



# CRUSADERS

SERVING CHRIST IN MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT



[www.divinemercy.academy](http://www.divinemercy.academy)

East Campus  
2306 Bedford Street  
Johnstown, PA 15904  
814-266-3837

**GRADES K - 6**

West Campus  
430 Tioga Street  
Johnstown, PA 15905  
814-539-5315

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Divine Mercy Catholic Academy is to promote exceptional, faith-based academics that will create a solid foundation of values, leadership, and commitment for self and community.

### ADMINISTRATION

Principal	Mr. Thomas A. Smith
Associate Principal, East	Mrs. Mary Jo Podratsky
Associate Principal, West	Mrs. Rosemary M. Batzel

### FACULTY                      WEST CAMPUS                      EAST CAMPUS

Curriculum / RTII / Coaching	Mrs. Patricia Gable, East/West Campuses	
PreK 3 and 4	Mrs. Casey Lovette	Mrs. Melissa Roxby
	Mrs. Cherie Bach, Aide	Mrs. Kathy Rosko, Aide
PreK 4	Mrs. Liz Mateljan	Mrs. Samantha Lavan
	Mrs. Janice Sindleri, aide	Miss Samantha Dravis
Kindergarten	Mrs. Sharon Kaufman	Ms. Shannon Stephens
Grade 1	Ms. Jaclyn Cascino	Miss Samantha Dravis
	Mrs. Jennifer Jones	
Grade 2	Ms. Pamela DiRenzo	Ms. Kathleen Marano
	Ms. Christine Long	Mrs. Kim Portser
Grade 3	Mrs. Jennifer Tomkowski	Mr. Matthew Ribblett
	Ms. Margaret Sindleri	
	Grades 4, 5, 6 Departmentalized	
	Mrs. Kimberly Hill	Mrs. Laura Swank
	Mr. Ryan Woodruff	Mrs. Sandy Hunsinger
	Mrs. Carrie Garlesky	Mrs. Denise Nairn
	Mr. John Hicks	
	Mrs. Karen Bell	Mrs. Marian Cyburt
	Mrs. Sarah McCullough	Mrs. Victoria Reilly

Music	Ms. Evonne Yanzetich-Homway	Mrs. Tina Teno
Art	Ms. Beverly Struble	Ms. Beverly Struble
Spanish	Ms. Paulette Parlock	Ms. Paulette Parlock
Phys. Ed	Mr. Michael Harchick	Ms. Ashley Strack
Computer	Ms. Marra Balmer	Mrs. Mary Fleck
Admin. Asst.	Mrs. Debra Leventry	Miss Alyssa Mallin
Nurse	Mrs. Kristen Instone	Mrs. Kathy Clark

**SPECIAL SERVICES\***

IU08 Guidance	Ms. Kellie Rembold	Ms. Barbara Gdula
IU08 Reading	Ms. Megan Lloyd	Mr. William Batzel
		Ms. Ann Marie Puto
IU08 Math	Mrs. Patricia Rován	Mrs. Heather Hrivnak
IU08 Speech	Ms. Olivia Flick	Mrs. Amy Miller
Learning Lamp	Ms. Sally Havener	Ms. Dawn Hubof
Band	Mr. Tim Backke	Mr. Tim Backke
Strings	Mrs. Sarah Smitherman	Mrs. Sarah Smitherman
Cafeteria	Mrs. Kim Hughes	Mrs. Michele Kovacic
	Mrs. Barb Barbato	Mrs. Bridget Kutsick
		Mrs. Chrissy Wyandt
Maintenance	Mr. Doug Ellenberger	Mr. Brennan Wasilisian
Maint. Spvsr	Mr. Kelly Seese	Mr. Kelly Seese

\*Subject to change based on district assignments

## **TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

Greater Johnstown School District, Westmont Hilltop School District, Conemaugh Township School District

- McIlwain School Bus Lines
- 814-288-1594 (McIlwain Dispatch)

Richland School District

- McIlwain School Bus Lines  
(Richland Dispatch) 814-535-0249

Ferndale Area School District

- Mlaker School Bus Lines
- 814-479-2515 (Mlaker Dispatch)

Central Cambria School District

- First Student Transportation
- 814-472-8870 x 306 (District Office)

Ligonier Valley School District

- Lodestar School Bus Lines
- 724-238-5696 (District Office)

Conemaugh Valley School District

- Ribblett School Bus Lines
- 814-539-8322 (Ribblett Dispatch))

North Star School District

- Griffith School Bus Lines
- 814-629-5631 x 1106 (District Office)

United School District

- 814-446-5615 (District Office)

## CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE

If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.

If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.

If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive.

If children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.

If children live with ridicule, they learn to feel shy.

If children live with jealousy, they learn to feel envy.

If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.

If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.

If children live with tolerance, they learn patience.

If children live with praise, they learn appreciation.

If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.

If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.

If children live with recognition, they learn it is good to have a goal.

If children live with sharing, they learn generosity.

If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness.

If children live with fairness, they learn justice.

If children live with kindness and consideration, they learn respect.

If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves and in those about them.

If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place in which to live.

©1972 by Dorothy Law Nolte

## **WHY SCHOOL POLICIES AND REGULATIONS**

Regulations are made to ensure the smooth operation of the school in an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. When a student enrolls in the school, he/she agrees to observe its regulations. It is in the best interest of everyone in the Divine Mercy Catholic Academy community that all are asked to obey the rules outlined in this handbook. The regulations are to be observed in a spirit of cooperation. The administration reserves the right to waive and/or deviate from any of the policies specific to Divine Mercy Catholic Academy for just cause and at its discretion.



## CATHOLIC IDENTITY

*To know, love and serve ...*

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy is a consolidated Catholic school, successor to individual parish-based Catholic schools in Greater Johnstown, Pennsylvania. As such, it has a rich educational tradition and a cherished place within the local community. DMCA strives to foster and develop each student's God-given talents, so as to steadfastly reinforce that each is created in the image of a loving God. Teaching the students "to know, love, and serve God and one another" is Divine Mercy's ultimate goal.

Divine Mercy offers the highest quality academics as well as strong arts and athletic programs. At the heart of all, is the teaching of Christian values and the principles of the Catholic faith. While giving its students both knowledge and confidence, DMCA holds fast to its commitment of creating lifelong learners. The DMCA graduates will be well-rounded and prepared to meet all challenges they may encounter in the future.



## ACADEMICS

All academic programs at Divine Mercy Catholic Academy are governed and evaluated by the Diocese of Altoona/Johnstown and Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. The core curriculum includes religion, English, reading, math, science and social studies. Additionally, instruction is offered in spelling, handwriting, vocabulary, art, music, Spanish, physical education, health, computer and library science.

## ADMISSIONS

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy welcomes students of any race, creed, color, sex, nationality, ethnic origin, or religion. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, nationality and/or ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admission policies, tuition assistance, athletic and other school-administered programs, or in hiring personnel. Students are accepted from three years of age and older.

Members of the Altoona Johnstown Diocesan Parishes may enroll their children at any of our three campus locations. Non-parishioners and non-Catholics are also welcome to enroll their children, but their tuition rate is assessed differently than the rate assessed to parishioners of parishes in the Altoona Johnstown Diocese.

**Early Childhood** programs offered by Divine Mercy include a two-day-a-week three-year-old preschool program, a three-day-a-week (four-year-old) pre-kindergarten program and a five-day-a-week (four-year-old) pre-kindergarten program. The early learning programs are literacy-based.

Preschool students must be 3 years of age on or before September 1. All students must also be out of diapers or pull-ups, and be able to perform all personal care routines independently.

Prekindergarten students must be 4 years of age on or before September 1. All students must be able to perform all personal care routines independently.

Kindergarten students must be 5 years of age on or before September 1.

When registering for school, birth certificate, baptismal certificate, social security number and current immunization records must be presented.

Since the preschool programs act as a feeder into the elementary program, students who are already in the DMCA Preschool or Pre-Kindergarten programs will be automatically enrolled in its Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten classes.

Admission of a student to any class or campus is dependent upon space availability.

Registration for the following academic year begins in the Spring.

## **Tuition**

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy requires tuition payments to be made through the use of a convenient, on-line payment plan with FACTS Tuition Management Systems. Upon registering with FACTS Tuition Management, each family selects (1) a method of payment—as in, direct withdrawal from a checking or savings account, or credit card payment; and (2) one of four payment options—as in, 12 monthly payments, 10 monthly payments, quarterly payments, or payment in full.

FACTS Tuition Agreements must be activated annually in order for scheduled payments to begin each school year. Delaying agreement activation decreases the number of scheduled payment opportunities, which will result in higher monthly payments.

Families are required to update their FACTS Tuition agreement profiles when changes occur relating to their financial institution, bank account or credit card, and demographic information. Failure to make scheduled payments because of invalid bank account or credit card information may result in the student's removal from school.

Tuition payments need to be kept current in order to participate in any extracurricular activity or sports program. A quarterly review of tuition balances will be made at the beginning of each school year and at the end of each subsequent grading period. If extenuating circumstances arise and parents/guardians are unable to keep their FACTS tuition account current, the parent/guardians should contact the Divine Mercy Business Office immediately at 814-248-3884. Divine Mercy Catholic Academy will make every effort to work with families who are experiencing financial difficulty.

Written tuition agreements are required when a family is 60 days past due with tuition payments. The tuition agreement will outline the process for returning the account to current status and for the reinstatement of the student as an active participant in extracurricular activities and sports programs. Terms of the tuition agreement will be executed through the FACTS on-line tuition management program.

Repeated unsuccessful attempts to contact a family with a delinquent account may result in the dismissal of that student from Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. Ordinarily, in the case of suspension or dismissal, or in the case of voluntary withdrawal, no part of the payments that have been paid will be refunded.

## **Fund Raising**

Each family is responsible for \$800 in fund raising over the course of each school year. If a family is unable to meet that goal of \$800, the remaining balance is added to the family's yearly tuition. This fundraising is part of the school operations budget. There are numerous opportunities available to reach or exceed the goal. See FUNDRAISING in this handbook.

## **Lunch Accounts**

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy contracts the breakfast and lunch programs through Metz Food Service. Breakfast is available daily from 7:15 am to 7:50 am. Lunch menus are distributed monthly, and applications for free and reduced lunches are available through the school office or on the school website. Parents may choose to set up an online payment account through schoolbucks.com, or send lunch money to your child's campus. In the event of a 2-hour delay, breakfast will not be served.

## **AFTERSCHOOL CARE**

After school care is available, through the Learning Lamp, to all students who need care from 2:45 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the East and West Campuses. If care is needed, interested families need to register directly with the Learning Lamp. Registration is not handled by Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. Students who do not abide by the rules of the program will not be permitted to remain enrolled.

Before school care is also available through Learning Lamp on days of 2-hour delays during the winter months. Interested families must speak directly to Learning Lamp about this service.

## **ASSESSMENTS**

Iowa Assessments, formerly known as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), are administered to students in Grades 2-6, according to diocesan guidelines. Test results aid in the determination of supplemental educational programs and to focus educational curriculum. For graduating students these tests are used for placement in high school courses.

### **CLASSROOM DIAGNOSTIC TESTING**

The purpose of the CDT is to provide information that will help guide instruction by providing teachers with a snapshot of a student's level of learning in Math and Reading, thus allowing them to plan targeted instruction in these areas.

### **DIBELS**

DIBELS stands for Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills. DIBELS assesses skills that are necessary for learning to read. Teachers are able to focus on those specific areas in which a child is lacking proficiency. The skills addressed are:

- Phonemic Awareness: Hearing and using sounds in spoken words
- Alphabetic Principle: Knowing the sounds of the letters and sounding out written words
- Accurate and Fluent Reading: Reading stories and other materials easily and quickly with few mistakes
- Vocabulary: Understanding and using a variety of words
- Comprehension: Understanding what is spoken or read

DIBELS Next consists of seven short individual tests, called subtests. Each DIBELS subtest focuses on a different skill with 1 minute components. A child may be assessed on up to five of these DIBELS subtests, depending on his/her grade level.

Each DIBELS Next subtest is used to guide instruction. Much like using a thermometer to take a child's temperature as an indicator of overall health, each subtest is an indicator of a child's early reading skill. Many school districts throughout the United States assess students using the DIBELS Next benchmark assessment. A child's score on a subtest indicates whether the child is likely to be "on track" for learning to read, or whether that child may need some help with certain reading skills. In addition, the results may also indicate how to enrich a child's language arts instruction. A child's teacher will use the information to gain a clearer focus on his/her individual reading skills.

### **STAR READING AND STAR MATH**

The purpose of the STAR assessments is to provide more in-depth information through this software-based program. Teachers and administrators are able to view reports at the individual, classroom, and grade level in order to monitor progress.

#### **STAR Reading**

The purpose of STAR Reading is to assess student reading skills. The assessment provides an approximate measure of each student's reading level.

#### **STAR Math**

The purpose of STAR Math is to assess student mathematics skills. The assessment provides an approximate measure of each student's math level.

### **AUXILIARY SERVICES**

Auxiliary Services are provided by Pennsylvania Non-Public Schools Act under the direction of the Diocesan Education Department, IU8 Act 89 programs, and by the local school districts' Title I programs.

- Reading
- Math
- Guidance
- Speech

Parents who request an educational evaluation must do so through their home school district. DMCA will provide necessary information for the testing to take place. Services are provided according to student needs as documented through the evaluation and its recommendation.

## ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

The State of Pennsylvania mandates 180 days of instruction and the successful completion of course requirements in order to grant grade advancement.

Regular attendance and punctuality are essential to a student's progress and to the formation of good habits. If your child arrives in the classroom after 8:00 am, he/she will be marked tardy.

Parents are requested to call the school office (814-539-5315, West campus; or 814-266-3837, East campus) between 8:00-9:00 am if your child is going to be absent that day. Please contact the school no later than 10:00 a.m. if you request homework. Please also let the respective offices know if someone will be picking the homework up, or if it needs to be sent home with another student.

A text message and/or phone call will be sent to parents when a student is marked absent for the day.

*Tardiness.* For every five accumulated days of tardiness, a student in grades 3 through 6 will serve an afterschool detention and be required to write a reflection.

Upon returning to school after an absence, students must present a dated excuse that states the date(s) absent, the reason for the absence, and the signature of the parent/guardian.

After three consecutive days of absence, a doctor's note must be presented to the teacher. When a pattern of absences is recognized, parents will be contacted and required to present a doctor's excuse upon the child's return to school.

The parent/guardian will be notified by mail when a student is absent 10 days during the school year; and a meeting will be scheduled with the school principal. A signed note from a doctor will be required upon return to school.

Students who are absent in excess of 20 or more school days may be evaluated for retention.

In order to participate in extra-curricular activities, a student must be present and in class for the entire day. If a student is tardy because he/she is sick, or tired, they will not be permitted to participate. The only exception is a doctor or dentist appointment or a family emergency. In such cases, an excuse signed by the doctor is usually required.

*Excused Absences.* Pennsylvania School Law states that "excused" absences include the following: illness, family emergencies, prearranged and approved doctor and dentist appointments, school scheduled student educational trips and authorized school activities. During excused absences, class work is made up upon the child's return to school. This work needs to be made up within 2 days of the absence, unless it is an extended absence. In that case, special arrangements will be made with the teachers.

A student is marked with a whole day absence if he/she leaves before 10:00 a.m. After 10:00 a.m., half day is assessed. If student arrives before 10 am, he/she is considered to be tardy.

All other absences will be considered unexcused unless prior approval has been given by the school principal.

*Make-up work.* Students are expected to make-up work for all absences. All previously assigned work must be turned in the day a student returns to school. This includes tests that were announced before the absence occurred. All new assignments are given a grace period of one day for each absence. Students are given 1 day to complete assignments for each day absent.

The principals of Divine Mercy Catholic Academy have no power to grant permission to a student to be absent from school for a reason which the Commonwealth does not recognize as legitimate. It is the parents who are answerable to the state authorities for an illegal absence.

Take your Child to Work Day is a non-school sponsored event; therefore, if you choose to have your child participate in that event, your child will be marked absent.

We encourage dentist, orthodontist and doctor appointments to be made for after school hours. If this is not possible, parents must notify the school before 8:00 a.m. on the morning of the appointment. The adult who is picking up the child must report to the OFFICE to sign out the student. When the child returns to school, an adult must report to the OFFICE to sign the student back into school. Students who miss classes for appointments are required to make up all assignments from the missed class. Students coming from a doctor or dentist appointment must bring a note from the doctor or dentist.

### **Arrival/Dismissal**

Arrival and dismissal procedures are different at each of the campuses due to location and logistics.

#### **West Campus**

*Arrival.* Students may arrive at school at 7:00 a.m. and are to report to the gymnasium. Parents are not permitted to accompany their child to his/her homeroom. If students arrive after 8:05 a.m., they must report directly to the school office for a tardy slip.

*Dismissal.* Parents picking up their child(ren) must wait outside of the gymnasium or in their cars until dismissal. Dismissal time for bus students is 2:40 p.m.; walkers/car riders are dismissed at approximately 2:50 p.m. We request that parents/guardians from grades preschool through grade three enter the gym and retrieve the student(s) from the teacher; students in grades 4-6 will be dismissed under the supervision of a staff member.

#### **East Campus**

*Arrival.* Students may begin arriving to school at 7:00 a.m. Students arriving between 7:00 a.m. and 7:50 a.m. are to report to the gymnasium for supervision. Parents are not permitted to accompany their children to homeroom. If students arrive after 8:00 a.m., they must report directly to the school office for a tardy slip. Students transported to school by car can be dropped off at two locations:

- Churchill Street—students should walk to the front entrance of the building.
- At the top of the steps between the top and lower parking lot.

**Dismissal.** Dismissal time for bus students is 2:40 p.m.; walkers/car riders are dismissed at approximately 2:50 p.m.

Parents who are picking up their child may wait for their child at the **upper parking lot** stairway.

For the safety of all of our students, parents are asked to wait until all children have reached their vehicles safely before leaving the parking lot.

Parents transporting students are reminded that:

- Cars are NOT permitted anywhere on the lower parking lot between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Parents and students walking from the upper parking lot to the school must stay behind the double yellow lines for safety considerations.
- The upper lot should be used for all parking. Churchill Street and Oakmont Boulevard parking may cause traffic jams and drivers are subject to being ticketed by the police. Parents parking on Oakmont Boulevard may cause interference with entering and exiting buses.
- Your child will be placed on the bus if a note is not provided to the teacher stating that he/she is a car rider.

### **Both Campuses**

If there is any change in a student's routine regarding pick-up, parents must supply a written note, and the student should give the note to his/her teacher in the morning. This pick-up policy is strictly held. If the student does not have a note, he/she will not be allowed a change in transportation. The school will not honor a student's oral instruction.

No student will be dismissed early without a written note (or phone call, if short notice) from the parent explaining the reason and particulars of the pick-up. Parents are asked to refrain from calling the school after 2:00 p.m. for transportation changes, unless it is an emergency.

Please note that drop-off and pick-up may be revised in the effort to keep children safe.

### **Vacation**

Absence caused by travel is considered to be an anticipated absence. Family vacations during the school year are not considered a legal absence. Parents are advised not to take vacations during school term. Assignments missed due to family travel during unscheduled vacations will be the responsibility of the student. Teachers will make every effort to prepare missed work in advance, if requested by the parent. The length of time of make-up work should be proportional to the amount of time away. If schoolwork is not completed in a timely manner, the grading for that subject area will be adjusted accordingly.

### **Snow Delays and Cancellations**

In the event of inclement weather, parents will receive a recorded school messenger phone, text, and/or email announcement. This is first line of communication.

The school will also utilize the Divine Mercy Facebook page to post announcements. In addition, WJAC-TV and WTAJ-TV will run delays or cancellations. If a child is bused to school by a district that has cancelled classes, buses will not be available for those DMCA either in the morning or in the afternoon. The home school district will determine the bus transportation schedule.

### **BIRTHDAYS**

Birthdays are a celebration of life—a life created by God. Families are encouraged to celebrate a child's birthday with treats in school. Each teacher has established a policy for birthday celebrations in individual classrooms. Due to the changes in state nutritional law, treats should be limited to non-food treats or low/reduced fat and/or sugar treats. **Teachers will alert you to any allergy situations within the classroom.**

Additionally, unless the entire class is invited, party invitations are to be sent via mail, email or telephone. This saves hurt feelings when not all are invited.

### **BOOKS**

Students are responsible for the care of all text and library books. All hard-backed books are **expected to be covered at all times.** Book socks or DMCA book covers or covers of any type are acceptable. Students are to have all papers and books in a book bag before leaving school. Any damaged or lost texts or library books must be paid for at the replacement cost.

### **BUS TRANSPORTATION**

Bus transportation provided to students in grades K-8 is a **privilege.** Failure to obey rules, exhibiting lack of respect for the driver, or endangerment of passengers is grounds for suspension of riding privileges. The driver has the authority to issue conduct slips for improper behavior on the bus. It is up to the students, faculty, and parents to work together to build a reputation of good behavior.

Please note that the Greater Johnstown School District and Conemaugh Valley School District **will** bus our pre-k students because they bus their own pre-k children.

Parents may request bus service by calling their local school district transportation department. Students may not deviate from this daily routine of transportation with written notification from parent/guardian and approved by the school administration. Bus change forms are available in the office. Students will receive this permission form when they submit parental permission. Please check the list in the beginning of the book for phone numbers of local school bus companies.

Drivers have **legal responsibility and authority** for supervision of riders. They may withhold bus privileges from children who do not abide by bus rules. If a question or problem related to buses arises, call the appropriate bus company or the appropriate school district.

In the unlikely event of a school bus accident, parents will be notified via school personnel by our Message Sender service. In that event, parents should not rush to the scene of the accident. They should await information or call the school for details about the current situation. They will receive information regarding where the children are to be taken for treatment or when they will be transported to a pick-up location and where that location will be.

### **CAFETERIA**

Hot lunches and breakfast are available daily through the USDA/PDE. In accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. Applications for free and reduced meals are provided through the school office. If you believe you have been discriminated against, write to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.20250. All students are expected to bring nourishing lunches to school when they do not participate in the provided hot lunch/breakfast program. Again, in light of nutritional standards in the state of Pennsylvania as well as those standards directed by the USDA, students should **not** bring soda or sugary fruit drinks. Water, low sugar, no-sugar, or 100% fruit drinks are recommended. Bottled water is available for purchase. Cups of cold water will be available at no cost.

The price of breakfast is \$1.50 (or \$.30 reduced); lunches are \$2.50 (or \$.40 reduced). Milk and bottled water are \$.75 and snacks range between \$.75 and \$.85 each. Adult lunches are \$3.50.

Students are expected to observe table manners and proper etiquette in the cafeteria, just as they would at home or in a restaurant. Student are also encouraged to assist in keeping their eating area clean after lunch. Students who fail to adhere to rules will be removed from the lunch tables.

### **COMMUNICATION**

Weekly “News and Notes” will be sent home on Tuesday via email, with a hard copy sent to those families without email access on Wednesday. These reminders are sent to inform families of upcoming events, meetings, schedule changes, etc. Daily correspondence from your child’s teacher will be sent home in the student’s folder. Teachers will establish a regular means of communication with families via a personal website, emails, newsletter, or other means. Parents can access teacher websites on the Faculty/Staff page of the school website.

A request for any information regarding a student must be in writing or personal phone call by the parent/guardian. Parents are encouraged to contact the office and meet with the principal and/or teacher if they have a question or suggestion. Please contact the teacher or principal immediately if a situation develops in school that causes a serious concern.

In case of illness or other emergencies, information given on the emergency information sheet will be used in contacting relatives or friends when parents are not available. Please make every effort to keep this information current.

Parents may contact teachers at the school between the hours of 7:45 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Arrangements will be made for a parent to speak with a teacher. Please refrain from calling the faculty at home or addressing staff for school purposes in public places outside of school hours. Students are not expected to use the office telephone without a legitimate reason. Forgotten items (homework, gym clothes, money) do **not** constitute a serious reason. We would like to develop a sense of responsibility among all Divine Mercy students. Parents may email teachers at the email address that the teacher provides, or via website link, or by calling the school office.

When a parent has a question or concern, the protocol to follow is:

1. Contact a child's teacher.
2. Contact the office/principal.
3. Request a conference with either or both, teacher and principal.
4. Meet with the guidance counselor if appropriate.

Please refrain from gossip or negative talk on the sports' fields and parking lots. Go directly to the source for correct information.

### **CONFERENCES**

Mandatory parent/teacher conferences will be held at the end of first marking period. Parents will receive their child's report card at that time. Conferences at the end of the second marking period will be determined by teacher or parent request. Students are not required to attend these conferences; however, teachers may request that the student be present.

Conferences with the principal are always welcome. The building principal has an open-door policy and will see a parent at any time when he/she does not have another commitment. Contact the office to schedule a meeting with the principal, or email Rosemary Batzel at [batzel.rosemary@divinemeracy.academy](mailto:batzel.rosemary@divinemeracy.academy) or Mary Jo Podratsky at [podratsky.maryjo@divinemeracy.academy](mailto:podratsky.maryjo@divinemeracy.academy). Tom Smith is also available for conferencing. You may reach him at [smith.thomas@divinemeracy.academy](mailto:smith.thomas@divinemeracy.academy).

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality means that all information is kept private. Teachers and the administration will keep confidential information entrusted to them so long as no one's life, health, or safety is at stake. Parents will be promptly notified of a teacher's concern.

### **CRISIS PLAN**

There is a crisis plan in the office to meet a possible crisis. Fire drills are to be conducted on a monthly basis. Students practice fire drill procedures beginning the first week of school. When the fire bell is sounded, the students leave the room in single file through the assigned exit. Members of the local fire department may be present to observe one of the school's fire drills. In addition to fire drills, **tornado** and **lock down** procedures in case of extreme weather and/or a security breach of our school are practiced twice yearly.

## **CURRICULUM**

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy follows the recommended curriculum of the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese in all subject areas with regard to content and time allotments. Grades K through 4 are self-contained; grades 6 through 8 are departmentalized.

### **BASIC CURRICULUM RESOURCES**

Religion—*We Believe*, W.H. Sadlier

#### Reading

Reading/Literature/Spelling: *Wonders*, grades PK-6

#### English

Writing, Grammar, Speaking, Listening  
Handwriting (Gr. K-3, Zaner-Bloser *Handwriting*)

Mathematics, Gr. K-6, *Math in Focus*

PreK, *Everyday Mathematics*

Science: General Science, STEM/STREAM

Social Studies

Music, Art, Spanish

Physical Education

Computer Technology, STREAM

### **DETENTION**

Detention may be assigned to students in grades 2 through 6. A form will be sent home stating the reason, day, and time of the detention. A parent or guardian must sign this form and indicate the means of transportation the student will use following detention.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy exists to provide Catholic education which will help each student grow in his or her awareness of God, self and others. DMCA also strives to develop a student to his/her full potential spiritually, academically, and socially. These objectives provide the standard of judgment and the guide for action in the area of student behavior.

### **Student Behavior Expectations**

**The following behaviors are expected at all times, in all places, from all students, staff, and volunteers:**

- Treat yourself, adults, peers and property with respect.
- Use school-appropriate language and tone of voice at all times.
- Follow directions given by a person in authority.
- While classes are in session, walk quietly while inside the building.
- Keep hands, feet and objects to yourself.

### **Behavior in Classrooms**

- Respect all adults and fellow students.
- Enter a classroom only when a teacher is present.
- If a teacher is not present, line up against the wall outside of the classroom.
- Take pride in your classroom by keeping it neat and clean.

### **Behavior in Halls**

- Students walk on the right side of the hallway and in stairwells.
- When classes are in session, walk quietly and in an orderly manner.
- Keep hands and feet to yourself.
- Take care to keep the walls and halls clean, free from pencil marks, crayons, deliberate scuff marks, etc.
- Cubbies and lockers must be kept clean and orderly throughout the year.

### **Behavior in the Restrooms**

- Wash hands with soap after flushing the toilet.
- Be aware of waste of soap and paper towels.
- Remain quiet in the restroom.
- Dispose of paper products properly.

### **Behavior in the Cafeteria**

- Do not leave the cafeteria without a teacher's permission.
- You may only purchase food for yourself, not others.
- Practice good table manners.
- Do not share or trade food.
- Use inside voices when talking.
- Students must clean their table and floor area before being dismissed.
- Refrain from walking around in the cafeteria. Limit your trips to the wastebasket; visit only with children at your table.

### **Behavior on the Playground**

- Stay within the playground boundaries. If a ball goes beyond the boundary tell a teacher.
- Listen to and cooperate with adults in charge.
- Be thoughtful and considerate of others.
- Use equipment in a safe way. Do not jump from swings and do not climb on the outside of the slides. This is a safety precaution.
- Games like tackle football and other contact activities are not permitted.
- Language and gestures need to be appropriate to the school setting.

### **Behavior in Church**

- Genuflect upon entering your pew, facing the Tabernacle.
- **Stand** respectfully when answering questions in church.
- Fold hands reverently and bow before receiving Holy Communion.
- Participate fully in all prayers and hymns.
- Refrain from standing on the kneelers.

### **Behavior on Fieldtrips**

- Students are expected to follow all school and bus rules while on fieldtrips.

### **Behavior on the Bus**

- Follow all directions given by the bus driver. The bus driver will have the final word in all matters and may assign students to specific seats.
- Remain seated at all times.
- Talk quietly.
- Use only appropriate school language on the bus.

- Keep all body parts inside the bus at all times.
- Do not throw objects on or out of the bus.
- Stay in your seat while the bus is moving.

### **Consequences of Behavior**

Since learning that consequences result from harmful behavior is important, failure to conform to school expectations, will result in the following behavior penalties. Specific minimum and maximum penalties are listed and consideration will be given to permit the consequence to fit the particular violation and student's history.

#### **A. Major Behavior Violations**

1. **Assaults** (physical attack on student or staff member)
  - a. Parent conference and detention (minimum)
  - b. Expulsion (maximum)
  
2. **Verbal abuse, harassment, threats**
  - a. Parent conference and detention (minimum)
  - b. Expulsion (maximum)
  
3. **Theft**
  - a. Parent conference and detention (minimum)
  - b. Suspension (maximum)
  
4. **Property Damage**
  - a. Parent conference and detention (minimum)
  - b. Payment restitution and suspension (maximum)
  
5. **Fire-related incidents including false alarms**
  - a. Parent conference (minimum)
  - b. Suspension with fire marshal and police referral (maximum)
  
6. **Weapons**
  - a. 10 days suspension with police notification (minimum)
  - b. Expulsion (maximum)

#### **B. Minor Behavior Violations**

1. Disruption of classroom learning
2. Failure to follow classroom rules
3. Cheating
4. Dress code violation
5. Loitering in the halls or bathrooms

6. Gum chewing or eating candy in class
7. Inappropriate language
8. Misbehavior in the cafeteria
9. Misbehavior in church
10. Disrespect towards teachers, peers or other supervising adult

**Consequences for Minor Behavior Violations**

- a. Behavior Checklist/Classroom Discipline Form
- b. Written Reflection
- c. Lunch detention/loss of recess or other activities
- d. Parent contact if appropriate
- e. Detention (afterschool)

**The principal in consultation with the classroom teacher is the final recourse in all disciplinary situations.**

## **DRESS CODE POLICY**

School uniform polo shirts, ties, and sweatshirts are available for purchase in the school office (order forms available)

### **GIRLS**

#### **JUMPERS and SKORTS**

- Girls in all grades may wear an approved jumper in navy or khaki year-round. Examples of approved jumpers are: Land's End- Navy Jumper #068175 & #068176 Walmart-George Girl's Pleated Jumper. (This is not an exhaustive list) No jumper or cardigan with an attached shirt, and no dresses. Jumpers and Skorts must be no shorter than two inches above the middle of the kneecap.

#### **PANTS**

- Dress, navy blue or khaki, "Docker-style" pants may be worn year round by girls in all grades. Pants must be modest; i.e., no low-riders will be acceptable. Pants must be navy blue or khaki – not faded or stonewashed blue or khaki. No decorations of any kind may be worn on pants – i.e. rivets, patches, embroidery, jewels, etc.

#### **BELTS**

- If a belt is worn, it must be solid black, brown, white or navy with no decorations.

#### **SHORTS/ CAPRIS**

- In warmer months, girls may wear navy or khaki shorts. Shorts must be knee-length – no shorter than two inches above the middle of the kneecap. Cargo style shorts are not permitted. The same guidelines that are stated for pants also apply to shorts. The principal will announce when shorts pants are permitted (Usually September, October, April, May, and June)

#### **DRESS SHIRTS**

- White, oxford-style collar or rounded collar (for girls), short or long-sleeved shirts may be worn by girls year round, but are required to be worn for Mass days. Shirts must be tucked in at all times. Shirts must be long enough to remain tucked in while seated or when hand is raised. Short-waisted girls' blouses that cannot remain tucked are not acceptable.

#### **UNDERGARMENTS**

- Any garments worn underneath shirts must be appropriately colored and have no writing – i.e. girls should wear white or beige garments under their blouses.

## POLOS

- Only uniform polos are permitted--available in short or long sleeve options. Polos must remain in good condition and should be neat and presentable. Polos may only be worn on non-Mass days

## MASS DAY/DRESS UNIFORM

- Dress shirt and jumper, skort, or pants with dress shoes and socks. See individual headings for descriptions.

## SWEATERS

- Cardigan, crewneck, V-neck and vests may be worn by girls in all grades as weather dictates. Sweaters or vests must be solid navy blue, white, or gray. Only uniform crewneck sweatshirts are acceptable. Hoodies, hooded sweatshirts and zip--ups are not acceptable. This includes DMCA spirit wear. These items may be worn to and from school and at recess, but may not be worn during class.

## SOCKS

- Socks must be solid white, navy blue, black, or khaki. Solid blue or white tights may be worn with jumpers. No-show style socks are not permitted

## SHOES

- Solid Black, Blue or Brown dress shoes must be worn by girls in all grades year round. No variation of athletic, sneaker, or tennis shoes or shoes with lettering and/or striping will be permitted. No boots of any kind may be worn during school hours. Heels must be no higher than 2 inches and must be “chunky.” No high heels, slippers, sandals, flip-flops, clogs, athletic shoes, open-heel shoes, or boots of any kind may be worn. Shoestrings must be solid navy, white, brown, or black.

## MAKE-UP, HAIR, JEWELRY

- Absolutely no make-up of any kind or tattoos is permitted. Only natural color hair is acceptable. Earrings may be worn in earlobes **ONLY**. Earrings must be small; no hoops or dangles. Other jewelry may be worn in moderation- i.e. one bracelet, watch, necklace, etc. Nail polish must be clear or light in color.

## GYM CLOTHES

- Students in grades K-6 will wear gym attire to school on their designated gym day.
- TOPS: any red DMCA T-shirt, a uniform red polo shirt, or purchase a new DMCA red T-Shirt.
- BOTTOMS: plain black shorts—no logos (to be worn during the months of August, Septembers, October, April, May); **or** plain black sweatpants (open bottom, no logos/stripes); **or** purchase DMCA logo shorts and/or sweatpants.
- If you choose to purchase gym attire with the DMCA logo, samples are available in the office before purchase.
- There will be a second uniform order available during the winter season.

## DRESS DOWN/UP DAYS

- Blue jeans are permitted on dress down days **ONLY** as long as they are not low-riding and have no holes. Athletic shoes are permitted on dress down days. T-shirts must have appropriate logos--no offensive or suggestive language. The same guidelines for hair, make-up, jewelry, and sandal-type shoes apply to dress down days as well as regular uniform days. Leggings may only be worn by girls as long as an appropriate length skirt or skort is worn over top. Tight fitting or excessively baggy clothing is **NOT** acceptable. Yoga pants are not permitted. Moderation is key. Keeping up with current trends in fashion should be balanced with modest considerations.

In all cases, the Administration reserves the right to determine and curtail unacceptable articles of dress and hair style.

## BOYS PANTS

- Dress, navy blue or khaki, “Dockers-style” pants may be worn year round by boys in all grades. Pants must be modest, i.e. no low-riders will be acceptable. Pants must be navy blue or khaki– not faded or stonewashed blue or khaki. No cargo pants are permitted No skinny pants, cargo pants, jeans, rivets, leggings, bell bottoms, painter pants, or cuffs are permitted.

## SHORTS

- In warmer months, boys may wear navy or khaki dress shorts. Shorts must be knee-length – no shorter than two inches above the middle of the kneecap. Cargo style shorts are not permitted. The same guidelines that are stated for pants also apply to shorts. The principal will announce when shorts are permitted (Usually September, October, April, May, and June)

## BELTS

- If a belt is worn, it must be solid black, brown, or navy with no decorations.

## DRESS SHIRTS

- White, oxford-style collar, short or long-sleeved shirts may be worn by boys year round- but must be worn for Mass days. Boys must have their top buttons and collars buttoned at all times. Shirts must be tucked in at all times. Shirts must be long enough to remain tucked in while seated or when hand is raised.

## UNDERGARMENTS

- Undershirts must be appropriately colored and have no writing – i.e. boys should wear white undergarments.

## TIES

- Boys in grades K-6 must wear a tie with dress shirt. Boys may wear a navy blue full-length standard tie, available for purchase in the office. Shirts, must be buttoned at top of neck at all times. If shirt is too small, please purchase next size.

## POLOS

- Only uniform polos are permitted- available in short or long sleeve options. Polos must remain in good condition and should be neat and presentable. Polos may only be worn on non-Mass days.

## MASS DAY/DRESS UNIFORM

- Dress shirt, tie, and pants with dress shoes and socks. See individual headings for descriptions.

## SWEATER

- Cardigan, crewneck, V-neck and vests may be worn by boys in all grades as weather dictates. Sweaters or vests must be solid navy blue, white, or gray. Only uniform crewneck sweatshirts are acceptable. Hoodies, hooded sweatshirts and zip-ups are not acceptable. This includes DMCA spirit wear. These items may be worn to and from school and at recess, but may not be worn during class.

## SOCKS

- Socks must be solid white, navy blue, black, or khaki. No-show style socks are not permitted

## SHOES

- Solid Black, Blue or Brown dress shoes must be worn by boys in all grades year round. No variation of athletic, sneaker, or tennis shoes or shoes with lettering and/or striping will be permitted. No boots of any kind may be worn during school hours. Sandals are not permitted (this includes dress-down days). Shoestrings must be solid navy, white, brown, or black.

### MAKE-UP, HAIR, JEWELRY

- Absolutely no make-up of any kind or tattoos is permitted. Hair should be neatly trimmed, conservative in style, and natural in color. It is not to touch the shirt collar and not be past the student's eyebrows. Earrings are not permitted for boys. Other jewelry may be worn in moderation- i.e. one bracelet, watch, necklace, etc.

### GYM CLOTHES

- Students in grades K-6 will wear gym attire to school on their designated gym day.
- TOPS: any red DMCA T-shirt, a uniform red polo shirt, or purchase a new DMCA red T-Shirt.
- BOTTOMS: plain black shorts—no logos (to be worn during the months of August, Septembers, October, April, May); **or** plain black sweatpants (open bottom, no logos/stripes); **or** purchase DMCA logo shorts and/or sweatpants.
- If you choose to purchase gym attire with the DMCA logo, samples are available in the office before purchase.
- There will be a second uniform order during the winter season.

### DRESS DOWN/UP DAYS

- Blue jeans are permitted on dress down days **ONLY** as long as they are not low-riding and have no holes. Athletic shoes are permitted on dress down days. T-shirts must have appropriate logos- no offensive or suggestive language. The same guidelines for hair, jewelry, and sandal-type shoes apply to dress down days as well as regular uniform days. Tight fitting or excessively baggy clothing is **NOT** acceptable. Moderation is key. Keeping up with current trends in fashion should be balanced with modest considerations

In all cases, the Administration reserves the right to determine and curtail unacceptable articles of dress and hair style.

If the dress code is not followed, a Dress Code Violation form will be completed by the homeroom teacher. On Mass days, the parent will be called to bring the appropriate attire. If 3 offenses occur, the student will be given detention.

## EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The following activities are available to the students of Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. (Ideas and **advisors** for new clubs are always welcome.)

Band/Strings

Spelling Bee

Lector

Choir

Math 24 Challenge

County Chorus

Psalmists

Forensics

Student Council

Ski Club

Yearbook

Science Fair

Musical Performances

Interscholastic Reading  
Competition

S.T.R.E.A.M.

First Lego League\*

Coding

Others, TBD

## FIELD TRIPS

A field trip is one of the many educational experiences planned for the children. Each student **must** have a regulation permission slip signed by a parent or guardian before participation is possible. Permission slips should be read carefully so that there is a full understanding of the responsibility of the parent, guardian, and chaperone. Students who fail to submit a proper form will not be permitted to participate. (Telephone calls will not be accepted in lieu of proper permission forms.) Chaperones, when needed and with proper clearances, are designated by the homeroom teacher. If, at any time, a child is unable to participate in a field trip because of the inability to pay, the principal will make accommodations as needed.

Field trips are privileges afforded to students. No student has an absolute right to a field trip. A student can be denied participation in a field trip if he/she fails to meet academic or behavioral criteria.

Parents always have the right to refuse to allow their child to participate in a field trip.

## **FUNDRAISING**

In order to keep tuition at an affordable rate, support of school-sponsored fundraising activities is essential to the school budget. Each family is assessed an \$800 fundraising fee. This fee may be paid up-front, monthly throughout the year, or be worked down throughout the year with fundraising activities.

Update: The fundraising program has been revamped to allow families that raise *more* than the required \$800 to apply *half of any overage* amount directly to their tuition for the 2017-2018 school year. The other half of any overage above the basic \$800 will be directed to the school's general fund for improvements. This change is both a reward and an opportunity for those families who are able to fundraise beyond the \$800 minimum goal.

The SCRIP Fundraising Program for the upcoming school year is being expanded. SCRIP may be purchased at St. Benedict, St. Clement, St. John Gaulbert, and Our Mother of Sorrows. In the near future, Great Lakes Scrip will be available through Divine Mercy.

For a complete list of current retailers, please check the website at <http://www.glscrip.com>

## **GRANT / SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS**

Eligible students need not be of the Catholic faith to receive Second Century scholarships. The schools are located in the counties of Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Centre, Clinton and Somerset.

The Second Century Scholarship Fund receives financial support from interested individual and corporate donors who are committed to making a positive impact in the lives of worthy young students in the region. Please consider how a tax-deductible gift can help make the four Catholic high schools and twenty grade schools/preschools in the diocese an option for more and more interested families. The Second Century Fund will make a quality, faith-based education a more affordable choice for years to come. A large percentage of contributions to the Second Century Scholarship Fund comes from businesses and corporations that make gifts through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) and Pre-Kindergarten Tax Credit (PKTC) programs coordinated by the Pennsylvania Department of Economic Development. However, gifts from individuals and families also play an important role in providing grants from the Second Century Scholarship Fund. Visit the website and [www.factstuitionaid.com](http://www.factstuitionaid.com) and click on the link to obtain information about obtaining a grant for children in grades PreK through 12. In addition, there are several OSTC grants available (Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit) for students residing in the Greater Johnstown School District. Check the website for additional information.

## **GUIDANCE**

Appalachia IU08 provides a guidance counselor through the IU8 non-public programs. Students need to inform the office, their teacher or the guidance counselor of their desire to meet individually with the counselor. The guidance counselor also provides developmental guidance with the whole class on a biweekly basis.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Each campus has a nurse to assist the students or staff with any/all medical issues.

Each campus also performs monthly fire drills, weather drills and lock down drills.

## **HOMEWORK PRACTICE**

Homework is essential for the full scholastic development of the child. Children are expected to do a reasonable amount of home study, and it is the responsibility of the parent to supervise this work. Homework may consist of written work, reading, study for review, memorization, or work on special projects.

Parents are encouraged to set aside a period of time for study every day, even when written homework is not assigned.

Failure to complete homework hinders learning as the review of material is necessary for mastery; therefore, if homework is not completed, a homework slip will be completed. If your child receives five slips, he/she will be required to serve afterschool detention.

## **HONOR ROLL**

Students in grades 4-6 may qualify for academic honors at the end of each marking period. The following are the guidelines for honor roll:

### **High Honor**

93% or higher in all solid subjects (religion, English, reading, math, science and social studies.)

Acceptable conduct/performance in all subjects is also required.

### **Honor**

85% or higher in all solid subjects

Acceptable conduct/performance in all subjects is also required.

## INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

Students and their parents/guardians must sign an “Internet Acceptable Use Policy” of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. The policy clearly states the guidelines for acceptable use of the internet. Any items that are contrary to the religious beliefs and moral values of the Catholic Church are prohibited. The school has excellent filters in place; however, there are always exceptions. Students using the internet will always be monitored. Instant messages, chat rooms, and personal emails are not permitted.

## LIBRARY

All students are permitted and encouraged to borrow books from the library, subject to established library rules. Students will pay the cost for replacement of any lost or damaged book.

## LOCKERS

Students may be assigned a locker. In some cases, lockers may need to be shared. Students are responsible for the proper care of the lockers. Lockers are available for the express purpose of housing jackets and book bags. Due to the size of the lockers, wheeled book bags are not permitted. The only things to be placed in the locker are jackets, sweaters, book bags, and lunches. For safety reasons, students may not climb in or on the lockers. If space permits, books may be stored. Decorations may **not** be placed on the outside of the locker. However, there are many “cool” magnets that students may use to decorate the inside door of the lockers. Please, no tape, no stickers, no writing on lockers. Inappropriate photos and other materials will be removed. There will not be room for any additional shelving inside the locker. Finally, no locks will be permitted on locker doors. Valuables may be kept in the office, if necessary. School lockers are the property of Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. Students DO NOT have a constitutional right to a private locker. Students should be aware that lockers may be searched randomly and periodically without regard to articulated suspicion or alleged infraction of school rules. School officials determine what action to take if inappropriate or illegal substances are found.

## LOST AND FOUND

A “Lost and Found” area is maintained outside of the school office. Valuable items will be placed under lock and key. DMCA makes every attempt to locate the owner of property that has a name legibly displayed. Parents and students are encouraged to check frequently for lost items. Several times throughout the school year (for sanitary reasons) it is necessary to bag up our unclaimed “Lost and Found” items and donate them to charity. **Please remember to clearly mark every item that your child brings to school.**

## MEDICATION

The school strongly recommends that medication be given at home; however, the health of some children requires that they receive medication while at school. *Prescription medicine* must be accompanied with the *physician's written request* along with instructions from the parent. *The medication is brought to school in its original pharmaceutically dispensed and properly labeled container. Your pharmacist will provide an extra bottle for school use, if you request.* All medicine is brought to and kept with the school nurse.

The school nurse, the principal, school secretary, or designated person will supervise or administer the medication.

No over-the-counter medications will be administered without a written physician's order.

## NO BULLYING POLICY a.k.a DIVINE MERCY CATHOLIC ACADEMY PEACEKEEPERS PROGRAM

In determining incidents of bullying, staff, students, and parents should refer to the following definition of bullying.

*Bullying* is defined as an intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act or series of acts directed at another student or students that is severe, persistent or pervasive and has the effect of doing any of the following:

1. Substantial interference with a student's education.
2. Creation of a threatening environment.
3. Substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.

Such acts can take place either within a school setting and/or outside of school boundaries.

*Bullying*, as defined here, includes cyberbullying. *School Setting*, as defined here, means in the school, on school grounds, in school vehicles, at a designated bus stop or at any activity sponsored, supervised or sanctioned by the school.

A person is being bullied when he/she is exposed **repeatedly**, and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons. Bullying happens when someone with **more** power unfairly hurts someone with **less** power **over and over** again. However, it is **not** bullying when someone is teased in a friendly manner. Additionally, it is not bullying when two students of approximately equal strength, ability, or advantage fight or argue. Such events are "classified" as misbehaviors, not bullying.

All incidents will be investigated and documented. All students involved will report to teacher and/or the office. Documentation will include date, description of incident, reaction, and consequences.

## **NO BULLYING POLICY: Consequences**

Students who violate this policy shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action consistent with the student behavioral expectations (discipline code), which may include:

1. Counseling within the school
2. Parental conference
3. Loss of school privileges
4. Transfer to another classroom, bus, or school
5. Exclusion from school sponsored activities
6. Detention
7. Suspension
8. Expulsion
9. Counseling/Therapy outside of school
10. Referral to law enforcement officials

## **PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES, INCLUDING CELL PHONES**

The Divine Mercy preference is that personal electronic devices, including cell phones, be left at home. However, some parents want their child(ren) to have a cell phone in their possession. In that case, cell phones (and other devices) are to be kept safely in the office during the school day and picked up prior to dismissal. If a student chooses to keep possession of an electronic devices, he/she must keep all devices his/her book bag and turned off. If a student does not turn over his/her phone (or other devices) to the office and uses it during the school day, it will be confiscated and the parent/guardian will be asked to pick it up in the office. The school will not be held responsible for lost or stolen personal electronic devices which have not been cared for according to school policy.

## **POWERSCHOOL®**

**DMCA recognizes that communication between school and parents is key to student achievement.**

In March 2006, PowerSchool commissioned an online survey of more than 1550 parents with at least one child in grades K-12. The survey was conducted to determine the frequency and manner of communication parents currently have with their child's school. It also gauged parents' attitudes on how communication could be improved and the subsequent impact that communication has on overall student achievement. The survey results revealed that almost all parents (99 percent) want more frequent communication between schools and parents.

## **Web-based parent portal--**

PowerSchool was the first web-based student information system to recognize the importance of connecting the home with the school. PowerSchool's external interface gives parents and students access to real-time information, like grades and attendance information, and provides a secure way to communicate with teachers from home.

According to recent survey results, 94 percent of parents want to use the web to get more involved in their children's progress, and 85 percent want more frequent progress updates. With PowerSchool's powerful, yet easy-to-use communication tools, parents can access secure student information online, including real-time attendance information, grades and detailed assignment descriptions, school bulletins, and personal messages from the teacher.

Parents who are new to PowerSchool will be asked to sign an "Acceptable Use Policy" statement in order to receive a PowerSchool login and access to the DMCA student information system.

## **RELIGIOUS FUNCTIONS**

All students, regardless of religious preference, will be instructed in and expected to participate in, the Roman Catholic faith, with the exception of reception of the sacraments. Religion classes are held on a daily basis. Mass is scheduled weekly, and family and friends are always welcome to join us in prayer. Religious activities include:

- Liturgy of the Eucharist
- Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Rosary
- Stations of the Cross
- Penance Services
- Prayer Services
- Daily and special prayers
- Adoration



## **SCHOOL MESSENGER**

The DMCA outreach via telephone, email, and text is a service of School Messenger. This program links with PowerSchool daily to keep information up to date. **Parents have access to change their information through Power School.** Parents are asked to keep the school current with their address, phone and/or cell phone, and email information. Parents will receive alerts in emergency situations, weather delays, and announcements/reminders via School Messenger.

## SERVICE

Service is part of living out the Baptismal call of Catholic Christians. All have been called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Jesus reached out to people who needed His love and care, especially those who were poor, sick and unwanted. It is essential that DMCA students, staff, and families use their God-given gifts, talents, and interests to love others and help them in times of need.

Students at Divine Mercy complete individual, class, and whole-school church, school, and community projects throughout the year.

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Student activities include, but are not limited to: Forensics, Math 24, St. Vincent DePaul, Ski Club, Reading Competition, Band, Strings, and Choir.

## VISITORS

Visitors must check in at the school office and receive a visitor's ID badge upon entering the building.

Friends of the students may not be brought to school without the permission of the principal. Out of respect for the learning process, no one may proceed to a classroom without prior approval of the principal or office staff.

Only authorized persons who have the permission from the office may meet with students once the children have reported to school.

Due to State and Diocesan guidelines, family members may not enter other areas of the school while in session including the cafeteria (lunch time) and playground (recess). Parents are encouraged to become lunch room volunteers by completing approved clearances and the Diocesan Youth Protection Program. Volunteers are required to report to the office to sign in and receive a volunteer badge.

## VOLUNTEERS

All volunteers must take the online Diocesan Youth Protection Program at [www.dioceseaj.org](http://www.dioceseaj.org). In addition, all volunteers must complete/provide the following background checks:

- **Act 151 PA Child Abuse History** (which may be completed online at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/CWIS>)  
Creating an account and submitting your clearance application online will give you immediate access to your results of the status of your results if those cannot be processed immediately.

- **Act 34 PA State Police Criminal Record Check** (online)  
<https://epatch.state.pa.us/Home.jsp>
  
- **Act 114 Fingerprinting**  
 This is only required if you have **NOT** been a resident of PA for the past 10 years. **If you have not resided in PA for the past 10 years, follow these directions:**
  1. Log on to the Cogent Website at [https://www.pa.cogentid.com/index\\_pde.htm](https://www.pa.cogentid.com/index_pde.htm)
  2. Select Department of Education
  3. Choose Register online
  4. Complete the registration form and print it—the registration ID# is required and your fingerprints need to be taken and viewed.
  5. Take your registration ID# to the Cogent location of your choice...  
*University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown in Cambria County or Alleghenies Unlimited Care Providers in Johnstown in Cambria County or The Learning Lamp (Bedford St) in Johnstown in Cambria County*
  6. Keep your receipt. You will receive an official letter in the mail from Cogent. This letter is the document you will turn in at the office.
  
- **Act 24 Arrest and Conviction Form**  
 If you **HAVE** lived in PA for the past 10 years, you merely complete this page and submit it indicating that you have not been arrested or convicted and should you be arrested and/or convicted at some point in time, you will report it. That pdf may be found at:  
<http://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/Teachers-Administrators/Background%20Checks/Arrest%20or%20Conviction%20form.pdf>
  
- **Mandated Reporting (Act 126) (\*if applicable)**  
 If the principal of a school determines that a volunteer is working at a school on a consistent, regular basis, the volunteer will be required to complete the Mandated Reporter Course by going to [www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu](http://www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu). This is a three hour course. After completion of the course, the prospective volunteer must turn in their certificate of completion to the school principal. The school principal must provide a copy of the competition certificate to the Diocese (Education Office).
  
- **Diocesan Youth Protection Program**  
 This is a one-hour online self-guided training course that is required of all volunteers and employees who are working or volunteering with our children.  
<https://youthprotection.dioceseaj.org/>

Volunteers need to click on the registration tab and complete the online registration. Be sure to indicate category and location. Remember, you are selecting Divine Mercy Catholic Academy.

Be sure to read the items under the FAQ tab on the Youth Protection page. There is paperwork under “Resources” that must also be submitted.

### **Continued Volunteering**

Should a volunteer in a school setting wish to continue volunteering after five (5) years of service, he /she must submit for renewal of both the PA Child Abuse Clearance and the PA Criminal History Check. The new clearances must be within 60 months of the initial clearance dates. If updated clearances are not provided before 60 months expire, the volunteer may not participate in activities with children until the updated clearances are provided. However, a single 30-day grace period is allowed for the provisional use of a volunteer who has applied for clearances. This may only be used one time per volunteer.

### **What forms must I return to the school to complete this training?**

- \* Completed Employee/Volunteer Application Form
- \* Signed Copy of Employee/Volunteer's Code of Conduct
- \* Completed Ministry Reference Form
- \* Completed Background Check Release Form
- \* COPY OF YOUR CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

**PLEASE NOTE CHANGE: AS OF NOVEMBER 1, 2015, ALL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS SHOULD SUBMIT THEIR FORMS TO THEIR RESPECTIVE SCHOOLS. DO NOT SEND DIRECTLY TO THE DIOCESE.**

Divine Mercy Catholic Academy Administration reserves the right to amend any part of this handbook for just cause. Parents and students will be notified of changes accordingly.



## Parent / Student 2017-2018 Handbook Signature Page

I have read this handbook and I understand and agree to the content.

Family Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

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

**\*\*Please return this page to your homeroom teacher by September 15, 2017.**

\* This signature form applies to your time here at Divine Mercy Catholic Academy.