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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the *Parent/Student Handbook* is to ensure that parents/guardians and students **understand** the policies and procedures of St. Mary's School of Piscataway and **agree** to be governed by them.

The education of the student is a partnership between the parents and the school. Just as the parent/guardian has the right to withdraw a child, if desired, the school administration reserves the right to require withdrawal of a student if the administration determines that the partnership is irretrievably broken. (Shaughnessy, 2002)

**The administration reserves the right to amend any and all policies or procedures at any time. The administration also reserves the right to rule on any issue or event that may also be covered in this handbook.**

**All parents and students must sign the ADW Parent/Student Handbook Agreement Form 22. This form must be returned to the school by the date requested.**

Every attempt will be made to notify parents/guardians of changes through regular school communications such as Plus Portals and official school mailings./emails.

- ❖ From here forward the term "parent/parents" will be used to refer to a student's legal parent or guardian.

## PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AND MISSION STATEMENT

### *School Mission Statement*

St. Mary's School, rooted in Christ, supports the development of students, their families, and the community. Building on our tradition of excellence, we continue to grow in faith, knowledge, and love by recognizing the worth and dignity of each individual as a child of God.

### *School Belief Statements*

Catholic education is an explicit expression of the evangelizing mission entrusted by Jesus to His Church. Our beliefs at St. Mary's School of Piscataway are:

- To teach the message of Jesus Christ through prayer, word, and example;
- To promote self-esteem, moral and spiritual values, enabling the students to reach full awareness of their God-given talents;
- To build, within a parish setting, a strong community based on Christian faith and service;
- To provide a structured and enriched educational program;
- To provide an atmosphere that empowers students to achieve their potential as children of God who influence the local and global community.

This process is enhanced by parents, staff, teachers, and administrators whose lives are modeled on Gospel values as they teach, serve, and build community as Jesus did.

## *The Role of the Parent*

We, at St. Mary's School of Piscataway, consider it a privilege to work with parents in the education of their children. As partners in the educational process, and to help children develop the self-control necessary to succeed to the best of their ability, we ask parents to develop in their children good habits of behavior as well as proper attitudes toward school. To help their children in school all parents:

- Will respect the teacher as a professional dedicated to furthering the student's academic and spiritual progress;
- Will comply with the rules of the school concerning student conduct and dress code;
- Will cooperate with the school in carrying out disciplinary action;
- Will model Christian behavior;
- Will arrange for a consistent time and place for their children to complete homework assignments;
- Will teach their children respect for authority, rules, for the rights of others, and for private and public property;
- Will volunteer for various school functions that require adult assistance and complete 20 hours of family service;
- Will participate fully in the Home and School Association fundraisers;
- Will insist on prompt and regular school attendance and comply with attendance rules;
- Will inform the school of any special situation regarding their children's well-being, safety, and health;
- Will work with the school in a cooperative spirit to carry out the recommendations made in the best interest of their children.

## *Parent Cooperation*

Parents and students understand and acknowledge the Roman Catholic religious nature of St. Mary's School of Piscataway. Parents and students agree not to publicly repudiate the teachings and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, and will respect and support the unique identity that St. Mary's School derives from its Catholic faith. As the primary educators of their children, parents shall not act in ways that contradict the Catholic nature of St. Mary's School. Parents shall cooperate fully with the school and the students shall participate in all required school programming, including instruction in the Catholic faith and attendance at Mass. **As the primary educators of the students, parents agree to act in ways that promote the best interests of the Church and school and will comply with the policies of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington and St. Mary's School of Piscataway.**

## **SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

### ***Spiritual and Religious Life***

St. Mary's School of Piscataway strives to be a community of faith increasingly marked by fraternal charity and fidelity to Jesus Christ and the Church He founded. The life of school is therefore centered upon student and faculty participation in Eucharistic liturgies, seasonal para-liturgical services, and other forms of prayer.

Parents/Guardians and students understand and acknowledge the Roman Catholic religious nature. Parents/Guardians and students agree not to publicly repudiate the teachings and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church and will respect and support the unique identity that derives from its Catholic faith. Parents/Guardians shall cooperate fully with the school and the students shall participate in all required school programming, including instruction in the Catholic faith and attendance at Mass.

### ***Religious and Moral Instruction***

Religious education at St. Mary's School of Piscataway is directed toward enabling the student's faith to "become living, conscious, and active through the light of instruction." (To Teach As Jesus Did, 102) The religious education program not only reflects the priorities determined by the Archbishop of Washington, but also the larger Catholic tradition of passing on the faith in a school setting, as expressed in the Church's official catechetical documents. The program seeks to proclaim and teach God's word in an atmosphere that promotes its faithful acceptance in conscience as well as in action.

Encouraging and deepening the sacramental life of our students' stands at the center of all religious instruction at St. Mary's School of Piscataway. Although the 2nd and 8th grades are special sacramental years, St. Mary's School of Piscataway considers all years of a student's formal religious instruction as preparatory for the sacraments. There is never a time when gaining knowledge of the Lord does not lead to seeking to love Him more in His Eucharistic presence and desiring His forgiveness in Confession. Students in Grade 2 are prepared for initial reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. The preparation program for Confirmation is in a format that brings together the Parish School of Religion and the day school students. In various ways, parents are required to be active partners in the preparation of their children for these sacraments.

## **SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

### ***Before & After Care Program (BAC)***

The Before & After Care Program strives to construct an atmosphere with varying activities including homework time, outdoor play, and indoor games. Only children enrolled in St. Mary's School of Piscataway and registered for the BAC Program, will be allowed to participate in the program. Only students in attendance for the day can use the BAC Program.

Registration fees, snack fees, late fees, and yearly, monthly or hourly BAC tuition fees are provided on the school website on the Tuition Rate Schedule, and also in TADs. For “drop-in” students not registered in the program, the BAC registration fee and snack fee will be applied at the third “drop-in” use of the BAC Program. **Students with any past due unpaid BAC Program fees will not be allowed to participate in the program. Students may only return to the BAC Program after past due unpaid fees have been settled in TADs. This will be strictly enforced.**

The BAC Program operates only on days when school is in session, normally from 6:45 am until 8:00 am and from 3:00 pm until 6:00 pm, and on Early Dismissal days from 12:15 pm until 6:00 pm. *There are **additional late fee charges** for students remaining after 6:00 pm. If a student remains after 6:00 pm, they must be signed out and picked up from the Parish Hall. If students arrive before or remain after specified school hours, or **after extra-curricular club hours**, they will automatically be placed in the BAC Program and the appropriate fees will be assessed.* The late fee for pick-up after 6:00 pm will be **\$25 PER CHILD** for the first 15 minutes and **\$30.00 PER CHILD** for each 15 minutes or fraction thereafter. Fees will be **\$40.00 PER CHILD** after 6:30 pm for each 15 minutes or fraction thereafter.

Students must be signed in and out by a parent or designated adult. Once a child is signed out, the child becomes the responsibility of the parent or designated adult and must immediately leave the school grounds with the parent or designated adult .

In the event of a “delayed opening”, Before Care will have its opening delayed by the same amount of time. If a delayed opening changes to a school closing, parents must arrange for student pick up as soon as possible. In the event of an “early closing” due to weather or other emergency, parents are to pick up their children as soon as possible so that everyone may get home safely. When Prince George’s County cancels after school activities, St. Mary’s BAC Program will close immediately.

The Before & After Care Program is operated under the auspices of St. Mary’s School of Piscataway, and all policies and procedures of the school apply. The BAC Program operates in accordance with the standards and regulations set forth by the Maryland State Department of Education.

#### **NOTES:**

- A 20% discount on the yearly BAC tuition fee will be applied only if paid in full **before** the start of the school year. A 10% discount on bi-annual BAC tuition fees will be applied if paid **before** September 1st and February 1st.
- Monthly BAC tuition fees are applied in TADs at the beginning of the school year, and due at the start of each month. A 10 month payment plan is available.
- Hourly BAC charges are tallied and applied in TADs the following month.
- Late pick-up fees are tallied and applied in TADs the following month.
- BAC registration and snack fees are non-refundable.

## ***Home and School Association (HSA)***

St. Mary's Home and School Association is a parent organization that supports and enhances the educational ministry of the school. All parents, faculty, and staff are members. General meetings provide opportunities for parents to hear speakers on pertinent issues and to take part in business and community-related activities. A strong emphasis is placed on promoting service activities, volunteerism, and fundraising activities. Active participation of all members is encouraged.

## ***National Junior Honor Society***

The St. Mary's School of Piscataway National Junior Honor Society was established in 2000 according to a charter granted by the National Association for Secondary School Principals. Membership is an honor bestowed upon a student. Selection for membership is based on outstanding scholarship, leadership, service, character, and citizenship. Once selected, members have a responsibility to continue to demonstrate these qualities.

## ***Instrumental Music Program***

In conjunction with the Archdiocesan Music Program, lessons in instrumental music are offered when available to students in Grades 4-8. A qualified music instructor is assigned to St. Mary's School of Piscataway. All arrangements, lessons, and rental or purchase of instruments are handled privately between the parent and the band instructor. The school permits students in the instrumental program to be released from classes for a half-hour lesson each week. **It is the student's responsibility to make up the work from a missed class.** Students participating in this program are responsible for arriving at school prepared with their instruments and music on the assigned day of lessons.

## ***ADMISSIONS POLICIES***

### ***Archdiocesan Admissions & Non-Discrimination Policy***

Archdiocesan Admissions & Non-Discrimination Policy: The Archdiocese's Admissions & Non-Discrimination Policy can be found on the website of the Catholic Schools Office of The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington at <https://adwcatholicschools.org/non-discriminationpolicy/>

### ***Program***

St. Mary's School of Piscataway seeks primarily to serve Catholic parents of St. Mary's Parish who want a Catholic education for their children. The school offers an eleven-year program from Pre-Kindergarten (3 and 4 year olds) through Grade 8. The number of students accepted will be limited.



## ***Accreditation***

St. Mary's School of Piscataway has received Accreditation from Cognia. St. Mary's School of Piscataway has met the requirements established by the Cognia Accreditation Commission and Board of Trustees and is thereby accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges & Schools Council on School Improvement.

## ***Application, Testing, and Interviewing***

Applications for Grades Pre-K-8 must be completed through TADs ([www.tads.com](http://www.tads.com)). **In order to be considered for enrollment, the completed Application form, along with the application fee and the following, must be submitted through TADs:**

- Copy of valid birth certificate;
- Copy of baptismal certificate (if Catholic);
- Current report card including any comments and the previous two years' report cards;
- Current standardized test scores and the previous two years' scores;
- Archdiocese of Washington Immunization Policy Acknowledgment (ADW Form 3) and all attachments;
- Allergy Agreement and Action Plan (if applicable);
- Copy of custody order, or other applicable court orders (if applicable);
- All relevant evaluations/assessments and previous special education plans (if applicable).

Parents must provide the school with a record of the child's immunizations signed by the Health Department or medical care provider. **No student will be permitted to start or remain in school without proof of immunizations.** In accordance with the immunization requirements and the guidelines of the Archdiocese of Washington, exemptions are provided only on a temporary basis to those students with a physician-documented medical contraindication.

Students applying for PreK3 must be 3 by September 1st, for PreK4 must be 4 by September 1st, for Kindergarten must be five years old by September 1st, and students applying for Grade 1 must be 6 years old by September 1st.

Students seeking entrance to St. Mary's School of Piscataway will be tested. Students applying for admission to first through eighth grades will complete a shadow visit. They will spend the day with the students in their current grade.

## ***Acceptance***

In acceptance of new students, the period of time a family has been registered, active, and contributing members of St. Mary's Parish will be considered. The presence of siblings enrolled in the school is a consideration for reasons of maintaining family unity. While preference is given to children of registered, active, contributing parishioners, children of non-registered parishioners, children of parishioners from another Catholic parish, or children of non-Catholic families will be considered for acceptance if space is available.

**New students accepted to St. Mary's School of Piscataway will be on probation for one year.** Students who withdraw from the school for any length of time, for any reason, and want to return must reapply and will be considered for re-admission.

### ***Registration and Waiting List***

Re-registration and registration for the upcoming school year begins in October and continues until classes are filled. Considering the class size limitations, applications for enrollment in any particular grade may exceed the available space. In this case, a waiting list will be established and candidates selected if and when space becomes available.

## **FINANCE POLICIES**

### ***School Tuition and Fees***

The Financial Policies of St. Mary's School of Piscataway were developed and approved by the Administrative Team. All tuition rates, other fees, and payment schedules are finalized through the Pastor. Those who are registered members of St. Mary's Parish **may** qualify for a Catholic Scholarship. To qualify, families must be active in the parish, attend Mass every weekend, and participate in the life of our community of faith. In order to maintain the highest standards in our school and to keep tuition affordable, each school family who is a registered parishioner of St. Mary's Church of Piscataway, is required to attend Mass Sunday (or Saturday evening) and make use of the weekly contribution envelope.

Families who are registered members of other Catholic parishes **may** qualify for a Catholic Scholarship with a letter of good standing from their Pastor.

**Parents desiring to re-enroll their child/children in St. Mary's School will be required to complete enrollment on TADs ([www.tads.com](http://www.tads.com)) and sign a Financial Agreement yearly. After a new student has been accepted, the parents must complete and sign a Financial Agreement.**

**St. Mary's School of Piscataway reserves the right to cancel the registration of any student whose family fails to meet the tuition or other financial requirements. The school reserves the right to withhold student-graded assignments, honor roll certificates, school records, including report cards and progress reports, when a family fails to meet the tuition or other financial requirements.** If payment of tuition or other financial requirements is not paid by the due date, late fees may be applied to the financial account. **If an account is 31+ days past due, students will not be allowed to return to school until the unpaid balance is paid in full.** If payment of tuition or any other school financial obligation is made with a check that is subsequently returned, there will be a fee of \$35.00 charged. All future payments and subsequent payments must then be made by cash, certified check, or money order.

## ***Enrollment Cancellation***

**Parents agree that by signing the yearly Financial Agreement the financial obligation is for the entire academic year.** Withdrawal/termination of enrollment on the part of the parent/St. Mary's School will warrant consideration for release of financial obligations or refund **only in extreme circumstances.** Prior written notification to the principal is required for all withdrawals.

## ***Tuition Assistance Program***

St. Mary's School of Piscataway recognizes the significant sacrifices many families make to educate their child/children in a values-centered environment. To assist those families who qualify, St. Mary's School of Piscataway is involved with programs for financial assistance. Applications for Archdiocese of Washington Tuition Assistance are available in the school office or online at [www.adw.org](http://www.adw.org). **In order to be considered for St. Mary's Parish/School Tuition Assistance, families must first apply for Archdiocese of Washington Tuition Assistance by completing and submitting the ADW TADs Form. All requests for tuition assistance are the responsibility of the parents.**

## ***Service and Fundraising Obligations***

Parents are recognized as the primary educators of their children and are encouraged to be involved with the school in substantial ways. Parent involvement and volunteerism build and strengthen our school community. Parents regularly help with special projects, various classroom activities, sacramental preparation, lunch/recess duty, and as homeroom parents, library aides, and chaperones. By becoming actively involved in St. Mary's School of Piscataway, parents demonstrate to their child/children how important school is and how important their child/children is/are to them. Our school depends on the generous giving of time and resources by our parents.

**All adults who volunteer and work with or around children, in the school or for other approved school and parish-sponsored activities, must comply with the Child Protection Policy of the Archdiocese of Washington. For these volunteers, this includes but is not limited to:**

- **Complete and submit a Volunteer Application;**
- **Criminal History Record Check by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the State of Maryland;**
- **Livescan fingerprinting through the Archdiocese of Washington;**
- **Reading and signing the Acknowledgement page of the Child Protection Policy book;**
- **Mandatory attendance at a Virtus - Protecting God's Children training session.**

Each family is required to actively support the school by giving of their time, talent, and treasures. Each family is required to complete 20 hours of Family Service, with 5 hours MANDATORY in the school building.

***Family Service:*** Parents may fulfill this requirement by volunteering for approved school and parish associated activities and events. For convenience, a system is in place for tracking Family Service hours. At the completion of any service hours, individuals are required to complete the Family Service

Form online within one week of completing service. The information must include the name of the event chairperson/co-chairperson. **Family Service hours will not be recorded without a completed Family Service Form. Each family must have completed 20 service hours by May 29, 2024. Families will be billed \$50 for each uncompleted mandatory service hour and \$25 for each uncompleted non-mandatory service hours.**

## ACADEMIC POLICIES

### *Curriculum*

St. Mary's School of Piscataway follows the curriculum standards approved by the Archdiocesan School Board and set forth by the Catholic Schools Office of the Archdiocese of Washington. The curriculum for the Early Childhood Program promotes the spiritual, emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual growth of the young child in a thematic format. The course of study in Grades 1–8 includes formal instruction in the following: Religion, Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. St. Mary's School of Piscataway also provides instruction in the following: Art, Music, Physical Education, and Archdiocesan Personal Safety Education. Foreign Language instruction and, for those students who qualify, advanced Mathematics may also be provided.

**As primary educators, parents are to monitor their child/children's progress by checking homework and reviewing class work and assessments on a daily basis.**

St. Mary's School of Piscataway also participates in regular on-going curriculum evaluation as directed by the Archdiocese of Washington and uses standardized testing results to identify strengths and weaknesses in our program. Teachers regularly assess their students' needs in order to better educate the whole child.

### *Special Learning Needs*

St. Mary's School of Piscataway has a philosophy of inclusion for all children whose parents wish for them to receive a Catholic School education provided the school can meet the child's educational needs with reasonable accommodations. This philosophy is consistent with the mission of the Catholic Church in viewing children with learning differences as children of God and members of the Church. Parents of children with learning differences are required to work collaboratively with the administration and the Student Assistance Team. This includes providing the school with the child's educational, physical, and psychological testing results, reports, and recommendations and allowing school personnel to consult with outside professionals regarding recommendations. Parents will also be asked to work with the administration and the Student Assistance Team to locate funding and resources to provide appropriate accommodations.

## *Academic Requirements*

All students are expected to work at maintaining high academic standards. Any student attending St. Mary's School of Piscataway will be required to achieve a minimum "D" grade average every quarter. Any student who falls below this requirement will be placed on probation for the next quarter. At the end of the probation period, the student is required to have achieved a minimum "D" grade average. Students failing to achieve and maintain the required "D" grade average will not be offered re-registration for the next school year unless they attend an approved summer school or comparable program. Written proof of attendance and a passing grade are required before re-registration forms will be accepted.

## *Classwork and Homework*

**Classwork assignments are to be completed in the manner and by the date required by the teacher. It is the responsibility of the student to take home all classwork papers in order that parents may be aware of their child's progress.**

Homework is an essential part of the learning process. **Homework is part of the academic evaluation of the students. The completion and subsequent submission of homework assignments is the responsibility of each student.** Homework is assigned as a reinforcement or extension of the daily program. All assigned homework should be completed in the manner and by the date required by the teacher. It is the parent's responsibility to supervise their child's homework. As the child becomes older, the major responsibility should shift to the child. Yet even with older children, some parental supervision is expected. Parents should emphasize that study and reading are as essential as written work.

### **Recommended Homework Time Allotments:**

Kindergarten:	15 minutes (Monday through Thursday)
Grades 1 & 2:	30 minutes (Monday through Thursday)
Grade 3:	45 minutes (Monday through Thursday)
Grades 4 & 5:	60 minutes (Monday through Thursday)
Grades 6, 7 & 8:	60 - 90 minutes

**If homework assignments cannot be completed because of home conditions, e.g., sickness in the family, death of a relative, etc., please send a written explanation to the teacher requesting permission for a change in the due date.**

In some curriculum areas there will be projects and reports to be done on a long-term basis. These may require the use of time for schoolwork over the weekend. In addition, if homework for the week or projects/reports for the quarter have not been completed, students will be expected to complete the assignment(s) over the weekend or during the holiday times.

Students in Grades 2-8 will receive a **Student Agenda** (homework book) at the beginning of the school year. Homework assignments should be recorded in the agenda. If the student needs to replace the agenda, a replacement fee will be assessed.

At all grade levels, homework is included in determining the subject area grade on the report card. Failure to complete homework in the appropriate manner, or by the date required, will result in a lower grade on the report card.

Students who are absent from school the day a test is given must make arrangements with the teacher to take the test. When a student is absent, parents may call the school office and request their child's assignments.

**Students who are absent due to illness have one day for each day absent to make up for 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 assignments.

**Teachers are not required to give make-up tests or assignments for absences due to vacations. No assignments will be given in anticipation of the vacation.**

## ***Grading***

Rediker is a password protected account and can be set up easily. Please see the school office to set up your account and password. It **MUST** be understood that grades are not posted immediately. Teachers may take up to 5 working days to correct and post online the graded work of their students. The hope and purpose of the online grading system is to help parents monitor their student's progress and to avoid unpleasant surprises at the end of the marking period. The system is not perfect and there are some drawbacks, however, the benefits far outweigh any of the negative effects and can be extremely helpful if used correctly. Report cards will not be sent home in a paper format. Rediker accounts for delinquent TADs accounts will be restricted until there is no past due balance.

## ***Late Assignments***

**Late homework or missing assignments for students in grades one through three will be accepted at the discretion of the teacher.**

## ***Report Cards***

Report cards are issued quarterly during the school year to keep parents informed of their child's achievement. The grade appearing on the report card is based on the student's daily performance, class work, homework, quizzes, tests, projects, reports, and class participation. Report cards for the First Quarter are distributed at the Parent/Teacher Conference. For the Second, Third, and Fourth Quarters they are distributed through email. Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten students receive a report card in January and at the close of the school year.

**\* Report cards are withheld if financial obligations have not been met.**

## ***Progress Reports***

It is the responsibility of parents to monitor their child's academic progress through PlusPortals. If you have a concern, please contact the teacher first. Progress reports will be sent to Parent Portals for Grades 4-8 halfway through each quarter. Instructions will go home each quarter in the weekly newsletter.

**\* Progress Reports are withheld if financial obligations are not met.**

## ***Grading System***

The Catholic Schools Office of the Archdiocese of Washington has adopted a uniform grading system for use in all Catholic elementary schools.

### **Academic Subjects (Grades 4–8)**

A = 100 – 93 (Superior)  
B = 92 – 85 (Above Average)  
C = 84 – 77 (Average)  
D = 76 – 70 (Below Average)  
F = Below 70 (Failing)  
\* with accommodations

### **Special Area Subjects (Grades 4–8)**

E = Excellent  
G = Good  
S = Satisfactory  
I = Improvement Needed  
U = Unsatisfactory  
\* with accommodations

### **Primary Subjects (Grade Pre-K–3)**

EE exceeds the grade level expectations at this time  
ME meets the grade level expectations at this time  
AE approaching the grade level expectations at this time  
NE not approaching the grade level expectations at this time  
X not assessed at this time  
\* see attachment

## ***Honor Roll***

Honor Roll is a way of recognizing students in Grades 4-8 who achieve academically and model honorable behavior throughout a grading period.

Principal's Honors is awarded quarterly to students who achieve all A's in Academic Subjects and all "E's" and/or one "G" in Special Area Subjects on their report card.

First Honors is awarded quarterly to students who achieve all A's and one B in Academic Subjects and nothing less than a "G" in Special Area Subjects on their report card.

Second Honors is awarded quarterly to students who achieve all A's and B's in Academic Subjects and nothing less than a "G" in Special Area Subjects on their report card.

## ***Eighth Grade Graduation & Class Trip***

An Eighth Grade Graduation Ceremony that includes the celebration of a liturgy, conferring of diplomas, and awards will take place at the end of the school year. ***A fee will be charged to cover some of the costs associated with graduation. Students and parents will host fundraisers to cover the remaining cost of graduation and 8th grade class trip.***

## ***Promotion and Retention***

Promotion to the next grade level depends on successful completion of all subject areas. The administration may recommend the repetition of a grade, tutoring, or summer school as a requirement for promotion when, after conferencing with teachers and parents, it is believed that such action will better prepare the student academically for the next grade. The summer school or tutoring program must be approved in advance by the administration of St. Mary's School of Piscataway. Written proof of attendance and a passing grade are required before promotion to the next grade. Students may also be transferred to the next grade. A student who is transferred to the next grade may or may not be offered re-registration for the next school year.

Retention in the primary grades is normally dependent upon the development of reading and language arts skills. Retention of students in grades four through eight is normally dependent on achievement in the basic skills subjects: Religion, Language Arts and Mathematics. Failure in two of the basic skills subjects, or in one of the basic skills subjects plus another academic subject, is a basis for retention.

**\* The administration reserves the right to make the final decision regarding retention, promotion, or academic dismissal of any student.**

The same requirements and procedures that apply for promotion at other levels hold for promotion of students to merit a diploma. Diplomas will be issued to those students who have successfully completed the eighth-grade requirements. Those who have not successfully completed the requirements may be issued a certificate of attendance.

## ***Parent Conferences***

**Parents are required to attend a Parent/Teacher Conference for each child at the end of the first quarter.** The first quarter report card will be reviewed and distributed to the parent during the conference.

First quarter conference schedules are prepared and issued by the teachers in advance of the scheduled date. Parents requiring additional conferences during the school year should make arrangements through the teachers. Additional conferences are by appointment only.

A Parent/Teacher Conference will be required if a student receives a failing or unsatisfactory grade in one or more major academic subjects for the second or third quarter.



Parents must notify and receive authorization from the administration to include other individuals in a Parent/Teacher Conference. The administration reserves the right to sit in on any Parent/Teacher Conference.

## ***Communication of Concerns***

In working with people, misunderstandings may arise. Parents with concerns regarding their child's academic life, or concerns related to issues that impact their child's learning, need to follow the appropriate chain of command to discuss those issues and/or concerns. The first contact should be the child's teacher. If an acceptable solution is not found, the next point of contact should be the department head. If further discussion is needed, the Assistant Principals for the department will be notified.

## ***Testing***

Students at St. Mary's School of Piscataway participate in a standardized testing program each year. The Archdiocese of Washington has adopted the MAP Standardized Test. Students in Grades 2-8 will be tested in the fall, mid-year, and spring. Test results in the form of a Home Report will be distributed to parents.

Students in Grade 8 will take the High School Placement Test. Parents will receive a report of their child's test results directly from the testing service. St. Mary's School may not release test results to parents.

The Faith Knowledge Assessment will be administered to all students in Grades 3-8 in the spring. Students in Grades 5 and 8 will take a Science Assessment in the spring.

## ***Technology***

Archdiocesan parents, educators, and administrators work together every day to ensure the safety and security of all God's children. With our schools' ever-growing and abundant technology resources, it is more important than ever that we communicate clear expectations of our students. The following guidelines were developed from Archdiocesan curriculum and have been adapted, with permission, from the International Society for Technology in Education. For more information regarding each school's individual rules, please refer to your school policy. Thank you for your consideration and cooperation.

St. Mary's School of Piscataway provides students with an opportunity to access computers and computer networks, including the Internet. Our goal in providing this service is to promote educational excellence in our school. Access to this technology is a privilege, not a right. All students are expected to abide by the following technology rules and to sign the user agreement.

Student Responsibilities When using any Technology Equipment, All Students:

1. Students will cultivate and manage their digital identity and reputation and demonstrate awareness of the permanence of their actions in the digital world. T.PK8.DC.1. All Students:
  - a. Shall always represent themselves in a manner that respects the values of the Catholic Church when using electronic devices, network and the Internet and demonstrate an understanding that digital content is everlasting, even when deleted or within privacy setting;
  - b. Shall only use accounts assigned to them or authorized by the school, supporting others' positive digital identity by not accessing the accounts of others or falsely representing themselves as others;
  - c. Shall keep all accounts and password information private and secure.
2. Students will engage in positive, safe, legal and ethical behavior when using technology equipment, including social interactions online or when using networked devices. Students will demonstrate an understanding of and respect for the rights and obligations of using and sharing intellectual property. T.PK8.DC.2, T.PK8.DC.3. All Students:
  - a. Shall always demonstrate kind and respectful behavior towards others when using electronic devices, network and Internet; following school policy agreements and anti-cyberbullying laws at the local, state and federal levels;
  - b. Shall immediately report any known cyberbullying behavior to a teacher or supervising staff member;
  - c. Shall protect the rights and privacy of others, by never photographing or filming an individual without consent, and never posting and/or distributing videos or photographs without consent of the school and the persons depicted;
  - d. Shall behave in a safe manner when using technology by protecting and not sharing personal information and personal images in the public domain. While on school property, students will only use technology to communicate with individuals within the school community or organizations/experts approved by teachers. While on school grounds students shall only use communication platforms approved by the school and all communication shall be only for educational purposes;
  - e. Shall abide by all copyright and intellectual property laws, avoiding plagiarism by using proper citations or permissions. Students shall only use work product that is their own, not taking credit of the work of others;
  - f. Shall immediately report to a teacher or supervising staff member any inappropriate material or misuse of technology equipment of which the student becomes aware.
3. Students will manage their personal data to maintain digital privacy and security and are aware of data-collection technology used to track their navigation online. T.PK8.DC.4. All Students:
  - a. Shall protect and manage personal data in a safe manner by never posting, or otherwise distributing personal information such as photographs, home addresses, telephone numbers, parents' work addresses or telephone numbers or the name and location of the school;
  - b. Shall respect networking protections and security within the school infrastructures by working within the designated login and security parameters and never reconfiguring or hacking any school hardware, software, or network settings;
  - c. Shall use school issued email accounts for authorized educational purposes only;
  - d. Shall respect the right of the school to monitor student use of technology.
4. Students will treat all technology equipment including issued devices, software and networking systems with care and respect, whether at school, at home, or elsewhere. All Students:

- a. Shall demonstrate proper physical care for technology equipment;
  - b. Shall protect the proper functioning of technology equipment by downloading only teacher approved files and not intentionally writing, producing, generating, copying or introducing dangerous codes or programs designed to cause harm, including, but not limited to viruses, bugs, ‘worms’, etc.;
  - c. Shall respect the digital property of others by not accessing or searching files, directories, or folders for which the student does not have authorization, and by not intentionally erasing, renaming, moving, or disabling anyone else’s files or programs;
  - d. Shall maintain the settings of any issued device by not manipulating any device settings or functionality.
5. Students understand and acknowledge that:
- a. Any violation of this policy may result in permanent revocation of their technology privileges and other disciplinary action may be taken at the sole discretion of the principal.
  - b. Schools may require that technology used in a bring your own device program must meet certain compatibility requirements, use certain security measures, and include certain hardware, software, or applications, which may include applications that grant the school control over the content on the technology.
  - c. Use of all technology may be monitored, and there is no expectation of privacy for, or for any information stored on any technology used on school grounds, including any information or files stored in students’ personal accounts (such as social media or file sharing accounts) that are accessible via such technology.
  - d. The school reserves the right to maintain, access, or retrieve an issued device at any time, at its sole discretion; the school reserves the right to access a student’s computer files or any other technology equipment when required for the maintenance of the school’s technology equipment, in emergencies, in the course of investigation of possible wrongdoing, or at the discretion of the principal.

Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement:

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) shall support both school and ADW-wide policies and procedures as they relate to the use of technology and our Catholic Identity

1. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will monitor online behavior and social media within the home and notify the school in the event of any incident contrary to the school policy, providing evidence when applicable.
2. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will monitor their child’s use of the Internet when the school networks and accounts are accessed from home or a non-school location
3. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) agree that students’ schoolwork should be limited to school authorized accounts only (if provided by the school)
4. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) shall respect the right of the school to monitor student use of technology
5. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are responsible for all fees as determined by school policy related to loss, damage, or misuse of school technology.

*In accordance with Archdiocesan policy, each student's parents must review the Technology and Internet Usage Agreement (ADW Form 17) with the student and sign and return the Agreement during the first week of each school year. (ADW Policy 3212)*

## ***Cheating, Plagiarism, and Forgery***

Cheating, plagiarism, or forgery is incompatible with the Christian nature of St. Mary's School of Piscataway.

***Cheating*** is dishonesty in the preparation of any academic work. It involves not only infractions during tests (such as copying another student's answers or using unauthorized materials during a test), but also use of another student's efforts in out-of-class assignments (including homework). It is understood that cooperation on homework can be a positive learning activity, but to represent someone else's work as one's own is unacceptable.

***Plagiarism*** is the claiming of another's ideas or work as one's own. In written, oral, or graphic work, students are expected to give credit for material derived from other sources (including books, articles, movies, television programs, computer programs, and information obtained from the Internet).

***Forgery*** is dishonesty in the simulated signing of another person's name to any writing. Forgery is a serious offense due to the willful dishonesty of the student involved. Forging a parent's signature on a quiz, test paper, quarterly evaluation, or any other document sent home to be signed by the parent is punishable in the following ways: A first offense will warrant an immediate after school detention and a second offense will result in a one-day in-school suspension.

Incidents of cheating or plagiarism will be dealt with in a developmentally appropriate manner. Any assignment tainted by cheating or plagiarism will always receive a grade of zero. A disciplinary conference will be held with the student. Students who choose to cheat or plagiarize may face detention, suspension, and/or expulsion.

## **GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION**

### ***School Hours***

St. Mary's School of Piscataway is in session from 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. on full days and from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. on early dismissal days. The entrance opens at 7:45 a.m. and students should enter the building through their assigned color zone and report to their homerooms. The doors will be open from 7:45 a.m. until 8:15 a.m. Once the door closes, your child is tardy for school. **You must park your vehicle and escort your child(ren) into the building where you must sign them in at the school office.**

**Unless enrolled in the Before/After Care Program, no student may arrive or remain on school property before or after school hours.** There is no provision made for supervision of these students, and St. Mary's School of Piscataway administration, faculty, and staff are not responsible for their safety.

Students are not to arrive at school prior to 7:45 a.m., or remain at school after 12:15 p.m. on early dismissal days or after 3:00 p.m. on full days, unless they are enrolled in the Before/After Care Program. If students arrive before or remain after the specified times, **they will be placed in the Before/After Care Program and the appropriate fees will be assessed.** Bills will be sent at the beginning of the next month. **The Registration and Snack Fees will be waived for the first two uses ONLY.** If a family requires the use of the program a third time, the Registration & Snack Fees will then be added to the billing. This policy should assist families who are caught in traffic or other situations and are unable to arrive in time to pick up their child(ren) at dismissal.

The School Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The Office is closed on days when school is closed including snow days and holidays. If the office is closed, we encourage callers to leave a message on the answering machine.

Phone: 301-292-2522

E-mail: [school@smsp.school](mailto:school@smsp.school)

## ***Attendance***

The following are valid reasons for **excused absences** from school (if properly documented upon the student's return to school):

1. Illness of the student (after three days of illness, student must provide medical documentation indicating that he/she is able to return to school);
2. Medical or dental appointments;
3. Death in the student's immediate family;
4. Necessity for a student to attend a judicial proceeding;
5. Lawful suspension or exclusion from school by the chief administrator;
6. Temporary closing of facilities or suspension of classes due to severe weather, official activities, holidays, malfunctioning equipment, unsafe or unsanitary conditions, or other conditions requiring closing or suspension of classes.

**For the protection and welfare of all students, parents are required to keep their children at home when they are ill. Students must be symptom free for 24 hours before they are permitted to return to school.**

A parent conference may be required if a student's attendance record indicates excessive absences. Absences that exceed 8 unexcused absences per quarter constitute as excessive.

**Any absence that does not fall into one of the above categories, or is not properly documented by the student's parent/guardian, is an unexcused absence.**

When a student is absent from school, a parent must call or email the office by 8:30 a.m. each day of the absence. The school must be immediately notified of all infectious or communicable diseases.

A written note communicating the reason for the absence must be given to the school office immediately upon return to school. The note must also specify the dates of the absence and must be signed by the student's parent. **A doctor's note will be required for student absences of three days or more.**

When a student has been absent from school, **it is the responsibility of the parent/student to personally check with teachers to determine the work that has been missed during the absence.** Arrangements may be made for obtaining class assignments and homework.

### ***Tardiness***

Punctuality is of the utmost importance in child education. The school day begins at 8:00 a.m. Students arriving after 8:15 a.m. and not in their classroom seats when the bell rings will be marked TARDY.

**Carpool drivers arriving after 8:15 a.m. must park in a designated parking space in the school parking lot, enter the building through the main entrance, and escort the student(s) to the office to be signed into school. At no time should vehicles be parked immediately in front of the school.**

### ***Absence During the School Day and Early Dismissals***

**For the protection of all, students are not permitted to leave school grounds during school hours unless they have been signed out in the school office and accompanied by a parent or designated adult.**

In the event that it becomes necessary for the student to leave school before regular dismissal, a written request, stating the date, time, and reason, must be submitted to the office. **No child will be granted an early dismissal after 2:15 p.m. on full days or 11:30 a.m. on early dismissal days.** The parent or designated adult must come into the office and sign the child out. The parent or designated adult is not permitted to go to the classroom. A school official will escort the child to the school office.

If the child returns to school during the same school day, the parent or designated adult and child must report to the office. The adult must sign the child in before the child can return to class.

### ***School Visitors***

In order to help provide a safe and well-ordered atmosphere for your child's education, any person, including a parent, entering the school must enter through the main entrance, stop at the school office, sign in and obtain a "Visitor's Pass." When leaving the building, visitors must sign out and return the "Visitor's Pass" to the school office.

\* **All school volunteers who work with or around children must comply with the Child Protection Policy of the Archdiocese of Washington.**

## ***Classroom Visitors***

Parents may visit classrooms with the prior approval of the administration and the teacher. Due to insurance regulations, younger siblings and/or non-St. Mary's School students may not accompany parents when they visit, volunteer in the classroom, school, or on field trips.

- \* **All school volunteers who work with or around children must comply with the Child Protection Policy of the Archdiocese of Washington.**

## ***Student Custody and Guardianship***

During the time that a child is enrolled at St. Mary's School of Piscataway, it is the responsibility of the parent(s) to provide the administration with a true and correct copy of the legal document for any student for whom there is a legal custody agreement or for any student not residing with their parent(s). Parents who are (or become) divorced, separated, unmarried, or who have other special circumstances regarding the custody of their children must provide St. Mary's School of Piscataway with a current court order or decree of custody for the student's file.

## ***Student Records***

St. Mary's School of Piscataway complies with the provisions of the Buckley Amendment (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act) regarding access to student records. Parents must submit a written request to the principal and schedule an appointment prior to review of their child's file. St. Mary's School of Piscataway abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of the non-custodial parent. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, we will provide the non-custodial parent with access to academic records and other school information provided they submit a written request to the principal and schedule an appointment prior to review of their child's file. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the custodial parent's responsibility to provide the school with a court-certified copy of the court order. Any other specific instructions regarding release of the child's records must be in writing and signed by the parent or parents with court-ordered legal custody. **Student records may not be reviewed if financial accounts are not current.**

## ***Confidentiality***

All test scores, grades, and behavior reports are confidential information and kept on file in the school office. School personnel will keep confidential information entrusted to them so long as no one's life, health, or safety is at stake. An administrator will promptly notify parents of any serious concerns.

## ***Transfer of Student Records***

Parents desiring to transfer their child to another school are asked to notify the principal in writing in advance. Parents must sign an Authorization for Release of Student Information (ADW Form 19) giving St. Mary's School of Piscataway permission to transfer student records to another school. Records of students transferring to another school will be forwarded directly to the new school's postal address through certified U.S. Mail. No records will be given to a parent to transport to the new school. Student records will not be transferred if financial accounts are not current.

## ***Letters of Recommendation***

All requests for letters of recommendation must be submitted to the Principal. Letters will be forwarded directly to the school or agency. **There will be a \$10.00 charge per child for recommendations and all financial obligations for the year have to be met before recommendations will be sent out. This fee does not apply to students graduating from eighth grade.**

## ***AP Notify – Telephone Broadcast Service***

In an effort to provide effective communication between school and parents, St. Mary's School of Piscataway utilizes a telephone broadcast system that will enable the administration to notify all parents by phone within minutes of an emergency or unplanned event that causes early dismissal, school cancellation, or delayed opening. The service may also be used from time to time to communicate general announcements or reminders. This service is provided by AP Notify. AP Notify is a company specializing in school-to-parent communications. Information for AP Notify is populated through TADs. **Please make sure all information on TADs is up-to-date.**

## ***Telephone Usage and Messages for Students***

Permission to use the phone must be obtained from the teacher and administrator. The school office phone is a business phone, and students are permitted to use it only in the case of an emergency. **Forgotten items such as lunch, homework, band instruments, athletic equipment, etc. do not constitute emergencies.** The school office staff will only deliver emergency messages to students during school hours.

## ***Crisis/Emergency/Inclement Weather and School Closings***

St. Mary's School of Piscataway has a comprehensive *School Crisis Plan* as per the requirements of the Catholic Schools Office of the Archdiocese of Washington and the United States Department of Homeland Security. **In the event of an emergency, we will follow announcements regarding the PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS. If there is a localized situation, parents are instructed to listen to local radio or television stations regarding St. Mary's School of Piscataway specifically.**



In light of the current world situation, and as per the requirements of the Archdiocese of Washington, our school has established use of the ALICE program. This program empowers students to make choices regarding their own survival. All students are trained to give them the appropriate information. Drills are conducted throughout the year. More information on the program can be found at <https://www.alicetraining.com/>. In the event we need to activate one of these plans, parents will be instructed to follow the directives of the public safety officials covering our local jurisdiction.

For weather emergencies, St. Mary's School of Piscataway follows the Prince George's County Public Schools with regard to cancellation, delayed opening, or early closing.

**Exceptions:** When St. Mary's School of Piscataway is scheduled for a 12:00 p.m. dismissal, the following will be in effect:

- If Prince George's County Public Schools open two hours late, St. Mary's School will be closed;
- If Prince George's County Public Schools open one hour late, St. Mary's School will open one hour late and still dismiss at 12:00 p.m.;
- If Prince George's County Public Schools have a previously scheduled teacher in-service/no school for student's day during a weather related emergency, St. Mary's School of Piscataway will follow the announcement of the Archdiocese of Washington.

Parents are to listen to local radio or television station broadcasts for information regarding cancellation, delayed opening or early dismissal due to inclement weather. Parents may also subscribe to [www.schoolsout.com](http://www.schoolsout.com), to receive email or text message alerts for weather related emergencies.

\* Please note: St. Mary's School of Piscataway will not follow Prince George's County Public Schools for extreme heat emergencies since all classrooms are air-conditioned.

## ***Monies Sent to School***

**All monies sent to school must be sealed in an envelope on which is written the student's name and grade, along with the amount of money and the reason for which it is being sent.**

## ***Lunch and Recess***

St. Mary's School of Piscataway works with several food vendors to provide lunches for students. A monthly menu will be provided and lunches must be pre-ordered and pre-paid each month by the date listed on the form.

Students not purchasing lunch should bring a lunch packed in a lunch box or bag and, if needed, a drink. Carbonated beverages and drinks in glass containers are **not** permitted. **Students may not have fast food lunches. This includes parent drop off and/or any delivery service.** Food may **not** be eaten in the classroom or the library, except for the days when there is a conflict in the parish hall or teachers have planned special events.

**Parents who forget to send a lunch with their child/children will be billed for an “Oops Lunch”.** An “Oops Lunch” will consist of cheese, fruit, crackers, and water. This money will be used to replenish the Oops Lunch supply.

### ***Cell Phones, Electronics, Media, and Toys***

Students should not bring cell phones. They are also **not permitted** to bring other electronic communication devices, smart watches, iPods, cameras, electronic games, expensive items, and/or toys in general. When cell phones are needed, students must sign them in with their homeroom teacher first thing in the morning, and will be signed out before dismissal.

Non-academic material in any media form that is brought to St. Mary's School of Piscataway must be cleared through the administration **before** it is taken into the classroom, on a field trip, or given to any other student. All materials must support St. Mary's mission and Catholic teaching.

### ***Field Trips***

Throughout the school year, students may be offered the privilege of educational field trips that broaden the learning experience. Each grade will go on at least one field trip per year. The Field Trip Permission Form (ADW Form 13) must be signed by the parent before a student will be permitted to attend a field trip. Verbal permission and faxed signatures **CANNOT** be accepted.

Field trips, though an extension of the educational curriculum, are a privilege, not a right. **Individual teachers, in consultation with the administration, reserve the right to restrict or deny student participation on any field trip due to poor academic performance and/or poor conduct.** All eligible students are expected to participate in class field trips. Additional work on the topic may be assigned for any student who misses a field trip due to academic or behavior issues. Any student not permitted to attend a field trip **may not** attend school on the day of the scheduled trip.

#### **Chaperones:**

- Are **NOT** permitted to bring other children on the field trip;
- Must comply with the Child Protection Policy of the Archdiocese of Washington;
- Must complete and sign a Field Trip Liability Waiver (ADW Form 14)

### ***Extracurricular Activities***

During the course of the school year, there are various opportunities for participation in extracurricular activities. Participants in these activities must meet the following criteria:

- Have a good academic standing (for students in Grades 4-8. This is nothing lower than a C for major academic areas)
- Demonstrate a spirit of cooperation

# HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

## *Emergency Information*

The school office maintains an emergency record for each child in the school. **All students enrolled in St. Mary's School of Piscataway MUST have a completed Emergency Information Form on file.**

At the beginning of each school year, a new Emergency Information Form will be sent home. Parents are required to complete the form and return it by the date requested. On this form, parents must designate the names and phone numbers for two emergency contacts.

If changes occur in home address, home phone number, or parent's work or cell phone numbers during the school year, it is important that parents inform the school office immediately.

It is the responsibility of parents to inform the administration about a student's serious medical or emotional condition, in writing. This information will be shared on a need-to-know basis with office staff, delegating nurse, and the classroom and special area teachers.

In the event of a serious/life-threatening injury, the Emergency Information Form authorizes school personnel to call local emergency response personnel for assistance, evaluation, and possible transport to the hospital. Parents will be notified by telephone regarding any serious/life-threatening injury, or any head or eye injury.

## *Health Regulations and Immunizations*

All students must submit to physical examinations and other health measures mandated by state and local jurisdictions. Written documentation, by a licensed medical practitioner, of current immunizations must be on file with the school or the child will not be admitted to school.

## *Blood-Borne Pathogens*

Procedures of the Maryland State Department of Health are followed regarding blood-borne pathogens. School personnel are trained in this area on a yearly basis.

## *Illness*

**Parents have the primary responsibility for the health and well-being of their child. The school does not have the services of a resident nurse or health professional. A student who becomes ill during the school day is to be sent home immediately.** The Maryland State Health Department requires that any child with a rash or vomits is to be sent home immediately. The child may not return to school without a physician's note explaining the rash and its treatment, if any. Additionally, **a child must be symptom free for 24 hours before returning to school as per State Guidelines.** A child who is ill or has a rash will be removed from class until the parent or the designated emergency contact can take the student home.

\* **The school office MUST be notified of all infectious and communicable diseases.**

Following certain illnesses, a definite period of absence from school is required. Parents should consult with their family doctor and send verification that the child is ready to return to school. **An illness of more than three (3) days will require a doctor's note permitting the student to return to school.** A child who comes to school is presumed to be well enough to go outside for recess, weather permitting, and will not be allowed to spend recess in the office or a classroom.

## ***Medication***

**If a child is on medication, it is best that the parent administer the medication before and after school hours.** Students are permitted to be given medication in school only when it is deemed absolutely necessary, and only under the supervision of authorized school personnel. In such cases, the ADW Medication Authorization Form 8 must be on file for each individual situation and medication including non-prescription, over-the-counter medications. These include but are not limited to aspirin, Tylenol, Ibuprofen, Benadryl (oral and topical) and cough drops. Other forms may be necessary, such as an Allergy Action Plan (ADW Form 6), Epi/Twinject Authorization (ADW Form 7), and/or Inhaler Authorization (ADW Form 9). The child's doctor must sign all forms. These forms are available online.

Medications, in the original prescription container, must be delivered to the school office by the parent or a designated adult. The container must be labeled with the child's name, dosage, instructions, and expiration date. (Two containers, one for home and one for school, should be requested from the pharmacist.) **The school reserves the right to refuse to accept, administer, or supervise the administration of any medication.**

**It is the responsibility of the parents to pick up their child's medications on the last day of the school year. Any medication left in the school office will be disposed of accordingly.**

## ***Accidents and Injuries***

St. Mary's School of Piscataway will report any student accidents or injuries to the affected student's parents as soon as possible. A written record (ADW Form 16 School Incident Report) will be kept in the school office and sent to the Catholic Schools Office. Reporting does not constitute an acceptance of liability.

## ***Fire/Crisis Emergency Management Drills***

Fire drills are conducted on a monthly basis in compliance with Prince George's County Fire Regulations. Crisis Emergency Management drills are conducted periodically as per the recommendation of the Catholic Schools Office of the Archdiocese of Washington and the Federal Office of Homeland Security.

## ***Prevention Programming***

As a Catholic school, we believe and teach that each of us is called to love our neighbor and to treat them with respect. is committed to providing a physically safe and emotionally secure learning environment that is free from bullying, harassment, and intimidation in any form, including cyberbullying. Bullying, harassment, and intimidation of any member of the school community is prohibited. All reports of bullying, harassment, and intimidation will be treated seriously. The principal's review and investigation of a credible allegation will be done in a prompt, confidential, and thorough manner." Reprisal or retaliation against anyone who reports acts of bullying, harassment, and intimidation is strictly prohibited. All reports of reprisal or retaliation will be treated seriously. The principal's review and investigation of a credible allegation will be done in a prompt, confidential, and thorough manner.

Bullying, harassment, and intimidation mean any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, including electronic communication (telephone, cellular phone, computer, pager, iPod, etc.), that:

1. Physically harms an individual; damages an individual's property; substantially interferes with an individual's education or learning environment; or places an individual in reasonable fear of harm to the individual's person or property; and
2. Occurs on school property; at a school activity or event; on a school transportation vehicle or bus; or substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a school.

## ***Weapons Policy***

It is the policy of St. Mary's School of Piscataway that no student shall bring a weapon onto school property, nor carry or keep any weapon on school property, or carry or keep any weapon on his/her person, while attending or participating in any school activity. This policy shall be enforced according to the prudent search and seizure procedures.

For purposes of this policy, a weapon is any firearm, knife, explosive, or other object, even if manufactured for a non-violent purpose but that has a potentially violent use, or any "look-alike" object that resembles an object that has a potentially violent use, if, under the surrounding circumstances, the purpose of bringing, keeping, or carrying the object is for using it, or threatening to use it, to cause violence.

## ***Threats***

In the event of any actual or perceived threat of violence or other inappropriate/illegal behavior, St. Mary's School of Piscataway reserves its right to take any and all actions it deems necessary for the health and safety of its school community, including the individual(s) making the threat. These actions may include contacting law enforcement offices, mental health professionals and/or any other outside experts as the school official(s) deems necessary. **A student who makes a threat of violence may be required to remain off school property until a mental health professional certifies that the student is not a danger to him/herself or others, or may be subject to disciplinary action, including expulsion.**

## ***Archdiocesan Catholic School Counseling Services***

In the event of an emergency or crisis, the Archdiocese of Washington may send a team of school counseling professionals to St. Mary's School of Piscataway. One-time, initial counseling services may be rendered to students by the Archdiocesan Counseling Staff in the event of a crisis or emergency.

## ***Child Abuse and Neglect***

St. Mary's School of Piscataway complies with the Maryland State law that mandates that any suspected case of child abuse or neglect be reported.

## ***Child Protection Policy***

**All adults who have substantial contact with children and who volunteer in the school or for other approved school and parish-sponsored activities must comply with the Child Protection Policy of the Archdiocese of Washington.**

For all volunteers working with or around children this includes but is not limited to:

- Completing a volunteer application and creating an account on [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org);
- Criminal History Record Check by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the State of Maryland;
- Fingerprinting;
- Reading and signing the Acknowledgement Page of the Child Protection Policy Book;
- Mandatory attendance at a Virtus-Protecting God's Children training session(s).

Additionally, school volunteers may be asked to attend a school sponsored Volunteer Orientation Training.

In accordance with the Child Protection Policy of the Archdiocese of Washington (Section 2-2.3), all children and young people shall attend scheduled training sessions that include but are not limited to the following subjects:

- Basic safety skills;
- Recognition of dangerous and abusive situations;
- Appropriate and inappropriate physical contact and other interpersonal boundary violations;
- Ability to say "no" to unwanted situations;
- Ability to identify trusting adults with whom to speak;
- Importance of disclosure if inappropriate or unwanted actions are directed to self or others;
- Recognition that abusive situations are never the fault of the child.

Instruction on these topics for students enrolled in St. Mary's School of Piscataway will be delivered using the Personal Safety Education Curriculum Standards developed and authorized by the Catholic Schools Office of the Archdiocese of Washington.

# STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND BEHAVIOR POLICIES

## *Uniform Policy and Dress Code*

Students are expected to be well groomed, and attired in approved clothing at all times. All students in pre-kindergarten through grade eight are required to be in full uniform each school day (except special days announced). Uniforms must be neat, clean, and in good repair. It is the responsibility of the parents to see that their child conforms to the dress code. No student may change clothes during the school day.

All clothing must be the proper size and fit for the child and worn correctly. Oversized or tight clothing is not allowed. Shirts and blouses must be buttoned and tucked in at all times. The shirt and blouse must be worn so that the belt or waistband is visible. Hems in girls' skirts and jumpers must touch the middle of the knee. All girls are required to purchase a jumper or skirt. No colored and/or printed T-shirts or undergarments may be worn under the uniform. Jackets or sweatshirts may not be worn in the school building, only St. Mary's regulation sweaters or regulation P.E. sweatshirts. P.E. sweatshirts may only be worn on P.E. days.

Both boys and girls are required to have neat hairstyles and may not have hair that hangs in or obscures the face. **Extreme hairstyles, such as change of natural hair color, bleaching, cutting stripes, etc. are not permitted. Mohawks, hair designs, or faux hawks are not permitted.**

*For Girls:* Cosmetics, lip-gloss, colored Chapstick, nail polish, nail ornamentation or artificial nails may not be worn. Jewelry should be limited to a watch, and simple cross or holy medal on a single narrow silver or gold chain. No visible tattoos or body piercings are permitted except for pierced ears. **Girls may wear one small post earring in each ear only.** Girls are permitted to wear solid or uniform patterned headbands.

*For Boys:* Jewelry should be limited to a watch, simple cross, or holy medal on a single narrow silver or gold chain. No visible tattoos or body piercings are permitted. **Boys may wear one small post earring in each ear only.**

The uniform company for St. Mary's School is Flynn O'Hara Uniforms. Uniforms are available for purchase at the store located in Lanham. The word "**regulation**" indicates that the item must be purchased from Flynn O'Hara Uniforms or obtained from the used uniform sale. **Uniformity of dress for students is a goal at St. Mary's. Working together, we can attain this goal.**

**The administration reserves the right to make definitive decisions concerning the acceptability of any items related to the dress code. Furthermore, it reserves the right to deny access to class or school activities to any student wearing inappropriate clothing or not in compliance with the Uniform Policy.**

## *Out-of-Uniform Dress Code*

Occasionally, out-of-uniform days will be announced. **On out-of-uniform days a casual look is permitted, however, attire must be in good taste.** Students may wear T-shirts, sweatshirts, sweatpants, and knee-length shorts with appropriate messages or symbols. The following are not permitted at any time:

- Spandex, yoga pants, tight or oversized pants;
- Undershirts or backless, midriff, sleeveless, or tight-fitting tops;
- Ripped or torn clothing;
- **Sandals, high-heeled shoes, crocs or croc-like shoes, any boots above the calf, wheelies, light-up shoes;**
- Bandanas, baseball caps or other hats (unless designated cap day);
- Bracelets;
- Dangling or hoop earrings.

If students are not dressed appropriately, they will be disciplined. If students choose not to participate in out-of-uniform days or Spirit Days, they are to come to school wearing the school uniform scheduled for that day.

### ***Dress Code for Boys***

1. **Regulation** monogrammed short or long sleeve white golf shirt - Grades K-5 (**shirts must be buttoned and tucked in at all times**);
2. **Regulation** monogrammed long or short sleeve white Oxford Shirt with Monogram worn with navy blue tie - Grades 6-8 (**shirts must be buttoned and tucked in at all times**);
3. Navy blue **regulation** monogrammed uniform pleated dress slacks (belt must be visible), kindergarten boys may wear an elastic waist;
4. Black belt;
5. Solid navy blue or white crew (mid calf) socks;
6. **Solid black, Oxford style or athletic shoes with non-marking soles** (heels may not be more than 1-inch in height) (boots over the ankle, light-up shoes or wheelies are NOT allowed);
7. Optional **regulation** monogrammed navy blue sweater;
8. Optional white turtlenecks may be worn under the long sleeve shirt (only during the winter months).

### ***Dress Code for Girls***

#### ***JUMPERS/SKIRTS***

1. Short or long sleeve white blouse with Peter Pan collar with navy blue cross tie - Grades K-5 (**blouses must be buttoned and tucked in at all times**);
2. **Regulation** monogrammed long or short sleeve white Oxford Shirt with Monogram worn with skirt - Grades 6-8;
3. **Regulation** knee-length plaid tunic jumper - Grades K-5;
4. **Regulation** knee-length plaid kick pleat skirt - Grades 6-8 (waistband must be visible);
5. Solid navy blue or white crew (mid calf or higher) socks, solid navy blue or white knee socks, or solid navy blue tights;



6. **Solid black, Mary Jane or Oxford style or athletic shoes with non-marking soles** (heels may not be more than 1-inch in height) (boots over the ankle, light-up shoes, or wheelies are NOT allowed);
7. Optional **regulation** monogrammed navy blue sweater;
8. Optional solid white turtlenecks may be worn under the long sleeve blouse or shirt (only during the winter months);
9. Required navy blue or black shorts (to be worn under jumpers or skirts).

#### *PANTS/SHORTS*

1. **Regulation** monogrammed short-sleeved white golf shirt - Grades K-5;
2. **Regulation** monogrammed navy blue walking length shorts (belt must be visible); kindergarten students may wear elastic waist;
3. Black belt;
4. Solid white crew (mid calf) socks;
5. **Solid black** shoes (no light-up shoes or wheelies allowed).

#### *Physical Education Dress Code for All Students*

1. **Regulation** monogrammed P.E. T-shirt;
2. **Regulation** monogrammed navy blue knee length shorts;
3. **Regulation** monogrammed navy blue sweat suit;
4. Athletic crew (over the ankle) socks;
5. Athletic shoes with non-marking soles (boots, light-up shoes, or wheelies are NOT allowed).

#### *Dress Code for Pre-Kindergarten Boys & Girls*

1. **Regulation** monogrammed P.E. T-shirt;
2. **Regulation** monogrammed navy blue sweatshirt;
3. **Regulation** monogrammed navy blue shorts or sweatpants;
4. Athletic-type (over the ankle) socks;
5. Athletic shoes with non-marking soles (boots, light-up shoes, or wheelies are NOT allowed).

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

The purpose of the discipline policy is to promote respect for oneself, others, and their property while applying Catholic moral values. Education cannot take place in an undisciplined environment. Discipline is a process designed to teach, model, and reinforce the responsible behaviors needed to ensure a safe, productive learning environment by changing unacceptable behavior to acceptable behavior. Students and parents are expected to comply with all rules and regulations of the school. Furthermore; teachers, staff, and administration will strive to uphold the highest standards of conduct and respect at all times.

### *Code of Conduct*

Based upon the Gospel message of Jesus and Catholic moral values, students:

- ❖ Respect oneself
- ❖ Be honest and committed to integrity and accountability
- ❖ Be respectful and courteous toward all teachers, adults, and students
- ❖ Speak respectfully to and about others
- ❖ Use appropriate language
- ❖ Refrain from harassment of any kind
- ❖ Accept responsibility for their actions
- ❖ Make a genuine effort to do their finest
- ❖ Comply to all school rules and regulations
- ❖ Adhere to the dress code
- ❖ Respect and care for all school property
- ❖ Strive for regular attendance, punctuality, and preparation for school and daily classes

In addition to the Code of Conduct, it is also understood that a “Hands Off” policy is implied. That is, no student should intentionally bump, push, or touch another student. This includes hugging and hand holding.

With the above thoughts in mind, the following procedures and regulations are put forth to help ensure the orderly and effective functioning of the school and the achievement of its stated objectives. Enrollment in St. Mary’s School is a privilege, not a right. By enrolling a child in St. Mary’s school, we presume acceptance of and cooperation with these procedures and regulations both by students and by parents or guardians. Further, the school reserves the right to establish additional regulations that might be deemed necessary to maintain effective order in the school.

Realizing that an all-inclusive listing of disciplinary offenses would be impossible to outline and describe on these pages, the school will take appropriate disciplinary action for any offense that, in the opinion of the administration, violates the conduct expected of a student or is inconsistent with Roman Catholic principles, values and morals, or damages and/or tarnishes the name of the parish, school or its members. Thus, disciplinary action may be taken for infractions that are not listed here. Additionally, depending on the facts and circumstances involved, St. Mary’s School may, in its sole discretion, determine that an infraction warrants more severe disciplinary action than that which would otherwise be called for here.

### ***Non-Discrimination and Harassment***

As a Catholic school, St. Mary’s School of Piscataway believes and teaches that each of us is called to love our neighbor and to treat them with respect. St. Mary’s is committed to providing a physically safe and emotionally secure learning environment that is free from bullying, harassment, and intimidation in any form, including cyberbullying. Bullying, harassment, and intimidation of any member of the school community is prohibited. All reports of bullying, harassment, and intimidation will be treated seriously. The principal’s review and investigation of a credible allegation will be done in a prompt, confidential, and thorough manner

Reprisal or retaliation against anyone who reports acts of bullying, harassment, and intimidation is strictly prohibited. All reports of reprisal or retaliation will be treated seriously. The principal's review and investigation of a credible allegation will be done in a prompt, confidential, and thorough manner.

**Harassment** means verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility toward an individual because of his or her race, color, gender, national origin, religion, age, disability or handicap, or any other protected classification, that creates a hostile environment or unreasonably interferes with an individual's educational opportunities or performance.

**Bullying** means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students. It is further defined as: unwanted purposeful written, verbal, nonverbal, or physical behavior, including but not limited to any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by a student, that has the potential to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment to cause long term damage; cause discomfort or humiliation; or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school performance or participation, is carried out repeatedly and is often characterized by an imbalance of power.

**Cyber-bullying** is defined as the willful and repeated harassment and intimidation of a person through the use of digital technologies including, but not limited to, email, blogs, text messages, social websites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.), chat rooms, instant messaging, etc.

Bystander support of harassment or bullying can support these behaviors. St. Mary's School of Piscataway prohibits both active and passive support of acts of harassment or bullying. Any of these behaviors should be reported immediately.

Bullying, harassment, and intimidation mean any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, including electronic communication (telephone, cellular phone, computer, pager, iPod, etc.), that: 1. Physically harms an individual; damages an individual's property; substantially interferes with an individual's education or learning environment; or places an individual in reasonable fear of harm to the individual's person or property; and 2. Occurs on school property; at a school activity or event; on a school transportation vehicle or bus; or substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a school.

## ***Types of Disciplinary Action***

**A. Demerit:** A demerit is given by faculty and staff members to students who violate a Procedure, Regulation, or Code of Conduct or act in a manner that is inconsistent with the spirit of these statements or Roman Catholic religious principles, values, and morals. **An accumulation of 3 demerits will result in a recess/lunch detention.**

Examples of actions resulting in receiving a demerit:

- Uniform infraction
- Class disruption
- Chewing gum
- Tardiness

**B. After School Detention:** A student can be given an After School Detention where it is determined that the student's behavior or conduct merits an After School Detention. Detention will begin immediately following dismissal where the student will report to the school office. Detention will end at 4:00 p.m. where students must be picked up from the office promptly.

Examples of actions resulting in receiving After School Detention:

- Fighting
- Destruction, damage or disfigurement of school property
- Abusive or demeaning language
- Verbal or written profanity
- Lying, cheating, stealing, forgery or plagiarism

**C. Suspension:** When a student has committed serious or chronic misconduct or blatant disregard for the rules and procedures of the school that undermines classroom or out-of-class discipline and/or impedes the academic progress or safety of others or an accumulation of After School Detentions, one of two types of suspensions will be issued.

1. **In-School Suspension (ISS):** A student is separated from other students in a designated area where all class assignments will be completed. The student will report to school for the day where a proctor/substitute will oversee the student. **Parents will be charged \$100 to cover the cost of the substitute.**
2. **Out-of-School Suspension (OSS):** The student will be removed from school for a specified period of time. Students who receive an OSS will not be allowed on the campus, nor allowed to participate in school activities during the time of their suspension. Students must complete all class work and tests from the days of suspension. The procedures for suspension are as follows:
  - a. The student and parents will be notified of the reason for the suspension, the type of suspension and its duration.
  - b. The student will be given an opportunity to present his/her understanding of the situation.
  - c. An explanation of the information regarding the situation will be provided for the student and his/her parents.
  - d. A conference date will be set with the student and parents to take place before the suspension is served to discuss expectations following the suspension
  - e. A written record of each suspension will be kept on file for the duration of the student's enrollment at the school.

\*In accordance with the rules of the Archdiocesan Board of Education and the Catholic Schools Office, the principal shall have the right to suspend any pupil for a period of no more than five school days.

**Any student accused of a crime may be placed in a home study program until the matter is resolved.**

**D. Expulsion:** Expulsion is viewed as a radical action at which point the school is stating that the student's interests would be better served in another environment, or that the student's behavior is a serious threat to themselves, the school community, or both. In the extreme case of irrevocable expulsion, the determination is that it is counter-productive for the student to continue as a member of the school community. The school follows the expulsion procedures provided by the Archdiocese of

Washington. If the principal, after conferring with the Pastor, determines that expulsion in a particular instance may be warranted, the following procedure will be followed:

1. The parents of the student will have a joint conference with the Principal and Pastor.
2. Following the conference, the Principal, with Pastor's approval, will notify the family in writing of the school's decision and the reasons for the decision to expel the student.
3. If the parent/student wishes to request an appeal of the school's decision, a hearing will be convened. The hearing will involve appropriate parties.
4. If the student is expelled from the school, the principal must notify the Catholic Schools Office.

While it is not possible to have an exhaustive list of cases where expulsion is merited, below are examples to illustrate these cases for guidance:

- ❖ Arson
- ❖ Extortion
- ❖ Physical Assault
- ❖ Possession of guns, knives, or anything that could be considered a weapon
- ❖ Possession of, or trafficking in, pornographic materials, including materials obtained from the Internet
- ❖ Possession of, or trafficking in, alcohol and/or other drugs
- ❖ Continued and willful defiance of rules, procedures, and/or code of conduct

**\*\* A parent is not entitled to any financial remuneration or discount of tuition or any other fees in the event of an expulsion.**

## ***Search and Seizure***

School administrators do not need search warrants or probable cause to search students and their belongings if they believe the student has in their possession an item, the possession of which constitutes a criminal offense under the laws of the state of Maryland.

The principal and/or the assistant principals may, at any time, conduct a search of the physical plant of the school and every appurtenance thereof, including students' desks, lockers and any personal computer hardware or software, or information on the school's computer network.

Lockers: Each student in grade six through eight is assigned a locker in which to store their Chromebooks and books. In order to maintain a quiet atmosphere for class, students are allowed to go to their lockers only at specified times. The school reserves the right to inspect lockers at any time.

## ***Application of the Disciplinary Code***

This Disciplinary Code shall be in effect before, during and after school hours when school personnel are responsible for students:

- On parish and school property;
- On buses to and from school;

- On all school trips;
- During the Before and After Care Program;
- At all school functions.

### ***Amendment of Handbook***

St. Mary's School of Piscataway retains the right to amend this Handbook. Notice of amendments will be sent in writing via email or hard copy distributed by teachers.

**All students and their parents are required to sign a Handbook and/or Handbook Addendum Acknowledgement Form stating that they have read the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook and they agree to abide by these policies and procedures.** The form must be signed and returned to the school office by the date requested. Failure to have a signed form on file will not prevent the school from enforcing its policies, but may prevent a student from enrolling (or continuing enrollment) in the school.

Any section headings are for convenience of use, and shall not affect the interpretation of any provisions. In light of the unique situations which may occur in the educational process, and because it is impossible to foresee all school issues that arise, the administration reserves the right to address and to take appropriate action for any such situations not specifically referenced in this handbook.