white. Shirts must always be tucked in. The embroidered school logo on shirts is not required at this time, but it is encouraged.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Within the school building, only solid white or navy sweaters or sweatshirts with or without the Nativity Saints official school emblem may be worn. Jackets and/or windbreakers may not be worn in the classroom in place of sweatshirts or sweaters. Jackets, sweaters, and sweatshirts should be clearly marked with the name of the child. White or navy socks (or tights for girls) must be worn and must be visible. No-show socks are not allowed.

Tennis shoes must be worn at all times. Cowboy boots, platform or backless tennis shoes, hiking boots, boat shoes, sandals and backless shoes are **NEVER** permitted. Sandals may be worn by students only due to a medical emergency and require prior approval from the principal

Hairstyles for both boys and girls should be neat and not distracting. Hair should be kept out of the eyes. The length of hair for boys should be above the collar. The principal reserves the right to make the final decision regarding hairstyles or dress.

Make-up is not to be worn at any time. This includes colored lip balm and/or colored lip gloss. Nail polish is permitted providing it does not cause a distraction.

The school should be contacted if there is a reason beyond control that prevents the child from wearing the uniform.

FREE DRESS DAYS

From time to time, a free dress day is scheduled as a reward or as a special celebration. Tennis shoes/socks must always be worn. Although shirts with sleeves are preferred, sleeveless shirts may be worn as long as they have wide straps and don't have multiple cut outs. Shorts should be at least fingertip length. If leggings are worn, shirts must be fingertip length.

If it is a designated "spirit shirt day," the spirit shirt that is worn must be from the **current school year** unless otherwise noted.

SCHOOL-WIDE DISCIPLINE POLICY

Appropriate behavior is an important component in the education of each child. Each child is expected to respect others as well as himself/herself. This respect is shown through the ways in which words and actions are expressed. Each child is expected to respond to, and obey, reasonable requests made by school personnel and adult volunteers and do so in an appropriate and polite manner. It is also important that the child assumes responsibility for his/her actions and choices. In keeping with this belief, Nativity BVM School uses a form of discipline that provides structure but also helps the child understand inappropriate behavior. Classroom rules/guidelines are posted in the room and discussed by the class. Consequences, appropriate to the developmental age of the child, are outlined in each room. These consequences are administered in a fair and consistent way.

Teachers will implement his/her classroom rules/consequences. Teachers will notify parents/guardians about continuous misbehavior. Teachers will document this notification.

If a student repeatedly disregards classroom rules and consequences, a discipline referral form will be completed by the teacher or responsible adult. The principal will be contacted and will meet with the student.

If a student commits an offense that is specifically listed on the school discipline ladder, a referral will be completed by the teacher or adult. The principal will be contacted and will meet with the student. The discipline procedures will be followed in a consistent and fair way. Teachers and parents/guardians will receive a copy of the completed discipline referral form.

If a student threatens to harm or kill another student or person, the principal will:

- Immediately remove the student from class and isolate the student
- Notify the pastor and consult with the pastor to determine if the law enforcement needs to be notified
- Contact the parents
- Begin to aggressively investigate the incident
- Suspend the student for an indefinite period until the matter is resolved
- Notify the local School Advisory President
- Upon completion of the investigation, if it is confirmed that a threat was made, action will be taken to expel the student permanently from the school

If it is not clear whether or not a threat was made, before the student is allowed back in school, the principal shall obtain, at the expense of the parent/guardian, the written opinion of a licensed psychiatrist, psychologist, or comparable mental health care professional to the effect that the student does not pose a danger to himself/herself or others. The student will not be allowed back in school until the written opinion has been given.

If a student threatens or is alleged to have threatened to harm himself/herself, the principal will:

- Immediately remove the student from the class
- Contact the parents/guardians
- Begin to aggressively investigate the incident
- Upon completing the investigation and it is confirmed that a threat of harm to himself/herself was made, the principal shall obtain, at the expense of the parent/guardian, the written opinion of a licensed psychiatrist, psychologist, or comparable mental health care professional to the effect that the student does not pose a danger to himself/herself or others. The student will not be allowed back in school until the written opinion has been given.

PRE-K3 THROUGH 1st GRADE STUDENTS:

<u>Offense</u>	<u>Steps</u>
Open defiance	Step 1-4
Disrupting instructional time	Step 1
Inappropriate behavior anytime/anywhere	Step 1
Continuous failure to follow classroom/playground/lunchroom rules	Step 1-4
Name-calling or showing disrespect to adults or other students	Step 1-4
Harassment, intimidation or threatening other students	Step 2-4
Defacing/damaging property that belongs to the school, other students, adults	Step 2-4
Profanity or vulgarity (actions, gestures, words or symbols)	Step 2
Bullying (actions, gestures, words, symbols)	Step 2-4
Physical abuse of a student or adult (biting, hitting etc.)	Step 3-4
Any misbehavior as determined severe by the Principal	Step 1-5

Following the first offense that is recorded on the discipline ladder, the student's next severe offense will move to the next step on the discipline ladder.

Discipline Ladder Steps

Step 1: The student will meet with the principal. The parents/guardians will be contacted. Consequences will be assigned. A discipline form will be sent home and must be returned, signed by the parent/guardian, to the principal the following day.

Step 2: The principal will meet with the parent/guardian. Consequences will be assigned.

Step 3: The student will serve a morning detention. The parent/guardian will bring the child to school at 7:00 a.m. and report to the teacher on detention duty. Detention will last from 7:00 a.m. until 7:30 a.m. Failure to report on time for the detention will result in an additional detention.

Step 4: A half day to a 3-day suspension will be assigned. The length of the suspension will be determined by the principal dependent upon the situation.

Step 5: A Discipline Committee will be convened to determine what further action, including expulsion, is warranted. The Discipline Committee will be composed of the principal, pastor, teacher and other staff members, if appropriate.

2nd THROUGH 6th GRADE STUDENTS:

<u>Offense</u>	<u>Steps</u>
Open defiance	Step 1-4
Disrupting instructional time	Step 1
Inappropriate behavior anytime/anywhere	Step 1
Running, pushing, yelling	Step 1
Continuous failure to follow classroom/playground/lunchroom rules	Step 1-4
Name-calling or showing disrespect to adults or other students	Step 1-4
Leaving the classroom without permission	Step 2-4
Cheating on tests/homework (The student will also receive a “0” for the assignment)	Step 2-4
Harassment, intimidation or threatening other students	Step 2-4
Defacing/damaging property that belongs to the school, other students, adults	Step 2-4
Profanity or vulgarity (actions, gestures, words or symbols)	Step 2
Bullying (actions, gestures, words, symbols)	Step 2-4
Stealing	Step 3-4
Physical abuse of a student or adult (biting, hitting etc.)	Step 3-4
Leaving school grounds without permission	Step 3-4
Fighting at school activities	Step 3-5
Use or possession of dangerous objects including fireworks	Step 3-5
Possession of a firearm/weapon	Step 5
Possession of drugs/alcohol/harmful substance	Step 5
Any misbehavior as determined severe by the Principal	Step 1-5

Following the first offense that is recorded on the discipline ladder, the student’s next severe offense will move to the next step on the discipline ladder.

Discipline Ladder Steps

Step 1: The student will meet with the principal. The parents/guardians will be contacted. Consequences will be assigned. A discipline form will be sent home and must be returned, signed by the parent/guardian, to the principal the following day.

Step 2: The principal will meet with the parent/guardian. Consequences will be assigned.

Step 3: The student will serve a morning detention. The parent/guardian will bring the child to school at 7:00 a.m. and report to the teacher on detention duty. Detention will last from 7:00 a.m. until 7:30 a.m. Failure to report on time for the detention will result in an additional detention.

Step 4: A half day to a 3-day suspension will be assigned. The length of the suspension will be determined by the principal dependent on the situation.

Step 5: A Discipline Committee will be convened to determine what further action, including expulsion, is warranted. The Discipline Committee will be composed of the principal, pastor, teacher and other staff members, if appropriate.

Absence of the Principal

In the absence of the principal, a certified staff member is designated to act on her behalf.

This certified staff member has full authority to act on behalf of the principal, in her absence, in all discipline matters.

Out of School Suspension

A student may be suspended according to provisions found in the school discipline plan. The duration of the suspension will be determined by the Principal and a conference with the parents/guardians will be held. Documentation of the incident will be placed in the student's cumulative file. When out of school suspension is used as a consequence, the student is prohibited from entering the school grounds. The student may not participate in, or attend, a school sponsored activity during the time of the out of school suspension. All work, missed during the time of the out of school suspension, must be completed within two school days upon return to school. Work that is not returned by that deadline will receive a grade of "0".

Expulsion

A student may be recommended for expulsion if the principal feels that the student's actions warrant such a severe consequence. A Discipline Committee will be convened to determine what action, including expulsion, is warranted. The Discipline Committee will be composed of the principal, pastor, teacher and other staff members, as appropriate. The final decision of the Discipline Committee will be communicated to the parents/guardians by the principal and pastor.

CONDUCT GRADING

The Nativity Discipline Program uses the following in grading a child's conduct:

- **O** Conduct grade is equivalent to an A and is viewed as "outstanding." No detentions for behavior.
- **S+** Conduct grade is equivalent to a B and is viewed as "better than average." No detentions for behavior.
- **S** Conduct grade is equivalent to a C and is viewed as "average." One detention for behavior is allowed.
- **S-** Conduct grade is equivalent to a D and is viewed as "poor." One or two detentions for behavior may have taken place in a nine-week period.
- **U** Conduct grade is equivalent to a F and is viewed as "extremely poor." More than two behavior detentions may have taken place in a nine-week period.

POLICIES FOR CHILD SAFETY

Nativity B.V.M. staff members share in the parental concern for the safety of the children and all persons in our school building. The following procedures are some of the ways in which we attempt to ensure this:

1. The school building remains locked throughout the school day. Access to the building is through the door nearest to the office. A doorbell is located to the left of the door.
2. All visitors and/or parent volunteers are required to sign in at the office and wear a Visitor Badge during their time on school grounds. (Assemblies and whole-school activities may be an exception to this due to the number of parents/guardians present.)
3. Any child arriving late for school must be **brought into the school lobby by an adult.**
4. Students should never enter the school grounds using the access gate across from the office.
5. Students leaving school before dismissal time must be checked out through the office. The child will only be released to someone listed on the family information card unless prior notification has taken place. Proper identification may be requested.
6. If a child is going home with another student, the **school office must receive notification from both families prior to dismissal time.**
7. Parents/visitors will not be allowed to go to classrooms to deliver forgotten items to students.
8. Because of the number of students remaining for After School Care and concerns for their safety, students or adults needing to retrieve items from the classrooms after dismissal time must receive permission from the principal or, in her absence, from adults in the After-School Program.
9. Calls regarding absences, check outs and changes in the way a child will go home, should be made through the **school office.** The classroom teacher or a staff member should not be contacted directly to communicate this information.

EMERGENCY CLOSING

In the event of severe weather, please stay tuned to WLOX TV, WXXV TV and WZKX and WVMI radio for information regarding school closing and/or opening. Notifications will also be posted to the school's website and sent out through School Messenger.

EMERGENCY DRILLS/SITUATIONS

Drills are held on a regular basis for fire, tornado and other emergency situations. A new state law requires schools to have two active shooter drills per year. In the event of a lockdown, no one will be admitted into the school building. Children will only be released when authorities have determined that the situation has been resolved satisfactorily. In the event of a tornado warning, no child will be allowed to be checked out of school until the "all clear signal" has been given. Any adults present in the building during a drill must participate fully.

RAINY DAY DISMISSAL

Children are dismissed from the front doors by the office. Drivers are asked to remain in their cars since the children are escorted to the cars by a member of the school staff.

PLAYGROUND AND TRAFFIC SAFETY

PLEASE DRIVE SLOWLY ON THE PLAYGROUND AT ALL TIMES. Please avoid coming to the school to pick up or drop off students during the recess period (10:00 a.m. - 10:35 a.m.) if at all possible.

Drivers arriving to pick up children at dismissal time are asked not to block the entrance gate at Benachi Avenue. This practice prevents access to school in case of emergency. Drivers should not cut traffic by driving through non-designated areas.

Picking up children at any place other than the school grounds is a very dangerous practice. The Biloxi Police Department has requested that drivers not pick up children on Porter Avenue, Benachi Avenue or Howard Avenue.

PARKING ON CAMPUS

Parking behind the school is reserved for Nativity BVM faculty and staff. Please park along the front of the building or where directed by school personnel. Parking is not allowed along the fence, on the surrounding side streets (e.g., Lestrade), or in the parking areas of nearby businesses.

ENTRANCE TO NATIVITY SCHOOL PROPERTY

The correct entrance to Nativity BVM School is through the driveway off of Benachi Avenue. During the school day (8:15 - 2:30), the safer way to enter the school grounds is off of Porter Avenue.

Cars should not enter Nativity School property via the Biloxi Visitors Center parking area. Parents, however, may choose to park in the Visitors Center lot and walk to the main school door.

VISITORS TO SCHOOL

ALL VISITORS TO THE BUILDING MUST FIRST CHECK IN AT THE SCHOOL OFFICE AND WEAR A VISITOR'S PASS. In the interest of safety, no one is allowed to go directly to the classrooms. Delivery of forgotten items and/or lunches is done through the school office. Parents/guardians are not allowed to take items to the classrooms.

Parents/guardians wishing to observe or visit a class for a period of time are welcome. The classroom teacher must be contacted at least one day in advance to arrange an appropriate time.

TELEPHONE

Teachers and/or students will be called to the telephone only in case of an emergency. Likewise, a student is allowed to use the office phone **ONLY** for emergencies.

FAMILY INFORMATION

Although a family card is completed at the time of registration, please advise the office of any change of address, telephone number or other information. Cell phone numbers are also helpful in case of emergency. It is important that the school office has the most current information. It is the option of each family to be included in a school-wide family directory.

HEALTH

A child may not attend school with any of the following symptoms: fever, undiagnosed rash, vomiting, lice, diarrhea, inflamed eyes and severe cold or sore throat. A child must be fever free for 24 hours, **WITHOUT** taking fever-reducing medication during that time, before returning to school. A fever is defined as 100°F or higher taken under the arm, 101°F taken orally, or 102°F taken rectally (Mississippi Department of Health). A reading of 100.4°F on a no touch thermometer is a fever.

The school administrator is authorized to take the temperature of a student. If a child becomes ill or injured while at school, the parent will be called and the child will be isolated from other students until picked up. If parents cannot be reached, the staff will attempt to contact other individuals listed on the emergency contact list.

Immunizations

1. Immunization records are **REQUIRED** for all new students.
2. A Form 121 must be submitted to the school office before the student can begin school.

Health Issues/Injuries

1. Allergies and other health problems must be brought to the attention of the administration in writing.
2. Parents/guardians will be notified immediately in case of student illness or an accident of a serious nature.
3. **PLEASE BE SURE THAT CURRENT, UP-TO-DATE EMERGENCY INFORMATION IS ON FILE IN THE SCHOOL OFFICE AT ALL TIMES.**
4. Parents/guardians are asked to notify the teacher, in writing, of complete details in case of special illness or physical incapacitation.
- 5.

“Too Sick for School” Guidelines

1. Fever - If a student has a fever of 100.4 degrees or greater, the student may return to school when they have been fever-free for 24 hours **WITHOUT** fever-reducing medication.
2. Vomiting/Diarrhea – Any student with unexplained vomiting or diarrhea may return to school 24 hours after the last episode.
3. Cough – Keep a child home for serious/sustained coughing, wheezing, or difficulty breathing.
4. Rash – If a student has any new rash accompanied by a fever, the student may return to school after the rash goes away or clearance is given by the health care provider. In addition, a rash that is draining should be covered.

Certain diseases/conditions are easily passed on in a school setting. If your child contracts one of the following, we ask that the school office be notified immediately and that the following procedures are followed:

HEAD LICE: Parents are encouraged to periodically check their child for this condition. Nits (eggs) will most generally be visible at the hairline, at the base of the neck, behind the ears or at the crown of the head. Although nits are sometimes mistaken for dandruff, they will not be easily removed from the hair shaft. Treatment with an over the counter or prescription product is required for this. A child will be excluded from school until treatment can take place effectively. Because this is highly transferable, an earnest effort to treat and remove all nits must occur before the child may return to school. Proof of treatment should be kept for records (receipt from the purchase of treatment or a doctor notice).

CONJUNCTIVITIS (PINK EYE): A student with this highly contagious eye infection must be excluded from school and under treatment for a minimum of twenty-four hours before being readmitted to school.

RING WORM: A student with this condition must be under treatment for a minimum of twenty-four hours before being readmitted to school. The affected area must be treated with appropriate medication and remain covered at all times.

Parents will be notified in the event of any public health issue occurring at the school (i.e. head lice, chicken pox, etc.) when directly affects your child’s class.

ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION TO STUDENTS

In order to protect the safety of each person in our school, we ask that the following procedure be followed whenever it is necessary for medications to be administered at school.

1. ALL medication (prescribed medication as well as over the counter items such as Tylenol/Ibuprofen) MUST be brought to the school office in the original container or in a clearly marked container.
2. Students are NEVER allowed to keep their own medication and all medication will be kept in the school office.
3. Inhalers for students with asthma will generally be kept in the school office. Inhalers should be clearly marked with the child's name. An "administration of medication form" should be completed at the beginning of the school year.
4. EpiPens for students with severe allergies will generally be kept in the school office. EpiPens should be clearly marked with the child's name. An "administration of medication form" should be completed at the beginning of the school year.
5. A written notice, signed and dated, must accompany any medication to the school. This note must contain instructions for giving the medication to the child and MUST include the dosage as well as the time to be given.
6. All medication will be administered by school personnel: school secretary, administrator, and certified or non-certified staff members.
7. Parents/guardians are free to come to school to administer medication to their own child. They should report to the school office and the child will be called to the office to take the medication.
8. For medications that are to be administered for several days or on a daily basis for the entire year, one set of instructions may be written for that time period.
9. Students wearing contact lenses should keep a lens case and solution at school.

STUDENT/PARENT CONTRACT

I have read and clearly understand the policies and expectations of Nativity B.V.M. Elementary School set forth in this handbook. As a student, it is my intention, with the help of God, my parents/guardians, friends, teachers and school staff, to live up to these standards. As a parent, it is my intention to ensure that my child/children follow the rules and policies set forth in this handbook. I understand my responsibilities and what is asked of me.

Signed: _____, Student #1

_____, Student #2

_____, Student #3

_____, Student #4

_____, Parent(s)

_____, Teacher #1

_____, Teacher #2

_____, Teacher #3

_____, Teacher #4

_____, Principal

_____, Date

Please sign and return no later than August 31, 2020.