

2021-2022  
PARENT-STUDENT  
HANDBOOK  
MOTHER OF MERCY ACADEMY

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***Although careful consideration has been given to the content of this handbook, revisions may be necessary throughout the year. The MMA community shall be advised at least five school days in advance of a policy change when practicable. Revised handbooks shall be available through the school's website. Handbook revisions are deemed accepted as notified and automatically become policy five school days after notification of the change.***

***Revised: 8/23/2021***

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Friends of Mother of Mercy Academy,

Mother of Mercy Academy faculty and administration are committed to teach and model Gospel values to encourage students to live their lives as a reflection of Christ. The philosophy of the school strives to recognize and respect the dignity of each person and to offer a positive, Christ-centered, safe learning environment.

Our goal is to make your child's educational experience both meaningful and productive. To accomplish this goal, every family should be informed of school policies, regulations, and procedures. This handbook serves as a primary reference source for questions about the operation of Mother of Mercy Academy School.

You are asked to read the handbook thoroughly and to keep it accessible. Of course, should you still have questions after referring to this handbook, the staff and I are available to assist you. Also, you and your child/children are requested to sign the last page and to return it to the school office as soon as possible.

Thank you for your cooperation.

God Bless,

*Mr. Don Militzer*

Mr. Don Militzer  
Principal

# **Staff 2021-2022**

**Principal:** Mr. Don Militzer

**School Secretary:** Mrs. Tina Allen

**Administrative Assistant:** Mrs. Donna Lew-Buechel

**Administrative Assistant:** Mrs. Amber Ingold

## **Teachers:**

Pre-School- Mrs. Sue Lydon

Kindergarten A – Mrs. Sarah Foster

Kindergarten B – Mrs. Erica Haakensen

Kindergarten C- Mrs. Lisa Jarosh

Grade 1A – Mrs. Kathy Hickey

Grade 1B – Mrs. Ruth O'Toole

Grade 2A – Mrs. Mary Beth Baumgardner

Grade 2B – Mrs. Bridget Carozza

Grade 3A – Mrs. Cheryl Kundra

Grade 3B – Mrs. Renee Skoff

Grade 4A – Ms. Diana Maresch

Grade 4B – Mrs. Andrea Lattimer

Grade 5A – Mrs. Laura Huebner

Grade 5B – Ms. Michaele Tynan

Grade 6A – Mrs. Cindy Phillifent

Grade 6B – Mrs. Susan Morgan

Grade 7A – Mrs. Kathleen Criss

Grade 8A – Mrs. Christie Gray

Grade 8B – Mr. Joe Mszanski

Music – Mrs. Michelle Keiper

Computer Science – Mrs. Lyndsey Lytle

Physical Education/Health – Mrs. Theresa Bekavac

Library/Middle School Language Arts – Ms. Jamie Ward

Spanish – Mrs. Karina Kurzawski

School Nurse – Mrs. Michelle Corey-Brundell

Nurse Volunteer- Mrs. Stephanie Kress

Nurse Volunteer- Mrs. Michelle Salera

Reading/Math Intermediate Unit Support – Mrs. Katrin Jones (K-4)

Reading/Math Intermediate Unit Support – Mrs. Meilssa Toole (5-8)

Speech Intermediate Support – Mrs. Debra Woss

School Counselor Intermediate Support – Mr. Timothy Donovan

D.A.R.E Instructor- Officer Rob Smith (Whitehall Police Force)

\* Psychological testing administered through the school district in which the family resides.

# Introduction

## PHILOSOPHY OF Mother of Mercy Academy

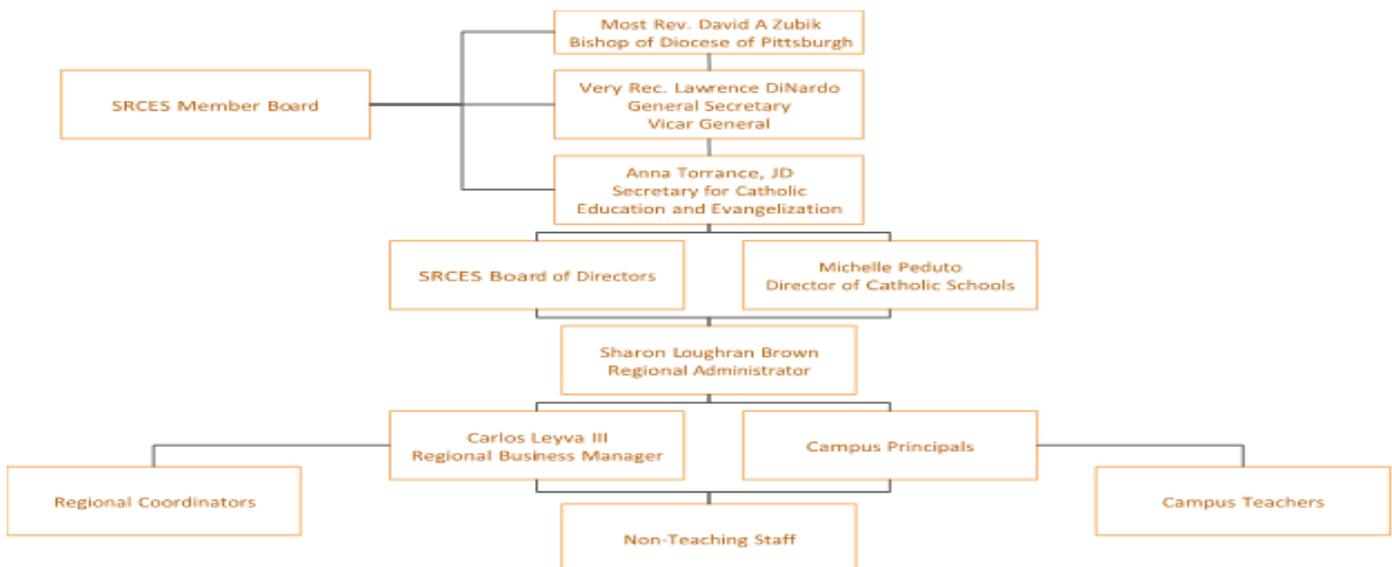
Christ is the reason for this school. Our tradition of academic excellence develops the whole child through knowledge and understanding, without regard to race, color, creed, or national origin. We foster the gifts, talents, and uniqueness of each person and empower all students to be lifelong learners, living in close relationship with God. With compassion, we nurture a positive self-image and provide opportunities for growth: culturally, intellectually, morally, physically, socially, and spiritually. Through the teaching of the Gospels, our students will become informed, responsible citizens of the State, Church, and God’s Kingdom.

### WELCOME

Mother of Mercy Academy was established in 2021 and is a merged school representing the former St. Elizabeth School and St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin School. MMA works under the governance of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and the South Regional Catholic Elementary Schools. Both schools represented a great deal of pride for their parishes and communities. MMA will look to honor the history and traditions of both schools and communities and start building new friendships, relationships, and traditions. The parishes, region, and school community work together to provide a quality education and emphasize the belief that a strong Catholic faith foundation is fundamental to a student’s future.

The school community welcomes you to a partnership of educational endeavors and the development of your child/children’s Catholic faith. As a school community, we engage the whole child, emotionally, intellectually, physically, socially, and spiritually.

Mother of Mercy Academy is a school located in the Diocese of Pittsburgh and part of the South Regional Catholic Elementary Schools. The school is under the leadership model below.



## **MIDDLE STATES ACCREDITATION**

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools accredits schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Middle States accreditation is an expression of confidence in a school's mission, goals and objectives, performance and resources and validates publicly the excellence in education.

As a newly emerged school Mother of Mercy Academy will begin the process of initial accreditation in Fall 2021.

## **CATECHETICS (RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)**

*Catechetics* is the center of the Catholic school. A conscious effort is made to create a Christ-centered atmosphere by stressing Christian values and morality in the classroom as well as throughout the school. A conscious effort is made to integrate catechetics into every aspect of the school curriculum.

Our belief in Jesus has drawn us to this school community. Our beliefs are expressed in and strengthened by daily communal prayer. Students develop skills and a love for the Church's daily worship. This includes a prayer service each morning led by our eighth-grade students. Simple prayers are recited before and after lunch. At the end of the day, closing prayers are said.

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

The principal, in conjunction with the host pastor and regional clergy, work with the teachers in the religious development and sacramental preparation of the students. Parent/guardian preparation programs for Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation are held during the year. These are parish programs and involve all eligible children and parents/guardians of the parish.

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

## **INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM**

### **CONTINUOUS GROWTH APPROACH TO INSTRUCTION**

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

The Catholic School offers a strong traditional curriculum. In the "Continuous Growth Program" of the Diocese

of Pittsburgh, students advance through a defined curriculum according to their individual needs and abilities. In addition to meeting all the requirements of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the curriculum gives special attention to the integration of Gospel values.

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

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

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

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

## **ACADEMIC SUPPORT**

We strive to be as inclusive as possible in welcoming all students for whom we can provide an appropriate education. Therefore, we implement the Diocesan Academic Support Model to assist students who are struggling academically and/or have been identified as a person with a special need. Parents may request more information about this program from the principal or the child's teacher.

## **ADMISSION**

Children who reach the age of five by September 1 cannot be admitted to kindergarten unless there is definite evidence of inability to adjust to the school situation. All children coming into first grade must be six by September 1. (Required dates of admission set by the students' home school district may supersede Sept. 1, in that case we will honor the students' home district)

## **Registration**

All registration takes place electronically or in person. For all new students, the following information is necessary at registration: Birth certificate, baptismal record, and immunization record, (and a signed records request, if transferring from another school.) Registration can start as early as February and the date is communicated in the church bulletins and through our parent contact system. Registration is tentative until all records are reviewed by administration. *All students are admitted on a ninety-day probationary period.*

## **SUBJECT AREAS**

## **Catechetics/Religious Education**

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

The goals and objectives of the Catechetical program consistently enhance the spiritual formation and moral development of all students. A genuine, personal relationship with God is cultivated through worship and service. Liturgical and personal prayer are essential in the development of a strong spiritual foundation. Careful planning and programming ensure a broad and deep understanding of authentic Church Doctrine. A variety of materials and resources are used to foster both spiritual growth and moral development.

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

## **Language Arts**

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

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

## **Mathematics**

It is our mission to enable all students to learn the skills, acquire the knowledge, and develop the attitudes in mathematics and technology necessary for them to reach their full potential as morally and socially responsible citizens who can meet the demands of a changing global society. The challenge is not only to meet and exceed grade level expectations but to excite students to explore topics on their own, to develop proof for answers and to learn from one another.

Educational goals for all students are based upon the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Standards:

- Develop the value of mathematics
- Do and apply mathematics competently
- Find and solve problems

- Communicate mathematically
- Reason mathematically
- Apply problem-solving and decision-making skills to real life situations
- Become self-directed life-long learners
- Use appropriate communication and group interaction skills
- Demonstrate concern, tolerance, and respect for others

## **Social Studies**

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

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

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

## **Science**

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

In kindergarten through fifth grade, the science program covers general science topics. In grades six through eight, the students focus on specific areas including: life, chemistry/physical, earth and space. Across all grades, the science curriculum focuses on an inquiry-based process and fosters collaborative learning. Science education strengthens life skills, such as creative problem solving, critical thinking, team cooperation, use of technology, and the value of life-long learning.

## **World Languages**

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

### **Physical Education**

The Elementary Physical Education Program addresses the needs of the individual child through a holistic approach. Spiritual, physical, psychological, social, and emotional needs are given prime consideration. The development of a positive self-image through skill development and success is an important factor. An acquired skill enhances the carry-over potential of an activity to daily life. The Physical Education Curriculum Standards are progressive, building on the skills of the previous year.

Components for Physical Education are:

- Presence of God
- Balance
- Coordination/Agility
- Endurance/Fitness
- Flexibility
- Respect/Tolerance
- Skill Building
- Speed/Reaction Time
- Sportsmanship
- Strength/Power
- Teamwork

### **Health**

The Health curriculum provides information at each level of development to help students make wise, moral decisions with respect for the God given Gift of life. The health curriculum places holistic emphasis on wellness, fitness, behaviors, and skills for healthy, active living. Topics include disease prevention, emotional/social/mental health, environmental and community health, family life and sexuality, nutrition, personal health and related fitness, personal safety and first aid, and substance use and abuse. Education and health for children are inextricably intertwined.

### **Fine Arts**

In the Fine Arts program, students will have the opportunity to deepen their awareness of God's gift of creation and to respond creatively to the beauty and goodness of the world through music, art, and drama.

Instruction in the Arts contributes to the development of the whole person, promotes individual expression, allows experimentation with diverse materials and elements, enables exploration and appreciation of the works of other students and major artists and musicians, develops an awareness and sensitivity toward the environment, and finally promotes a deeper understanding of heritage and culture.

The Fine Arts curriculum provides a holistic approach to education that incorporates many aspects of the core curriculum and can be integrated into the total educational experience. Art classes will be taught to all students in grades Pre-K-8<sup>th</sup>.

### **Library**

The school library exists primarily to support and enrich the curriculum. It is a service and teaching agency as well as a place of purposeful learning where the use of all resources correlates with the school curriculum to intensify and individualize a child's educational experiences. The library is an integrated part of the total curriculum and is an essential element in the development of lifelong learning skills for students.

The integrated approach permits students to develop library skills as the need for these skills naturally emerge from the curriculum. They plan and implement these activities so that the goals of both the content area and the library program are achieved. The school library is open daily and students in grades PK-8<sup>th</sup> will have time scheduled weekly with the school certified Librarian. Lost or damaged books must be paid for.

### **Technology**

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

Teachers of computer literacy look beyond hardware and develop an awareness of values such as relationships, collaboration, ethical conduct, responsibility, and creative expression. As in all other areas of the curriculum, the integration of the Gospel values is a part of the teaching/learning process in the computer lab and classroom.

Students utilize various applications to master the following:

- Word Processing
- Slide Show presentations
- Basic Programming
- Spreadsheets
- Internet safety

Students in grades PK-8<sup>th</sup> will have set times weekly with a certified technology instructor.

### **ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

Standardized tests, textbook tests, and teacher-made tests are administered to students throughout the year. These assessments require students to synthesize information, apply what they have learned and demonstrate their understanding of what has been taught. At MMA we understand tests are a snapshot of what a child can achieve so we do not base everything on testing alone. Testing is simply another tool to help us assess the needs of each individual student as well as school wide strengths and weaknesses.

## **IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS**

### **Kindergarten – Grade 6**

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

*2 doses of chicken pox vaccine (or proof by physician's letter of having had chicken pox)*

*4 doses of diphtheria and tetanus (one dose must be after the fourth birthday)*

*3 doses of oral polio vaccine*

*2 doses of measles vaccine after the first birthday (or proof by blood test of having had measles)*

*2 doses of mumps vaccine after the first birthday (or proof by physician's letter of having had mumps)*

*1 dose of rubella vaccine after the first birthday (or proof by blood test of having had German measles)*

*3 properly spaced doses of hepatitis B vaccine (K-4)*

### **Grade 7 - 8**

In addition, before entrance to seventh grade, each child must submit immunization records showing the following requirements have been met:

1 dose of meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MVC)

1 dose tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (if 5 years has elapsed since last tetanus vaccination)

## **HOME LANGUAGE SURVEY**

Pennsylvania requires all school districts and charter schools to identify limited English proficient (LEP) students, because they are required to provide English instructional special services to them. This is done through the completion of the Home Language Survey. Please be prompt in your return of this form, a copy of which can be found in the Appendix.

## ATTENDANCE /TARDINESS

State Law requires that all children between the ages of six and seventeen attend school regularly. Regular and punctual attendance is an important requisite for success in school and is directly related to the pupil's efficiency and achievement. The only excused absences according to the Pennsylvania School Code are as follows:

1. Illness of student
2. Death in the family
3. Quarantine
4. All exceptional or urgent reasons that affect the child

The school office or the student's teacher must be notified upon the absenteeism of a student. This should be done before 9:00 a.m. **A written excuse must be presented to the teacher upon the student's return from absence as well as when they are tardy.** Unexcused absences and chronic tardiness are considered truancy which carry serious consequences. **Public school truant officers will be notified to investigate chronic absence and tardiness. State law requires a doctor's excuse whenever absence or tardiness exceeds 10 days.**

The school day begins at 8:20 a.m. **Students will be marked tardy if they arrive after 8:20 a.m. unless the delay in arrival is due to a busing situation.** In that case, the office will be advised by the bus garage of the late arrival of any bus due to breakdowns or emergency traffic patterns. Students arriving late due to these circumstances will not be marked tardy or absent by the homeroom teacher. **Students must be escorted to the office by a parent or guardian when tardy; they must be signed in and receive a tardy pass before they can proceed to their class.** Students may arrive **NO EARLIER** than 7:45 a.m. and must go directly to the gym. They will be supervised by a faculty member until 8:00 a.m. At that time, they are free to go to their classroom. **Mother of Mercy Academy will now have BEFORE and AFTER SCHOOL Care. Details of the program will be sent out separately.**

**Children in kindergarten through eighth grade, who arrive later than 11:00AM, are marked absent for a half day.**

## **BEHAVIOR CODE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR STUDENTS**

The Mother of Mercy Academy Code of Behavior is based on the belief that young people must learn to deal with one another and with adults in a manner consistent with Christian teaching. This means that everyone is entitled to respect and that one's behavior in school should reflect our love of God, our neighbor, and ourselves.

- ***Middle School Students also create a specific Code of Conduct they establish with the Middle School Teachers at the beginning of each school year.***

### IN CHURCH

Students are expected to actively participate in liturgical services by singing responses and hymns and by reciting prayers. Respect for the presence of God in the Tabernacle requires that students remain quiet before, during, and after services, and leave the church in silence.

### IN GENERAL

1. Students will walk, not run, through corridors
2. Students will be quiet in the halls - limiting disruptions to other classes
3. Students will always use proper language.
4. Students will respect school property as well as the property of teachers and other students.
5. Students will not chew gum.
6. Students will not engage in touching/hitting other students or other rough behavior.
7. Students will not tease or taunt other students.

### IN THE CLASSROOM

1. Students will maintain a respectful attitude toward teachers and classmates.
2. Students will follow the individual classroom rules of each teacher.
3. Students will be responsible for submitting all assignments neatly and on time.

### IN THE CAFETERIA

Students will practice the following good manners:

1. Speak in a normal tone.

2. Use utensils properly. Use napkins.
3. Practice good manners and acceptable social behavior in keeping with a pleasant atmosphere in the cafeteria.
4. Avoid wastefulness.
5. For safety, all students are to remain seated in assigned area until dismissal.
6. Clean up personal space on the tables and on the floor.

#### AT ASSEMBLIES

1. Students will maintain a respectful silence when others are speaking or performing.

#### ON THE BUS

1. Students will walk when boarding or leaving the bus.
2. Students must remain seated at all times on the bus.
3. Profanity is unacceptable.
4. Due respect is to be given to the driver, and other bus riders.
5. Undue noise and rowdiness are unacceptable.

**Please note that public school districts have a policy that states:  
STUDENTS MUST RIDE ONLY THEIR ASSIGNED BUS. CHILDREN MAY NEVER USE AN  
ALTERNATE BUS TO GET HOME EARLIER OR TO VISIT FRIENDS.**

#### ON THE PLAYGROUND

1. Students will respect the authority of the playground supervisors.
2. Students are to remain in designated areas during recess time.
3. Students must line-up in silence once the bell rings to end recess.
4. Students must remain silent when re-entering the building from the playground as other students are in class.
5. Students will return equipment to designated areas.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

OFFICE NEWS: Frequent news and updates are sent home via **OneCall emails** in order to facilitate communication and keep parents informed of the happenings at school. OneCall's are often issued more than once a week to communicate changes and other pertinent information. Please make sure that all of your contact information is updated with the office so you can ensure you receive all communications.

NOTICES: Often notices and forms are sent home with students. It is suggested that parents check with their child about such notices, which may be forgotten in school bags, lockers, or desks.

OFFICE CALLS: Parents are free to call or email the school office for clarification of information as the need arises. The school phone number is (412) 882-3353. We will also share the email for the administrative assistants at the beginning of each year. **WE ASK THAT YOU REFRAIN FROM CALLING THE OFFICE BETWEEN 8:20 a.m. AND 8:35 a.m. SO THAT MORNING PRAYERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS CAN BE MADE OVER THE P.A. SYSTEM WITHOUT INTERRUPTION.**

TEACHER CONTACT:

1. All parents and visitors to the school must report to the office. No one is permitted to interrupt a class. **VISITORS/PARENTS ARE NOT TO DISTURB THE TEACHERS BEFORE, DURING, OR AFTER CLASS WITHOUT AN APPOINTMENT.** Teachers do have responsibilities at those times and cannot be distracted from their attention to the children. **APPOINTMENTS WITH TEACHERS MUST BE SCHEDULED THROUGH THE OFFICE.**
2. **ANY MESSAGES OR PACKAGES ARE TO BE DELIVERED TO THE OFFICE.** This includes forgotten homework assignments and lunches.
3. **FOR THE SAFETY OF YOUR CHILDREN, YOU ARE REQUIRED TO STOP AT THE OFFICE TO SIGN IN AND RECEIVE A VISITORS PASS IF YOU COME TO THE BUILDING FOR ANY PURPOSE.**
4. **ALSO, PARENTS WHO COME INTO THE BUILDING DURING THE DAY TO VOLUNTEER OR FOR ANY OTHER REASON ARE NOT PERMITTED TO ROAM THROUGH THE BUILDING. THE SCHOOL OFFICE MUST KNOW WHERE YOU WILL BE AT ALL TIMES WHEN IN THE BUILDING. THIS AGAIN IS IN THE INTEREST OF SAFETY.**
5. **TEACHERS ARE NEVER TO BE CONTACTED AT THEIR PRIVATE RESIDENCES.**

DISMISSAL PROCEDURES: All students are to remain in the classroom until dismissal procedures are announced on the P.A. system. **PARENTS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO GO TO CLASSROOMS AT DISMISSAL TIMES (Unless otherwise permitted by the school office.)** We ask that parents remain in the foyer until dismissal is completed at 3:00 p.m. before attempting to use stairways to visit the office, teachers, or classrooms. In order to enter the building for any reason after 3:00 p.m. you must have an appointment scheduled or be there for an after-school activity.

**ALL AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES MUST COMMENCE ONLY AFTER DISMISSAL HAS BEEN COMPLETED BY 3:00 p.m.**

**ALL CARS LEAVING THE DRIVEWAY MUST TURN LEFT TO AVOID BUS INTERFERENCE ON**

**GREENRIDGE DRIVE. PASSING BUSES THAT ARE UNLOADING/LOADING CHILDREN AND HAVE THEIR RED LIGHTS AND STOP SIGN OUT MAY RESULT IN TRAFFIC CITATIONS BY THE WHITEHALL POLICE.**

**WHITEHALL POLICE HAVE REINFORCED THIS MATTER, REMINDING US THAT VIOLATORS WILL BE TICKETED IF THEY DO NOT RESPECT THIS BUS ZONE AREA. ON GREENRIDGE DRIVE, FROM OUR DRIVEWAY TO WINDVALE DRIVE, THERE IS TO BE NO PARKING OR PASSING OF BUSES WITHIN THIS BUS ZONE. FOR THE SAFETY OF OUR CHILDREN, AND TO AVOID BEING TICKETED, PLEASE TURN LEFT AT THE END OF OUR DRIVEWAY, BOTH MORNING AND AFTERNOON.**

### **COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE GUIDELINES**

We are pleased to offer students access to a computer network and the internet.

Parents/guardians are required to review these guidelines for computer and internet use with their child(ren) annually and complete and return the contract shown the Appendix to gain student access to the computers and the internet. Once this form is returned to school, it remains in effect during a student's entire career at school, unless a new contract is completed and returned. Should a parent/guardian prefer that a student not have internet access, use of the computers is still possible for more traditional purposes, such as word processing.

Access to the internet enables students to explore our library along with thousands of other libraries, databases, and repositories of information around the world and use software hosted on-line. Our school has taken precautions to avoid exposing our students to illegal, defamatory, inaccurate, age-inappropriate, or potentially offensive material that may reside on the internet. However, it is impossible for us to guarantee restricted access of all material of this nature. Internet resources at our school are designed for constructive educational goals and we believe the benefits to students far exceed the disadvantages. Ultimately, parents/guardians of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using media information sources. Therefore, we support and respect each family's right to decide whether or not to allow internet access to their student.

Students are responsible for appropriate behavior on the school's computer network, just as they are in a classroom or on school property. Communications on the network are sometimes public in nature. General school rules for behavior and communications apply. The use of the network is a privilege, not a right, and may be revoked if abused. The student is personally responsible for his/her actions in accessing and utilizing the school's computer resources. The students are advised to never access anything that they would not want their parents/guardians, pastor, principal, or teachers to view.

### **PRIVACY**

Computer and internet usage is monitored with a teacher or other school official in the classroom at all times. File storage may be reviewed by any school official at any time, for any reason. Students are not permitted to reveal personal identifying information when using the internet.

## SOCIAL MEDIA & INTERNET

### Electronic Postings, Communication & Public Sites:

Mother of Mercy Academy, their families, and their students together share a responsibility to maintain a positive educational atmosphere. Anything distracting from this positive atmosphere is not in the best interest of our entire school community.

Therefore:

**Students** must be aware that the use of the Internet, whether in school or at home, for posting of online communication and/or information is often accessible to the public for reading, downloading, and printing. Therefore, any postings by a MMA students in word or image that disrespects, defames, harasses, intimidates, or threatens another individual, student, family member, or school personnel may be handled with disciplinary action.

**Parents** must also be aware that the use of Social Media for posting on-line communication and/or information in word or image that disrespects, defames, harasses, intimidates, or threatens a faculty member, administration, school (philosophy) etc., may be asked to leave Mother of Mercy Academy or have other actions taken. These types of actions are considered against the Memorandum of Understanding which all parents sign and agree to in order to attend Mother of Mercy Academy.

Again, parents and guardians are expected to model the appropriate use of technology and social media for their children. Those who are found to damage the reputation and integrity of the school or parish will be held accountable.

### INAPPROPRIATE MATERIALS, LANGUAGE, AND CONDUCT

In addition, students, while at school, will limit their technology use to education purposes only. They will keep all cyber activity to productive academic work and refrain from engaging in illegal or inappropriate conduct. Students may not disrupt others' use of computers or internet access. Only materials that are in line with the rules of school behavior should be accessed. If a student should encounter material that is inappropriate, they should report it to their teacher or a school official immediately.

The following actions, which are not inclusive, are considered unacceptable by the administration of SGS School:

- ξ Placing unlawful information on the internet
- ξ Using the internet for non-school related activities
- ξ Sending messages that are likely to result in loss of the recipients work or systems
- ξ Using the internet for commercial purposes

- ξ Downloading or installing any commercial software, shareware, or freeware onto a school computer or its network, unless they have explicit permission from a school official.
- ξ Using the internet for a purpose that does not support the expressed philosophy and tenets of the Catholic Church or in a way that compromises the integrity or reputation of the parish or school.
- ξ Sending or receiving copyrighted material without permission
- ξ Plagiarism or copying other people's work by accessing files that do not belong to them.
- ξ Intruding into files that do not belong to them.
- ξ Using the internet to send or retrieve pornographic material, inappropriate file text, files dangerous to the integrity of the system, violent or threatening material or messages.
- ξ Circumventing security measures on school or remote computers or networks
- ξ Vandalism
- ξ Falsifying one's identity
- ξ Cyber bullying or an inappropriate use of social media

## DISCIPLINE

Discipline can be defined as control over one's behavior in order to promote learning for all. Self-discipline is important so that the rights of other students to participate in educational programs are not impaired. Good discipline should protect and nurture the physical, social, mental and emotional growth of all students.

Discipline implies self-control. Self-control is a learned behavior. Each person must eventually learn to assume responsibility for his own growth and development. Teachers strive to develop in students an intrinsic discipline which allows the individual to move toward goals which he/she honestly view as important. Hopefully, students will gain the skills to act responsibly in all situations.

### **NO STUDENT'S LEARNING SHOULD BE INFRINGED UPON BY ANOTHER STUDENT'S ACTIONS.**

- ***Middle School Students also receive a specific Code of Conduct they presented with at the beginning of the year. It is attached at the end for your reference.***

#### SERIOUS INFRACTIONS

- Bullying other students on school property, on the bus, and through social media.
- Fighting- inflicting bodily harm to another student.
- Vandalism - disfiguring or damaging school property
- Stealing - taking any school equipment or any student's personal property without permission
- Possession and/or use of, vape pens or devices', cigarettes and/or drugs, including alcohol
- Possession and/or use of any harmful instrument or other contraband

#### Suspension of Students (Article 550.02 in Diocesan Policy Handbook)

A student may be temporarily suspended by the principal for a serious infraction of school regulations or for repeated offenses. The length of suspensions could be from one to ten days. All suspensions become effective only after the principal contacts the parents and the parents receive a Notice of Suspension. However, no prior notice is needed if health, safety or welfare of the school community is threatened. The original Notice of Suspension is kept on file in the Principal's office and a copy is given to the parents. This document will not only explain why the student was suspended but will also contain an agreement between the student, parents, and the principal describing the student's future cooperation in a program designed to resolve the student's problems. Students may be given in-school suspension as a warning. If infractions continue, out-of-school suspension will be enforced.

#### Expulsion of Students (Article 550.03 in Diocesan Policy Handbook)

An expulsion may be necessary for persistent and willful disregard of school rules and regulations. The following examples are illustrative but not exhaustive: chronic undesirable conduct detrimental to the physical and/or moral well-being of self or other students, continued malicious disobedience or disrespect for school authority, continued refusal by parents and/or student to comply with school policies.

An expulsion may also be necessary for a single serious incident, event or situation involving disregard for, or a clear violation of, school rules or regulations. The following examples are illustrative but not exhaustive:

1. Selling or using drugs or alcohol
2. Violation of the weapons policy
3. Physical abuse of other students or staff
4. Indecent behavior
5. Arson
6. Theft

#### Weapons Policy (Diocesan Policy Handbook)

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

1. Parents will be immediately notified.
2. The local police may be called.
3. The student is subject to suspension and/or possible expulsion.

#### Non-Violence Policy

Verbal abuse leads to physical reactions such as hitting, pushing, punching etc. This behavior, whether it is physical abuse or verbal abuse, is contrary to the Catholic Philosophy of Mother of Mercy Academy. Horseplay or pretend fighting is a potential for someone to be hurt. There are no degrees for this type of behavior due to the potential for harm. It is the responsibility of the administration to provide as safe an environment as possible for all students. Therefore, the following directives shall be enforced in the school.

If a child experiences continual harassment and is attacked, verbally or physically by another student, it is the responsibility of the attacked student to seek adult help and not engage in the fight. It is the student's duty to remove himself/herself from the situation and seek adult help. The moment he/she reacts, it becomes a fight, and it is against school policy. At this point, all parties will be penalized. All threats will be taken seriously and may result in detention, suspension, and/or expulsion.

### **No Bullying Policy**

The Diocese of Pittsburgh has adopted a zero-tolerance policy regarding students who bully other students. Teachers and administrators have attended diocesan directed in-service sessions to gain information in identifying and dealing with students who persist in participating in bullying tactics against their fellow students.

Our school works with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit and their school assigned guidance counselor to work on preventing and stopping bullying behavior. Students participate in class meetings frequently during each month where they share their feelings and opinions. They learn to follow the rules and seek solutions that help them handle bullying situations appropriately.

Bullying most often occurs when teachers/administrators are not present, such as in the cafeteria, on the playground, or on school buses. Also, cyber-bullying takes place on computers at home or by means of cell phones. Students witnessing bullying incidents, as well as students who are victims of bullying, are expected to report such incidents to a responsible adult in school or at home.

Our behavior policy promoting student responsibility encompasses student training on avoidance of bullying behavior. Each bullying episode will be dealt with on an individual basis by teachers and administration. Parents will be notified and actions will follow.

In extreme cases, the regional administrator, principal, teachers, and parents of students engaged in bullying will be asked to attend meetings to deal with the consequences of bullying episodes. Please find forms that will be used by faculty and administration for reporting and dealing with bullying incidents at the end of this handbook

### **BULLYING PREVENTION**

Bullying is a type of violence that occurs when someone uses their power unfairly and repeatedly to hurt someone else. MMA recognizes bullying as any word, look, sign or act that hurts a person's body, feelings, or personal affects. Bullying behaviors include not only physical aggression, but also emotional harassment and social alienation. This policy also includes cyberbullying between our students, whether it happens on school grounds or not. Cyberbullying is harassment made electronically, either directly to the child or through social media.

Bullying is distinguishable from peer conflict, which may be more of a power struggle and may involve inappropriate actions by all parties involved in the conflict. Peer conflict may occur once, but left unresolved, may result in repeated conflicts over time that may seem unrelated to the initial disagreement. It is important to recognize that sometimes peer conflict results in bullying behavior by one or more of the parties involved. Although the conflict may be the underlying cause of the bullying behavior, it is important to recognize that ANY inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated and is actionable under our bullying prevention policy. Conflict between students may not always be resolved, but adult intervention can help all parties replace hurtful behavior with appropriate, respectful responses

to achieve our goal of a peaceful, inclusive, work environment in the classroom.

To make our school violence-free and safe from bullying, we pledge

- ξ Not to tolerate bullying
- ξ To intervene in incidents of bullying and strictly enforce rules against bullying
- ξ To empower students to report bullying behavior and to treat one another with respect

Students at SGS are responsible to adhere to four anti-bully rules:

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

Documentation is kept on students who engage in any form of bullying. Any student involved in continued efforts to bully or harass any student or faculty member will face serious consequences and possible expulsion.

### **WHEN THE DISCIPLINE POLICY APPLIES**

- ξ While attending school
- ξ While arriving at or departing from school
- ξ While on school property for any reason
- ξ While riding school buses or vans
- ξ While waiting at the bus stop
- ξ While attending any school related functions, e.g. sports events, field trips, assemblies, skating parties, church activities, community programs, Brownies/Girl Scouts, After School Program, etc.
- ξ While off campus, if the actions directly affect the school, it's employees or it's students

The safety of any student on school property after school hours is the responsibility of the adult leader. Order within any educational setting permits learning to progress, as it should. A disciplined person and a disciplined atmosphere promotes:

- ξ Individual and group learning
- ξ Development of self-control
- ξ Expected individual and group social behavior
- ξ Self-respect and respect of others
- ξ Making right choices and accepting consequences of choices

- ξ Good listening
- ξ Recognizes one's rights and the rights of others
- ξ Pride in self and in one's work
- ξ The implementation of Christian principles of community, charity, kindness, justice, good sportsmanship, etc.
- ξ An emphasis on doing one's best

MMA realizes that the foundation for all of the above is taught and caught in the home. With this in mind the, student is expected to display proper behavior at all times.

### **LUNCH DETENTION / SUSPENSIONS (IN-SCHOOL / OUT-OF-SCHOOL)**

Discipline is the key to good conduct and to respecting the rights of others and is essential to learning.

Classroom standards and expectations for student behavior vary according to age and are determined by the individual teacher. If behavior warrants action, a student may be issued detention by any member of the faculty or administration. Depending on the severity, this detention may be served either during lunch/recess or after school hours. If the detention is after school, parents/guardians are responsible for transportation.

If a lunch/recess detention is issued to a pupil, that pupil will be seated separately from their classmates and friends. After eating, the student may have an assignment to complete as part of this detention.

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

### **RIGHTS OF NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS / GUARDIANS**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act gives full rights to each parent/guardian, unless the school has been provided with evidence that there is a court order, state's statute, or legally binding document relating to such matters as divorce, separation, or custody that specifically revokes these rights. Such an order is to be on file in the school office and those persons responsible for the child are to be informed of the circumstances.

Every effort is made to keep the non-custodial parent/guardian apprised of the progress of the child through reports, report cards, and parent/guardian/teacher conferences.

### **DISMISSALS**

Those students changing their means of getting home, including buses, walkers, or car riders, must have a written note from a parent or guardian. This note should be addressed to the child's homeroom teacher, who in turn, sends the request to the office.

### **CAR RIDERS**

In the morning, car riders must be in the classroom by 8:20 a.m.

At dismissal all car riders will be picked up at the Gym Door using the Curb Lane. Parents must remain in their car for the safety of the children and the convenience of other parents. **PARENTS OF CAR RIDERS MUST TURN LEFT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE DRIVEWAY TO AVOID PASSING SCHOOL BUSES ON GREENRIDGE DR. THAT CAN RESULT IN A TRAFFIC VIOLATION/CITATION FROM AREA POLICE.**

### **BUS RIDERS**

Students who move within the parish territory must request a bus transportation change by contacting our office. The secretary in turn will contact the school district serving your child. Only after all necessary forms have been approved can the change take place. **Students must ride only the bus to which they have been assigned. The bus driver can refuse to honor parent requests without official bus transportation change forms filed with transportation offices in the various school districts serving our school.**

### **EARLY DISMISSAL**

Unless the reason is urgent, parents should refrain from requesting an early dismissal. **Requests for early dismissal must be in writing, signed by a parent and delivered to the office in the morning before the first period. A TELEPHONE CALL IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO SECURE THE EARLY DISMISSAL OF A CHILD.** If at all possible, medical and dental appointments should be scheduled at times other than during school hours. Early dismissal students must be picked-up at the school office by the parent or other appointed adult. A pupil will be allowed to leave the school grounds with a person other than the parent **ONLY** if written permission and identification have been supplied by the parent or guardian.

### **EMERGENCY CONTACT**

It is essential that we have both a home and a work telephone number and an emergency phone number to reach a responsible adult for each child. An answering machine cannot help us help your child in an emergency. **Emergency cards need to be updated whenever a change in phone number or address occurs. New emergency cards may be obtained from the school office. If your only means of contact is a cell phone, make sure it is on during school hours; 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.**

### **EMERGENCY CLOSINGS**

In the event of snow or other inclement weather, Mother of Mercy Academy shall follow the action of the Baldwin-Whitehall District in determining dismissal, delayed openings or school cancellations. **TUNE IN TO KDKA RADIO AND TV, WTAE, AND WPXI TV FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS OF SCHOOL DELAYS, CLOSINGS, AND EARLY DISMISSALS.** You will also receive a phone call with a recorded message detailing the change.

**ALSO, RESIDENTS OF THE BALDWIN/WHITEHALL SCHOOL DISTRICT HAVE BEEN PLACED ON THEIR AUTOMATED SKYLERT SYSTEM WHICH WILL CALL YOUR HOME DIRECTLY TO ALERT YOU TO A SCHOOL DELAY OR CLOSING.**

PLEASE DO NOT CALL THE SCHOOL TO INQUIRE ABOUT THESE MATTERS. IN MOST INSTANCES, NO ONE WILL BE HERE TO ANSWER IT DURING EMERGENCY CLOSINGS.

### **EXTENDED DAY: MORNING AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE**

Mother of Mercy Academy will have before and after school care available. The program will be run by Miss Anngela Monaco. The program will be available in the morning from 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. and in the afternoon from dismissal until 6:00 p.m.

The cost will be \$5 per hour per child. You do not need to sign-up in advance, but it is always very helpful once school gets started to let Miss Monaco know if you will be consistently using the program on certain or all days.

## **Before-and-After Care Hours**

Monday-Friday

Morning : 7am-8am

Afternoon: Dismissal until 6pm

- ***Important notes:***
- ***Before school care will not be offered on days in which school is delayed.***
- ***After school care will not be offered in the case of any early dismissal.***
- ***Families who do not pick up their children by 6:00 p.m. are subject to higher fees.***

## DRESS CODE

### Mother of Mercy Academy Elementary School Uniform Dress Code

#### *Effective 2021-2022 School Year*

- Please note that any existing uniforms from St. Elizabeth or St. Gabriel may continue to be used for this school year. Subsequent school years will adhere to a revised dress code which will drop any St. Elizabeth/St. Gabriel specific uniforms as the school transitions to school specific uniforms.

#### Uniform Supplier:

##### **Pro3 Services**

2101 Greentree Road, Suite A109

Pittsburgh, PA 15220

[www.pro3services.com](http://www.pro3services.com)

412.279.1102

#### General Rules:

- The uniform policy applies to grades Kindergarten – 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The attire for Preschool is neat, casual wear with socks and tennis shoes – no flip flops.
- Uniform pieces EXCEPT uniform pants, shorts, skirts, skorts, socks and shoes must be purchased from Pro 3 Services. Pro 3 carries everything you need but you are welcome to look elsewhere as long as what you purchase meets the Dress Code requirements.
- All uniforms should be clean, neat, and properly fitted. It is expected that students come to school in their full uniform each day unless otherwise instructed.
- Parents can be called to bring the proper uniform to their child if they are in violation.
- Please be advised that when weather is appropriate students will go outside for recess. Make sure they are appropriately dressed for the day's forecast.
- Students may wear any (school) branded athletic outfit from Pro3 services instead of their regular school uniform on their gym day INCLUDING All School Liturgy days.
- **On Dress Down Days:** Modest dress is always required. Girl's may not wear heels, open-toed or backless shoes, or sandals. Socks must be worn. Hooded sweatshirts are acceptable during cool weather, but hoods may not be up. Midriff shirts are not permitted for boys or girls. SHORT SHORTS ARE NEVER ACCEPTABLE FOR EITHER BOYS OR GIRLS.

# Boys

## Standard Uniform (Year-round)

Item	Description/Color
Polo	White, Green, Yellow, Light Blue. (Regular or with school logo)
Oxford	White, Light Blue (Regular or with school logo)
Pants	Khaki, Navy or Black - Not cargo style
Belt	Belt required for pants or shorts.
Socks	Solid colors (white, navy, gray, black) that cover ankle. No Logos
Shoes	Dress or tennis shoes of any color (No light up shoes or shoes with wheels)
Boots (during inclement weather)	Black or brown boots may be worn during inclement weather.
Over-wear	ALL STUDENTS may wear a (school) embroidered sweatshirt, sweater, sweater vest, ¼ zip pull over, or (school) branded athletic jacket may be worn over uniform shirts.
Hair	Hair must be neatly trimmed, clean and be of natural hair colors.
<b>Unacceptable-Hair</b>	No unnatural colors are permitted in the form of highlights, tips, or full head. Highlights of natural colors are permitted.
<b>Unacceptable-Jewelry</b>	Boys are not to wear earrings larger than a small stud.
<b>Unacceptable-Items untucked</b>	All uniform shirts, blouses and polos must be neatly tucked into uniform pants or shorts.
<b>Unacceptable-Undergarments shown</b>	Boys' undergarments are never to be displayed above shorts or slacks.
<b>Unacceptable-Flip Flops</b>	No flip/flops or backless shoes are permitted with uniforms or on Dress Down Days.

## Mass Attire

Item	Description/Color
Oxford	White
Tie	Any
Pants Shorts (during summer)	Khaki, Navy, or Black - Not cargo style
Shoes	Tennis shoes or dress shoes

## Summer dress (First Day of School-October 31, April 1-Last Day of School)

Item	Description/Color
Standard uniform	Described above.
Shorts	Khaki, Navy, or Black

## Gym

Item	Description/Color
T- Shirt	Anything previously used for School 21-22 (Including royal blue with St. E logo on front and any St. Gabriel Logo) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newly merged school gym attire will also be available for purchase at Pro 3</li> </ul>
Shorts	Anything previously used for School 21-22 (Including logo material from either school) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newly merged school gym attire will also be available for purchase at Pro 3</li> </ul>

# Girls

## Standard Uniform (Year-round)

Item	Description/Color
Polo	White, Light Blue, Green, Yellow. (Regular or with school logo)
Oxford	White, Light Blue. (Regular or with school logo)
Pants	Khaki, Navy or Black
Jumper	Khaki, Navy, Approved plaid *only 1st-4th (MUST NOT BE SHORTER THAN 3" ABOVE KNEE.)
Skirt	Khaki, Navy, Approved plaid (MUST NOT BE SHORTER THAN 3" ABOVE KNEE.)
Skort	Khaki, Navy, Approved plaid (MUST NOT BE SHORTER THAN 3" ABOVE KNEE.)
Belt	Belt required for pants or shorts.
Tights	White, navy, black tights, or knee
Leggings	Leggings under skirts or skorts are permitted during inclement weather.
Shoes	Dress or tennis shoes of any color (No light up shoes or shoes with wheels)
<b>Unacceptable - shoes</b>	Fur lined shoes
Boots	Black or brown boots may be worn during inclement weather.
Hair	Hair must be neatly trimmed, clean and be of natural hair colors.
<b>Unacceptable – hair</b>	No unnatural colors are permitted in the form of highlights, tips, or full head. Highlights of natural colors are permitted.
Earrings	Girls are permitted to wear small hoop earrings no larger than 1/2 inch. No dangling earrings.
Nail Polish	Neutral color. No dark colors, artificial nails, or designs of any kind.
<b>Unacceptable - makeup</b>	NO makeup is permitted at any time.

## Mass Attire

Item	Description/Color
Uniform	Standard Uniform Described above.

## Summer dress (First Day of School-October 31, April 1-Last Day of School)

Item	Description/Color
Uniform	Standard Uniform Described above.
Shorts	Khaki, Navy or Black

## Gym

Item	Description/Color
T-Shirt	Anything previously used for School 21-22 (Including royal blue with St. E logo on front and any St. Gabriel Logo) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newly merged school gym attire will also be available for purchase at Pro 3</li> </ul>
Shorts	Anything previously used for School 21-22 (Including logo material from either school) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newly merged school gym attire will also be available for purchase at Pro 3</li> </ul>

## HOMEWORK

In kindergarten through eighth grade, a reasonable amount of homework, according to grade level, is of great educational value and so it can assigned every day. Assignments are not always written. Study and memory work are frequently assigned. Homework is assigned on a regular basis to:

- ξ enrich school experiences
- ξ provide practice and review
- ξ develop good study habits
- ξ teach responsibility, and
- ξ foster originality.

Families may assist students with home assignments in the following ways:

- ξ Provide a quiet spot away from the television, telephone, or other distracting elements. Homework should be done at home and not at dance or soccer practice or other extra-curricular activities.
- ξ Check to see what was accomplished during the designated study time regarding completeness, neatness, and correctness.
- ξ Be willing to listen to reading, spelling, and math facts and to explain procedures, but never do the assignment for your child.
- ξ Check your child's school issued homework notebook. Students in second through eighth grade are issued a homework planner courtesy of our PTG.
- ξ Consult the teacher if the child uses the excuse of no homework too often.

Students are responsible for entering homework in their plan book, gathering necessary materials, completing work, and turning in their assignments on time. All work should be completed in a neat fashion. If for some reason the child cannot complete an assignment, the parent/guardian should inform the teacher via a written note stating the reason. Arrangements should be made as soon as possible to make up incomplete assignments.

Incomplete, missing or late homework makes it difficult for teachers to assess lesson mastery and will have a detrimental effect on a student's grade. Students will be required to refrain from involvement in school-related extracurricular clubs and sports if there are more than three missing, late or incomplete homework assignments in any one subject during a grading period.

The diocese recommends the following time schedule for home study:

Primary - levels K-3	30 minutes
Intermediate - levels 4-5	45 minutes
Upper Elementary - levels 6-8	1 – 1-1/2 hours

At the discretion of the teacher, homework may be assigned on weekends. In case of a student's absence, requests for homework should be made before noon to the school office. It is recommended that fourth through eighth grade students, have access to a computer at home. This also applies to students in third grade beginning in the last semester of third grade. Arrangements may be made to complete work requiring a computer using the school computers in the case of a temporary loss of access. Additionally, computer work can be completed through the use of a computer at a local public library.

### **LITURGY**

All students participate in the celebration of the Mass throughout the school year, typically on Friday's at 9:00 a.m. On Holy Days of Obligation, students will attend Mass as a group. In addition, students have the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, to participate in the Stations of the Cross during Lent, and to experience other para-liturgical services during the school year.

### **LOST AND FOUND**

All personal items should be marked with student's name; this includes all articles of clothing. Students must be responsible for their own property. Lost textbooks and workbooks will be replaced, and the cost charged to the parents. Items sent to the office will be kept for a short period of time before either being donated or thrown away.

## **MEDICATION POLICY**

In accordance with Diocesan School Policy, No. 560.07, of the Diocesan School Handbook, medication should be given at home, and physicians should be asked to change the schedule for the administration of medication so that it can be given before or after school hours.

For the safety of our students and in order to avoid potential liability for the school and school personnel, this policy is effective immediately.

**With the direction of the Baldwin-Whitehall School Nurse, the Authorization For Administration of Prescription Medication at School Forms must be signed and completed by parents and physicians; this pertains to self-administered emergency drugs such as epipens and inhalers. No other medication can be administered during school hours, unless done so by the school nurse.** In addition, children with severe conditions which may require extraordinary intervention by school personnel in the absence of a school nurse must sign a "Release and Hold Harmless" form prepared by the Diocese of Pittsburgh Legal Office.

You may send epi-pens and asthma inhalers with your child provided they are in a prescription box with your child's name displayed prominently on the prescription label and accompanied by the above-mentioned form. We will then store them in the office making them available to your child when needed.

## **PARENT TEACHER GUILD (PTG)**

The Mother of Mercy Academy PTG is an organization which provides opportunities for parents and teachers to work together to enhance their children's learning. The organization also helps promote and organize fundraising. Fundraising funds are part of the schools operating budget and also gives parents a chance to be more personally involved in the activities of the school. The PTG holds one general meeting at the beginning of the school year. Parents are encouraged to join this supportive organization.

## **PERSONAL POSSESSIONS**

Students may not bring any articles to school which are distracting to the learning process and/or expensive to replace. These items can be confiscated and returned to the student at the conclusion of the school day to be taken home. The school will assume no responsibility for personal items damaged on property.

## **PETS**

Pets are not permitted in the school. Some children as well as teachers may allergic reactions to pets.

## **RECESS**

All students will go outdoors for recess, except during inclement weather. Therefore, students should dress appropriately for outdoor recreation. When recess is being held outdoors, NO ONE is permitted in the classrooms unless they are accompanied by a teacher. The following rules are to be observed:

1. **STUDENTS ARE TO SHOW RESPECT FOR ALL PLAYGROUND AND LUNCHROOM MONITORS.**
2. Students are to show respect for each other and the property of others at all times. Bullying behaviors will have consequences.
3. Students will follow directions the first time they are given.
4. Students are only permitted in the building with permission of the playground supervisors and/or faculty members in charge of recess supervision.
5. Students are to remain in their designated play area.
6. There is to be no rough behavior - one whistle is the signal to stop all inappropriate behavior.
7. At first bell, students are to freeze.
8. At second bell, students are to walk to designated line-up area and follow their teachers into the school in a quiet and orderly fashion.

### Consequences:

First Offense - Warning given; Second Offense - Student will be benched for the remainder of recess and reported to the Principal's office. Repeated offenses will result in the student remaining under supervision in the cafeteria for an extended period of days; losing recess privileges.

## **SCHOOL COUNSELING SERVICES**

### Individual/Group Counseling:

A highly qualified and certified School Counselor from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit provides individual and small group counseling to children in grades K-8. Children may be referred by parents, administration, teachers, and through self-referral. Individual and group counseling requires parental permission. However, a student may be seen one time without parental consent if deemed necessary by the building administrator.

### Developmental Guidance:

We value the social and emotional development of your child as much as their academic growth and success. Throughout the school year, our counselor from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit will be visiting classrooms to present lessons on topics including character education, conflict resolution, anger management, feelings, social skills, etc. The topics and grade levels chosen will be based on the needs of the building by the administrator and counselor. This service does not require parental permission. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your building administrator.

## **SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM**

Mother of Mercy Academy is attempting to participate in the National School Lunch Program which requires that lunches meeting specific nutrient requirements be served every day. Currently, the Diocese of Pittsburgh is working with the state of Pennsylvania to gain approval to participate. As of this moment the approval has not been received. This program would provide free or reduced lunches for those in need. We will pass any information onto you as soon as we receive it.

As we continue to wait on this, the school will still provide daily lunch options to parents but there will be a cost associated.

The cost of a student lunch is \$3.50 per day. The cost is \$17.50 for five lunches. Students buying lunches can pay for a full week of lunches on the last day of the week. Parents should place lunch money in a sealed envelope marked with the student's name, room number and the dollar amount. Parents will be notified of any change in the cost from one year to the next. Tickets will not be issued. We have established a roster system to eliminate lost tickets and to move students more quickly through the lunch line.

Milk is sold separately for those who carry their lunches. Ice cream and cookies are sold alternately. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, students can purchase 2 cookies at 25 cents each. On Tuesday and Thursday, students can purchase 1 ice cream treat at either 25 or 50 cents, depending on the item. We have limited consumption of sugar in accordance with the state wellness policies governing our National School Lunch Program. Nutritional Guidelines require that cookies and ice cream treats are in compliance with low fat, low sugar content.

## **SPORTING EVENTS**

Mother of Mercy Academy provides boys the opportunity to participate in football, basketball, volleyball, cross-country, track and golf. Girls can choose to participate in basketball, volleyball, cross-country, track, golf and cheerleading.

**A temporary suspension from the athletic program will be given to any student who cannot follow school policy and regulations.** Any student who demonstrates an inability to follow school regulations even after a suspension, will be dismissed from the athletic program. **ANY STUDENT ABSENT FROM SCHOOL CANNOT PARTICIPATE IN SPORTS THAT DAY.** Students will lose temporary eligibility for academic lapses as well as serious disciplinary infractions.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY**

Each student is responsible for being on time and thoroughly prepared with materials and assignments for each class. The student is responsible for bringing books, homework, lunches, and gym clothing to school. Permission to make telephone calls for such items will only be granted for rare instances. If lunches are brought to school by parents, they should be left at the office where students may pick them up during their regular lunch period. Books must be kept clean and neat. All students must have book bags; however, backpacks will not be used to carry books from one class to another in school. We are sensitive to the weight of textbooks and recommend that students take only necessary supplies along with books for homework. Book bags that can be hand carried instead of backpacks are preferable to alleviate back injuries and discomfort.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Mother Mercy Academy provides the following services:

- Remedial reading and math specialists from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit
- Speech and Language support from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit
- Guidance Counselor from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit
- Nurse – one day every month from Baldwin/Whitehall School District
- Volunteer Nurses- We have a dedicated parent who are qualified RN's who help in the office several times a week.
- Dentist - yearly check-up by school district dentist
- School Physician as designated by the school district
- Student Assistance Program
- Academic Support Program

## **TARDINESS**

A child who is not present in the classroom by 8:20 a.m. is considered to be tardy. To gain admission to a class, a tardy student must report to the office with their parent or guardian. Chronic tardiness will result in investigation by the school district Truant Officer.

## **TELEPHONE/Cell Phone Policy**

The office telephone is a school phone. Permission for students to use the phone must be given by the principal or school secretary. The telephones in the cafeteria and the Teachers' room are not to be used by students without specific permission from the office. Please be reasonable with phone requests.

**CELL PHONES ARE NOT PERMITTED TO BE IN USE BETWEEN 8:00 A.M. - 2:40 P.M. CELL PHONES ARE MAJOR DISTRACTIONS TO THE LEARNING PROCESS.**

### **Cell Phones:**

- **Cell phones are for emergency purposes only.**
- **Cell phones will be turned in to homeroom teachers when the students arrive at school.**
- **All homerooms will have special secure boxes for cell phone storage. Each student will have an individualized number to avoid confusion.**
- **Students can retrieve their cell phones at the end of the day, if they have an early dismissal, or in the case of an emergency.**
- **Phone's must be turned off when put in the storage box.**
- **If a student is found to have a cell phone in class, or on his/her person, the phone will be confiscated, and a parent must come to school to retrieve it.**
- **Repeated cell phone infractions will result in the banning of the cell phone from school property.**
- **Any video or picture taken during the school day and of other students, faculty, or staff will have viewed as a major infraction and be treated as such.**
- **The school will assume no responsibility for personal items damaged on property. (this includes broken screens)**

## **ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

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

### **Acadience Reading Test and Math Tests**

Acadience Reading is an assessment used to measure the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade. Acadience Math is an assessment used to measure the acquisition of mathematics skills in order to provide early support to help students reach their full potential. This diagnostic test is administered three times a year (September, January and May) to monitor growth and progress.

### **Placement Test**

Transferring students, after a review of academic records, may be administered an assessment to determine a child's strengths and areas of needed support.

### **IOWA Achievement Tests**

Students in grades 1-8 are administered a standardized test to measure progress from one year to another. A component of the standardized testing program for grades 2, 4 & 6 is a cognitive abilities section, which helps compare a student's achievement with other students of the same age, grade, and ability. If a child is absent due to illness, every attempt will be made to enable the child to make-up the tests. However, since the tests must be returned within a two-week period, make-up testing often necessitates taking more tests daily than is ideal. To prevent this, we ask parents not to schedule trips or appointments during the time of standardized testing.

### **CDT**

Classroom Diagnostic Tools (CDT) is a set of online assessments, divided by content areas Literacy and Mathematics, and is designed to provide diagnostic information to guide instruction in order to support intervention and enrichment. Students in grades K-6 take these tests in the subject areas of reading and Mathematics.

Math Benchmark Tests are administered quarterly to students in Grades K-6. These tests determine if the student is making progress towards grade-level expectations.

## **TEXTBOOKS**

MMA participates in Pennsylvania's Act 195/90 whereby the state purchases textbooks and instructional materials of non-religious items. State law requires the parent/guardian originate the usage request by signing and dating the Certificate of Individual Request for Loan of Textbooks and Instructional Material included the Appendix and return it to the school office as soon as possible.

In addition, MMA participates in several Federal programs that provide your children with a variety of materials and services. It is one of the few ways in which your children receive benefits from your tax dollars. In order for our school to continue to receive these benefits, it is a requirement that the Family Survey be completed and submitted to the school for every family. This form is revised annually and comes to us from the Diocese shortly after the school year begins. We ask your cooperation in completing the survey in a timely manner once you receive it. An example of the survey is included in the Appendix for your reference. All information will be held in the strictest confidence.

**All books are to be covered at all times.** Students are responsible for the condition of the books given to them at the beginning of the year. Students will be required to pay for the book if it is damaged or lost. Books taken to and from school are to be placed in a book bag.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

The help of volunteers is always needed in the school and at school- sponsored events. Please consider using some of your time and talent to help enhance our quality program. The possibilities are endless. At MMA, parents/guardians play an integral role in the education of their children through a daily basis.

In order to volunteer at school, the following requirements must be met:

- Proof of attendance at a Protecting God's Children session
- Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Background Check
- Child Abuse Clearance
- FBI Clearance/Fingerprinting

## **TREATS: HOLIDAY PARTIES**

**For holiday parties, homeroom parents, along with teachers, will coordinate the donation of a snack, drink, and treat baggie for classroom parties. Donated treats should not contain peanuts and must be store-bought with ingredient labels attached. If your child has an allergy, please provide a snack from home on party days.**

**Those parents in charge of classroom holiday parties will work with the teachers to plan games, crafts, movies, or activities that celebrate the various holidays.**

## **TREATS: BIRTHDAYS**

**Birthdays are a special time for children. Parents are welcome to send in a small treat for their child's birthday for the class. Treats must meet the needs of all special allergies in the class and also need to be pre-purchased and individually wrapped. Please, consult your child's teacher before sending anything in.**

## **VACATIONS**

We encourage parents to plan vacations during school breaks, at Christmas, Easter and during the summer months. When a child is not attending school during the school year due to a vacation trip, the parents/students are responsible for the educational or instructional work that has been missed. We also understand that schedules do not always allow for vacations on breaks, so please simply notify your child's teacher and the office if any vacations are planned.

Please keep in mind that standardized testing is an important measure of your child's progress and ability. Results are used to determine remediation and enrichment for your child. Also, these results are forwarded if your child transfers or when he/she goes on to high school. **THEREFORE, IT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR YOUR CHILD TO BE IN ATTENDANCE WHEN THESE TESTS ARE ADMINISTERED IN THE SPRING OF EVERY YEAR.**

## **Gender Policy:**

The gender of every human being is a gift fashioned by God that enriches the human family through the complementarity of masculinity and femininity.

At this time the Diocese of Pittsburgh recognizes gender according to a student's birth certificate.

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

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

## **PUBLICITY**

MMA students are recognized throughout the school year for various academic, athletic, and extracurricular accomplishments. This recognition may also be useful to include in published school materials. With permission, our school would like to share the achievements of our students with the community via press releases in local newspapers, radio/television stations, social media and on the school website. Your permission is needed to use a likeness of your child, if that child is identifiable in the image. If the back of your child was pictured, permission would not be needed, as the child would not be identifiable in the image. ***Please complete the form found in the initial packets if wish for your child to not be in any images.***

In school publications may contain the full names of our students. Since this information is only directed to our school families, we ask that you do not forward the packet in its entirety to families outside the school, to protect the privacy of others.

## **ACCIDENT, INJURY, AND PHYSICAL DISORDERS**

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

Families of children who have any physical disorder should contact the principal, school nurse, and teachers to alert them of the situation. All cases of head lice should be reported immediately to the principal and school nurse.

## **BUILDING SECURITY / SURVEILLANCE**

To create and maintain a safe learning environment, MMA locks all perimeter doors during the school day. The school is equipped with electronically controlled doors, as well as an intercom and video surveillance system at the main entrance. All visitors requesting access to the school must enter through the main entrance and contact the office using the intercom system. School personnel will ask the visitor to identify themselves and the reason for requesting entrance to the school. Upon entering the school, all visitors must sign-in at the office. Our school is equipped with surveillance cameras both inside and outside the perimeter of the building for additional security purposes.

## **EMERGENCY DRILLS**

Emergency drills are practiced throughout the school year for weather, fire, or other emergencies. Teachers follow the policy governing emergencies for student safety. Students must maintain silence at all times during emergency drills.

## **FIRE DRILLS**

Fire drills are held monthly. Exit directions, which are posted in prominent places in each room, are to be followed. No teacher, student, or other personnel may remain in the building during fire drills. When the students hear the bell, they are to leave the room quickly and quietly in single file. Students remain outside until summoned back to class. Teachers are to take a copy of their class roster with them to account for the presence of each student.

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

## **WEATHER EMERGENCY DRILLS**

Weather emergency drills are held periodically throughout the year. When practicing for a weather emergency, students exit the classroom and position themselves on the floor, facing an inside wall. Students are instructed to get onto their knees, with their forehead placed on the floor in front of them, covering their head with their hands. Each classroom has a designated area for the students in the case of a weather emergency. Students must remain quiet throughout the drill.

## **ILLNESS**

It is often difficult to decide if your child should stay home from school when complaining of illness. An objective sign is an elevated temperature. It is recommended that a child be kept home from school until the temperature has remained normal (below 100°) for at least twenty-four hours without the use of fever reduction medicine.

If a child has a temperature of 100° or more, skin rash, diarrhea/vomiting, strep throat, or evidence of lice, the child will be sent home. Parents/guardians are asked to use discretion in sending their children to school if they display any of these symptoms. Please inform the school office if your child becomes sick with a contagious illness. Notes will be sent home with the other children to warn parents/guardians of contact and incubation of communicable diseases.

- As we continue to navigate the challenges of Covid-19 it is always important to error on the side of caution.

## **USDA Nondiscrimination Statement 2015**

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

