

**2016-2017**

**STUDENT/PARENT  
HANDBOOK**

**St. Mary Catholic School**

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**ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN A SETTING OF CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN VALUES  
SINCE 1869**

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

### WELCOME LETTER

Dear Families,

We welcome you and thank you for choosing St. Mary School for your child. You have now become a member of our school family, joining thousands who have given their children the St. Mary School experience. Here at St. Mary, we follow the three-fold mission of Catholic schools which is to spread the message of God, build community, and teach service. Our educational program provides a variety of experiences that will help your child discover his/her God-given gifts.

We provide a safe and nurturing environment where mutual respect and integrity are evident. We follow Christ's teachings, and He is an important part of our entire day.

Blessings to you,

Joyce McGuire Price  
Principal

This handbook and the policies stated in it are intended as a guide to student activities and discipline. Since it is impossible to foresee all situations that may arise, the administration reserves the right to set and/or revise policy as needed throughout the 2016-17 school year. New policies and revisions will be communicated to parents. Parents and students are bound by the policies contained in this handbook and the procedures set forth by teachers.

## MISSION and BELIEFS

### DIOCESAN SCHOOLS MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the schools in the Diocese of Raleigh is to engage our school/center communities in creating a quality education within a Catholic environment that fosters the current and future development of the whole child.

### ST. MARY SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of St. Mary Catholic School is to ensure learning for all our students within the framework of Catholic Christian values.

### WE BELIEVE...

- ✦ Our aim is to help our students grow in a manner consistent with their needs, interests, and abilities, and prepare them to live in a changing world as self-directed, caring, God-loving, responsible citizens.
- ✦ It is our responsibility to challenge our students to develop their potential in the trust-filled atmosphere of a Catholic Christian Community whose curriculum includes instruction in the precepts of the Catholic faith and practice in the Christian call to service.
- ✦ Parents, as primary educators, have the responsibility to take an active part in the school community and the right to help direct the education of their children.
- ✦ Every facet of life: spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional, should be addressed in the educational process.
- ✦ The development of critical thinking skills, knowledge, and reasoning are more important than the mere accumulation of facts and data.
- ✦ Every child is unique and valuable and deserves our best efforts in learning the ultimate value of life.
- ✦ Students and teachers deserve a setting conducive to education, a calm and enriching classroom that encourages creativity and fosters learning.

### HISTORY of ST. MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Located in the heart of the historic district of Wilmington, NC, St. Mary School lays claim to a rich and unique past. In 1869, Bishop James Gibbons requested assistance from the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in

Charleston, SC to open a Catholic school in Wilmington. Under the title of the Academy of the Incarnation, the school began in a house at 202 Nun Street with an enrollment of thirty-six students. With several donations and tuition contributions from the Academy, the Sisters added a parochial school for poor girls of the parish called St. Peter's Parochial School for Girls in January 1871. The Peden House, located at the corner of Fourth and Ann Streets near the site of the present St. Mary Lower School building, housed St. Peter's. The Academy was later closed.

In 1876, to provide Catholic education for boys, work began on a separate school building situated on the site now occupied by the Basilica Shrine of St. Mary at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Ann Street. It formally opened on October 1, 1878, with an enrollment of fifty boys. Over the course of time the boys' and girls' schools were merged into St. Mary School.

Separately, on the opposite side of Ann Street, Amy Morris Bradley, with a monetary award from the philanthropist Mary Tileston Hemenway of Boston, began construction on a structure that would become the first school in Wilmington to offer free education. Plans for the Tileston School were drawn by John A. Fox, Esq., noted designer of the Boston Museum. Following its construction in 1871, the Tileston School on Ann Street continued its own storied history. After Amy Morris Bradley's retirement in 1891, Tileston School, which had undergone five additions over the century, continued to educate Wilmington's youth, serving as a public elementary, middle, and high school. The city of Wilmington abandoned the buildings in the 1980s. Unattended, they quickly fell into disrepair.

Construction of a new church began in 1908 on the site of the old boys' school. Built on the plan of a Latin cross in the Spanish Baroque style, the church is constructed of brick and tile with no steel, wood, or nails used in the structure. With its twin steeples and domed roof, the Basilica Shrine of St. Mary graces the lovely skyline of downtown Wilmington today.

The St. Thomas School, at Second and Orange St., was home to the African American Catholic children. In the 1960s, prior to the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the Diocese of Raleigh desegregated Catholic Schools. Later, St. Thomas School became affiliated with St. Mary School. The Sisters of the Franciscan Handmaids of Mary joined the faculty of St. Mary and taught for several years with the Sisters of Mercy. In 2000, the Preschool and Kindergarten were moved to the St. Mary School.

Eventually, in 1988, under the direction of Monsignor Thomas P. Hadden, St. Mary Parish purchased the Tileston complex for \$17,000.

Renovations were soon underway. The historic Tileston Center is currently home to the Basilica Shrine of St. Mary parish offices and meeting rooms, St. Mary Tileston Outreach Ministry, and clinics. Additionally, St. Mary Middle School (grades 5-8), the Art and Music classrooms, Science Lab, Computer Lab and Media Center and the beautiful Upper Room (auditorium) call the Tileston Center home. The full-court gymnasium, although detached from the main buildings, is part of the Tileston Complex. During 2016, the old gym floor was replaced with a beautiful new wooden floor funded mostly by school fundraisers along with parish and fencing donations. The buildings are a living part of the neighborhood filled with the bustle of school children and the ministries of an active Catholic parish.

Joining the St. Mary Parish on September 8, 1982, were the Sisters of the Society of St. Ursula. This order contributed to the parish and school with work in the areas of education and especially in the development of social ministry.

The Sisters of Mercy continued to serve the students of St. Mary School until 1991. From its humble beginnings with thirty-six students in 1869 as the state's first Catholic school, the school now serves over 200 children in grades preK through eight.

During 2015-16, St. Mary School will celebrate its 147th year offering Catholic education in Wilmington.

## **ACCREDITATION**

St. Mary Catholic School is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) under the direction of AdvancED.

## **ADMISSIONS**

St. Mary Catholic School is a Roman Catholic non-profit, co-educational school serving students in grades preK through eight. Application is open to all students regardless of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, and disability that possess the motivation, ability, and character that would enable them to succeed in a rigorous academic environment. In the admissions process, preference is given to siblings of students presently enrolled in grades preK3 through eight and active members of St. Mary Parish and all Catholic parishes including families from out-of-town parishes. Children entering kindergarten must be 5 years of age by August 31st.

Applicants are accepted on the basis of both the student's and the family's sincere interest in St. Mary Catholic School, a willingness to support and cooperate with school policies and philosophy, and the ability to develop and thrive in the academic and spiritual environment. As the child's primary educators, parents are required to support their child's academic efforts and be active participants in their child's moral and social development at school. Parental encouragement and involvement are vital to the child's success.

Applicants are invited to visit the school and to meet the principal and other members of the staff and student body. Previous academic and behavior records are reviewed, and parents are asked to provide as much information as possible regarding their child's educational experience, needs, and interests. In order to understand the child's educational background more clearly, the administration may contact the child's previous teachers and/or principal. Every effort is made to meet the needs of children of all learning styles and abilities. St. Mary Catholic School is limited in its resources to provide individual programs or staff for exceptional students. The principal makes final decisions.

Upon acceptance, the registration process includes the completion of the registration forms, payment of registration and book fees, and arrangements for the payment of tuition.

## **PARENTS' ROLES in EDUCATION**

We believe you, as parents, are the primary educators of your children. Therefore, it is your right and your duty to become the primary role models for the development of your child's life - physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically. Your choice of St. Mary School involves a commitment and exhibits a concern for helping your child to recognize God as the greatest good in his/her life. As the primary teacher of your child, you have the greatest influence. Ideals taught in school are well-rooted in the child when nurtured by good examples in the family. The strongest way of teaching your child is to set a good example.

Once you have chosen to enter into a partnership with St. Mary School, we trust you will be loyal to the commitment. During these formative years, your child needs constant support from both parents and faculty in order to develop moral, intellectual, social, and physical gifts.

Neither parents nor teachers should doubt the sincerity of each other in the quest of challenging the student to reach his/her potential.

It is vital that both parents and teachers work together. To divide authority between school and home will only teach disrespect of all authority. Evidence of mutual respect between parents and teachers will model good, mature behavior and relationships. Students are naturally eager to grow and learn. As this natural process occurs, the student needs both understanding and discipline. At times, your child may perceive discipline as restrictive. However, boundaries and limits provide a learner with both guidance and security.

It is essential that a child take responsibility for the grades he/she earns and be accountable for homework, long-term assignments, tests, service projects, and all other assignments. This responsibility extends to times of tardiness and absence.

As partners in the education process at St. Mary Catholic School, we ask parents to do the following:

#### Set rules, times, and limits so that your child:

- ✦ Receives an adequate amount of sleep to function properly in the classroom
- ✦ Eats a nourishing breakfast
- ✦ Arrives at school on time and is picked up at the end of the day on time
- ✦ Is dressed according to the school dress code and weather
- ✦ Completes assignments on time
- ✦ Has provisions for a nutritious lunch everyday

#### To assist in the child's scholastic development by:

- ✦ Reinforcing teachers' academic requirements
- ✦ Examining school work, progress reports, and report cards
- ✦ Actively participating in school activities, such as Parent-Teacher conferences, Open House, and other school events

#### To assist in the child's personal development by:

- ✦ Teaching the child to take responsibility for personal behavior
- ✦ Teaching the child to respect oneself, authority, classmates, and property
- ✦ Fostering independence in the child

#### To support the education process by:

- ✦ Being positive ambassadors for our school in the community
- ✦ Supporting the religious and educational goals of the school

- ✦ Treating teachers with respect and courtesy
- ✦ Supporting and cooperating with the discipline policy of the school
- ✦ Reading school notes and newsletters and showing interest in the student's total education
- ✦ Promptly completing and returning requested school information
- ✦ Notifying the school office of any changes of address, phone numbers, email addresses, or any special family situations regarding the student's well-being, safety, and health
- ✦ Attending and participating in school functions and volunteering to help with school-related activities. We suggest that each family donate 10 volunteer hours.

## PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

There is one scheduled Parent-Teacher Conference during the school year. A good parent/teacher relationship enables both to have a better understanding of the child. Parents are encouraged to keep in touch with the child's teacher during the school year. If you find that additional conferences with your child's teacher would be helpful, please contact the teacher by note, email, or by phone. School personnel are not to be contacted at home without prior consent. Please respect our faculty as professionals. **Teachers are not to be distracted while they are on duty.** During school hours the teachers' priority is the needs and safety of the children.

## GRIEVANCE POLICY

In order to secure equitable solutions to concerns or school-related issues, the following procedure should be followed.

- ✦ Step 1 - Contact your child's teacher and make every effort to resolve the issue.
- ✦ Step 2 - The principal should be contacted if a solution to the problem has not been reached after all efforts have been made with the teacher.
- ✦ Step 3 - The pastor should be contacted if the solution is still not found.
- ✦ Step 4 - If the above contacts have been made and the problem is not resolved, the superintendent may be contacted.

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- ✦ Parents/Guardians are financially responsible for payment of the full amount of tuition agreed upon by the school and the parent/guardian.
- ✦ In the case of a delinquent tuition payment without a change-of-status agreement with the school, the student may be denied admission to the classroom until a new agreement is established.
- ✦ Delinquent accounts (including tuition, After School fees, lunch program fees, etc.) will result in loss of re-enrollment of student for the upcoming school year as well as transcripts being withheld. Unpaid tuition balances will be sent to a collections agency.
- ✦ Monthly payment plans are arranged through the FACTS Tuition Management Program which will be used by all families.
- ✦ There is a returned check fee of \$25.00 and an additional late fee payment of \$25.00 after the tenth of the month.
- ✦ All funds designated for the school are to be placed in an envelope marked with the student's name, teacher's name, and an indication of the purpose of the funds.
- ✦ Notice of the withdrawal of a student should be made by the parent in writing to the principal in advance of the withdrawal date to enable the school to prepare the necessary information and to settle accounts.
- ✦ Registration fees are non-refundable.
- ✦ If a student withdraws after the beginning of a quarter, tuition will be owed for that quarter and any previous quarters.

## STUDENT RECORDS

St. Mary Catholic School adheres to the Buckley Amendment (Family Education Rights and Privacy) regarding access to student records. Records of students transferring to other schools will be sent by fax or through the US Mail. No records will be given to parents to transport to a new school.

- ✦ Parents requesting records/transcripts and/or recommendations must make a request to the school office at least five school days in advance.
- ✦ Forms completed by teachers assisting in the evaluation of students will be faxed or mailed directly to the requesting professional.

## **FAMILY and CUSTODIAL RECORDS**

In the case of separation or divorce, the school requires that the parent with sole custody of a student provide a certified copy of the court order stating the custody arrangements for the student. The school also requires that the custodial parent sign a form indicating whether or not the non-custodial parent may receive information regarding the child. By law, the school is not permitted to release a student and/or information about a student to the non-custodial parent without permission from the custodial parent (see Appendix A).

## **CHANGE in CONTACT INFORMATION**

Please notify the office immediately of any change in street address, email address, or telephone number. You must also make these changes in RenWeb. It is critical that we have emergency contact telephone numbers on file at all times. If children are staying with other family members, caregivers, or friends while parents are temporarily out of town, the office must be provided with this contact information.

## **STUDENT HEALTH**

Each child's personal file will include at least the following documents: a health form documenting immunizations and physician's examination, a medical care release, the parents' work and home phone numbers, names and phone numbers of individuals to contact in an emergency if the parents cannot be reached (in order of parental preference), a list of allergies (including medicines, insect bites, and food), name, address and phone number of physician, and name and phone number of the emergency room of the preferred hospital.

Minor scrapes and bruises are, unfortunately, a part of a child's life. Staff will closely supervise children and prevent accidents whenever possible. Administrative staff will offer assistance as needed and parents will be contacted when there is any indication that it is appropriate.

If a child's injury or illness requires emergency treatment, the school will first call the Emergency Medical Service (911). Parents will be notified immediately. An alternate will be called if the parent cannot be reached. If the child is taken to an emergency room before the parent arrives at school, a school staff person, with the child's personal folder with medical and insurance information, will accompany the child.

In the event that 911 must be called, the parent is expected to come immediately to the school or to the emergency room. An accident

report, when appropriate, will be completed and kept on file in the office. A copy of the report will be sent to the parent.

## **COUNSELING SERVICES**

The Office of Catholic Charities of Wilmington provides counseling services for St. Mary Catholic School students under the auspices of the Diocese of Raleigh. A certified social worker is also available to interview a student at the request of a student, teacher, parent, or administrator. Our school policy permits the social worker to meet twice with a student. These preliminary meetings are designed to clarify a question or concern, not for the purpose of professional counseling. If the social worker determines that counseling is advisable, parents are contacted and permission will be requested. Counseling occurs only with parental permission.

## **CHILD ABUSE LAWS**

St. Mary Catholic School abides by the Child Abuse Laws of the State of North Carolina. This law mandates that all cases of suspected abuse and/or neglect be reported to Child Protective Services.

## **TITLE IX**

St. Mary Catholic School adheres to the tenets of Title IX: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participating in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

## **MEDIA RELEASE FORMS**

St. Mary Catholic School requests parental permission to have their child participate in media opportunities which may include newspaper, TV, and the St. Mary Catholic School website. The form is included in the registration packet.

## **FUNDRAISING**

All fund-raising projects by students, teachers, classes, parents, and committees must be proposed to and approved by the administration in advance of the event. All funds collected at school-sponsored events must be double-counted and locked in an approved location on the school campus. No money will be held by teachers or parents.

## DAILY LIFE

### SCHOOL CALENDAR

The St. Mary School calendar may be found here:

<http://www.thestmaryschool.org/wordpress/school-calendar/>

### SCHOOL CLOSINGS

St. Mary School follows the decisions made by the New Hanover County School System on school closings, including early dismissals and delayed openings. Please listen to the local radio and television news reports for the announcements and follow the announcement for New Hanover County Schools. Closings are also posted on the NHCS website. The school reserves the right to change this policy as circumstances and needs arise. If, for any reason, we are not following this policy, families will receive an alert call notification.

### ABSENCES and ATTENDANCE POLICIES

- ✦ Students are expected to attend classes everyday unless sickness or family emergencies arise that make an absence necessary. Students must be free of fever and vomiting for 24 hours, without the aid of medication, before returning to school.
- ✦ If your child is absent, please call the school office by 8:30 a.m. to report the absence. On the day(s) of absence, if homework is requested by the parent, the request must be made by 8:30 a.m. in order to give time for the teacher to prepare. It is the student's responsibility to complete all required class work, homework, and tests missed during an absence. It is the student's responsibility to check with his/her teacher(s) regarding missed assignments upon return to school. Requests made for missed assignments due to absence must be made directly to the classroom teachers and will be fulfilled at the discretion of the individual teacher.
- ✦ **A written statement with reasons for absence must be given to the teacher or office upon the student's return.**
- ✦ Students requiring medical appointments during school hours require a written note from the parent. Parents are required to sign out their child. If the child returns to school the same day, he/she must be signed back in at the Lower School office.

- ✦ The school calendar provides for extended weekends and vacations throughout the school year. Parents are encouraged to schedule trips during these times to eliminate the need to interrupt a child's learning process.
- ✦ Should absence for any reason other than illness seem imperative, parents are required to consult with the principal and present a written reason for the absence. These notes will be retained in the office for one year.
- ✦ Teachers are not required to give make-up tests or assignments for absences due to vacations or activities that are not school related, nor are teachers expected to give assignments in anticipation of a student's absence. Assignments may be completed and credit granted at the teacher's discretion.
- ✦ **Make-up work can never cover all that is taught during absences.**
- ✦ Arrangements for missed classroom tests should be made with individual teachers.
- ✦ In accordance with N.C. G.S. 115C-378 (Compulsory Attendance Law of North Carolina), parents will be notified when a student has accumulated three unexcused absences in a school year. Parents will be required to meet with the principal to develop a plan to support the student's attendance. If the attendance does not improve, the parents will be notified in writing after six unexcused absences that they may be in violation of the law mentioned above. An assessment will be made to determine if the situation constitutes educational neglect. If this is determined to be the case, the Catholic Schools Office of the Diocese of Raleigh will be notified to determine further action. Absences may affect a student's promotion to another grade.

## **ARRIVAL, LATE ARRIVALS and TARDINESS**

### **ARRIVAL PROCEDURE—RAIN OR SHINE, GRADES K-8**

Our morning routine has been established to help with several issues. Our plan moves students into the classrooms efficiently and provides a more timely start to the day. It prevents the Tileston students from repeatedly having to be out in the weather on inclement days. This routine provides a safe way to start the day. Staff members are on duty to welcome the children each morning at 7:30 am.

## LOWER SCHOOL PROCEDURE, GRADES K-4

Lower School children (grades K-4) should be dropped off, beginning at 7:30 am, in front of the Lower School building in the “drop and go” lane, and the children will immediately enter the building through the front door. Staff members in the lobby will direct the children to their classrooms. If you have children in both the Lower School and the Tileston Building, please drop off the Lower School student first, make a left-hand turn onto Ann Street, pull over to the “drop and go” lane, and drop off your Tileston student. If you have children in the Lower School building only, we ask that you continue straight on Fourth Street (rather than turning left on Ann Street) to keep the flow of traffic moving.

If you need to park, please do not park in the “drop and go” lanes nearest the school buildings. A Crossing Guard will be on duty in front of the Lower School building. Please cross only with the Crossing Guard. Children may be walked to the front door.

## TILESTON BUILDING PROCEDURE, GRADES 5-8

Tileston students (grades 5-8) should be dropped off, beginning at 7:30 am, in front of the Tileston building and should immediately enter through the main door between the large white columns. A staff member will be on duty in the front lobby.

If you need to park, please do not park in the “drop and go” lanes nearest the school buildings. A Crossing Guard will be on duty in front of the Tileston Building. Please cross only with the Crossing Guard.

If Tileston students arrive late to school, they must sign in at the Tileston front desk. If they arrive after 8:20, they must sign in at the lower school office to receive a late slip. Parents should then deliver the child to the front door of the Tileston Building.

## LATE ARRIVALS and TARDINESS

Students arriving after 8:00 a.m. are considered tardy. All tardy students must sign in at the Lower School office. A child who is late causes a disruption to the class already in progress. It is difficult for a child who is late to immediately focus on the lesson. Please do everything possible to ensure that your child arrives to school on time. The chronically late student runs the risk of being dismissed or not being considered for re-registration for the following year. Students who arrive at school after 11:30 a.m. are considered absent for the day. Students who arrive at school, but check out before 11:30 a.m. are recorded as

absent for the day. Students who are absent for the day may not participate in after-school activities such as practices and games.

## DEPARTURE and EARLY DEPARTURE

- ✦ School is dismissed at 3:00 p.m. Kindergarten is dismissed from the first classroom door into the courtyard. All students in the lower school are dismissed from the front door. Tileston students are dismissed from the west stairwell.
- ✦ Children are supervised by on-duty staff until 3:15 p.m. Students remaining after 3:15 p.m. will be escorted to the After School Program, located in the cafeteria. Parents will be charged the drop-in rate of \$15.00.
- ✦ Parents must submit written permission to the office for children to walk home from school.
- ✦ Parents whose children will be using van transportation to After School programs must furnish a note to the teacher and the office.
- ✦ Permanent or temporary changes in your child's regular transportation throughout the school year must be submitted in writing.
- ✦ Children waiting for pick-up must always remain in an area supervised by on-duty staff. Drivers should find a place to park and walk to the pick-up area to get the children. Children should not go around the corners or beyond the walls where it becomes impossible to supervise them. Carpool drivers should arrange a specific area where children should meet for pick-up within the supervised area.
- ✦ Children and parents should cross the street only in the designated crosswalks with the crossing guard. Please remind your child of this important safety issue.
- ✦ Parents may not enter the buildings at arrival and dismissal to conference with faculty. Teachers are involved in organizing daily activities and performing special duties and must not be distracted. Please make arrangements to meet with your child's teacher at some other mutually convenient time.
- ✦ **Teachers are not to be distracted while they are on duty.**
- ✦ Please do not linger on school grounds after dismissal. This causes confusion for the staff members on duty as they monitor the safety of the children.

- ✦ Children are not permitted to play on the courtyard or on the Tileston playground after school.
- ✦ If your child must leave school before 3:00 p.m., a note must be presented to the homeroom teacher who will forward it to the school office. When arriving to pick up a child, parents are required to sign the early dismissal sheet in the school office. This sheet must also be signed in the event of early departure due to illness. For a scheduled early departure, office personnel will retrieve students from their class only after they have been signed out, so please allow a few extra minutes for the child to arrive at the office.
- ✦ Students will be released only to adults designated on the school emergency form. If there is a change, written notice must be sent by the parent to the office. A photo ID may be required of the person picking up the child. Parents should list a locally responsible adult to whom the child may be released.

## AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

St. Mary Catholic School offers an After School Program for students in grades kindergarten through eight. Registration is required for full-time and drop-in students. Forms that fully explain the program and procedures are available in the school office. After School hours are from 3:00 - 6:00 p.m. on school days. On half days (except for the first two, those just before holidays, and the last day), the program runs 12-6 p.m. Children should bring their lunch, unless otherwise notified.

## MEDICATION

A medication form with specific instructions must be on file in order for school personnel to administer any prescribed medication. No child will be administered any prescribed medication without specific written instructions from a physician. All medication must be in the original container. Only a parent may deliver medication to the school office to be dispensed. At no time should any medication be in the possession of a student.

No over-the-counter medication will be dispensed by school personnel. If a child feels unwell, a call will be made to the parent. If a parent feels that medication is necessary, the parent must come to the school and administer the medication to the child in the school office.

School personnel will document the administration of the medication in the Medical Log.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

During the school year, a weekly email will be sent to all families by the principal. Teachers may send class newsletters by hardcopy or through their web pages. Each teacher has voicemail and email, and parents can leave non-urgent messages during the school day. Teachers will check messages during planning periods and/or after school.

Check your child's daily planner and/or weekly homework sheets regularly for other timely information. In addition, The St. Mary Parish bulletin contains a School News page which features information on school events.

It is important that parents read all communication, as some announcements require immediate attention.

## **TELEPHONES**

Classroom telephones are for the faculty and staff use only. Students are not permitted to use classroom telephones for any reason without permission of the teacher. Students may use office telephones only under the supervision of office personnel and only for emergencies. Calling parents to bring forgotten items is not considered an emergency.

Additionally, the use of cell phones by students during the school day, in the After School Program, and during other after school activities is not permitted. If you need to reach your child during the school day, please call the office and a message will be given to your child. Student cell phones are to be off and in the student's book bag during the school day. First offense for cell phone use will result in two demerits. The phone will be confiscated and sent to the principal's office. A parent must retrieve the phone. A second cell phone offense will result in two additional demerits. The cell phone will be confiscated and returned to the student on the last day of the school year.

## **SCHOOL VISITORS**

We welcome parent involvement. We have many needs here at St. Mary Catholic School and enjoy involving our parents as much as possible. Please do not hesitate to call your child's teacher and/or the Home School Association if you are able to volunteer. All school volunteers must have a completed Personal Information Sheet on file in the office.

All visitors and volunteers to the school must enter the school office by using the main entrance at 217 S. Fourth Street. All visitors/volunteers must sign in at the office and receive a visitor's sticker and permission before proceeding to the classrooms.

Lunches and other forgotten items delivered to the school must be left in the school office. Parents will not be permitted to enter the hallways to deliver items to avoid unnecessary interruptions and ensure greater safety for all of our children. Children are instructed to check at the office, with teacher permission, for their forgotten items.

## **ADULT DRESS CODE for VOLUNTEERS and VISITORS**

Respect and professionalism must be reflected in the attitude and appearance of adults who represent St. Mary Catholic School and work with our students. Clothing worn by volunteers during school hours should be suitable for our environment. Apparel that is designed to be accentuating in cut, fit, or style is considered inappropriate in the parish and school environment. Clothing should reflect self-respect and be a sign of respect for those we serve.

## **ANIMALS and PETS**

Pets/animals are not allowed on campus at any time, with the exception of disability service animals. This ensures the safety of our staff and students and is in accordance with diocesan policy and our liability insurance.

## **SCHOOL SAFETY**

- ⊕ Students and volunteers are not permitted to open an outside door to anyone without staff assistance.
- ⊕ Fire and tornado drills are practiced regularly. Directions for these drills are posted in every classroom.
- ⊕ St. Mary School has implemented a Crisis Plan in case of a "lockdown" or "shelter-in-place" emergency. All teachers and staff are well-trained in the procedures to keep your child safe. Lockdowns may occur due to an incident in the surrounding community or on our school property. During a lockdown, no one may leave or enter any of the school buildings. Official school-wide emergency communications will be sent to parents using the "Alert Now" communication system following a lockdown as soon as the principal is free to do so.

## LUNCHES and SNACKS

### LUNCHES

- ✦ Children may bring their lunch from home or participate in our hot lunch program. Hot lunches are served on all full days of school. The menu is available on the website. A la carte items are available each day.
- ✦ Dining cards are ordered through the child's homeroom teacher. A ten-meal (\$42.50) or twenty-meal (\$85.00) card may be purchased. The cards are issued to the homeroom teachers. The children present the card to the cafeteria worker as they move through the lunch line. When a dining card has three meals remaining, a reminder and an order form will be sent home.
- ✦ Students are expected to use the same manners required in the classroom during lunch. Courtesy toward other students and cooperation with the cafeteria staff are in order at all times.
- ✦ A student without lunch or a dining card will be offered a lunch, and parents will reimburse the cafeteria for this service.
- ✦ Lunches from carry-out restaurants are not permitted.
- ✦ Students may not bring in lunches for other students.

### SNACKS

Teachers will set the classroom policy regarding snacks. It is important to follow the classroom policy regarding snacks and treats due to students with allergies.

Birthday treats are at the discretion of the teacher; however, birthday snacks may not be used in place of lunch. If a parent wishes to bring in pizza or a similar item for a birthday, it must be done at a time other than the lunchtime.

A water bottle policy will be set by classroom teachers.

## DELIVERIES, GIFTS, and INVITATIONS

### DELIVERIES

Do not have deliveries (flowers, balloons, etc.) made to your child at school. They will not be delivered to students during the school day.

## **GIFTS and INVITATIONS**

Students should not exchange individual gifts at school. This gesture creates hurt feelings among other students. Invitations for parties should be sent to the homes of students via US Mail unless an invitation is being issued to every student in the class.

## **LOST and FOUND**

Please label all articles of clothing, lunches, backpacks, etc. so that lost articles may be returned to your child. Items left at school will be placed in the "Lost and Found" basket located in the cafeteria. Items are kept in "Lost and Found" until the 30<sup>th</sup> of each month. At that time, any unclaimed items will be donated to Social Ministry. Teachers are not responsible for lost items.

## **LOCKERS**

Each Middle School student at Tileston is assigned a locker in which to store clothing and textbooks. 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. Lockers may not be decorated inside or out.

# **CURRICULUM**

## **INTRODUCTION**

St. Mary Catholic School offers a rich core curriculum including Language Arts, Literature, Science, Math, Social Studies, and Religion. Students participate in weekly Mass celebrations. Additional classes include Physical Education, Art, Choir, Band, Creative Music, Suzuki Violin, Spanish, Library/Media, and a variety of elective courses. Technology is integrated into all subject areas.

Extra-curricular activities offered include Liturgical Dance, Science Olympiad, Girls on the Run, Girls on Track, Stride, Cheerleading, and Art classes.

Middle School team sports include basketball, volleyball, tennis, and cross country.

A student whose academic performance indicates serious deficiencies may be placed on academic probation. Academic probation

impacts a student's ability to participate in extra-curricular activities and team sports.

## GRADING POLICIES

Report cards are issued to students by email at the end of each quarter. Interim reports are issued to students in grades 6-8 midway through each marking period. Students in grades K-8 receive graded papers on a regular basis. It is imperative that parents, as the primary educators, look over the child's work, check RenWeb regularly, review teacher reports, and discuss information with the child.

The grading system is as follows:

- ⊕ PreK students receive report cards during parent conferences in November and at the end of the year.
- ⊕ Kindergarten students are graded using a 1 - 4 grading scale which is defined on the report card.
- ⊕ Grades 1-5 receive academic letter grades in each subject area. In addition, they receive marks for Conduct and Study Habits based on the scale shown below.
- ⊕ Grades 6-8 receive numerical grades in the core subjects and letter grades for the electives.

### ACADEMIC GRADES

A	94-100
A-	93
B+	91-92
B	86-90
B-	85
C+	84
C	78-83
C-	77
D+	76
D	71-75
D-	70
F	69 and lower

### CONDUCT/STUDY HABITS

1	Excellent
2	Good
3	Fair
4	Needs Improvement
5	Unsatisfactory

### LETTER GRADES

A	Superior work
B	Above average work
C	Average work
D	Below average work
F	Inadequate/failing

work

## **PROMOTION and RETENTION**

Advancement to the next grade in St. Mary Catholic School is based on the student's daily performance, attendance, test results, recommendations of teachers, and the student's ability to complete work successfully on a more advanced level.

Promotion to the next grade depends on successful completion of all subject areas. The administration may recommend the repetition of a grade. Tutoring or summer school classes may be recommended as a requirement for promotion when, after conferencing with teachers and parents, it is believed that such an action will better prepare the student academically or emotionally for the next grade.

## **HOMEWORK**

- ⊕ Teachers assign appropriate home study to reinforce and supplement lessons presented in class. All written work is to be neat, accurate, and complete.
- ⊕ Students in grades 1-3 should expect approximately 10-15 minutes of homework in each subject area, Monday through Thursday. Students in grades 4-8 should expect approximately 20 minutes of homework in each subject area, Monday through Friday. Occasionally students may also find it necessary to work on the weekends or holidays to complete a special project, book report, etc.
- ⊕ Additional reading should be encouraged after written assignments are completed. Parents should check homework and provide assistance while allowing the child to accept responsibility for the task. Students will be provided with either an assignment book or homework sheet on which to record the assignments.
- ⊕ It is the student's responsibility to inquire about assignments and tests that were missed during an absence.
- ⊕ Consequences for incomplete assignments will be handled according to policies set forth by individual teachers.

## **STANDARDIZED TESTING**

The Diocese of Raleigh has adopted the Iowa Tests as the annual standardized test. The test is administered in October of each school year to all Diocesan School students in grades 3 through 8. The Cognitive Abilities Test is administered in grades 2 and 5. The purpose of the tests is to monitor the academic growth of the school, class, and individual

student over a period of several years. The Diocese has chosen to administer the tests in the fall in order to obtain results early in the school year. With these early results, the curriculum can be adjusted to address the needs of the school, a class, or individual students. Test results are generally available in November. The primary focus at St. Mary Catholic School is to utilize the test results to drive curriculum development and revisions.

St. Mary School also participates in the North Carolina Catholic Schools Writing Competency Assessment Program. St. Mary will participate in a pilot program in Writing for grades 4 and 7 during the 2015-16 school year.

## FIELD TRIPS

- ⊕ Field trips are designed to correlate with teaching units and to achieve curricular goals. Field trips are permissible for all grades when advanced planning, location, and experience ensure a successful learning experience.
- ⊕ Individual teachers, in consultation with the administration, reserve the right to restrict or deny student participation on any field trip due to, but not limited to, poor academic performance and/or poor conduct.
- ⊕ An official permission slip signed by the parent is required before a child will be permitted to attend a field trip activity. Verbal permission, including a phone call, cannot be accepted.
- ⊕ Diocesan policy requires that buses be used for field trips.
- ⊕ Parents are responsible for all costs incurred by field trips. Funds collected for field trips are non-refundable.
- ⊕ Volunteers are always needed and appreciated.
- ⊕ The school uniform will be worn for field trips unless otherwise announced by the teacher.
- ⊕ A parent must accompany any student requiring the administration of a prescription medication during the duration of the field trip.
- ⊕ Cell phones are not allowed on field trips.

## CONDUCT and DISCIPLINE

### BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS of STUDENTS and PARENTS

Self-discipline is the Christian ideal that all students are encouraged to achieve. St. Mary Catholic School holds high expectations for all students, particularly in the areas of morality and academics. All students and parents are expected to be:

- ✦ Aware of the presence of God in oneself and in others at all times.
- ✦ Respectful of self and others in manners, kindness, and consideration.
- ✦ Sensitive to others' feelings and opinions.
- ✦ Respectful and caring of the environment and property.
- ✦ Honest in all endeavors.
- ✦ Punctual in all commitments.
- ✦ Patient in listening to the opinions of others.
- ✦ Cooperative with classroom and school rules.

Providing a safe, calm learning environment depends on the cooperation of the student and the support of the family. As their child's primary educator, parents share the responsibility with their child in upholding the school's discipline code.

### HONOR CODE

Honesty is the cornerstone of a quality education and a quality life. Dishonesty, in personal actions and/or academic endeavors, is considered a serious offense at St. Mary Catholic School. The following guidelines indicate consequences for incidents of dishonesty such as the use of unauthorized aid on a test, assignment, or homework, and plagiarism or forgery. The intent of any action is to help the student to understand the value of his/her integrity and the importance of avoiding any future incident of dishonesty.

#### HONOR CODE VIOLATIONS

Include, but are not limited to:

- ✦ Cheating on an assignment, test, or project
- ✦ Plagiarism
- ✦ Forgery
- ✦ Alteration of a signature or grade
- ✦ Stealing
- ✦ Lying to administration, faculty, or staff members

## CONSEQUENCES for HONOR CODE VIOLATIONS

First offense includes:

- ⊕ Restrictions and/or loss of privileges determined by the teacher
- ⊕ Probation notification to parents
- ⊕ Three demerits assigned to the student's discipline record
- ⊕ Student/teacher/parent/principal conference or letter from principal
- ⊕ Zero on the assignment, test, and/or project
- ⊕ Return, replace, and/or pay for stolen/misused property

Second offense includes:

- ⊕ Out-of-school suspension for 1-3 days
- ⊕ Zero on the assignment, test and/or project
- ⊕ Return, replace, and/or pay for stolen/misused property

Third offense includes:

- ⊕ Zero on the assignment, test, and/or project
- ⊕ Return, replace, and/or pay for stolen/misused property
- ⊕ Suspension/possible dismissal from St. Mary Catholic School

## DISCIPLINE CODE

The Saint Mary Catholic School norms of conduct are standards by which all students are expected to adhere in order to promote personal responsibility and demonstrate Christian values. Behavior problems are first handled by the teacher with various warnings, restrictions, and loss of privileges, and/or parent conferences. Parents are notified in writing of any infractions on the Student Discipline Notice and are consulted when multiple offenses occur. Parent signature on the Student Discipline Notice indicates that parents have received the notice. The St. Mary Catholic School discipline code operates on a demerit system in grades 1-8.

It is our belief that effective discipline occurs when each infraction is addressed fairly and promptly with respect for the dignity of the child. Students are expected to correct their inappropriate behavior, and the discipline system is designed to provide ample opportunity and support to do so. When counseling and guidance may be helpful to the student, the school will request the assistance of a certified counselor from Catholic Charities.

## ONE DEMERIT INFRACTIONS

Include, but are not limited to:

- ⊕ Late to class
- ⊕ Unprepared for class
- ⊕ Late to detention
- ⊕ Gum, food, drink or candy in class without permission
- ⊕ Fooling around or general disruptions in class
- ⊕ Failure to return Student Discipline Notice
- ⊕ Uniform violations

## TWO DEMERIT INFRACTIONS

Include, but are not limited to:

- ⊕ Inappropriate, rude, bold, sassy, or discourteous behavior
- ⊕ Unacceptable language or the use of profanity
- ⊕ Deliberate disregard for directions
- ⊕ Destruction of property
- ⊕ Misbehavior in church
- ⊕ Disturbing behavior during class, interfering with others' right to learn
- ⊕ Unprepared for Specialty class
- ⊕ Cell phone policy infraction

## CONSEQUENCES for REPEATED DISCIPLINE CODE VIOLATIONS

- ⊕ Should events occur that warrant an immediate detention, 5 demerits will be automatically assigned to the child's Student Discipline Record.
- ⊕ An accumulation of 5 demerits on a child's Student Discipline Record will result in a one hour after school detention. Parents will receive written notification of the detention immediately.
- ⊕ An accumulation of 5 additional demerits, for a total of 10, will result in a second one hour after school detention. Parents will be notified. A conference may be requested.
- ⊕ With a further accumulation of 5 demerits, for a total of 15, the student will be issued a 1 day in-school suspension. A parent conference is required.
- ⊕ A further accumulation of 5 demerits, for a total of 20, will result in the issuance of a 3 day out-of-school suspension. Another conference will be required.
- ⊕ An accumulation of an additional 5 demerits, for a total of 25, will result in dismissal from St. Mary Catholic School.

- ⊕ Immediate out-of-school suspension, for one to three days, depending on the child's Student Discipline Record, will be issued for certain unacceptable behaviors. These behaviors include, but are not limited to, insubordination to a faculty or staff member and deliberate and violent physical contact with another student. The parent will be notified immediately and the child must be removed from school. The term of suspension begins with the following school day.
- ⊕ Immediate dismissal from St. Mary Catholic School will occur as a result of a student being in possession of a weapon or illegal drugs on the school property. Violations of this nature will be reported to local law enforcement authorities.
- ⊕ Threats against a staff or faculty member will result in immediate dismissal. Violations of this nature will be reported to local law enforcement authorities.
- ⊕ The pastor of St. Mary Catholic School and the superintendent of the Diocese of Raleigh will be notified in the case of any suspensions or dismissals from St. Mary Catholic School.

Since it is impossible to foresee all violations that can arise, the administration reserves the right to use disciplinary action for any behavior that brings discredit upon the school or seriously impairs the rights of others as outlined in the Behavior Expectations of St. Mary Catholic School Students. The principal also reserves the right to review the academic and disciplinary record of a student at the end of each school year to consider if a student will be invited to return the following year. The faculty and staff of St. Mary Catholic School will work hard to help any student meet our expectations for appropriate behavior. *We expect full cooperation and support of both the students and the parents.*

## DETENTIONS

Detentions are held on Thursday afternoons from 3:10-4:10 p.m. Students should meet promptly for detention in the Lower School lobby. Parents should pick up children serving detention at 4:10 p.m. at the front door of the Lower School facing Fourth Street (or in front of the Tileston Building if those arrangements have been made). Students remaining at 4:10 p.m. will be escorted to the After School Program. Parents will be assessed fees at the same rate as a late 3:00 p.m. pick up.

Detention takes precedence over practices, lessons, ballgames, and/or other appointments.

## **WOW AWARDS**

At St. Mary Catholic School, high expectations for student behavior are standard. We feel it is important to recognize and encourage exemplary behavior. When students are seen going above and beyond to help peers, faculty, and/or administration, WOW awards are issued, and the recipient's name is entered into a monthly drawing. At the end of each month, the WOW award recipients will be recognized after Mass, their names will be listed in the principal's weekly email, and two grand prize winners will be drawn, one child each from upper and lower school. Each winner will receive gift cards.

## **STUDENT HARASSMENT and BULLYING**

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

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

## **INTERNET USE POLICY**

Each student must sign the St. Mary Catholic School Acceptable Use Policy for Internet Usage agreement in order to be permitted to access the internet while at school.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Engagement in online social media by students such as, but not limited to, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter, that includes defamatory comments regarding the school, faculty, administration, or other students will result in disciplinary action determined by the principal.

## **SCHOOL PROPERTY**

A student who destroys or damages furniture, equipment, buildings, or personal property of others will be obligated to pay the full amount of

repairs/replacement and labor. This behavior will result in demerits, detention, or suspension. School textbooks which travel between school and home must have a proper book cover. Writing is permitted only in consumable textbooks. The student will pay a fine or replacement for lost or damaged books.

## **STUDENT UNIFORM POLICY**

A uniform policy is intended to promote unity and eliminate distractions. St. Mary Catholic School has adopted a uniform that is comfortable and appropriate. Parents play a major role in helping the school enforce the uniform code.

All uniforms must be clean, in good repair, and properly fitted. Shirts will be tucked in and buttoned, except for the top button. Skirt/jumper length must be to the knee. Belts are to be worn at all times with shorts or slacks. Uniform infractions will be enforced through the demerit system on the Student Discipline Record.

Students are expected to be well-groomed and maintain a neat appearance. No makeup is permitted. Girls may wear clear nail polish (no false nails or painted tips), a simple gold or silver chain with a religious medallion, a wristwatch, and one pair of small post earrings. Hair accessories are limited to headbands, clips, pins, elastics, and scrunchies which match the school uniform. Girls are not permitted to wear oversized bows. Boys may wear a wristwatch and a simple gold or silver chain with a religious medallion. Boys are not permitted to wear earrings.

For all students, the style and cut of hair must be conservative. Boys' hair length should be cut above the shirt collar and above the eyebrows. For boys and girls, hair must be the student's natural color (no streaking, tipping, highlighting, dyeing, bleaching, or otherwise altering the natural hair color). Hair color that has been altered will be required to be changed back to its original color. Extreme styles or fads (shaving or cutting designs into the hair) will not be permitted. Semi-permanent tattoos and/or transfers are not acceptable. Children may not write on themselves. Violations of the uniform policy will result in demerits and/or detention.

In any questionable instance of uniform policy, the principal's discretion will be used.

## ST. MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL UNIFORM

- ✦ All school uniforms must be purchased through Schoolbelles
- ✦ No substitutions are permitted
- ✦ Find Schoolbelles at [www.schoolbelles.com](http://www.schoolbelles.com) (School 1712) or dial 1-888-637-3037

## GIRLS BASIC UNIFORM

All items apply to grades K-8 unless otherwise noted:

- ✦ Plaid v-neck jumper (grades K-5)
- ✦ Plaid inverted v-pleated skirt (grades 6-8)
- ✦ Navy blue pants or shorts
- ✦ Khaki pants or shorts
- ✦ Navy blue, brown, or black belt
- ✦ White or maroon pullover knit collared shirt (long or short sleeved) with St. Mary School logo
- ✦ Maroon pullover v-neck sweater vest with St. Mary School logo
- ✦ Maroon crewneck pullover sweater with St. Mary School logo
- ✦ Maroon v-neck cardigan sweater with St. Mary School logo
- ✦ SMS sweatshirt (no hoodies) with knit shirt collar worn out
- ✦ Navy blue or white knee socks, white crew socks, or navy blue tights (no logos)
- ✦ Tights (no leggings) worn only with skirts or jumpers
- ✦ Navy Blue or black **LEATHER** oxford with rubber sole, lace-up or Mary Janes, heel limited to 1"
- ✦ No slip-ons or loafers (shoes must have laces, buckles, or Velcro)
- ✦ No Vans, Keds, Toms, etc. are permitted.
- ✦ Examples of girls uniform shoes
- ✦ Hair decorations should match the uniform. Refrain from wearing large, sparkly bows, headbands, and ponytail holders.

## GIRLS PE UNIFORM (GRADES K-5)

- ✦ Grades K-5 will wear the basic uniform (shorts, pants, or jumper) to PE.
- ✦ Grades K-3 may wear any shorts under their jumper.
- ✦ Grades 4 and 5 must wear PE shorts under their uniform on PE day.
- ✦ Grades K-5 students must wear black or white PE shoes to school on PE days.

## GIRLS PE UNIFORM (GRADES 6-8)

- ✦ Navy blue PE shorts with St. Mary School logo
- ✦ Gray pullover PE t-shirt with St. Mary School logo
- ✦ Gray PE sweatshirt with St. Mary School logo
- ✦ Black or white PE shoes

## BOYS BASIC UNIFORM

All items apply to grades K-8 unless otherwise noted:

- ✦ Navy blue pants or shorts

- ✦ Khaki pants or shorts
- ✦ Navy blue, brown, or black belt
- ✦ White or maroon pullover knit collared shirt (long or short sleeved) with St. Mary School logo
- ✦ Maroon pullover v-neck sweater vest with St. Mary School logo
- ✦ Maroon pullover crewneck sweater with St. Mary School logo
- ✦ Maroon v-neck cardigan sweater with St. Mary School logo
- ✦ SMS sweatshirt (no hoodies) with knit shirt collar worn out
- ✦ Navy blue, black, or white crew socks (no logos)
- ✦ Black **LEATHER** oxford with rubber sole
- ✦ No slip-ons or loafers (shoes must have laces, buckles, or Velcro)
- ✦ No Vans, Keds, Toms, etc. are permitted.

### BOYS PE UNIFORM (GRADES K-5)

- ✦ Grades K-5 will wear the basic uniform (shorts, pants, or jumper) to PE.
- ✦ Grades K-5 students must wear black or white PE shoes to school on PE days.

### BOYS PE UNIFORM (GRADES 6-8)

- ✦ Navy blue PE shorts with St. Mary School logo
- ✦ Gray pullover PE t-shirt with St. Mary School logo
- ✦ Gray PE sweatshirt with St. Mary School logo
- ✦ Black or white PE shoes

### UNIFORM SHOE EXAMPLES:

Leather oxfords or Mary Janes with a tie or velcro closure



### NON-UNIFORM SHOE EXAMPLES:

Loafers, slip-ons, athletic shoes, embellished shoes. Toms. Keds, and Vans type shoes including off-brands



## DRESS-DOWN GUIDELINES

- ⊕ Middle school students will be required to wear PE uniform during PE.
- ⊕ All clothing must display only school-appropriate pictures, symbols, and language.
- ⊕ All shirts and t-shirts must be of modest style and coverage (no tank tops, and no exposed midriffs, waists, hips, or undergarments)
- ⊕ All shorts and skirts must be of modest length and coverage (no short shorts/skirts and no exposed undergarments)
- ⊕ Athletic shoes, sandals, and leather shoes may be worn (no flip-flops or Rainbows).
- ⊕ No leggings may be worn.
- ⊕ Students will be sent to the office and parents will be called to bring appropriate clothing for dress down day if guidelines are not followed.

## APPENDIX A

### FAMILY CUSTODIAL RECORD

St. Mary Catholic School is finding an increasing number of families experiencing transitions in parental custodial relationships. For this reason, we find it necessary to clarify and restate the procedures followed by the administration and faculty in dealing with parents in such situations.

In two-parent families, it is assumed that both parents are living at the same address unless we have been notified otherwise. St. Mary Catholic School personnel will therefore send home notices, communications, etc. with the child. It is assumed that both parents are communicating regarding the child and that all information is shared by and between the parents. This information includes, but is not limited to, conference appointments, report cards, interim reports, discussions with school personnel, and tuition statements.

In families experiencing separation of parents, or pending divorce, information will be sent home with the child to the parent who currently has care of the child. It is assumed that this information is shared by the parents and between the parents. Since this situation frequently impacts

a child's achievement and interactions at school, parents are asked to inform both the principal and teacher of this fact so that appropriate support can be given to the child. St. Mary Catholic School personnel cannot proceed on hearsay, rumors, or demands of a parent, but only with the appropriate documentation detailed below.

In cases of an actual divorce decree involving clear custody by one parent, the principal is to be informed by the custodial parent of this fact. A copy of the decree bearing the case number, the pages referring to custody and the relationship with the school, and the final page bearing the judge's signature are to be submitted to the principal. Unless the decree indicates otherwise, school communications will be sent home to the custodial parent\*. Custodial parents should understand, however, that unless the divorce decree specifically limits the non-custodial parent's right to access the records, the non-custodial parent\*\* has a right to the same access as the custodial parent. We will, unless instructed by a Court Order, release such records upon request to the non-custodial parent. "Records" includes official transcripts, report cards, health records, referrals for special services, and communications regarding major disciplinary actions. It does not include daily classwork and papers, or routine communications sent through the children to the home or residence. In these cases, the custodial parent is asked to cooperate with the school and share this information directly with the non-custodial parent. This avoids time-consuming duplication of services. Further, you should realize that unless restricted by Court Order, any non-custodial parent has the right to attend any school activity of their child, which includes sports activities and class programs. Parents should keep each other informed as to these activities to avoid duplication of communications and to allow the school to better attend to the duty of teaching your children.

In cases of "joint custody" (shared parenting agreements), entitling both parents' access to school personnel and activities, it is assumed that one copy of communications and information will be sent home with the child and that this will be shared by and between the parents.

Regarding parent conferences in all custody situations: it is preferred and will be the general procedure that one conference appointment be scheduled "jointly" if both parents wish to be present. It is assumed that parents are able to set aside differences and to come together on behalf of their child for this time. A joint conference further insures that both parents are given the same information at the same time, thereby avoiding misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

In cases where joint conferences are clearly neither possible nor desirable by all parties involved, alternate arrangements may be discussed with the principal, subject to the approval of both parents, and further reviewed by St. Mary Catholic School's legal counsel. Every effort will be made to keep communication open with both parents while at the same time avoiding duplication of services and excessive demands on the teacher's time.

Visitation should generally begin at the home of one of the parents and not at school. It is hoped that visitation arrangements would reflect the sensitivity of both parents to the consistency and routines that foster security in a child and allow for the school responsibilities and homework to be taken care of during the school week.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. If you have any questions concerning these procedures, or circumstances you feel necessitate other arrangements, please contact the principal or pastor personally.

\*The Custodial Parent is understood to mean the parent with whom the child resides.

\*\* The Non-custodial Parent is understood to mean the parent with whom the child does not reside.