



**DIVINE MERCY**  
**Catholic Academy**  
Developing Skills for the 21st Century

## **Divine Mercy Catholic Academy**

### **STUDENT / PARENT HANDBOOK**

**2017 – 2018**

**U.S. Department of Education  
Blue Ribbon School  
Of Excellence**

**(321) 452-0263  
[www.dmccs.org](http://www.dmccs.org)**

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Dear Parents and Students,

It is my utmost pleasure to welcome you all to a new school year here at Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. I am very excited to be your new Principal and for the opportunity to get to know each of you as we gather as a vibrant Catholic community throughout this school year.

The partnership we share through service to the children of DMCA is invaluable to the development of today's youth, tomorrow's leaders. The collective strength of this community is dependent upon the dedication of its members to provide exemplary formation and development for our children. I firmly believe that the partnership between school and home is what truly makes the difference in the formation of our youth.

Each one of us is a unique child of God and it is through our community that we come together to share in our love for Jesus. God has brought us together to share in the physical, spiritual, social, emotional and mental development of our children. I am blessed to serve you as your new Principal.

I encourage you to please read through this Student – Parent Handbook and to dutifully follow the guidelines provided for you. Please sign and return to the school two forms that are included in this handbook. The forms can be found on pages 18 and 51. If you have any questions or concerns please communicate with us so that we may together find some resolution.

I truly look forward to sharing the DMCA community with you all.

Peace and Blessings,

Dave Parker, Principal

## *INTRODUCTION*

### **Mission Statement**

*Divine Mercy Catholic Academy, a ministry of Divine Mercy Catholic Community, serves students from the Space Coast in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade by developing each child's Catholic spirituality, academic ability, creativity, responsibility and independence in partnership with family, Church and community.*

### **The Divine Mercy Catholic Academy Community believes:**

- Each child is a unique child of God in his/her social, emotional, and academic needs.
- A safe and comfortable environment promotes learning and success.
- Mutual respect among and between the students and staff creates a wholesome learning environment.
- A Catholic Academy reflects the integration of Catholic faith and values with learning and life.
- Ongoing evaluation and improvement of the curriculum is crucial to the development of a sound education program.
- Catholic education is an integral part of the Church's mission to proclaim the gospel message of Jesus, to build faith communities, to celebrate through worship and to serve others without distinction.
- The curriculum furnishes instruction in Catholic truths and moral values that are an integral part of the school program.
- Students experience faith-based traditions as part of their educational formation in our Catholic Academy.
- Students are actively involved in the learning process.

## Academy History

On the morning of September 1, 1964, 200 children (grades 1-6), four Sisters of Mercy from Galway City, Ireland, one lay teacher, the pastor and friends participated in a ceremony in a warehouse at Merritt Island Airport that began the dream of Divine Mercy School.

In February 1965, the ground was broken for a permanent school building that was ready for the first day of school in September 1965. Two more Sisters had come from Ireland and a kindergarten class was added.

During the summer of 1967, we purchased a building from Patrick Air Force Base, assembled, and proudly named Hartnett Hall. We now had kindergarten through eighth grade.

The 1986-87 school year saw the addition of a pre-kindergarten class and an extended day program. The silver jubilee of 1989 began with the addition of a beautiful new wing to the school, adding a fully furnished science lab, a computer lab, and a teachers' lounge.

The thirtieth anniversary (1964-1994) was celebrated with another school extension, Mercy Center, which added four additional classrooms and three flexible meeting areas for school and parish functions.

In the year 2000, the flexible meeting areas were renovated and converted into a state of the art library/media center with an accompanying media production studio.

The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year of the School (2004-2005) was a very significant year. Divine Mercy School was officially recognized by the **U. S. Department of Education as a Blue Ribbon School**. In addition, a very successful capital campaign allowed the refurbishment of the entire school facility inside and out during the summers of 2005 and 2006, which also included state of the art technology throughout the school, a new science lab and an enhanced media production studio.

In 2011, Divine Mercy became distinguished as Divine Mercy Catholic Academy, developing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. Today we can boast of hands-on Math and Science Programs, enhanced Art and Music Programs, Smart Boards in every classroom to enhance interactive learning, and iPad2s for our teachers and middle school students.

True to the pioneer spirit of Merritt Island's early Catholic Community, Divine Mercy has always labored diligently with limited resources to achieve excellence in education. It is through this spirit that the school continues to be the hub of educational activity, with lifelong learning programs continuing to meet the needs of the individual and family, as it boldly enters a new phase of growth into the new millennium.

## School Accreditation

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy is accredited through the Florida Catholic Conference and the National Council for Private School Accreditation.

## *POLICIES and PROCEDURES*

### Academics

#### Curriculum

The curriculum followed at Divine Mercy Catholic Academy is in accordance with the diocesan curriculum guide and includes:

- Religious education. Students in grades 5 and 8 will take the ACRE (Assessment of Catechesis of Religious Education Test in February).
- IOWA Standardized Testing will be administered in the spring to grades 2-8.
- Language arts: (reading, including phonics, English grammar and usage, vocabulary, spelling, handwriting, composition, listening skills)
- Mathematics , Pre-Algebra, Algebra
- Social studies (American or world history, geography, map skills, Florida history)
- Science
- Music
- Art
- Physical education
- Guidance
- Computer education
- Library skills
- Foreign Language (Spanish)

#### Homework Guidelines

Homework is assigned daily at Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. Homework is to be seen as an extension and reinforcement of the day's schoolwork. It is a vital and productive part of the curriculum. Students at Divine Mercy Catholic Academy are required to read (with supervision) every night. Each student in grades 3-8 is required to use the school student planner to record daily homework.

**Parents should get into the habit of checking the online portal routinely to keep abreast of their student's progress!**

If a student frequently fails to hand in assigned homework. There will be a reduction of grade if homework is not turned in, or is unacceptable.

#### Reports Cards/Progress Reports

Report cards are distributed three times per year, as noted on the school calendar. Parents may check on their child's progress daily through the online Parent Portal. Checking the Parent Portal on a consistent basis should provide parents with a good picture of the student's academic progress, including missing assignments. If you are unsuccessful in viewing the online information, please email the teacher right away. Please notify the administration if necessary.

Parents are encouraged to confer with teachers by appointment whenever the need arises. Communication between parents and teachers is essential.

### **GRADING SCALE**

Students in grades PreK have skills based report cards. Students in grades K-2 receive standards based report cards.  
Students in Grades 3-8 receive a standard grade. (See scale below). All students in grades K-8 receive the Diocesan of Orlando report card which is used throughout the entire diocese.

**Grade K-2:**

**P—Proficient:** Student work is Secure and meets grade level expectations for this trimester with accuracy

**DP—Developing Proficiency:** Student work is developing but is not consistently meeting grade level expectations with accuracy for this trimester.

**EP—Emerging Proficiency:** Student work is beginning to show progress/understanding but is not yet meeting grade level expectations for this trimester.

**IP—Insufficient Proficiency:** Student work shows insufficient progress/understanding and is significantly below grade level expectations for this trimester.

**N/A—Not taught OR Not Assessed** during this trimester.

**AP—Advanced Proficiency:** Student work consistently surpasses grade level expectations for this trimester with independence and accuracy.

**Grade 3-8:**

**Academic Grading Scale:**

**A—90-100**

**B—80-89**

**C—70-79**

**D—60-69**

**F—Below 60**

**Descriptions of Learner Behaviors:**

**Responsibility:** Student successfully adapts to classroom practices and routines

**Participation:** Student actively participates in classroom discussion and activities

**Assignment Completion:** Student completes assigned tasks within the assigned time limits

**Interpersonal Skills:** Student displays respect for others; interacts appropriately in cooperative group, classrooms and school settings

**Behavior Scale:**

**1—Student consistently** demonstrates this behavior

**2—Student sometimes** demonstrates this behavior

**3—Student seldom** demonstrates this behavior

**Honor Roll**

The HONOR ROLL at Divine Mercy Catholic Academy is awarded as follows:

1<sup>st</sup> Honors will be earned by middle school students who achieve A in every subject and a “1” in interpersonal skills.

2<sup>nd</sup> Honors will be awarded to middle school students who achieve an 85% average with no grade lower than a B and a “1” in interpersonal skills.

**National Junior Honor Society**

The Divine Mercy chapter of the National Junior Honor Society upholds the high values and expectations set forth by the National Chapter. Students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades will be applicable for admittance based on the following criteria:

- 3.50 GPA or higher in core classes

- A “B” or higher in all specials classes
- All 1’s in skills section of progress reports
- Fewer than 5 chart signings within a trimester

Students who meet this criteria will be provided with the following packet to complete by the date provided by the advisor. The application must be filled in in its entirety for the selection committee to consider acceptance. Students who are accepted will be notified and an induction ceremony will be held to welcome new members. Students accepted in the chapter will have annual dues of \$20.00.

### Valedictorian and Salutatorian

To be considered for Valedictorian or Salutatorian in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, a student must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Must have attended DMCA for 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- Maintain a high academic GPA for grades 7 and 8
- Be a role model in the school

### Athletics

Any student participating in a school sport must have passing grades. Any student, who makes a “C” may continue to play on the team, but will receive a warning from the principal. Any student who makes a “D” in any academic class or in conduct will be placed “on probation” and will not be allowed to participate in his or her sport. The athletic director and coaches will conduct a weekly academic evaluation of the student on warning or probation to determine the student’s eligibility to maintain or resume participation in team sport. Students participating in fall sports must have passing grades at the time of progress reports to be eligible to play.

### Dishonesty

**Academic Dishonesty shall be defined as any cooperative, collaborative or solitary attempt to represent the work of any other person as one’s own.** Examples include, but are not limited to, copying homework, sharing information on test questions (both in and out of class), plagiarizing, **direct copying from the Internet**, or otherwise misappropriating the intellectual property of others. Academic dishonesty is a serious offense and may result in disciplinary action, including suspension

## **Diocese of Orlando / Office of Catholic Schools Student Technology Responsible Use Policy 2017-2018**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy recognizes that access to technology in school gives students greater opportunities to learn, engage, communicate, and develop skills that will prepare them for work, life, and citizenship. We are committed to helping students develop 21<sup>st</sup>-century technology and communication skills.

To that end, we provide access to technologies for student and staff use.

This Technology Responsible Use Policy outlines the guidelines and behaviors that students are expected to follow when using school technologies or when using personally owned devices on the school campus.

- The Divine Mercy Catholic Academy network is intended for educational purposes.
- All activity over the network or when using school technologies may be monitored and retained.
- Access to online content via the network may be restricted in accordance with our policies and federal regulations, such as the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA).
- Students are expected to follow the same rules for good behavior and respectful conduct online as offline.
- Misuse of school resources or personal devices while connected to the school network can result in disciplinary action.
- Divine Mercy Catholic Academy makes a reasonable effort to ensure students’ safety and security online, but will not be held accountable for any harm or damages that result from use of school technologies.
- Users of the school network or other technologies are expected to alert Administrator, Technology staff or teacher immediately of any concerns for safety or security.

## 2.0 Definitions

### 2.1 Authorized Users:

- **Student:** any child 18 years or younger enrolled in Divine Mercy Catholic Academy
- **Faculty/Staff:** any person who is employed by Divine Mercy Catholic Academy, whether part-time or full-time, who provides instruction to students

**2.2 School Network:** communications systems connecting two or more computers and their peripheral devices to exchange information and share resources, it includes wired and wireless

**2.3 Internet:** includes both external and internal access of communications and data storage equipment, either owned or reserved for use by Divine Mercy Catholic Academy

**2.4 Technologies Covered:** Divine Mercy Catholic Academy may provide Internet access, desktop computers, mobile computers or devices, videoconferencing capabilities, online collaboration capabilities, message boards, email, and more. Also, Divine Mercy Catholic Academy may allow students to bring their personal devices which will also be covered by this policy.

As new technologies emerge, Divine Mercy Catholic Academy will attempt to provide access to them. The policies outlined in this document are intended to cover **all available technologies**, not just those specifically listed.

### **3.0 Usage Policies**

All technologies provided by the school are intended for education purposes. All students are expected to use good judgment and to follow the specifics of this document as well as the spirit of it: be safe, appropriate, careful and kind; do not try to get around technological protection measures; use good common sense; and ask if you do not know. In the event that the inappropriate behavior happens outside of the school and it is brought to the principal's attention, Divine Mercy Catholic Academy will investigate and may have disciplinary repercussions at the discretion of the school according to the Code of Conduct.

#### **3.1 Web Access**

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy provides its students with access to the Internet, including web sites, resources, content, and online tools. That access will be restricted in compliance with Diocesan Social Communication Policy, CIPA (Children's Internet Protection Act) regulations and school policies. Web browsing may be monitored and web activity records may be retained indefinitely.

Students are expected to respect that the web filter is a safety precaution, and should not try to circumvent it when browsing the Web. If a site is blocked and a student believes it should not be, the student should follow school protocol to alert Technology staff or submit the site for review.

### **3.2 Email**

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy may provide students with email accounts for the purpose of school-related communication. Availability and use may be restricted based on school policies.

If students are provided with email accounts, they should be used with care. Students should not send personal information; should not attempt to open files or follow links from unknown or untrusted origin; should use appropriate language; and should only communicate with other people as allowed by the school policy or the teacher.

Students are expected to communicate with the same appropriate, safe, mindful, courteous conduct online as offline. Email usage may be monitored and archived.

### **3.3 Social/Web 2.0 / Collaborative Content**

Recognizing the benefits collaboration brings to education, Divine Mercy Catholic Academy may provide students with access to web sites or tools that allow communication, collaboration, sharing, and messaging among users.

Students are expected to communicate with the same appropriate, safe, mindful, courteous conduct online as offline. Posts, chats, sharing, and messaging will be monitored by teachers and the sites will be protected from outside viewers. Students should be careful not to share personally-identifying information online.

The use of personal social media sites for enjoyment is prohibited on campus during instructional hours. Students must refrain from taking and posting pictures and videos of themselves, other students or teachers at school during instructional hours.

### **3.4 Mobile Devices Policy**

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy may provide students with mobile computers or other devices to promote learning outside of the classroom. Students should abide by the same responsible use policies when using school devices off the school network as on the school network.

Students are expected to treat these devices with extreme care and caution; these are expensive devices that the school is entrusting to the student's care. Students should report any loss, damage, or malfunction to the Technology staff immediately. Students may be financially accountable for any damage resulting from negligence or misuse.

Use of school-issued mobile devices off the school network may be monitored.

### **3.5 Personally-Owned Devices Policy**

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy may allow students to bring personally owned devices to use in the classroom after it has been approved by the Technology staff. Students should keep personally-owned devices (including laptops, tablets, e-readers, smart phones, cell phones, and smart watches) turned off and put away during school hours unless as instructed by a teacher or staff for educational purposes or in the event of an emergency.

Because of security concerns, when personally-owned mobile devices are used on campus requiring the use of data, these devices must only be on the school network, data services must be disabled and permission from the Technology staff is required. For the Technology staff to grant permission, students need to submit the required paperwork with the appropriate information such as MAC address and serial number. In some cases, a separate network may be provided for personally-owned devices.

Students must to follow the same code of conduct for use of personally owned devices on Divine Mercy Catholic Academy campus or at other functions, whether on or off property, related to the Divine Mercy Catholic Academy

### **3.6 Security**

Students are expected to take reasonable safeguards against the transmission of security threats over the school network. This includes not opening or distributing infected files or programs and not opening files or programs of unknown or untrusted origin.

If the student believes a computer or mobile device the student is using might be infected with a virus, IT must be alerted immediately. The student must not attempt to remove the virus or download any programs to help remove the virus.

### **3.7 Downloads**

Students should not download, attempt to download, or run .exe programs or any other executable programs over the school network or onto school resources without express permission from the Technology staff.

Students may be able to download other file types, such as images or videos. For the security of our network, download such files only from reputable sites, only for education purposes, and following copyright laws.

### **3.8 Netiquette**

Students should always use the Internet, network resources, and online sites in a courteous and respectful manner.

Students should also recognize that among the valuable content online is unverified, incorrect, or inappropriate content. Students should use trusted sources when conducting research via the Internet and follow copyright laws for their use.

Students should also remember not to post anything online that they would not want parents, teachers, or future colleges or employers to see. Once something is online, it is out there—and can sometimes be shared and spread in ways it was never intended.

### **3.9 Plagiarism**

Students should not plagiarize (or use as their own, without citing the original creator) content, including words or images, from the Internet. Students should not take credit for things they did not create themselves, or misrepresent themselves as an author or creator of something found online. Research conducted via the Internet should be appropriately cited, giving credit to the original author.

### **4.0 Personal Safety**

Students should never share personal information, including phone number, address, social security number, birthday, or financial information, over the Internet without permission from a parent or legal guardian. Students should recognize that communicating over the Internet brings anonymity and associated risks, and should carefully safeguard the personal information of themselves and others. Students should never agree to meet someone they meet online in real life without parental or legal guardian permission.

If you see a message, comment, image, or anything else online that makes you concerned for your personal safety, bring it to the attention of an adult (teacher or staff if you are at school; parent or legal guardian if you are using the device at home) immediately.

### **5.0 Cyber Bullying**

Cyber bullying will not be tolerated. Harassing, dissing, flaming, denigrating, impersonating, outing, tricking, excluding, and cyber stalking are all examples of cyberbullying. Do not be mean. Do not send emails or post comments with the intent of scaring, hurting, or intimidating someone else.

Engaging in these behaviors, or any online activities intended to harm (physically or emotionally) another person, will result in severe disciplinary action and loss of privileges. In some cases, cyberbullying can be a crime. Remember that your activities are monitored and retained.

## **6.0 Sexting**

Any student taking, disseminating, transferring, possessing, or sharing obscene, sexually oriented, lewd, or otherwise illegal images or other content, commonly referred to as “sexting,” which can include, but is not limited to, pictures of themselves, other students or friends without appropriate clothing or in compromising or suggestive positions, will be disciplined according to the Student Code of Conduct, may be required to complete an educational program related to the dangers of this type of behavior, and, in certain circumstances, may be reported to law enforcement. This type of behavior needs to be immediately reported to the parent/guardian, and if it involves other students in the school it should be reported to the teacher or principal.

## **7.0 Examples of Responsible Use**

The student will:

- ✓ Use school technologies for school-related activities.
- ✓ Follow the same guidelines for respectful, responsible behavior online that I am expected to follow offline.
- ✓ Treat school resources carefully, and alert staff if there is any problem with their operation.
- ✓ Encourage positive, constructive discussion if allowed to use communicative or collaborative technologies.
- ✓ Alert a teacher or other staff member if I see threatening, inappropriate, or harmful content (images, messages, posts) online.
- ✓ Use school technologies at appropriate times, in approved places, for educational pursuits.
- ✓ Cite sources when using online sites and resources for research.
- ✓ Recognize that use of school technologies is a privilege and treat it as such.
- ✓ Be cautious to protect the safety of others and myself.
- ✓ Help to protect the security of school resources.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Students should use their own good judgment when using school technologies.

## 8.0 Examples of Irresponsible Use

I, the student will **not**:

- ✓ Use school technologies in a way that could be personally or physically harmful.
- ✓ Attempt to find inappropriate images or content.
- ✓ Engage in cyberbullying, harassment, or disrespectful conduct toward others.
- ✓ Try to find ways to circumvent the school's safety measures and filtering tools.
- ✓ Use school technologies to send spam or chain mail.
- ✓ Plagiarize content I find online.
- ✓ Post personally identifying information, about others or myself.
- ✓ Agree to meet someone I meet online in real life.
- ✓ Send or distribute obscene, lewd or sexually explicit images.
- ✓ Use language online that would be unacceptable in the classroom.
- ✓ Use school technologies for illegal activities or to pursue information on such activities.
- ✓ Attempt to hack or access sites, servers, or content that is not intended for my use.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Students should use their own good judgment when using school technologies.

## 9.0 Internet Safety Plan

- ✓ Divine Mercy Catholic Academy implements an effective internet filtering and reporting solution CIPA that monitors internet activity, detects inappropriate usage and blocks and/or filters visual depictions that are obscene, pornographic or in any way harmful to minors as defined in CIPA
- ✓ The internet filtering solution controls access by minors to inappropriate matter on the Internet and the World Wide Web and restricts access to materials that may be harmful to minors
- ✓ Policies and procedures are in place that covers category blocking, automated weekly reports on internet activity, and identification of emerging threats
- ✓ School network is secure with CIPA from unauthorized access, including "hacking" and other unlawful activities by minors online
- ✓ Faculty provides internet safety instruction integrated in their curriculum or as part of a technology class that covers appropriate online behavior, including interacting with other individuals on social networking sites and in chat rooms and cyber bullying
- ✓ Technology Responsible Use Policy and Internet Safety Plan will be published in the parent/student handbook and Divine Mercy Catholic Academy will hold an informational meeting to address the policy.

## 10.0 Limitation of Liability

- ✓ Divine Mercy Catholic Academy will not be responsible for damage or harm to any personal devices, files, data, or hardware brought to the school by students.
- ✓ While Divine Mercy Catholic Academy employs filtering and other safety and security mechanisms, and attempts to ensure their proper function, it makes no guarantees as to their effectiveness.
- ✓ Divine Mercy Catholic Academy will not be responsible, financially or otherwise, for unauthorized transactions conducted over the school network.

## 11.0 Violations of this Responsible Use Policy

Violations of this policy may have disciplinary repercussions at the discretion of Divine Mercy Catholic Academy according to the Code of Conduct, and including but not limited to:

- Suspension of network, technology, or computer privileges
- Notification to parents
- Detention or suspension from school and school-related activities
- Legal action and/or prosecution

## 12.0 References

- ✓ Children's Internet Protection Act – <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/cipa.html> , <http://ifea.net/cipa.html>
- ✓ Children's Online Privacy Protection Act - <http://www.ftc.gov/ogc/coppa1.htm>
- ✓ Protecting Children in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century - [http://www.ntia.doc.gov/legacy/advisory/onlinesafety/BroadbandData\\_PublicLaw110-385.pdf](http://www.ntia.doc.gov/legacy/advisory/onlinesafety/BroadbandData_PublicLaw110-385.pdf)
- ✓ Consortium for School Networking – <http://www.cosn.org>

**I understand that inappropriate and irresponsible use and conduct while using the device and/or other technology resources and/or school network shall result in appropriate disciplinary action. I agree to be a responsible digital citizen and user and will conduct myself appropriately while online. I have read and understood this Responsible Use Policy and agree to abide by it:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Student Printed Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Student Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**As a parent/guardian, I will or have discussed Responsible Use Policy, user guide, and all other policies with my child and will support the school in guiding my child in using the device at home as an educational tool. I understand that I am responsible for monitoring and guiding my child's activity while he/she is not at school.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/Legal Guardian Printed Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/Legal Guardian Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

## Accidents

All accidents that occur on school property, in classrooms, on playgrounds, and in the cafeteria, will be reported immediately to the school staff member on duty. It is the responsibility of that staff member to fill out an accident report form, which will be kept on file in the school office.

## Admissions

Families requesting admission to Divine Mercy Catholic Academy must submit the following:

1. Complete school registration/re-application form.
2. Health/immunization records. All students must have current immunizations before being permitted to enter school.
3. A birth certificate and a baptismal certificate, if baptized
4. The registration fee. This fee is non-refundable.
5. An active, supporting membership in Divine Mercy Parish (demonstrated by use of Sunday envelopes) in order to register for the Category I tuition rate OR pay the Category II rate required of non-parishioner families.
6. The required number of service hours to include required bingo concessions each calendar year OR pay for non-worked service hours (in the amount determined annually by the school board) in order to reregister for the next school year in March.

All children entering Divine Mercy Catholic Academy are subject to the policies and regulations of the Diocese of Orlando, Brevard County, and the State of Florida. Children entering the early childhood program must be potty-trained and meet the following age requirement(s):

- Pre-K3 must be 3 years old on or before September 1<sup>st</sup> of the school year.
- Pre-K4 must be 4 years old on or before September 1<sup>st</sup> of the school year.
- Kindergarten must be 5 years old on or before September 1<sup>st</sup> of the school year.

Children entering grade 1 must be 6 years old on or before September 1<sup>st</sup> of that year, or have successfully completed kindergarten at an accredited public or private school.

**Enrollment of students at Divine Mercy Catholic Academy implies the willingness of both parents and students to comply with and support decisions, policies, regulations and philosophy of the Academy.**

All prospective students must interview with the principal before registering at Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. Based on this interview, the Academy administration reserves the right to determine whether or not a child may be registered at this Academy.

Students transferring from another school to Divine Mercy Catholic Academy may be tested in math, reading, and writing prior to the interview with the principal and expected to bring a copy of their most recent report card and standardized test scores to the interview for review.

All students entering Divine Mercy Catholic Academy for the first time will be accepted on a **probationary basis** for a nine week period to ascertain their ability to adjust to the school's philosophy and program.

### Policy of Non-Discrimination

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national, or ethnic origin in the

administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, loan programs, athletic, or other school administered programs.

As openings become available, the following priorities will be used to accept students to Divine Mercy Catholic Academy:

1. Members of Divine Mercy Parish
2. Members of other Catholic parishes
3. Non-Catholic students

### **Placement for All Grades**

The administration reserves the right to assign students to a particular grade. Any questions or concerns must be addressed to the principal.

### **Re-Registration for All Grades**

Re-registration of the current student body normally occurs in mid-January for the early childhood program (grades PK3 – K) and in March for all other grades. A fee is required at that time. In order to re-register, all financial debts must be paid and all service hour requirements for the current school year must be fulfilled. **REGISTRATION FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.** Any student who withdraws from Divine Mercy for reason deemed to be unacceptable to the administration will not be readmitted. The principal reserves the right to readmit students to Divine Mercy Catholic Academy.

### **Anti-Harassment**

- A. Harassment is contrary to Gospel values and has no place in the Catholic school. All students are entitled to study in a school environment that is Christ-centered and free of harassment.
- B. Harassment occurs in many ways, including but not limited to: verbal or written threats, bullying, cyber-bullying, emotional, psychological, physical, racial and/or sexual.
- C. The school will treat complaints of harassment seriously and will respond to such complaints in a prompt, confidential, and thorough manner. Harassment of any type will not be tolerated and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

### **Arrival/Dismissal**

#### **Arrival**

No student should be on campus prior to 7:00 am. **Students arriving between 7:00 A.M. and 7:45 A.M. must go directly to the Rainbow Room.** At 7:45 A.M., students may proceed to their classrooms and prepare for the academic day. The first morning bell sounds at 7:55 A.M. Parents need to be out of the classrooms by the first bell! School officially begins each day at 8:00 A.M. Students who arrive at school after the 8:00 A.M. bell – for any reason – are required to go directly to the school office for a late slip in order to enter class.

No student will be permitted to leave school during the school day without the written permission of his or her parent or guardian and the approval from the principal.

When medical appointments are necessary during the school day, the students are to present notes from the parent or guardian to the teacher the day before the actual appointment. All appointments are to be made as closely as possible to dismissal time. Students will be released from the main office, and picked up by the parent, guardian, or authorized person.

A responsible party must escort pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students to the teacher.

## Dismissal

Dismissal for all students in pre-kindergarten through grade 8 will take place at 3:00 P.M.

**There will be classroom dismissal each day for Pre-K thru Grade 2.** Older siblings of the students in Pre-K thru Grade 2 will be sent to the youngest sibling's classroom where these parents can pick up their children. These parents are to park in the area designated on the accompanying diagram and should enter and exit the school via the playground entrance. Once the children are entrusted to their care, the parents are responsible for the safety of their children from the school through the parking lot.

**Grades 3 thru 8 will line up outside along the sidewalk for drive thru pick up.** Students must enter and exit cars from the passenger side. No one should be between cars for any reason, including placing items in or out of the trunk. **This is a major safety issue.** No parent or student is to cross the car line at any time. If parents insist on parking, they are to park in the area designated for parking and to cross on the crosswalk behind the traffic cones.

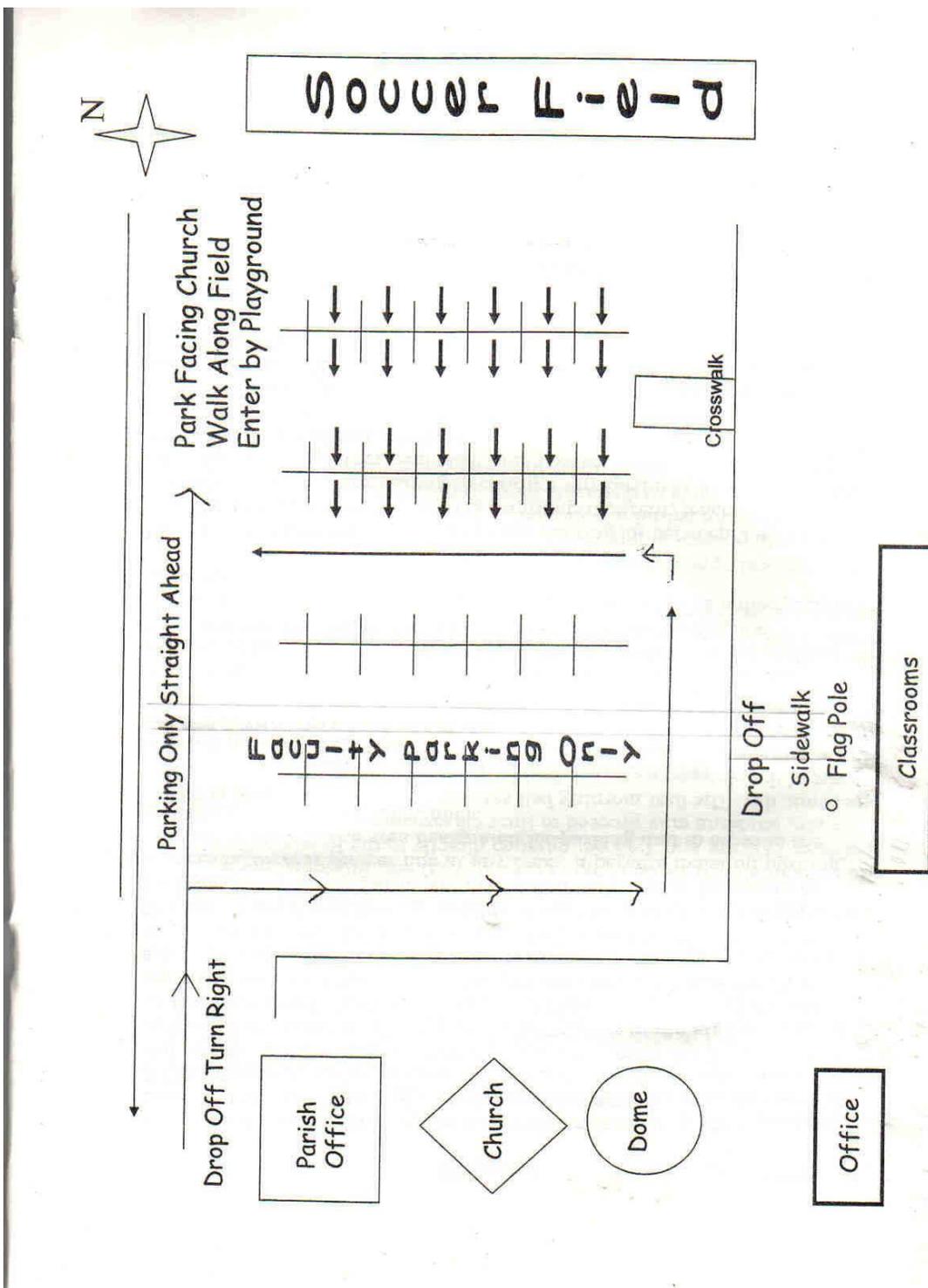
All teachers are to remain with their classes until 3:10 P.M. **Students who are not picked up by 3:10 P.M. are placed in the extended day program at 3:10 P.M. by the classroom teacher and billed accordingly.**

No child will be dismissed to anyone other than a parent, or person authorized by the parent, in writing. No student is to be in the parking lot unsupervised. There is to be no horseplay in the parking lot. Inappropriate and/or unsafe behavior will be dealt with as a disciplinary infraction.

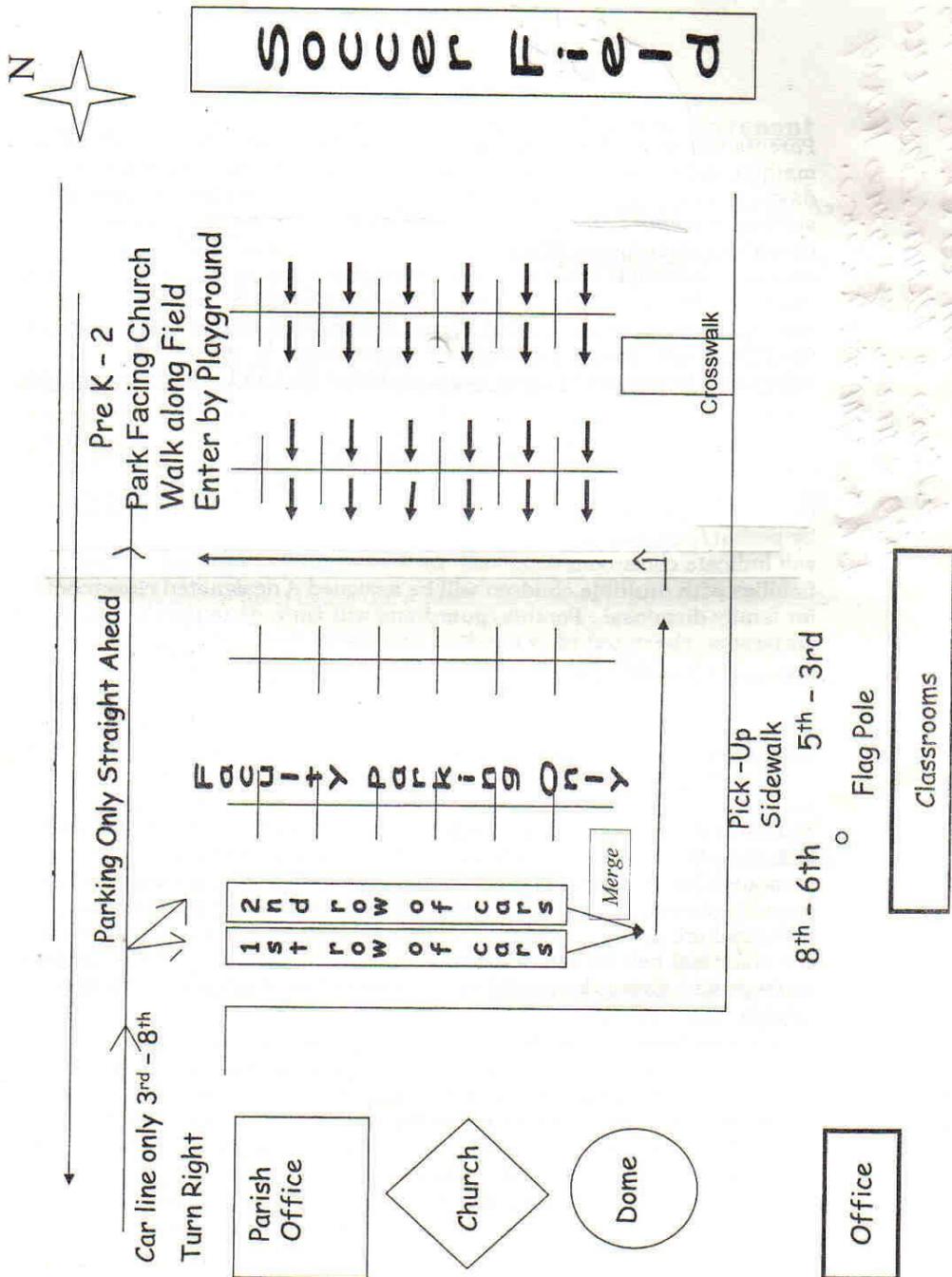
Parents are asked not to socialize in the parking lot between 2:45 and 3:15 PM, nor to involve teachers in impromptu parent/teacher conferences. If you are waiting to conduct any business at school, kindly park and wait until after dismissal time is over. Please follow the traffic patterns for arrival and dismissal.

No Divine Mercy student is allowed to drive on school property, even if age appropriate and licensed. At no time should a vehicle be left running and unattended in the parking lot.

**SCHOOL MORNING DROP OFF ROUTE**



**SCHOOL DISMISSAL PICKUP ROUTE**



### Emergency Dismissal

Parents will be notified at the beginning of the school year concerning the method the academy will use to announce unplanned, non-attendance days. In the event of an emergency dismissal, Divine Mercy Catholic Academy will activate the e-mail distribution list whereby an attempt will be made to contact all parents or guardians. The principal will use prudent judgment in deciding to dismiss students for an emergency and will alert the diocesan office of schools in Orlando and the Brevard County School Board. **In weather emergencies, Divine Mercy Catholic Academy will abide by the Brevard County School Board's decision to dismiss school. The decision to resume class sessions will be made by Divine Mercy Catholic Academy Administration. Please listen to the major television networks or local radio stations for the latest information: in addition, stay abreast through the school web-site, Edline, mass e-mails to parents, telephone calls, and/or the school answering machine.**

### Rainy Day Dismissal

On rainy days, students will be dismissed from the classroom, collected by parent/guardian at the classroom door. **A gold flag on the flagpole will indicate classroom dismissal.** At the beginning of the school year, families with multiple children will be assigned a designated classroom for family dismissal. Parents/guardians will park, go to the designated classroom, check out their children, and escort them safely to their cars.

## Attendance, Absences, and Tardiness

### Attendance

Faithful and daily attendance at school is extremely important to the educational growth and development of each child and should not be taken lightly.

### Absences

We realize that illness and matters of serious importance will require a student to be absent on occasion. Should absence for any reason other than illness seem imperative, parents/guardians are requested to consult with the Principal and present a written reason for the absence. **Keeping children out of school for such reasons as family excursions, conflicts with holidays of other schools, etc., does not constitute a valid absence.** Such an attitude on the part of a parent does not foster good habits in the child toward the importance of school. The school calendar provides for extended weekends throughout the academic year. Parents are encouraged to schedule trips or family outings during these times so as to eliminate the need to interrupt a child's learning process. Missed assignments are the student's responsibility.

It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to telephone by 8:30 A.M. to advise the office when a student is absent. In the event of an unreported absence, the parent or guardian will be contacted by the Academy during the school day.

**Upon returning from a one, two or three-day absence, the child must present a written note from the parent or guardian to the office for a readmission pass before the 8:00 AM bell.** An absence of four days or more requires a doctor's note for an admission pass. Any absence for which a note is not received is considered un-excused.

**It is the student's responsibility to make up any work that has been missed during an absence.** Students who are absent due to illness have one day for each day of absence to make up the missed assignments, quizzes or tests. For example, a student who was absent three days would be given three school days to complete the missed work. For absences other than illness, the teacher(s) will determine the due date of any missed work, including tests.

Students who exhibit serious or chronic symptoms of illness such as a fever, severe cough or infectious nasal discharge should not be sent to school until symptoms subside. Please abide by the "24 hour rule!"

Whenever possible, doctor, dental, and orthodontic appointments should be made outside of the school hours.

A student who misses more than nine (9) days within a semester will not receive a passing grade for the semester in accordance with Florida Statute unless:

- a. Medical evidence is presented to the principal in writing, justifying a specific number of days of absence, and
- b. The student demonstrates mastery of the student performance standards in the course as identified in curriculum guides and/or adopted textbooks.

If the absences are excused, all educational requirements for the course shall be met before a passing grade and/or credit is assigned. **It is the absentee's responsibility to seek out all missed assignments and tests given during his or her absence.** The student will receive a zero for missed assignments and tests for unexcused absences.

**Students who are absent from school on a given day are not allowed to participate in any extracurricular activities for that day or evening.**

**Under no circumstances are students permitted to leave the Academy premises. If, for some important reason, a student has to leave during school hours, his or her parent or guardian must sign him/her out from the office. If a person other than a parent or guardian is releasing a student from school, that information must be communicated to the office by the parent or guardian IN WRITING. Identification of such person will be required.**

### Tardiness

Tardiness is not only disruptive to the individual student involved but also to the class and teacher involved. Parents are asked to make sure children arrive to class each day "on time". Chronic tardiness will be subject to disciplinary action by the principal.

**ALL students regardless of age who arrive at school after the 8:00 AM bell – for any reason – are required to go directly to the school office for a late slip. This procedure is mandatory in order to account accurately for the whereabouts of every child.**

### Bicycles/Walkers

Students may ride bicycles or walk to school. All bicycles are to be parked and locked by the Mercy Way Entrance. The school assumes no responsibility for damage or loss of bicycles; locks must be used for the security of your personal property. Students riding bicycles or walking home at dismissal are asked to leave the school grounds before the dismissal bell for safety reasons. A written note is required from parents or guardians giving their child(ren) permission to ride a bicycle or walk to and from school.

## Birthday Parties and Academy Activities

We are happy to celebrate your child's birthday at school. You may send in a simple treat on that day for the class to celebrate. A NUT day for all students in the class celebrating a birthday that month will be held on the last Thursday of that month. Teachers may establish their own procedures as to how this can best be handled in an age appropriate way.

**If you are planning a "private" birthday celebration outside of school, please send the invitations via U. S. mail. If the entire class is invited, invitations may be handed out in the classroom.**

## Charger Corp

The purpose and goals of the Charger Corp are as follows:

- To promote the philosophy of Divine Mercy Catholic Academy and to encourage a strong school spirit.
- To encourage involvement in social and service oriented activities within a Christian atmosphere.
- To establish communications between families and the School.
- To support the growth and development of curricular and extracurricular programs by raising monies through fund raising activities.

Each parent in the school is a member of the Charger Corp. It takes the combined efforts of home and school to provide for the needs, growth, and development of Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. Please support the Charger Corp by becoming actively involved in a parent action committee (PAC) described below:

### **Members and Responsibilities**

The principal will sponsor and facilitate the Charger Corp and will provide support and guidance. The coordinators will assist the principal in providing support and communication between committees. It is important that families, teachers and staff support the purposes and goals of the Charger Corp.

### **Parent Action Committees (PACs)**

Parent action committees are groups of people formed to accomplish specific tasks in support of Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. Each committee will have a chairperson and subcommittees as needed. The Charger Corp consists of numerous parent action committees:

- a. The **Teacher and Student Support PAC** is responsible for the recruitment and organization of the volunteers to assist teachers and support staff with tutoring and as room parents, class aides, library aides, and cafeteria aides. This PAC also recruits and organizes volunteers to assist with cultural and extra-curricular programs, which enrich the students' educational experience and acknowledge their academic accomplishments.
- a. The **Administrative and School Support PAC** is responsible for working with the school administration in the recruitment of volunteers for activities that directly affect the administrative function of the school.
- b. The **Fund-Raising PAC** is responsible for working with the parish and the local community in organizing and implementing activities and events that will be of financial benefit to the school. All parents are expected to support the annual car give-away through either the purchase or sale of car give-away tickets.

- c. The **Family Life Support PAC** is responsible for organizing and implementing adult, child, and family activities that help to build Christian Community.
- d. The **Athletics PAC** is responsible for enhancing the total athletics program of Divine Mercy Catholic Academy and for building school and team spirit.

### Advisory Board

The school board of Divine Mercy Catholic Academy is comprised of school parents and parishioners who are non-school parents, appointed by the pastor. It serves in an advisory capacity to the pastor and school principal. The Board reviews the overall marketing, public relations, alumni, and long term fund raising efforts of the school.

The board meets monthly. Parents and parishioners are always invited to attend. Parents are also welcome to express their interest in being considered for a board appointment and may do so to the school board through the school office

### Child Abuse

Florida Statute defines child abuse as: “any willful act that results in physical, mental or sexual injury that causes or is likely to cause the child’s physical mental or emotional health to be significantly impaired.” Child neglect is failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter health care or needed supervision. Florida Law also requires “any school teacher or other school official or personnel who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child, shall report such knowledge or suspicion to the department.

### Clinic and Medications

#### Clinic

Volunteers, who care about ill and injured children, staff the clinic. No student will be admitted to the clinic without approval from either the classroom teacher or the teacher on playground duty. A parent/ guardian will be called when his/her child has been admitted to the clinic with a head injury. Minor scrapes will be treated with ice, bandage, and TLC; no call will be made unless otherwise instructed.

If, during the school day, your child is running a fever over 100.5 degrees, has had diarrhea, has vomited, or has a runny nose with mucus or eyes with discharge (indicative of an infection) you will be required to pick the child up or to arrange for the child to be picked up. Ill students must remain home for a period of 24 hours after symptoms have subsided.

Children who have contracted a communicable disease must be kept home until no longer contagious, as documented by a physician’s note.

Head lice control will be administered as documented in the school clinic handbook.

Students who leave school due to illness must have a parent or guardian sign them out in the school office. Parents are not to disturb a class at that time.

#### Medication

Written permission must be given to the office for children requiring **any** medication during school hours. A form for the “Administration of Medication by Academy Personnel” must be completed in the school office before any medication will be given. All medications must be delivered to the office by the parent or guardian (not the student), and in the “original” containers. Ask your

pharmacist to provide a second bottle with label for prescription medicine that needs to be administered at the Academy. If your child is on daily medication, the form must be filled out each year and every time such medication is adjusted.

Parents or guardians should provide office with an inhaler for any student having asthma or an Epi-pen for any student with severe allergic reactions.

For any special medical circumstances not covered, please consult with the Principal, who will try and accommodate the needs of your student.

## Code of Conduct

The goal of all discipline is self-discipline, creating a wholesome sense of what is appropriate and what is inappropriate behavior. Students are taught choices based on what is good for each individual and what is good for the school community.

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy utilizes a positive discipline program in pre-kindergarten through grade eight. The purpose of this program is to encourage positive behavior and not to waste instructional time dealing with inappropriate behavior. Each classroom teacher posts a maximum of five behavior rules and specific consequences. In addition, teachers clearly outline their reward system to encourage positive behavior. Students earn the right to participate in a monthly good behavior NUT Day (No Uniform Today) upon achieving behavior goals.

Disciplinary actions are generally minor involving only the student and teacher. **For minor infractions within the classroom, each teacher has the authority to correct misconduct and to issue appropriate discipline.** A close communication and interaction among the principal, teacher, parent/guardian, and students enhances prevention of conflicts.

Peer sexual harassment and bullying will not be tolerated. Any inappropriate behavior of a sexual or bullying nature will be subject to disciplinary action by the principal.

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy provides a safe environment for all individuals. Verbal or written threats made against the physical or emotional well-being of any individual are taken very seriously. Students making such threats (seriously, in jest, or online) face detention, suspension, and/or expulsion.

Harassment of any type is not tolerated. The Principal investigates all complaints of harassment. Students involved in harassing behavior face detention, suspension, and/or expulsion.

Negative postings or interactions via social media may result in disciplinary actions if the content of the student's social media posting includes defamatory comments regarding the school, the faculty, other students, or the parish.

Over the years, the Diocese of Orlando and the Office of Schools have taken steps to ensure the safety of your children. We continually review the measures we have in place to protect your children, and we oftentimes ask for your support in implementing new measures and procedures designed to make our schools a safe haven for your children.

To this end, we hope you will share the following with your children to help us ensure that wrongful conduct does not occur in our schools. The intent of this document is not to alarm you, but rather to help all of us understand the limits of proper conduct we expect in our schools.

While we hope never to have these problems in our schools, we want it clearly understood that the Diocese does not condone or authorize its employees, volunteers, coaches, or students to engage in any of the following activities:

- Threatening or causing personal harm or injury
- Threatening or causing damage to school or Diocesan property

- Providing medical advice
- Conducting physical examinations of or providing shots to students (other than school-sponsored or sanctioned exams for scoliosis, vision, hearing, athletic fitness, diabetic treatments, or other medical treatments, all of which require written permission from a parent or guardian)
- Administering drugs, including any over the counter medication, in the absence of express, written permission from a parent or guardian per diocesan policy
- Providing massages or other physical therapy
- Taking blood samples or performing any other medical procedure
- Examining the genitalia of any student, for any reason
- Touching an individual inappropriately
- Smoking, or encouraging smoking, on school property. Asking a student to undress or observing a student while he or she is changing clothes at school or a sporting event, other than necessary supervision in a locker or approved changing area
- Denigrating or abusing any child, volunteer, or employee

We also ask you, as parents, to help us identify these and any other inappropriate activities that take place in our schools. Please report them immediately to the Principal or the Office of Schools. Similarly, if your child observes or experiences these or similar activities, he or she should feel comfortable telling you, the Principal, or the Office of Schools. Our experience and that of experts, particularly in the area of school violence, is that tell-tale signs (e.g., severe mood changes, emotional outbursts or irrational conduct, fascination with guns or incidents of violence, indirect and direct threats) usually exist before the actual violent act occurs. Early intervention, therefore, is the key to avoiding a tragic situation.

We cannot possibly identify all the improper conduct that might occur, but we ask you, as parents, to use your common sense and report anything that you believe is inappropriate. Your cooperation in enforcing these guidelines is greatly appreciated. Working together, we can continue to provide your children a caring, loving environment, and the best Catholic education.

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy students are expected to behave as follows:

- Respect every person regardless of age or position.
- Listen and follow directions.
- Be considerate of others' need for quiet.
- Take pride in personal appearance to wear complete uniform (regular and P. E.).
- Take good care of school property (no chewing gum on school property and no eating/drinking outside the cafeteria or classroom).
- Be honest in taking tests and doing homework.
- Tell the truth.
- Remain on campus during school and after school activities.
- Be on time for school and prompt for each class.
- Be thoughtful of others by allowing them to speak.
- Be mannerly by standing aside and holding a door for another person.
- Walk quietly in the hallways and courtyard.
- Complete assignments on time.
- Keep neat desks, books covered and clean.
- Help classmates and teachers maintain a clean and orderly classroom.
- Play fairly and encourage one another in games and activities.
- Invite all classmates to participate in games and activities.
- Use time wisely by studying or reading.
- Take school notices home the day they are handed out.
- Avoid using offensive language.

- ❑ Refrain from the possession, sale, and/or use of alcoholic beverages, narcotics, illegal drugs, and tobacco products.
- ❑ Refrain from reading or promoting indecent literature.
- ❑ Refrain from carrying objects that are or could be used as weapons.
- ❑ Abide by the acceptable use policy for computer.

Students have the right to privacy in regard to their personal possessions unless there is cause to believe that a student is concealing material that is prohibited by law, hazardous, or may distract from the educational process. The school reserves the right to search desks, backpacks, lockers, etc., in order to preserve the safety of each individual and the common good of the school. Property confiscated from a student will be returned to the parent after an appropriate release has been signed and appropriate discipline determine

“Any seasoned administrator probably has had at least one parent or student argue, ‘It happened outside the school or school day. You can’t punish me for what I did on my own time.’ The fact is, however, that a Catholic school or program administrator can impose consequences for conduct occurring outside school. What students do off-campus can detrimentally impact a school or program’s reputation. So long as the parent/student handbook, which can and should be a contract, states that the administration reserves the right to discipline students for off-campus conduct, courts will not interfere. The school should require that prior to the student’s first day of attendance, parents sign a statement that they agree to be bound by the handbook’s rules and regulations. Courts will uphold rules and regulations that are not illegal.

Educators are already familiar with the issues arising from student threats conveyed through e-mail. Blogging provides another venue for making threats. Threats are threats wherever they are made.

A more common problem occurs when students make negative, often untruthful statements about staff and other students. The Web site, [www.ratemyteachers.com](http://www.ratemyteachers.com), in addition to blogs, offers opportunities to post potentially defamatory statements. Holding that teachers were in effect, quasi-public figures and had to expect a certain amount of ‘grief’ from parents and students, courts in the past were reluctant to find in favor of teachers who brought defamation suits against parents or students. Such is no longer the case. Several state courts have ruled the same right to their reputations that other people have. Therefore, if defamed, educators have a right to sue.

Additionally, school administrators can punish students who defame others in the school community. Deliberate defamation of others is not consistent with Christian values, and students should be held accountable for intentional harm they cause others.”

The principal will handle more serious disciplinary actions involving inappropriate behavior. Such disciplinary action may include the following:

- ❑ After school detention.
- ❑ Suspension – imposed only for a serious infraction. The decision **to** suspend rests with the Principal. Parents are notified by a letter stating the measure and reason for suspensions. Students must complete all class work and tests from the days of suspension but failing grades will be recorded for this work.
- ❑ Expulsion – resorted to only when all other means of discipline have proven ineffectual, or the student’s conduct is a definite hindrance to the welfare and progress of the school community.

Corporal punishment is clearly against the philosophy of Divine Mercy Catholic Academy.

## Crisis Intervention

The local diocesan crisis intervention team was formed to deal with crisis situations such as death or suicide of a student, parent, or faculty member, disaster situations, or other crises which impact the student or school personnel population. This is different from crisis counseling, which may involve individual students. When an incident occurs, the principal will notify the superintendent of schools, office of schools, who will contact the team members to implement the crisis procedures.

The direct services in the event of the crisis will include: consultation with administrators, teachers, counselors, and parents regarding the current crisis and intervention procedures; direct intervention with individual students and groups of students to identify those “at risk” and to help to stabilize the situation; determining the need for an outside agency involvement, follow-up counseling, or further evaluation and treatment.

It should be noted that the crisis intervention team is called in solely at the principal’s discretion. Only the principal can judge the extent of the impact of a death or other crisis. The crisis intervention team is offered as an aid for dealing with difficult situations, impacting the whole school.

## Custody Issues

If parents are divorced or separated, the Academy presumes that both parents have access to the children, unless one parent can provide written, legal evidence to be kept on file in the school that he or she has the sole custody rights. If parents have joint custody of their child(ren), both the mother and father are to sign the registration and emergency release forms, which is to represent a unified agreement as to the names of other individuals authorized to pick up their child(ren.) If parents cannot agree on custody issues, the Academy may require the parents to make other arrangements for the child. It is better to have matters settled at the beginning of the year, than to wait for a conflict to arise.

## Divine Mercy Catholic Academy Parent /Teacher Covenant

Because Divine Mercy Catholic Academy strives to be a faith community, parental cooperation and good parent-teacher relations are essential. As a faith community, our first instinct is to assume that each of us – teachers, administrators, parents, guardians, and other caregivers – has the child’s best interest at heart.

While we are an excellent school in many ways, no one within our community is perfect, and problems and misunderstandings will occur. When a problem or disagreement arises, we at Divine Mercy will make every effort to contact you to clarify the situation. Parents, guardians, and family members who experience problems or are confused about some matter regarding their child’s educational experience are asked to show similar respect by striving first to learn the reasons behind a policy or by inquiring about the teacher’s or the school’s understanding or decision before judging or forming an opinion. Those who are not satisfied with what they have learned are asked to approach the administration to investigate the matter. In this way, positive resolutions can be reached.

Parents and guardians are asked to follow these guidelines for expressing concern over a school matter:

1. If a problem involves routine procedures such as homework, class assignments, classroom or playground behavior, or student-to-student problems, the parent is asked to

contact the teacher first. The best way to do this is usually through a phone call to the school, leaving a message for the teacher to return your call. For a variety of reasons, parents should not attempt to bring up a serious matter in front of students while the teacher is on duty during the regular school day.

2. If the problem is more serious, the parent or guardian should inform the principal in writing or with a phone call. Only signed notes or callers who identify themselves will be taken seriously. Due to school responsibilities, the principal may not be available immediately; therefore, patience in setting appointments or in expecting a return phone call is requested. Since concern for your child is uppermost in all our minds, we will make every effort to accommodate you and your concerns. We simply ask that you understand that many children and other parents may also require our immediate attention.
3. All staff members at Divine Mercy promise prompt attention to problems, privacy in discussing matters, professional courtesy and respect when problems are presented, and a sincere effort to resolve problems in a Christian manner. That is, we promise to approach problems and misunderstandings in a manner that expresses genuine concern for the welfare of all children spiritually, psychologically, academically, and physically.
4. With this in mind, parents and guardians are expected to show the same concern and respect for the staff of Divine Mercy Catholic Academy, as well as for the other children and the families of our community. The following behaviors, therefore, are unacceptable within our community: We will not tolerate assaults or harassment of any staff member, student or parent; nor will we tolerate the intimidation or verbal abuse of any member of the community in person or in writing.
5. Commission of any of the above acts on the part of a staff member will lead to appropriate disciplinary action. Likewise, misconduct on the part of a parent, guardian, or family member may lead to a warning or to one of the following actions:
  - a. limiting or refusing permission to enter or use school grounds and facilities;
  - b. asking that someone other than the person exhibiting poor behavior represent the child's interests on school matters;
  - c. refusing to allow the child to re-register, and in extreme cases, initiating procedures to ask the family to withdraw the child from the school.

## Dress Code

The Academy uniform is compulsory for pre-kindergarten through grade 8. **Parents are responsible for compliance with uniform requirements. The parent must solve the problem of children being out of uniform.** Good grooming is a vital part of a child's education and all students are required to come to school in clean, neat uniforms. Uniform pieces may be purchased at Sir Walter Uniforms, located at 500 S. Plumosa St. Merritt Island, FL.

Parents will be called for an explanation when a student in pre-kindergarten through grade 4 is repeatedly out of uniform. **Lunch detention will be given to any student in grades 5-8 who is out of uniform.** Repeated infractions will earn the student an after school detention. If there is a time when the prescribed uniform cannot be worn, for some legitimate reason, a note from the parent/guardian must be written to the Principal. **Students who are out of uniform without this excuse will be sent to the office, and a parent will be called to bring the proper clothing.**

Please give particular attention to uniforms in the winter months. Only uniform outerwear is acceptable in the classroom for girls and boys. No weather conditions justify students coming in jeans on normal school days.

NUT Days (No Uniform Today) are days when students are allowed to wear street clothes to school. Nonetheless, good grooming as well as appropriate and modest dress is expected. **Short shorts, short pants and tops made of spandex, backless shirts, spaghetti straps, sleeveless shirts, tank tops, ripped jeans and shorts, sandals and flip flops are not appropriate dress for NUT days. School rules regarding make-up, nail polish, jewelry, and hair styles apply on NUT days. Students who come to school on a NUT day inappropriately dressed will be asked to call home for a change of clothes or sent to the clinic for a change of clothes.** Repeated offenses of the dress code will cause a student to lose NUT day privileges. Parents, please help your children learn good judgment.

Each student is required to have a “Formal” uniform to be worn for Mass on Fridays November through March and on special occasions. Girls must wear Formal Uniform all Mass days throughout the school year.

- **Formal uniform for girls** consists of the jumper/logo knit shirt (white or maroon) in grades 1-5 and the skirt/logo knit shirt (blue or gold in grades 6-8).
- **Informal uniform for girls** will consist of logo knit shirt along with navy blue walking shorts, plaid skorts, or plaid culottes.
- **Formal uniform for boys** consists of long navy blue slacks **worn at the waist** with the logo knit shirt (white or maroon) in grades 1 – 5 and (blue or gold) in grades 6 – 8..
- **Informal uniform for boys** consists of logo knit shirt and navy blue walking shorts **worn at the waist**.
- **Black belt** will be worn with shorts and/or slacks for students in grades 3-8.
- **All uniform shirts must be tucked in.**

Mark all pieces of clothing with your child’s name in permanent ink; 100% of our lost and found is unmarked clothing.

Pre-Kindergarten and kindergarten students will wear P. E. shorts and P. E. t-shirts (white or blue) and sneakers as the standard uniform. Navy sweat pants and sweatshirt may be worn during cold weather. **This is for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes only.**

### Girls

Shorts	Navy blue walking shorts <b>worn at the waist with a black belt.</b>
Shirt	White or maroon logo knit shirt <b>tucked in at all times</b> - grades 1 through 5. Blue or gold logo knit shirt <b>tucked in at all times</b> – grades 6 through 8. Knit shirts should state “Divine Mercy Catholic Academy” (preferred) or “Divine Mercy Catholic School” (accepted).
Plaid Jumper	Worn by grades 1 through 5. <b>Girls are encouraged to wear PE shorts under their jumpers.</b>
Plaid Skort	Worn by grades 1 through 8
Plaid Culottes	Worn by grades 1 through 8
Plaid Skirt	Worn by grades 6 through 8. <b>The length of the uniform skirt is expected to be appropriately modest given the height and weight of the student.</b>
Socks	All white with no logo. Must be clearly visible, preferably over the ankle.

Outerwear	If wearing a sweatshirt or sweater in the classroom, it must be solid navy blue or a DMCA sweatshirt/sweater from Sir Walter's.
Cold Weather	Navy blue dress slacks with logo knit shirt or jumper/ Dress skirt with logo knit shirt and white or navy blue tights. Cold weather dress policy will be allowed if the weather is <b>below 50 degrees</b> . Outerwear that is not from Sir Walter's (jackets, coats, etc.) will be permitted to be worn from car to school and at PE or recess time.
Shoes	Black sneakers. Shoe laces must be white, black, or brown. Dress shoes in black or brown. All shoes must be flat and closed toed. High-tops and Heelys are not appropriate.

### Boys

Shorts	Navy blue walking shorts <b>worn at the waist with a black belt</b> .
Slacks	Navy blue dress slacks <b>worn at the waist</b> on formal uniform days or during cold weather.
Shirt	same as the girls
Socks	same as the girls
Outerwear	same as the girls.
Shoes	same as the girls.

### P. E. Uniform

Shorts	Navy blue with elasticized waist and the Divine Mercy Logo.
Shirts	Blue t-shirt with the Divine Mercy Logo, tucked in at all times.
Shoes	Sneakers. High tops and Heelys are not appropriate.
Sweats	Divine Mercy Catholic Academy navy sweats may be worn to P.E. during cold weather days.

### Uniforms for Middle School Summary

We would like you and your child (or children) to become familiar with the important highlights regarding uniform policy prior to the start of school in August. For more information about the uniform policy, please see the DMCA student handbook.

All middle school students:

Shorts:	Navy blue walking shorts worn at the waist. A solid black belt must be worn.
Shirts:	Blue, white, or yellow knit shirt with "Divine Mercy Catholic Academy" (preferred) or "Divine Mercy Catholic School" (accepted) tucked in at all times

Skirts:	The length of the uniform skirt is expected to be no more than 3 inches above the floor when kneeling. This is how the length of the skirt will be measured to ensure appropriate modesty.
Socks:	Solid white.
Outerwear:	In the classroom, only a plain navy blue or uniform sweatshirt, plain navy sweater, or plain navy jacket is permitted. Or sweatshirt/sweater from Sir Walter's.
Shoes:	Black canvas or leather sneakers; one-color trim is allowed within reason as long as the shoes are basically white or black. Shoe laces must be white, black, or brown. Dress shoes in black or brown. All shoes must be flat and closed. High-tops and Heelys are not appropriate.
Slacks:	Navy blue dress slacks worn at the waist on formal uniform days or during cold weather. A solid black or brown belt must be worn.
Hair:	No highlighted, dyed, tinted, or fad haircuts/hairstyles for boys or girls. No distracting hair accessories. Natural color barrettes and bands or matching DMCA uniform pattern.

Uniform violations are recorded on the uniform violation charts. Three signatures in one month will result in the loss of the monthly NUT day. Repeated violations of the uniform policy will constitute open defiance of authority, and will warrant further disciplinary action including Friday detention or suspension from school.

#### **PLEASE NOTE:**

- **No make-up is allowed.**
- **Clear nail polish only.**
- **Artificial nails are not allowed.**
- **Girls may wear small, plain stud earrings, only one earring per ear.**
- **Boys may not wear earrings.**
- **Pins, necklaces, bracelets, anklets and rings are not allowed.**
- **Boys and girls may wear a plain wrist watch and one simple chain with a medal or cross on it.**
- **Haircuts/hairstyles that are extreme in appearance, or that interfere with vision are NOT permitted. Hair should be neat, trimmed, and well groomed. For boys, the length of hair may not touch the shirt, and be cut above the ear, brow & collar of shirt.**
- **No highlighted, dyed, tinted, or fad haircuts/hairstyles for boys or girls. No beads should be worn in hair.**
- **Hair accessories: natural hair color barrettes and bands or hair accessories sold at Sir Walter's.**
- **No cargo or baggy shorts or slacks.**
- **The length of all uniform pieces is expected to be appropriately modest given the height and weight of the student.**
- **Pants and shorts are to be worn at the waist – no low-riders.**
- **No crop tops, muscle shirts, tank tops, backless or sleeveless shirts, spaghetti straps, or short shorts are to be worn – at any time!**
- **Waistbands of shorts may not be rolled over.**
- **No sandals, flip flops, high-tops, light up shoes, or roller sneakers.**
- **Sweat pants are not allowed, except for P. E. during cold weather (grades 1-8).**

- **Accessories not specifically discussed are generally considered not a part of the uniform.**
- **Girl Scout uniform are allowed to be worn on meeting days**
- **House shirts may be worn on the determined day.**

**Lunch detention will be given for uniform violations. Repeated violations of the above will constitute open defiance of authority, and will warrant further disciplinary action including Friday detention or suspension from school.**

## Drills: Fire and Tornado

For the protection of our students and faculty, fire and tornado drills are required at regular intervals. It is essential that, when the first signal is given, pupils pass quickly, and in silence, out of the buildings, following directions posted by the door of each classroom or given by the classroom teacher.

A sufficient number of drills must be conducted in September and October to acquaint the students with proper procedures. An exact record of the date of the drills and the amount of time needed to evacuate is sent to the diocesan office of schools and kept in the school office files.

## Electronic Devices

Electronic devices such as CD players, DVD players, I-Pods, MP3 players, cell phones, cameras and hand held video games are not to be brought to school. These devices are a distraction during the school day and are much too expensive to risk being lost or damaged.

Students may have cell phones provided that they are not used, and are turned off and in the student's backpack during school hours. Students are encouraged not to bring cell phones to school or to school related functions.

Parents assume the responsibility for electronic devices brought to school.

## Emergency Management Plan

By policy of the Diocese of Orlando, each school is required to have an Emergency Management Plan to deal proactively with any emergency situation which might arise. A safety team is trained and in place to readily manage the plan should the need arise.

## Extended Day Program

The extended day program is available to all students in pre-kindergarten through grade 8. There is homework time, free time (indoors and out), and TV/game time. All activities are supervised by adult caregivers. There is a registration form to be filled out and a fee charged for enrolling. Forms are available in the school office.

Monday through Friday Hours:

7:00 A.M. to 7:45 A.M.

3:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M.

Afternoon extended school hours are from 3:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. only. Parents arriving to pick up their children after 6:00 P.M. will be charged a late fee. This fee must be paid directly

to the extended day supervisor in cash if the student is to be allowed into the extended day program on the following school day.

The students are required to wear their school uniform for the extended day program. If a student is involved in an extracurricular activity and needs to change, then arrangements should be made accordingly. On In-Service days, students are required to wear their P. E. uniforms.

A student, enrolled in the extended day program and involved in an extracurricular activity, needs a permission slip signed by the parent or guardian allowing the coach, etc., to sign the student out for practice or a game. Permission slips will be kept on file. If there is not a permission slip, the student will not be released to attend the activity.

If a student is awaiting a sibling in an extracurricular activity, the student will automatically be enrolled in the extended day program and charged accordingly. Also, if a student attends an activity and the parent does not arrive on time to pick the student up, the student will automatically be considered in the extended day program. The person supervising the student will escort him/her to the extended day program and charges will be assessed accordingly. No student will be allowed to wait without supervision for a parent.

Invoices are calculated on a regular basis and must be paid by due date or your child may not be eligible to stay until account is brought up to date. If a student consistently behaves inappropriately, parents will be required to withdraw their children from the program. There will be a late fee charge on unpaid balances.

If a parent has their child on school property after school *they must supervise their child(ren) and follow school rules*. The playground must be cleared by 3:20 P.M.

## Extracurricular Activities

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy has a wide range of extracurricular activities geared to the varying ages and interest of the students. Offerings vary each year based on interest and availability of adult volunteers

- Altar Servers
- Basketball
- Christmas Program
- County Science Fair
- County Spelling Bee
- Choir and Band
- Drama Club
- English Handbell Choir
- Flag Football
- Girl Scouts
- Junior Achievement
- Knights of Columbus Spelling Bee
- Lego Robotics
- Literary Magazine
- Liturgical Dancing
- MCC Academic Bowl
- Media Production
- National Junior Honor Society
- Nursing Home "Grand Kids"
- Peer Mentors
- Peer Tutors

- Public Speaking Contest
- Rainbows for All God's Children
- Science Research
- Soccer
- Student Council
- Track
- Volleyball
- Yearbook
- Young Astronaut Club
- Youth Ministry

## Field Trips

Diocesan policy requires a standard school field trip permission form and a medical release form be completed and signed in two places in order for a child to accompany his or her class on any excursion off school grounds. Field trips are an extension of the academic curriculum. If a student elects not to accompany his or her class on a field trip, he or she will not be excused from school, but will be assigned to a supervised classroom until the close of the school day.

According to diocesan policy (1997) the following are requirements for those who volunteer to drive to and from school-sponsored field trips or sporting events.

- Chaperones must be 18 years of age and have cleared fingerprints on file in the school office.
- Car pools are acceptable for field trips taken within Brevard County. Buses must be used for all out of county field trips.
- Driver must be 25 years of age.
- Driver must have a valid driver's license – copy of license in school office.
- Driver must have current insurance policy with coverage as follows. \$100,000 bodily injury each person, \$300,000 bodily injury each accident and \$50,000 property damage each accident. **An updated copy of your insurance policy, specifically the declarations page identifying coverage, is to be provided to the school office promptly upon each renewal.**
- Vehicle must have a working seat belt for each child in the car.
- Chaperones may not bring their preschool or any other children on field trips.
- Chaperones and drivers must have cleared fingerprints on file in the school office.

Chaperones are responsible for the children's supervision in cooperation with the teacher, and must maintain proper control and behavior for student safety. **Under no circumstances are drivers to stop at an unauthorized location when driving students to and from field trip destinations.** It is diocesan policy that teachers and school staff members may not drive any students on field trips.

## Fingerprinting

The Diocese of Orlando has mandated the fingerprinting and Safe Environment Training of all personnel and volunteers who will be working with children, the elderly, and the handicapped. In this bold measure, the Diocese of Orlando is taking an unprecedented stand to ensure the safety of our children from unwarranted abuse and molestation of any kind. This policy, in effect, means that any parent or parishioner volunteering in our school in any way, including everything from assisting in the classroom, lunchroom, or playground to chaperoning on a field trip, must have "cleared" fingerprints. Each teacher is responsible for seeing to it that parents or parishioners volunteering for class sponsored activities have cleared fingerprints on file in the main office.

ALL Academy personnel and volunteers must submit themselves to an FBI clearance. All clearances must be renewed every 5 years.

## Library and Media Center

Students in grades 6 – 8 visit the library regularly in the course of their academic classes.

Students in grades K - 5 will have a scheduled library class once a week. The library/media center is also open and available to individual students before school and during lunch breaks. Library rules must be observed at all times. Students who lose or damage library materials will be required to pay damages.

## Lost and Found

When clothing and various other possessions are found, they are placed in the lost and found located in the clinic. Lost keys or valuable jewelries will be kept in the school office. Mark all students' belongings with their names and grades to help avoid the problem of lost items. If your child has lost an item, please check the "lost and found".

## Lunch and Snack

Snack time is scheduled each morning. Your child may either bring a healthy snack and drink (no candy, soda, or caffeinated beverages please) from home or may purchase one from the school's "snack cart."

Hot lunches will be provided daily. The price for meals and the process for ordering will be announced at the beginning of the school year. Students may choose to bring their lunch each day. Students should not bring glass bottles, soft drinks or excessive amounts of candy

With the teacher's prior knowledge, parents may also eat with their children. Lunch menus will be posted online.

During lunch, students are expected to use the same manners required in the classroom.

## Mass

School masses are celebrated each Friday at 8:30 AM and also on Holy Days of Obligation. Individual classes plan liturgies and participate in them.

Parents are encouraged to attend and sit in the general congregation, behind the school children's section. No parent should be sitting with the class unless a teacher has requested his/her presence.

## Parent Portal

Online serves as an excellent means of communication between school and home for all families with Internet access. Plus Portals is used to disseminate school-wide information in an accurate and timely manner, as well as containing information such as the monthly calendar of events and lunch menus. Parents are granted access to private information that is specific to their child(ren)'s academic progress,

Family username/passwords are distributed to new families. Check it often.

## Pets

Pets are a lovely addition to a family. However, please keep your pets at home. Please be advised, animals/pets are not allowed at school. Therapy animals and animals visiting for in-classroom field trips are allowed.

## Publications

All publications from any Divine Mercy Catholic Academy or parish group, which go home via the school, must be reviewed and approved by the principal.

Occasionally, your child will receive a flyer concerning activities or events not sponsored by the school, i.e. Brevard Sports. These too must be reviewed and approved by the principal. The school, however, assumes no liability for any injury incurred at these events.

## Religious Education and Formation

Although Catholic Schools do not compel students to profess any religious ideology, it is expected that all students, regardless of their beliefs, will participate fully in the religious education program at the school. Students will attend all religion classes and worship services. Students are expected to conduct themselves respectfully and reverently during prayer, worship and religion classes.

Divine Mercy Catholic Community, in partnership with school parents, assumes the responsibility for preparing the children for the reception of First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation.

Students prepare for the listed sacraments in the following grades:

Reconciliation	Grade 2
Eucharist	Grade 2
Confirmation	Grade 8

Preparation is not automatic, and there are certain prerequisites for their reception:

- A child must understand that the sacraments celebrate key events in our lives and help to affirm the faith that is already being practiced. For this reason it is important that you and your child pray, and attend Mass on Sunday.
- Parents must attend a series of parent meetings during the year, prior to their children's reception of the sacrament. The parish director of religious education offers these formal classes. The dates will be set out on the monthly calendar.

Divine Mercy students who are not Catholic, but who desire to become Catholic, must have the approval and support of their parents or guardians and must take part in the program of preparation, which is sponsored by Divine Mercy Parish.

## School Hours

7:45 – 7:55 Children Arrive in Classrooms.

7:55 First Bell: Students prepare books and materials for the academic day.

8:00	Second Bell: Homeroom Period (Attendance, Prayer, Pledge of Allegiance, Announcements, Morning Work)	
8:10	Academics Begin	
8:30	School Mass on Fridays	
9:50	Snack	All Grades
11:30	First Lunch Period	Grades 3, 4 and 5
12:00	Second Lunch Period	Grades K, 1 and 2
12:30	Third Lunch Period	Grades 6, 7 and 8
2:50	Homeroom period	
3:00	Dismissal bell	
3:00 – 3:10	Student Pick-up	
3:10	All remaining students report to Extended Day Program.	

## School Office

The school office will be open during school hours 7:30 A.M. - 3:30 P.M. each school day.

## Search of Students and their Property

The Diocese of Orlando affirms that, consistent with the Diocesan Mission Statement, each Catholic school has a special responsibility for the conduct of students and for ensuring the right of teachers to teach and students to learn in a safe and caring Christian environment. Given the Diocese's dedication to create and maintain a safe environment, students will not have any expectation of privacy with respect to any and all property brought on school grounds or to school events.

The search of a student's person or any item carried by the student is permissible when there is any suspicion that the student may be carrying contraband. Contraband is defined as any weapon, dangerous object, illegal drug, drug paraphernalia or other item prohibited by law or by school policy. All property of the school, including student desks and lockers, as well as contents, may be opened, searched or inspected at any time without notice. School personnel have an unrestricted right to search this property as well as any containers, book bags, purses, or articles of clothing that are left unattended on the school campus.

Searches may be conducted by authorized school personnel, police, or other appropriate officials with the approval of the principal, including random searches. Divine Mercy Catholic Academy will follow all federal, state and local laws in respect to any student involvement in illegal activities and will cooperate with all law enforcement personnel. The administration does not need to notify parents prior to the questioning of a student by law enforcement, however, the administration may ask to notify the parents/guardians if permissible.

## Standardized Testing in the Diocese of Orlando

All schools in the Diocese of Orlando are required to administer standardized testing as an integral part of the total instructional program. This testing, however, is *not* "high-stakes" – the

results are not used to determine teacher efficacy, nor are they used solely to determine a child's promotion or retention. Test results/scores are simply one measure of the total composite of a child's individual academic progress; thus, the information is used to assist teachers in meeting the specific and targeted learning expectations for a child's appropriate developmental level. This information is critical in helping our teachers provide the best educational opportunities for our students.

Given the number of benefits derived from the standardized testing, the Diocese of Orlando does not allow a parent or a student the choice of "opt-out" of testing. Students who are absent for any reason, including medical absences, during the school's designated testing window will be rescheduled for testing upon his/her return to school at the discretion of the school's administration. Students will not be exempted from taking standardized tests.

Accommodations or modifications will be offered as required to meet the qualified child's learning needs. This means accommodations or modifications are allowed *only* when specifically indicated through testing via a professional evaluation completed as part of the IDEA Child Find process by the public school District, or through a private psychological-educational evaluation approved by the Office of Catholic Schools.

In addition, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Orlando do not write 504 Student Disability plans. Accommodations or modifications are offered at the sole discretion of the school staff and must be based on an evaluation of the documentation provided and other factors deemed relevant by the school staff.

## Student Records

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy adheres to the Buckley Amendment regarding access to student records. Students requesting records/transcripts/recommendations must make a five school-day request to the Office. All forms should be submitted to the Divine Mercy Catholic Academy Office for distribution. Completed forms will be sent via the U.S. Mail. Special handling will require that all postal fees be paid by the parents.

The Academy will not forward records for students with an outstanding balance.

## Student Services / Guidance Office

The Department of Student Services and Guidance offers a wide range of programs that offer assistance to students, teachers, and parents. This office serves as an advocate for all students and is committed to enhancing the personal growth of every student in the following ways:

- Providing services to pupils through individual counseling, small group, and classroom guidance activities
- Assisting students in selecting and making educational/career plans
- Providing assistance to teachers as they seek to meet the individual needs of their students
- Offering parent information/support workshops
- Administering and interpreting testing
- Offering peer mediation/tutoring programs
- Conducting conferences and consulting with students, parents, teachers, administrator, the child study team, and other specialists

Two cutting edge programs that are offered through the student service department are the Interactive Metronome and Play Attention. These are advanced, brain-based, treatment programs which help students to train their brains to learn to focus and attend for longer periods

of time, filter out internal and external distractions, and improve the ability to monitor mental and physical actions.

On-going staff development is provided to teachers throughout the year on the various ways in which children learn, as well as the best teaching methodologies that support the individual learning patterns and individual minds of each child.

Throughout the year, parents are invited to attend workshops which offer support, information, and encouragement on topics related to their child(ren)'s development.

## Substance Abuse Policy

The Diocese of Orlando affirms that, consistent with the Diocesan Mission Statement, each Catholic school has a special responsibility for the conduct of students and for ensuring the right of teachers to teach and students to learn in a safe and caring Christian environment.

The definition of terms for this policy is as follows: "Controlled Substances" are defined as illegal drugs and drug paraphernalia, anabolic steroids, performance enhancing drugs, tobacco, restricted or controlled chemicals, alcohol, inhalants, restricted or controlled solvents, and prescription or over-the-counter drugs used by someone other than the prescribed or intended user or used for purposes other than those for which they are indicated or in a manner or in quantities other than directed by a physician or an authorized medical prescriber.

"Abuse" or "Substance Abuse" means the consumption or use of any substance for purposes other than the treatment of sickness or injury as prescribed or administered by a physician or an authorized medical prescriber, including, but not limited to the possession, use, delivery, transfer, or sale of Controlled Substances, chemicals or any substance or material designed to look like or be represented as such by students, on school premises, in school buildings, or at school-sanctioned events.

It is illegal and unacceptable for students to use, abuse, misuse, distribute, or sell Controlled Substances on campus or at any school-sponsored event. A student found to be engaging in Substance Abuse, in possession or under the influence of a Controlled Substance of any kind, at school, on school property, or at a school-sponsored event shall be subject to discipline up to and including possible required withdrawal from school. Substance Abuse, regardless of where such Abuse takes place, also may warrant discipline up to and including required withdrawal.

The following process will be followed if there is a student suspected of being under the influence of Controlled Substances while at school, on school property or at a school-sponsored event:

1. The student will be required to take a drug test performed at the school's discretion, whether a rapid drug screen or reference lab of the school's choice. No chain of custody is required.

## Teacher Gifts

Collecting money for teachers at Christmas, teacher birthdays, teacher appreciation, or end of the year gifts is permitted, as long as the following guidelines are maintained:

- Specific dollar amounts are not required.
- Most students have more than one teacher – be fair.
- Gifts must come from everyone in the class, regardless of who donated.
- Approval from principal is obtained in advance.

## Telephone

In order to keep interruptions of school schedules to a minimum, students and teachers will not be called to the phone during the school day. Emergency messages for a student will be taken and delivered by the office staff at period breaks

Students may have cell phones provided that they are not used and are turned off, and kept in their back packs during school hours. Students caught texting during class will have their phones taken away and sent to the office. Parents may pick up the phone directly from the principal.

Telephone messages for teachers will be taken and delivered, or messages may be left on a teacher's voicemail. A return call will be made at the teacher's earliest convenience. Please be patient. The teacher's school day responsibilities do not include impromptu parent teacher conferences. They are to be dedicated to academic time and student supervision. E-mails should never be used in place of an issue which requires a parent/teacher conference.

Students may not use the office phone unless a teacher or the principal grants permission.

## Textbooks

All textbooks are the property of Divine Mercy Catholic Academy and must be safeguarded carefully. For this reason, it is **essential that the students do not write in, tear or deface the textbooks in any manner**. Textbooks may have clear contact cover, which should not be picked at, written on, or removed for any reason. Should textbooks be lost or vandalized, the student issued the textbook will be responsible for paying to replace it.

## Tornado Watch and Warning Procedures

In the event of a Tornado Watch, we will carefully monitor the National Weather Service and the local media for the latest and most accurate information. If a decision is made to evacuate Hartnett Hall and the second floor classrooms, an announcement will be made over the public address system. Students should move calmly, quickly, and quietly to their designated location.

If a Warning indicates that a tornado is approaching, desks will be pulled away from windows and doors toward the center of the room. Students should take cover underneath their desks.

**Parents may not sign their children out of school until the warning has been lifted.**

## Tuition

### Payment

Divine Mercy has adopted a tuition policy that outlines payment procedures. This is to ensure that revenues owed to the school will accrue in a timely fashion enabling the school to meet its financial obligations in an efficient and businesslike manner. The following payment plans are available:

1. Payment in full (cash, check or money order) with \$100 discount on or before July 15th.
2. Half Payment or Monthly Payment via FACTS (only) with 10 or 11 month option. All payments must be completed by May 20<sup>th</sup> of the school year.

Families that pay tuition through FACTS and who change their bank account, must notify the school business office at least four (4) weeks prior to their scheduled withdrawal. Also, families knowing that they will not have sufficient funds in their account at the time of a scheduled withdrawal, must call the academy business office at least five (5) business days ahead of their scheduled withdrawal. The FACTS Company requires these amounts of time to adjust an account. The FACTS company will also charge certain services fees.

Family that are two (2) months delinquent in their tuition payments will be contacted by the principal and given fifteen (15) days to update their payments. If satisfactory arrangements are not made within a fifteen (15) day period, the principal will see that the family involved is informed that their child(ren) may no longer attend classes at Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. The student book fees are part of the total tuition and are non-refundable.

Students are not permitted to take exams or re-register for the succeeding semester until all outstanding debts, including tuition, have been satisfied. Graduating eighth graders will not be allowed to sit for final exams until all delinquent account have been satisfied. This policy will be administered by the school administration. Delinquent tuition notices will be sent out by the bookkeeper. **It is anticipated that a delinquent tuition situation will normally be cleared by prompt payment of the outstanding balance. However, it is recognized that circumstances may occasionally prevent prompt payment. These situations should be brought to the attention of the principal, so that a reasonable solution can be reached.**

**Families with students receiving the McKay Scholarship, Step Up Scholarship or any other scholarship are responsible for full payment of the balance between tuition and scholarship. Registration fee is required at time of registration. Students receiving the McKay scholarship will not receive the multi-student discount, however the siblings of a student on McKay will receive the multi-student discount if applicable. Please refer to the tuition rate sheet.**

#### Category I

Registered parishioners of Divine Mercy Church are those who attend Mass regularly and who contribute to the church using the weekly offertory envelopes during the calendar year. The minimum, non-tax deductible, amount is specified annually on the registration form. Contributions towards the Capital Campaign will not be considered as satisfying the required annual offertory contribution. These contributions must be held separate in order to maintain the necessary financial support to the Parish, as well as to realize the goals set for the refurbishment effort. The Category I family must also be active members of the parish community.

#### Category II

Those who do not meet the criteria for Category I must pay the Category II tuition rate for each child which is the actual cost of tuition per child. (Rates subject to change)

### Tuition Assistance

**Application for tuition assistance will be sent to you at the time of (re)registration.** The tuition assistance application must be filled out completely and accompanied by copies of the parents' W2 and 1040 forms and sent directly to FACTS Tuition Management <https://online.factsmgt.com/aid> at the time of registration in order to be considered for tuition assistance. Only registered and active parishioners will be considered for tuition assistance.

### Visitors and Volunteers

All parents, visitors and volunteers must report to the school office to identify themselves, sign in, state their reason for being on campus, and sign-out upon leaving the school. Visitor badges must be worn while on campus.

Parents may not go into the classrooms when class is in session without prior consent of the teacher. Class time is much too precious to be interrupted. Forgotten items, brought to the school office, will be delivered in a timely fashion.

## Volunteer Coaches

Our sports programs rely on parent/adult volunteers. All volunteer coaches must have fingerprint clearance and complete the Safe Environment Training. CYS training requirements must be met.

## Volunteer Service Requirement

One very important aspect of quality education is the willingness of the parent/guardian to become a part of that endeavor. It is through the work of volunteers that many education needs are achieved.

Each family of a student at Divine Mercy Catholic Academy is required to serve a specific amount of volunteer service for each school year, or pay a fee to offset hours/ points not served. The amount of the fee and the number of volunteer hours/points required will be determined by the school board each year as part of the registration preparation process, and is specified annually in the registration form. Included in the required number of volunteer hours/points are required bingo concessions during each calendar year. Otherwise families will be required to pay for non-worked service hours/points (in the amount determined annually by the school board) in order to reregister for the next school year in March.

According to diocesan policy, all volunteers working directly with children must have cleared fingerprints on file with the school office, as stated in the Fingerprinting section of this handbook.

The advisory board and administration decide policy to determine the number of hours/points required by each family. Each family is responsible for recording all volunteer hours/points worked by handing in a hard copy of their work hours to the school office. A member of the Divine Mercy Catholic Academy Charger Corp is appointed each year to monitor family volunteer hours/points. Volunteer hour/points are per school year (August – May).

## Written Notes are required for the Following:

1. Absenteeism or tardiness
2. Permission to leave school early
3. Not wearing proper uniform
4. Permission for a student to go to a friend's house after school
5. Permission for a student to be excused from P. E. class because of illness or injury (**includes recess as well**)
6. Permission for a student to be dismissed to anyone other than a parent or guardian
7. Permission to take public transportation, to walk home, or to ride a bike to and from school



## ADDENDUMS

### **Divine Mercy Catholic Academy Policy for use of an E-Reader**

Examples of approved devices include e-readers: Nook, Kindle, PanDigital Reader

**Purpose:** The use of a digital reading device is a privilege, not a right and should be treated as such. The rules and limitation set forth in this policy are in addition to all existing policies including the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), student code of conduct, and individual classroom and school rules. This policy governs the use of these devices during school hours. Devices used during after-school care, extra-curricular activities, or other events that occur after school hours are subject to the rules and limitations set forth by the governing adult.

#### **Risks**

In an active classroom environment, these devices are vulnerable to loss, theft, and breakage. Divine Mercy Catholic School accepts no responsibility for personal property brought to school. Students who bring a reading device to school assume total responsibility for their devices. Lost, stolen, or damaged devices are the responsibility of the student and of his/her parent/guardian regardless of how the device was lost, stolen, or damaged. Students **MUST** take all necessary precautions. The following are **MINIMUM** requirements of protection for personal computing devices.

1. The student must read and understand the E-Reader Policy, and return the signed permission form and waiver.
2. The personal computing device must be labeled with the student's name.
3. The personal computing device should have a protective case. A screen protector is also suggested.
4. The personal computing device must be properly stored when not in use.

#### **General Rules for Usage**

· Students **MUST** comply **AT ALL TIMES** with all rules and limitations outlined in the Acceptable Use Policy in addition to this policy as well as any verbal instructions or limitations set forth by the governing staff member.

All devices must be charged and run off of their own batteries while at school.

- Student use of personal computing devices must support educational activities currently occurring in the instructional environment.
- As always, use of these devices is at the sole discretion of the classroom teacher.
- Playing games, listening to music, or other activities engaged in for the sole purpose of entertainment are prohibited.
- Files must be appropriate in nature.

These files must only be used for the specific purpose outlined by the classroom teacher. No other use is permitted.

Internet capability (3G, 4G, cellular broadband, or Wi-Fi connectivity or any other connection network) on personal computing devices must be switched off. Books must be purchased and downloaded at home.

Electronic communications are strictly prohibited unless explicitly approved by the classroom teacher for the purpose of an educational activity. Electronic communications include:

- Text messages
- Instant messages
- E-mail
- Chat
- Phone or Skype type Calls
- Blogs
- Facebook or other social network

- Any screensaver, wallpaper, pictures, videos, or other media on any device must not violate the limitations outlined in the Acceptable Use Policy as well as the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Classroom teachers and administrators have the right to view ANY and ALL files on a personal computing device regardless of suspicion of appropriate or inappropriate use.
- Devices that emit sound must be muted during classroom use unless explicitly approved by the teacher.
- Headphones are NOT permitted during instructional time.
- If asked to turn off and store a device by a classroom teacher or administrator, the student MUST comply with these instructions immediately.
- Students may not loan or share devices with other students and are responsible for all liability or inappropriate use.
- Students may NOT connect their device to the network either wirelessly or by using a cable unless specifically approved by the Technology Staff.
- DMCA staff will not provide technical support for personal computing devices.

### **Privacy Policy**

Students shall have no expectation of privacy once they have been authorized to use their device on campus or at school events. Teachers, Administrators, and other school Personnel, may examine the device and search its contents at ANY time.

### **Consequences of Misuse**

First offense device confiscated until the end of the day

Second offense student is confiscated until the end of the day and is banned from bringing the device to school for

14 days from date of offense.

Third offense, student's mobile computing device is confiscated until the end of the day and privileges are revoked



## LETTER TO PARENTS FROM THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE:

Dear Parents:

Over the years, the Diocese of Orlando and the Office of Schools have taken steps to ensure the safety of your children. We continually review the measures we have in place to protect your children, and we oftentimes ask for your support in implementing new measures and procedures designed to make our schools a safe haven for your children.

To this end, we hope you will share the following with your children to help us ensure that wrongful conduct does not occur in our schools. The intent of this letter is not to alarm you, but rather to help all of us understand the limits of proper conduct we expect in our schools.

While we hope never to have these problems in our schools, we want it clearly understood that the Diocese does not condone or authorize its employees, volunteers, coaches, or students to engage in any of the following activities:

- Threatening or causing personal harm or injury
- Threatening or causing damage to school or Diocesan property
- Providing medical advice
- Conducting physical examinations of or providing shots to students (other than school sponsored or sanctioned exams for scoliosis, vision, hearing, athletic fitness, diabetic treatments, or other medical treatments, all of which require written permission from a parent or guardian)
- Administering drugs, including any over the counter medication, in the absence of express written permission from a parent or guardian per Diocesan policy
- Providing massages or other physical therapy
- Taking blood samples or performing any other medical procedure
- Examining the genitalia of any student, for any reason
- Touching an individual inappropriately
- Smoking, or encouraging smoking, on school property
- Asking a student to undress or observing a student while he or she is changing clothes at school or a sporting event, other than necessary supervision in a locker or approved changing area
- Denigrating or abusing any child, volunteer, or employee.

We also ask you, as parents, to help us identify these and any other inappropriate activities that take place in our schools. Please report them immediately to the Principal or the Office of Schools. Similarly, if your child observes or experiences these or similar activities, he or she should feel comfortable telling you, the Principal, or the Office of Schools. Our experience and that of experts, particularly in the area of school violence, is that tell-tale signs (e.g., severe mood changes, emotional outbursts or irrational conduct, fascination with guns or incidents of violence, indirect and direct threats) usually exist before the actual violent act occurs. Early intervention, therefore, is the key to avoiding a tragic situation. We cannot possibly identify all the improper conduct that might occur, but we ask you as parents to use your common sense and report anything that you believe is inappropriate. Your cooperation in enforcing these guidelines is greatly appreciated.

Working together, we can continue to provide your children a caring, loving environment, and the best Catholic education.

**RIGHT TO AMEND HANDBOOK**

Because it is impossible to foresee all problems which arise, this clause empowers the faculty and administration of Divine Mercy Catholic Academy to take disciplinary action against any behavior which violates the spirit and philosophy of DMCA, even though it is not specified in this handbook. Additionally, the school administration retains the right to amend the handbook for a just cause.

I acknowledge that I have read the contents of the 2017-2018 Divine Mercy Catholic Academy Parent/Student Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Name (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student signature (Grades 1 - 8)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Name (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date