

## ADMINISTRATION

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Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee

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Pastor Saint Mary Catholic Church

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Superintendent of Catholic Schools

Mr. Peter Rodgers  
Principal

Mrs. Elizabeth Parker  
Assistant Principal



MASCOT  
Archangels

COLORS  
Blue and Gold

The Principal and/or his/her designated proxy is the final interpreter  
or arbiter of this Handbook.

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## **I. SCHOOL INFORMATION**

### **A. PRINCIPAL'S LETTER**

Dear St. Mary Catholic School Community:

On behalf of the faculty and staff of St. Mary Catholic School, welcome to the 2024-25 school year. A little over two years ago, I began my tenure here. One of the first items on my checklist when I arrived was to meet and greet the entire faculty and staff. I met with each person individually. In the context of those meetings, I asked everyone to provide one thing I should take away from our meeting about St. Mary's. Overwhelmingly, the idea of family emerged.

St. Mary's is about many things: providing an education animated by the truth and charity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, educating the whole person (mind, body, and spirit), and laying the foundation for a good and productive life ordered toward Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. But, it is also about family. St. Mary's is about a collective of families who share a common vision for education. A vision which sees education that goes far beyond just the truths taught in a particular subject area to the author of all truth. A vision which sees education as the vehicle to attain our life's purpose – unity with Jesus in eternity.

As we begin this new school year, I pray we all keep this vision in mind and maintain singularity of purpose and drive.

Peace and blessings,  
Mr. Rodgers

### **B. PASTOR'S LETTER**

A Warm Welcome Back to Saint Mary Catholic School!

Dear Students, Parents, Faculty, and Staff of Saint Mary Catholic School,

On behalf of Saint Mary Catholic Church, I extend a heartfelt welcome back to a new school year filled with faith, learning, and friendship. As summer draws to a close, we eagerly anticipate the energy and joy that students bring to our school community.

Saint Mary Catholic School is a beacon of Catholic education in Okaloosa County. Here, within the loving embrace of our faith, students are nurtured in their spiritual development, academic pursuits, and personal growth. Our dedicated faculty and staff are committed to providing a Christ-centered Catholic environment where each child can flourish and reach their full potential. We take inspiration from the Blessed Virgin Mary, our school's namesake. Mary's unwavering faith and devotion to God are an example for us all as we seek to emulate Mary's love of Jesus, her spirit of compassion, humble service, and lifelong learning.

We also remember that Pope Francis has designated the year 2024 as a year of prayer and 2025 as a Jubilee year titled “Pilgrims of Hope.” A Jubilee year takes place only every 25 years! Keeping the year of Prayer and the Jubilee Year in mind, I encourage all of you – students, parents, teachers, and staff – to embrace the following:

1. **A Commitment to Faith:** May our Catholic faith be the foundation upon which we build a strong school community. Let us integrate Mass, daily devotions, daily prayer, and service into our lives, fostering a deeper connection with God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Let us fan the flame of hope that has been given us by God to help the world gain new strength and certainty by showing the world we, at Saint Mary, are Christ centered “Pilgrims of [Great!] Hope” (brackets mine!).
2. **Academic Excellence:** Saint Mary Catholic School is renowned for its rigorous curriculum and dedicated faculty. May we strive for excellence in all aspects of learning, fostering a true joyful love for learning and a thirst for discovery in our students in such a way that through the knowledge they gain, they learn to humbly use that knowledge to give glory to God.
3. **Service to Others:** Following the teachings of Christ, let us cultivate a spirit of humble service. May we identify opportunities to help those in need, both within our school community and beyond.

Together, let us create a year filled with a deepening of our faith, growth, and discovery. God bless you all as we embark on this exciting new 2024-2025 school year at Saint Mary.

In Christ,  
Father Doug Halsema

### C. SCHOOL HISTORY

Since its official opening in September 1946 Saint Mary School has been committed to the academic, spiritual, emotional and social well-being of students. During the past seven decades the school has endured challenges, celebrated achievements and proclaimed the Gospel message unceasingly.

On September 11, 1946, Saint Mary School was opened and had an enrollment of 57 students. A third teacher, Sister Frances Louise, arrived shortly after the school year began to assist Sister Marie Dolores and Sister Madelene Sophie. In March of 1947 Bishop Toolen dedicated the school in the presence of Father Sherman as well as many priests from Pensacola and Mobile.

Excitement was high in 1949 when President Harry S. Truman made a visit to Saint Mary (May, 1996), but enrollment had dropped to only forty-eight students and the school was in danger of closing. With the beginning of the Korean War in 1950, however, an increase in military and civilian personnel to Eglin brought new students to the school

On May 6, 1959, ground was broken for a new school with Archbishop Toolen officiating. In October of that year construction began. Sister Marie Judith spoke of having “many moments of anxiety and trust in the Lord” during that time.

On September 8, 1960, the new school on Robinwood Drive was partially completed and opened for grades one through six. The Josephine Gerlach Memorial Library, a gift to the school from the Staff and Gerlach families, was opened on campus on February 28, 1960.

The 50th anniversary of the school brought a chance to reflect on the Saint Mary story. Alumnus Father John Cayer gave the homily during the anniversary Mass. He called the history of the school “50 years of God’s grace” and stated, “Today we celebrate not just tangible reminders of the past, but God’s active involvement in our lives. Let us pray that our ‘yes’ to God today will bring another 50 years to St. Mary School.”

The groundbreaking of a new parish life center dedicated to former pastor Monsignor Mullins was in 2005. Bishop Ricard and Monsignor Mullins attended the ceremony, and many of the 369 children from the school performed songs to commemorate the special occasion. The Parish Life Center would consist of a new gym, cafeteria, offices, meeting rooms and social hall.

In the fall of 2005 Saint Mary School opened its doors and hearts to 87 children and their families displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. With enrollment at 470, following the storms several classrooms were filled to overflowing, but the school family was determined to see that anyone in need of assistance was not turned away.

On September 20, 2005, Saint Mary was named a No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon School. The school was recognized for scoring in the top ten percent of the nation on standardized assessments. The school celebrates its 80th year anniversary in 2026.

#### **D. MISSION STATEMENT**

Dedicated to Catholic values, Saint Mary Catholic School is a Christ-centered educational community committed to academic excellence, spiritual growth, individual responsibility, and service to others.

“We Walk with Jesus”

#### **E. PHILOSOPHY**

Since parents have given their children life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators.

(1) Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered. Hence the family is the first school of social virtues and every society needs. It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and office of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship Him, and to love their neighbor. (2)

Saint Mary Catholic School was established in 1946 to proclaim the Gospel message. Saint Mary School provides a distinctive Christian environment in which the Church’s tradition of education brings to students the joyful pursuit of faith, wisdom, and virtue. This integration of faith with school life develops students whose values are centered on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Through experiencing the Gospel message, students develop an inner faith, which

sustains them throughout their lives. In Catholic Schools, liturgy, prayer, and all forms of faith practice are incorporated into school life.

Catholic education has the responsibility to educate those who seek such an education. The school challenges students to fulfill their potential spiritually, intellectually, physically, and socially. The community of priests, administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students work cooperatively toward the school's goals. A strong foundation of religious education and active academic learning, coupled with close relations with home and family, encourage students to reach out from the school community to the world around them.

Christian standards of social behavior are emphasized at Saint Mary Catholic School. As a result, a strong sense of social justice is developed during the students' school years. The school provides many opportunities for service to others. Saint Mary Catholic School strives to form productive, caring members of society.

The goal of our Catholic Schools, as ministries of their Catholic parishes and the diocese, is to form, for, students in the Catholic faith through a rigorous academic, spiritual and moral education program. Catholic school students strive for high academic achievement, are taught to love and worship God, and live the Gospel teachings.

All parents and guardians must be aware of their obligation to model Christ and His Church's teachings. All parents and guardians of students in Catholic schools must understand and accept that all teachings of the Catholic Church are an essential and required part of the curriculum. All parents and guardians must be aware that their own conduct can impact whether a student is admitted or remains enrolled, at the discretion of the school.

The school strongly supports the parish and the importance of a Catholic family's commitment to and participation in its parish. The school also keeps an active, open, and ongoing relationship with the area parishes to foster and nurture their importance in Catholic life. The diocese very much encourages parents to continue to support their respective parish in ways deemed appropriate by their parish. The school reserves the right to dismiss any student, or to deny re-enrollment to any student, who, in the judgment of the principal, in consultation with the pastor and superintendent, is not making satisfactory progress, has engaged in conduct which is detrimental to the school, or whose parent has engaged in conduct which is detrimental to the school.

1. *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, p. 59 ff.

2. Second Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, nos. 11 and 35: A.A.S. 57 (1965)  
pp. 16, 40

## **F. ACCREDITATION**

Saint Mary Catholic School is Accredited by the Florida Catholic Conference. Teachers hired by the school meet the requirements of the State of Florida Department of Education and the Department of Education for the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee.

Saint Mary Catholic School is also a member of the National Catholic Education Association.

## **G. MINISTERIAL CLAUSE**

Saint Mary Catholic School is a ministry of Saint Mary Catholic Parish and is part of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee's system of schools, which is under the direct supervision of the Bishop and his delegates. Catholic schools serve the Diocese by playing an integral role in the religious mission of the Diocese.

## **H. PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS**

The Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee is committed to healing the hurting hearts of sexual abuse victims and has established Victims Assistance Coordinators who are experienced and trained counselors available to help persons who have been sexually abused.

## **I. SCHOOL COUNCILS**

School Advisory Council:

The purpose of the School Advisory Council (SAC) is to advise the Pastor of Saint Mary Parish and the Principal of Saint Mary Catholic School in the organization and operation of the School. The SAC does not exercise any actual authority with respect to the administration of the School but rather acts solely in an advisory capacity. This is to ensure that the interests and concerns of the school families are effectively considered in support of the delivery of a strong Catholic education to Saint Mary Catholic School students. New members are nominated by members of the SAC, approved by the Principal, and appointed by the Pastor and serve for a term of two (2) to three (3) years.

Finance Advisory Council:

The Finance Council is an advisory committee and is responsible for the preparation and monitoring of the annual school budget and drafting a long-term financial plan for the School. Members are appointed by the pastor and principal.

## **II. ADMISSIONS**

### **A. NON-DISCRIMINATION**

It is the policy of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, and thereby Saint Mary Catholic School, to admit students of any race, disability, color, sex, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. They do not discriminate on the basis of race, disability, color, sex, national and ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, and athletic and other school administer programs.

Students are allowed to enroll in diocesan schools regardless of their immigration status.

Saint Mary Catholic School may admit students who are not Catholic provided that both students and parents clearly understand that participation in Catholic religious instruction and school activities, related to the Catholic culture of the school, are required.

### **B. ENROLLMENT PROCESS**

Students are considered for admission based on Saint Mary's ability to meet the needs of each student academically, behaviorally, developmentally, physically and emotionally. In matters of admission and registration, the decisions of the Principal and Admissions Team are final. Parents will be notified as to a student's acceptance or placement on a waiting list as soon as possible. Admission to Saint Mary Catholic School is based on the availability of space in each class and adherence to the requirements listed below.

### **C. ADMISSION PRIORITIES**

After a student has met the basic school requirements, including admissions tests, transcripts, admissions interview, and behavioral records, the following criteria will be followed:

#### **Returning Families**

First: Current students in good standing, both Catholic and non-Catholic students.

#### **Parish Families**

Second: Catholic Families who are registered, supporting and active parishioners of the school parish (a Catholic parish for high schools). When the applicants are equal, the following will be taken into consideration:

- a. Siblings of students who are parish families
- b. Children/siblings of alumni at the school
- c. Parents' longevity at the parish
- d. Grandparents' longevity at the parish
- e. Results of any interviews deemed necessary by the principal.

#### **Siblings**

Third:

Siblings of students currently enrolled at the school whose families meet the first criteria.

- a. Catholic siblings (not from the school's canonical parish)
- b. School staff children's siblings that are non-Catholic
- c. Diocesan or other Catholic schools' staff children's siblings that are non-Catholic
- d. Other siblings that are non-Catholic

## **New Families**

Fourth:

Catholic Families who are registered and are active parishioners of other neighboring Catholic parishes.

- a. Catholic students transferring from another Catholic school.
- b. Children, siblings, and grandchildren of alumni who do not fall into an earlier category
- c. Children of diocesan employees.
- d. Children of military members (Purple Star Schools reserve 5% of seats)

Fifth:

Non-Catholic students

- a. Students transferring from another Catholic School.
- b. Children, siblings, and grandchildren of alumni who do not fall into an earlier category
- c. Children of diocesan employees.
- d. Children of military members (Purple Star Schools reserve 5% of seats)
- e. Other non-Catholic students.

## **D. AGE REQUIREMENTS**

Pre-Kindergarten — Must be 4 years of age on or before September 1st

Kindergarten — Must be 5 years of age on or before September 1st

1st Grade — Must be 6 years of age on or before September 1st (Must have successfully completed a Kindergarten Program).

## **E. STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

Saint Mary School does accept students with special needs, to include students who have an IEP or 504 Plan, if we are able to provide the services required for the child's educational setting.

Parents must meet with the principal to discuss the services needed for their child and provide the documentation, either IEP, 504 Plan, or medical testing, before admission is granted.

## **F. REGISTRATION OF NEW FAMILIES**

Parents registering children for the first time must provide the following documentation:

1. Birth Certificate
2. Baptismal Certificate
3. Social Security Card
4. Florida Immunization Certificate (HRS Form 680)
5. Florida School Entry Health Exam (HRS Form 3040)
6. Non-refundable registration fee per child: \$250.00 (Due at the time of registration)

## **Immunizations**

Per Diocesan Policy # 310, all students shall comply with State of Florida required Immunization and Health laws prior to admission. If the child's immunization status proves to be inadequate, said student shall be excluded until such time that the appropriate requirements have been completed. Parents have 30 days to bring immunizations up to date from the date they move to the state of Florida. Parents must keep the office informed of all updated immunizations. There are no exceptions to this

policy. There are generally recognized to be three types of exemptions sought from the schools' immunization policy – religious, conscience and medical.

### **1. Religious exemptions:**

There is nothing in Catholic moral teachings which would hold that the use of vaccines is immoral and sinful. Accepting the opinion of the much-respected National Catholic Bioethics Center, the Bishops of Florida take the position that, "Catholic schools or a Catholic diocese cannot grant an exemption from vaccination on religious grounds since the Catholic Church does not teach that the use of vaccinations...is intrinsically evil." Accordingly, requests for exemptions based on religious beliefs will not be considered in any Catholic schools of this diocese.

### **2. Conscience exemptions:**

The risk to public health in our Catholic schools has been determined to be too grave to allow exemptions from immunizations on the basis of conscience, or even for parents who erroneously believe that it would be sinful to have their children immunized. Social teachings of the Catholic Church are firm and consistent on the "common good" as the principle guide to reason in this regard. In justice, we consider and sometimes place the needs of others above our own. It is in that spirit that the Catholic Church recognizes a parent's right to decide what is in the best interest of their child, so long as the effects of that decision only impacts them or their child. It is clearly a different matter when the consequence of that decision potentially puts others at risk. The good of respecting the conscience of parents of a single child is outweighed by the harm which could come to many as a result of an exemption on the basis of conscience. Accordingly, requests for exemptions based on conscience will not be considered in any Catholic schools of this diocese.

### **3. Medical exemptions:**

Medical exemptions will be considered, but only if a determination can be made by diocesan officials that, based on medical evidence, admission of the child without a vaccination would not constitute a health risk to the school community under the circumstances. If such determination cannot be made, a medical exemption will not be granted. This exemption is reserved to Diocesan officials and is not to be granted at the parish or school administration level.

## **G. REREGISTRATION**

Registration for current students is taken during the first two weeks of February. A registration packet is sent home with students whose financial accounts are current. Non-refundable registration fee per child: \$250.00 (Due at the time of registration).

## **H. PROBATION**

All newly-enrolled students will be accepted on a probationary basis for the first semester of school.

## **I. TRANSFER/WITHDRAWAL**

When a student withdraws or transfers to another school, it is the responsibility of the parent to complete a Saint Mary Catholic School withdrawal/transfer form. All books and materials that belong to the school must be returned and all outstanding balances and school accounts must be paid in full. Schools in the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee do not release official student records to parents, unless the parent has registered with the public-school district to homeschool the student and provides such documentation to the school office. Records will be transferred directly to another school upon request. Transcripts will be released when all school accounts are paid in full.

As per Diocesan Office for Catholic Schools policy #305, the pastor and superintendent are to be consulted in cases of doubt or unusual circumstances about registering a student. The pastor and superintendent are to be consulted or informed when a student is dismissed. Administration of a school being asked to enroll a transfer student from another Catholic school within the diocese will consult the principal of the other school prior to accepting the student on mid-year transfers. The decision of acceptance at the receiving school is up to administration, subject to review by the superintendent.

### **III. FINANCES**

#### **A. TUITION POLICY**

Tuition rates and fees are based upon the actual cost of operating the schools. Failure to pay tuition by the end of the month will result in notification to the pastor and principal. You may be asked to remove your child from the school if your payment is in arrears for two months. As members of a Christian community we are willing to assist those members who experience extenuating circumstances. However, it is your responsibility to contact the bookkeeper or principal to make them aware of your particular situation. Families requesting financial assistance must see the principal to request additional help. Families seeking financial assistance will be required to complete the FACTS Grant and Aid Assessment Application to verify need. Based on the results of the application and available funding, additional assistance may be granted.

#### **B. TUITION PAYMENT**

The payment of tuition on time is very important because the school depends upon these funds for its financial operation. Tuition is automatically taken out of FACTS (Financial Aid Certification Tracking Service). All families are required to register with FACTS.

Tuition payments will be made over a 10-month payment period. Tuition payments are due the 5th or the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month, with the first payment in August. If a student withdraws from school once classes have started, tuition up to and including the quarter in which the student withdraws is nonrefundable.

#### **C. TUITION ASSISTANCE**

Saint Mary Catholic School is committed to making Catholic education affordable. There are numerous scholarship possibilities. It is our hope that these scholarship options will enable any parent/guardian to choose a Catholic education for their child(ren).

Financial aid is determined through a third-party assessment by FACTS. An application must be completed through FACTS Grant & Aid Assessment at [www.factstuitionaid.com](http://www.factstuitionaid.com). After completing the online application, supporting documentation must be mailed or faxed to FACTS. Submission of application does not guarantee financial aid.

##### **1. Family Empowerment Scholarship-Educational Options (FES-EO)**

The scholarship award is based on where the student lives and his/her grade level.

Age Eligibility:

- Students entering kindergarten must be 5 on or before Sept 1.
  - Students entering first grade must be 6 on or before Sept 1.
  - Siblings of students participating in the Family Empowerment Scholarship, including siblings of students who are eligible based on a special need.
  - Dependent children of a member of the United States Armed Forces, including reservists.
- 
- Available to Florida residents, regardless of household income.
- Apply online @ [www.stepupforstudents.org](http://www.stepupforstudents.org).

## **2. Florida Tax Credit Scholarship (FTC)**

The scholarship award is based on where the student lives and his/her grade level.

Age Eligibility:

- Students entering kindergarten must be 5 on or before Sept 1.
- Students entering first grade must be 6 on or before Sept 1.
- Siblings of students participating in the Family Empowerment Scholarship, including siblings of students who are eligible based on a special need.
- Dependent children of a member of the United States Armed Forces, including reservists.
- Available to Florida residents, regardless of household income.

Apply online @ [www.stepupforstudents.org](http://www.stepupforstudents.org).

## **3. Family Empowerment Scholarship – Unique Abilities (FES-AU)**

- Available to students entering K5 through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, who has a specific diagnosis
- Students need an IEP written in accordance with the rules of the State Board of Education or with the rules of another state OR the diagnosis of a Florida physician or psychologist or a physician who holds an active license issued by another state or territory of the United States, the District of Columbia or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Apply online @ [www.stepupforstudents.org](http://www.stepupforstudents.org).

## **4. FACTS Grant and Aid Assessment**

To receive financial assistance, you must submit your financial information to FACTS Grant and Aid Assessment which will determine if there is a need based on the information you provide (not necessary for the Family Empowerment Scholarship-UA, Family Empowerment Scholarship-EO). *Current tax information is required to apply for financial assistance. After completing the online application, you will need to mail or fax the supporting documentation.*

Apply online @ <https://online.factsmgt.com/signin/3T36S>.

## **5. Kremer Grant**

Income must not exceed the Federal Food Program Maximum Family Income for reduced-priced meals.

Apply online @ <https://online.factsmgt.com/signin/3T36S>.

## **6. James Murtha Memorial Scholarship**

The Murtha Scholarship is for Catholic Military Families who desire a Catholic Education for their children.

Apply online @ <https://online.factsmgt.com/signin/3T36S>.

## **7. Eugene and Virginia Poschel Endowment Grant**

The Poschel Grant is for Catholic families who desire a Catholic education for their children. Mrs. Poschel was a lifelong educator and was dedicated to both Catholic education and Pro-life causes.

Apply online @ <https://online.factsmgt.com/signin/3T36S>.

#### **D. TUITION REFUND POLICY**

For students withdrawing from school at the request of the school administration, at any time, tuition up to and including the quarter in which the student withdraws is non-refundable. There are no refunds on fees.

In the event of a transfer of employment of the parent over 30 miles from their original home, the principal may use his or her discretion regarding the withdrawal fee and will notify the Schools Office of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee of his or her decision. Tuition up to and including the quarter in which the student withdraws is non-refundable. There are no refunds on fees.

If a student withdraws from school once classes have begun, tuition up to and including the quarter in which the student withdraws is non-refundable. There are no refunds on fees.

A child's attendance may be terminated if tuition is two (2) months in arrears, unless a payment plan has been approved by the Administration.

All payments for the school year must be up to date for a student to take semester/final exams.

#### **E. EARLY WITHDRAWAL**

There will be a \$200 withdrawal fee applied to each account for withdrawal of students before the end of the school year for processing the withdrawal.

If a child is withdrawn prior to July 1st, there will be a full refund of tuition minus fees.

#### **F. FUNDRAISERS**

All families are encouraged to participate in the fundraisers sponsored and promoted by Saint Mary Catholic School.

## **IV. FAITH FORMATION**

### **A. PRAYER AND LITURGY**

Saint Mary Catholic School reflects the spirit of Catholic life and learning and offers students a complete program of spiritual activities, including daily Religion instruction as a core subject.

Note: all students attending Saint Mary Catholic School, regardless of religious faith, must participate in our Religion classes and activities according to Diocesan Policy #304.

### **B. RECONCILIATION**

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available to students during Advent and Lent. Although all students may be given an opportunity to speak with a priest, please know that only baptized Catholic students can receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, absolution, and protection of the seal of the confessional.

### **C. SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

To receive the Sacraments, students must be baptized Catholics and registered in a parish. Students/families who desire to be baptized or to have their First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion should reach out to the classroom teacher, the Catholic Immersion Director, or the parish office.

Formal preparation for the sacraments is the responsibility of each family's home parish. If you have questions about preparing for a sacrament, please contact the Religious Education Coordinator at your home parish. They will provide the appropriate guidance and resources for your family's journey. Our Catholic Immersion Director is available to guide you in this process as well.

### **D. ATTENDANCE IN RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES**

Our Catholic faith is celebrated through regular prayer services, the weekly celebration of the Eucharist, Adoration, and Holy Day liturgies. Parents are always welcome to join the school community in prayer.

In accordance with policy #304 established by the diocesan Office for Catholic Schools, it is mandatory for all students enrolled in Catholic schools within the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee to participate in religion classes and religious activities organized by the school, including attending school Mass. We extend a warm welcome and show respect to our families from various Christian faith traditions while upholding our identity as a Catholic institution. We believe what unites us in Christ is far greater than any difference in theology. Any inquiries or concerns regarding religious activities should be addressed during the initial enrollment meeting with the administration before the students' first day of attendance.

### **E. DEVOTIONS**

Catholic devotions are cherished customs, rituals, and practices that express worship of God and veneration of the Saints. These acts of devotion reflect a deep love and commitment, shaped by an individual's faith, cultural heritage, and the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. At Saint Mary, we honor the Blessed Sacrament through Eucharistic processions and Adoration. We also

venerate our patroness, Mary, Mother of God, by praying the Living Rosary in October and celebrating May Crowning in the spring.

#### **F. MASS**

Weekly Mass attendance as a family is vital to each child's faith formation. As a school community, we celebrate Mass together each week, as well as on holy days of obligation and special feast days. Parents and extended family are warmly invited to join the school and parish community for these Masses.

#### **G. RETREATS**

Students in all grade levels participate in retreat experiences at different times throughout the school year.

#### **H. VIRTUES IN PRACTICE**

Virtues in Practice is a schoolwide program that helps our students grow closer to Christ by imitating the virtues taught to us by His life, death and resurrection. Students in every class focus on the same virtue each month, and our Servant of the Lord award recipients are chosen for living out the virtues in their daily lives. Virtues are introduced and highlighted during our morning announcements, and they are reinforced within the classroom. Monthly virtue visits provide opportunities for students to share how they can apply the virtues in their lives.

#### **I. SERVICE PROJECTS**

Service to others is one of the four commitments proclaimed our mission statement. We encourage all students to make service an active part of their lives, both within and outside of school. All students have the opportunity to participate in school service projects, often organized by our Student Council or as part of the House System.

## **V. ACADEMICS**

### **A. GENERAL CURRICULUM**

1. Kindergarten: Religion, Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, History, Handwriting, Spanish, Music, Computers, Physical Education, Art, Library Skills
2. Primary: Religion, Reading/Phonics, English, Spelling, Handwriting, Mathematics, Science, History, Spanish, Music, Computers, Physical Education, Art, Library
3. Intermediate: Religion, Reading, English, Spelling, Handwriting, Mathematics, Science, History, Spanish, Music, Computers, Physical Education, Art, Library Skills
4. Middle School: Theology, English, Literature, Mathematics, Science, History, Physical Education, Art, Spanish (6)

### **B. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All students are expected to demonstrate honesty in their academic pursuits and submit work that is entirely their own. As a St. Mary Catholic School student, responsibility is an integral part of student life along with moral, spiritual, and personal growth. Practices considered dishonest and, therefore, not permitted, include, but are not limited to, cheating and plagiarism.

Cheating includes purposefully giving or receiving help/answers on any test, quiz, or assignment when specific permission to do so has not been given by the teacher. This infraction is commonly encountered in the following forms: unauthorized cheat sheets, copying from another student's work, looking at another student's assignment or exam, opening books/using notes during an assessment when not authorized, use of unauthorized answer keys found on-line, and using previously graded assessments for a different student from a prior year.

Plagiarism is defined as: to steal and pass off the ideas or words of another as one's own; to use a created production without crediting the source. Any student failing to properly credit ideas or materials taken from another has plagiarized.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) should not be used by students to engage in plagiarism, cheating, or any form of dishonesty in academic work. AI work must not be submitted in the place of student work. Google AI Checker will be used on all assignments turned in via Google Classroom.

Students who engage in academic dishonesty may receive level 2 disciplinary consequences and a zero on the assignment/assessment. Students who willingly give their academic work to a classmate to copy may receive the same consequence. Additionally, students involved in academic dishonesty may be denied honor roll for the quarter of the incident and, for those holding any elected or appointed leadership/honor positions, may forfeit any school leadership position. National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) members involved in academic dishonesty will be placed on probation and considered for dismissal from NJHS.

### **C. ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

At SMCS we offer the following academic services to ensure our students success: Director of Guidance, certified ESE Teacher, certified Gifted Education Teacher, Title 1 Reading and Math Program, and a licensed Speech, Language Pathologist (SLP). Our Occupational Therapy services are provided by the Elks and are free for our students. In addition, we can work with outside private services such as ABA Therapists and Occupational Therapists.

### **D. ELECTIVES AND SPECIAL CLASSES (MIDDLE SCHOOL)**

Varsity Band, Junior Varsity Band (5<sup>th</sup> grade), Choir (5<sup>th</sup> grade), Weightlifting, Drama, and Study Skills.

### **E. GRADE REPORTS**

#### **Report Cards**

Report cards are issued every semester for kindergarten and quarterly (every nine weeks) for grades K-8. The nine-week grading period is in accordance with Diocesan policy. Report Card envelopes must be signed by the parent/guardian and returned to the school within one week of issuance. The last report card of the year will be mailed home if financial obligations are clear.

#### **1. Grading Scale**

<u>GRADE K5-1</u>	<u>GRADES 2-8</u>
E Excellent	A 90-100
G+ Very Good	B 80-89
G Good	C 70-79
S+ Very Satisfactory	D 60-69
S Satisfactory	F Below 60
NI Needs Improvement	
P Poor, Below Grade Level	

#### **2. Citizenship Grades**

Citizenship/conduct grades are given quarterly and are as follows:

- 1 - Above Average
- 2 - Satisfactory
- 3 - Needs Improvement
- 4 – Unsatisfactory

#### **D & F Reports**

Reports are emailed to parents whose students have a D or F in any course at the midpoint of each quarter.

#### **Final Grades:**

At the end of the year, a final average is given for each student in grades 3-8 based on the four-quarter marks. The mid-year and final exam marks are also averaged in the final grade for those students who take them. In computing the final grade, each quarter grade bears twice the weight of a semester exam.

#### Homework Guidelines:

The goal of homework is to provide students practice in the concepts and skills that they are learning during the school day. Homework is only assigned after a concept has been introduced.

- a) Students in grades 2-8 are required to use agenda books to record assignments.
- b) Homework assignments take into consideration individual differences and are reasonable in length.
- c) Homework will include activities completed outside the school which have a direct application to content being studied in school.
- d) Homework is evaluated; however, recording grades for every homework assignment is not necessarily required or expected.

#### Late Work:

- a) Assignments that are one day late may have a 10-pt. reduction.
- b) Assignments that are two days late may have a 30-pt. reduction.
- c) Assignments may not be accepted if more than two days late.
- d) Assignments not turned in may receive a grade of zero.

#### Absentee Work:

Parents may request short-term homework for absent students. Such requests must be made at the school office before 10:00 a.m. and then be picked up at school dismissal time in the school office. This will allow teachers an opportunity to write assignments without interrupting ongoing learning activities.

#### Due to Illness:

- a) When health allows, older students should monitor their teachers' Class Dojo or Google Classrooms for assignments while absent.
- b) Parents of younger students should monitor Class Dojo for updates to assignments.
- c) Students are allowed three school days to turn in missing assignments upon returning to school from an excused absence for illness. Failure to complete missed assignments may result in a reduction in grades.
- d) It is the student's responsibility to obtain assignments and turn in missing work.
- e) If a student is absent the day of an assessment but was present the day the assessment was assigned, the student will make up the assessment upon his/her return to school.

#### Due to Vacation and Extracurricular:

- a) Homework will be due the following day for students who miss class due to extracurricular activities (sports, etc.), and vacation absences.
- b) **Absences for extended vacation days must receive prior approval by the principal.**
- c) Students who take extended vacation days will need to monitor their teachers' Class Dojo or Google classroom for assignments as they can change.
- d) For principal-approved extended vacation days (longer than two days), students will need to confirm with their teacher when missing assignments are due, and all assessments will need to be taken immediately upon return.

## **F. ACHIEVEMENT TESTING**

### The Terra Nova Assessment:

The Terra Nova Assessment is given to the students in grades 2-8 in the spring as required by the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee. The results of these tests are placed in the student's cumulative files and a copy given to the parents. These tests denote specific skills mastered by students and aid teachers in setting up individual programs for students. These tests are also used to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum. The Terra Nova is a nationally recognized, norm-referenced test that meets most states' annual testing requirements. It provides a series of tests that are easy to administer, stimulating to take, and most importantly extremely accurate in their assessment of student achievement. Terra Nova is a norm-referenced nationally standardized achievement test.

- a) Nationally standardized means that the test was administered to students across the country at the same time. Norms are also set for the time of year the tests are taken.
- b) A statistical sample of students is involved in the norming. This enables the test designers to establish appropriate percentile scales (norms) indicating how well students of a particular age and grade perform on the test items.
- c) Terra Nova is an achievement test, not a proficiency test such as the state administers. Proficiency tests are those in which students have been taught all the content and are now being tested on whether or not they "got" it. Achievement tests include content that students have been taught and include content students may not have been specifically taught, but that they could be expected to have mastered according to their cognitive ability.

### The ARK:

The Assessment of Religious Knowledge (ARK) provides teachers of grades 2-8 with actionable information to help improve students' faith formation. It gives feedback that enables teachers to make informed decisions to improve the Catholic identity—knowledge, beliefs and behaviors—of the whole school community.

### MAP Testing:

The MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) is administered three times per year in grades K-8 to provide teachers with accurate, actionable evidence to help inform instructional strategies. The MAP measures each student's academic progress or growth. By having precise measurement of student achievement, teachers and others can better monitor academic progress.

## **G. HONORS**

An Honor Roll will be established naming those students in grades 1-8 who have demonstrated academic excellence together with consistent effort and good conduct. Honor Roll Certificates are presented during Honor Roll Assemblies for the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarters.

The following criteria will be used:

Academic Excellence- All A's, including Specials (Music, P.E., Art, Computers, Library, Spanish)

Outstanding Academics: Only A's or B's in all subjects, including Specials (Music, P.E., Art, Computers, Library, Spanish)

Extra Effort – Students who work above and beyond in their studies. Grade 1 awards only Extra Effort.

Middle School Courses for High School Credit and Online Courses:

SMCS offers on-site courses for high school credit, as well as online courses through Florida Virtual School (FLVS). High School credit courses offered at SMCS are Spanish 1, Algebra 1, and Geometry (when needed). Requirements to take Spanish 1 are a B or A in 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Literature and 6<sup>th</sup> Grade English courses.

## **H. ALGEBRA I POLICY**

The requirements to take Algebra 1 are to receive a score of a 8 on the below matrix:

### **ALGEBRA 1 HONORS QUALIFICATION MATRIX**

SCORE	3 POINTS	2 POINTS	1 POINT
Iowa Algebra Aptitude Test	99-93% ILE	92-86% ILE	85-80% ILE
Terra Nova Math Composite	99-93% ILE	92-86% ILE	85-76% ILE
Pre-Algebra Class Final Grade	100-93	92-86	85-80
Terra Nova Science Composite	99-93% ILE	92-86% ILE	85-76% ILE
Science Class Final Grade	100-93	92-86	85-80

FLVS Courses taken in place of on-site courses must be taken on the same timeline as on-site courses. Students are expected to work on these courses during the allotted class time. FLVS exams will be taken on the same date and time as on-site exams and grades will be used to calculate student's final GPA.

## **I. INCOMPLETE GRADES**

Incomplete grades are permitted for serious reasons, to be determined by the principal. Incomplete grades become failures if all incomplete academic work/assignments have not been satisfactorily completed by the deadline established by the Administration. No incomplete grades are permitted for the final marking period.

## **J. ACADEMIC PROBATION**

Students who receive a GPA below a 2.0 may be put on academic probation.

## **K. SUMMER SCHOOL - see O. below**

## **L. FIELD TRIPS**

Field trips are recognized as an integral part of a sound educational program and provide a valuable addition to the classroom curriculum. They provide students with experiences to expand their educational and cultural horizons. Each child must have a school-issued permission slip and a medical treatment release form, signed by a parent or guardian, in order to accompany the class on a field trip. Verbal permission or handwritten note by parent will not be accepted. If special financial arrangements are needed, please see principal privately.

Field Trips are a privilege, not a right. Students can be denied participation if they fail to meet behavioral or academic requirements as determined by classroom teachers or school administration. All reasonable and prudent steps to safeguard the welfare of participating students shall be taken. Only students enrolled in Saint Mary School will be allowed to participate in class field trips. Younger or older children may not accompany adult chaperones on the class trips. Chaperones must be able to give their undivided attention to supervising class members.

When valid school bus transportation is not available and private vehicles are used, the following is required:

- Qualified volunteer drivers over 25 years of age must complete and be in compliance with all stipulations on the Volunteer Driver Information Form.
- Every student in a car must wear a seat belt or be in a booster seat and may not sit in the front seat.

Students in grades PreK-2 must be in an approved booster seat, provided by their parents. (If a student is 4'9" or taller, s/he may sit with a seat belt. That student will not be required to have a booster seat, if the seatbelt fits correctly according to American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines.

## **M. GRADUATION**

Graduation ceremonies are held for kindergarten and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Graduation fees can be found on the Tuition and Fees Schedule on the school website.

## **N. STUDENT RECORDS**

A cumulative record of each student is kept on file in the school office. The student record includes final averages for grades from each year, test results, health records, any auxiliary information provided, and school entrance information. A student's record may be transferred to another school only with the appropriate approval of the parent until such student is a legal adult. The Withdrawal School Form must be completed and submitted to the school office prior to records being sent. Parents may review their child's records by making an appointment with the principal. All financial obligations must be satisfied for the release of the report card, student records, or to access PowerSchool for viewing.

## **O. RETENTION POLICY**

Parents are encouraged to contact their child's teacher at the FIRST SIGN of a student's difficulty in any academic subject. It is the teacher's duty and responsibility to notify parents through PowerSchool, conferences and report cards that academic problem(s) exist. Parents and teachers will work together in planning possible remedies to the problem.

Grades PreK3-1:

The faculty involved and the school administration determine retention in grades PreK3 - 1.

Grades 2-3:

If a student in grade 2 or 3 receives a D or below in Reading and/or Mathematics, she/he must receive a minimum of 16 hours of instruction per subject administered by a certified

teacher or at an accredited facility. The faculty involved and the school administration will determine retention.

**Grades 4-8:**

If a student in grades 4-8 fails one subject s/he must attend local public summer school if available. In the event that summer school is not available, then grades 4-8 must take the course online through Florida Virtual School. If a student fails in two or more core subjects, it is automatic retention, and the student will need to repeat the grade. If the student is retained in grade eight, she/he cannot remain at Saint Mary Catholic School.

**P. EXTRACURRICULARS**

To further the development of each student, Saint Mary Catholic School has a variety of extracurricular activities in which students are encouraged to participate. Any activity after school hours or one that may pull a student during academic classes is considered extracurricular.

Extracurricular activities include Drama and Theatre, Theatre Set Design, Robotics Teams, Academic Team, National Junior Honor Society, Student Council, Yearbook, Athletics (OCSMS 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades- Program Participant), Gifted Class, Student Council, Mercy in Motion, Life Runners, Book Club, Chess Club, Altar Servers, Community Speech and Writing Contests, Community Art Contests, Archery, Military Kids' Club, and Spirit Club.

Extracurricular Activity Guidelines:

Students must have good conduct and a 2.0 on progress reports and report cards to participate. Any activity after school hours or one that may pull a student during academic classes is considered extracurricular.

Student Council:

Students are represented by grade level through the Student Council. Grades 3 -8 elect two members to serve as delegates at meetings. The president of the Student Council is elected by a general vote of all students and must be an 8<sup>th</sup> grader. Student Council officers and representatives must maintain a satisfactory conduct and at least a 2.0 in academics throughout the year.

Sports Offered:

3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades -Archery

5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades - Cross Country, Girls' Volleyball, Boys' Basketball, Soccer Golf, Tennis

Middle School Sports Guidelines:

- Each student must have a 2.0 average in academic core courses in order to participate in sports.
- Each student must have satisfactory conduct in all classes in order to participate in sports.
- Each student must complete the sport season in order to be eligible for end-of-year accolades.
- If a student is ruled ineligible because of injury or low grades, they may participate in practice but cannot play any games or matches with other schools.

- Individual criteria are used for any special needs child who desires to participate.
- Students who are absent may not participate in sports practice or games on the same day as the absence.
- All medical and other paperwork must be received at or before try-outs.
- Students cannot participate without their physical and other required paperwork. These forms are found on our website.

#### After School Sports Practice Pick-up

Students must be picked up on time from sports practice. The coaches are instructed to send the students to Extended Care if the parents are not here on time. Any student who is not directly supervised by an adult must go to Extended Care.

Younger siblings may not go to sports practice with older students.

## **VI. COMMUNICATION**

### **A. FERPA/PRIVACY**

It is the policy of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee not to disclose information about any of our students consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This is done not only to protect privacy but to provide a safe and secure environment in which the students may learn and grow. All media requests must be referred to the Diocesan Communications Office (except for Athletics).

### **B. SOCIAL MEDIA**

SMCS uses Facebook and Instagram to engage the community as well as post announcements about the school. No social media usage in the school name may be used without written permission from the school principal. Parents are encouraged to like and follow our school Facebook page. Only the school is permitted to create a Facebook Page which uses the school name or logo. Anyone posting negative or defamatory comments or depictions regarding the parish, school, faculty, students or parents SMCS on any social media site would be in breach of our mutual commitment to gospel-based dialogue and partnership.

### **C. POWERSCHOOL**

The PowerSchool parent portal offers parents the ability to access and review their students' grades and attendance online. At the beginning of each school year, parents of new students are given a confidential id and password. You will need these to associate your child's information to a login and password that you will create to access the parent portal and see your child's information. Please keep them confidential to protect your child's information.

#### Using PowerSchool:

To log into the parent portal, click on the Parent Portal tab on the homepage of the school website or go to <https://ptdioceseschools.powerschool.com/public/>

If you have previously created a login name and password, enter them in the Username and Password boxes and click Submit. If you have not done this, click the Create Account.

#### Grades and Attendance:

When a category or assignment is listed in blue, you may click on it to get more information. Click on a grade to see a list of assignments and tests that make up that grade. A legend at the bottom defines special characters. Click on the number of tardy days or absences to see a list of dates that make up that total number. Click on the student's name to return to the main screen. Both an attendance summary and daily attendance to the most recent two weeks are available on this screen.

#### Grades History:

This screen allows you to see final grades from previous quarters.

#### Attendance History:

This screen allows you to view attendance for the entire quarter. A legend at the bottom of the window explains the attendance codes that are used.

#### E-Mail Notification:

This option allows you to elect to have a copy of your child's grades or attendance sent to you via e-mail. You can select how often these e-mails are sent.

### **D. PARENT COMMUNICATION**

Effective communication is essential to the success of our school. Parents are encouraged to reach out to the front office or to teachers when questions or concerns arise, or to provide information concerning the welfare of students.

#### Flocknote Messaging:

SMCS uses a text messaging program called Flocknote to communicate important school information on a regular basis. We highly advise signing up for this service through the link on the front page of our website.

#### Class Dojo:

Many individual teachers use ClassDojo as a means of communicating with parents on a daily basis. Administration will often share time-sensitive information via the school Dojo account as well.

#### SMCS Message Newsletter:

Every Friday afternoon we send out our newsletter, the SMCS Message. The newsletter is an excellent way to be up to date on all school news and participate in school fellowship. The Message is sent via Flocknote.

#### Contacting Students during School Hours:

Parents picking up students, leaving messages, etc., during school hours must go through the Office. Messages for students and teachers will be delivered at a time that does not disrupt classroom activity. Please make every attempt to keep these interruptions to a minimum. It is important that the pick-up procedures/plans be made before the school day begins. We will not accept change in routine instructions for students after 2:15 p.m. unless it is an emergency.

Parents are not to enter the classroom during the school day unless they are scheduled as a volunteer and have signed in at the school office. All visitors to school must go through security procedures in the office upon entering the campus.

### **E. PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Communication between home and school is very important and is part of our philosophy at Saint Mary Catholic School. As such, we require parents to receive at least one report card at a parent/teacher conference. For grades 3 through 8, these conferences are held at the end of quarter 1. For PreK through grade 2, the conferences are held at the end of quarter 2.

Throughout the year, teachers and parents/guardians may request additional conferences to ensure the best possible education for each student. Please call the school office or email your child's teacher to request a conference.

If a parent has any concerns in regard to his/her child's education, they should be addressed with the teacher first and then, if necessary, with the principal.

## **F. PARENT-PRINCIPAL CONFERENCES**

Parents and students have the opportunity to meet with the principal regarding school-related issues. An appointment can be scheduled by either emailing the principal or by contacting the school office at 850-243-8913. In cases of classroom concerns, parents are required to discuss the matter with the teacher prior to seeking a meeting with the principal.

## **G. PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES**

At Saint Mary Catholic School, we believe that a student's education flourishes when parents and the school collaborate as partners. This partnership is founded on mutual respect and a shared dedication to a Catholic education. We promote open communication and teamwork with all families. Your unique perspective on your child's education is highly valued, and we believe that your support is crucial for their success. We recognize that differing opinions may occur. We are dedicated to addressing these differences through respectful dialogue grounded in Christian principles. Our objective is always to identify solutions that enhance your child's education. A robust partnership necessitates mutual respect and support.

We encourage families to:

- Uphold the school's philosophy and policies.
- Maintain open communication with teachers and administrators.
- Exhibit a positive and supportive attitude towards the school community.

We take any behavior that disrupts the positive learning environment we aim to cultivate very seriously. Disparaging remarks, hostility, or actions considered detrimental to the school's mission may result in a meeting to discuss the matter. As a final measure, and after all reasonable efforts to resolve the issue have been exhausted, the school reserves the right to request a student's withdrawal. We believe that this action is necessary when the partnership is compromised in a manner that obstructs a student's success or the school's capacity to provide a positive learning environment for everyone.

This policy framework offers guidance but may not cover every situation. We retain the right to interpret and implement these policies and to address unforeseen circumstances.

## **H. PARENTS AS PARTNERS - VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS**

Before any parent or adult volunteers to work in the school or to be a chaperone, he/she must meet requirements as set forth by the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee. Volunteers and Parents are strongly encouraged to complete the requirements early in the year to allow time for processing.

The cost to initiate the volunteer process is currently \$65 and is good for five years. A packet of information is available in the school office.

All volunteers must

- Complete the on-line Safe Environment Education Program through Praesidium Academy. The required courses are Meet Sam, Policies, and Abuse Risk Management for Volunteers. Volunteer coaches must also complete the Athlete Protection 1 & 2, and Bloodborne Pathogens courses,

- Complete a Level-2 Background Check, which includes fingerprinting.
- Dress appropriately when volunteering for any reason.
- Abide by confidentiality guidelines set forth by SMCS and the diocese.

In addition, if you will be driving on behalf of the school or Diocese a Motor Vehicle Report (MVR) will be requested and the volunteer driver must be approved. Individuals must meet all volunteer requirements including:

- Completing and submitting the Volunteer Driver Information Form.
- Submitting a legible copy of Driver's License and a Certificate of Insurance / Verification of Coverage from insurance provider (usually declarations page).
- Must be at least 21 years old.
- Must be a Florida licensed driver.
- Must have three years of clean driving record history or less than six points on their license within the last year.
- Must have \$100,000/\$300,000 car insurance liability.
- Completing a Level-2 Criminal Background Check, which includes fingerprinting.
- Completing the on-line Safe Environment Education Program noted above.
- Must not have any medical condition or be taking any medications that would impair ability to operate a motor vehicle.

Once approved by MVR, the driver is eligible for two years.

## **I. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

Concerns should be handled at the appropriate level. Persons with concerns about a teacher should first attempt to address the concern with the teacher. Only then should school administration be contacted. Appointments may be made directly with the teacher by e-mail, or a phone call to the office. In middle school, unless you wish to speak with only one teacher, it is better to let the homeroom teacher coordinate this for you.

Morning (7:15 a.m.) or after school (3:10 p.m.) are usually the best times to schedule conferences. Sometimes a telephone call is sufficient to solve the problem.

## **J. PARENT GROUPS**

Parents are encouraged to participate in our PTO. Meetings are held monthly, and information about upcoming events can be found in the Friday Newsletter and on the PTO Facebook page.

## **K. TELEPHONE**

Students will use the office telephone for emergency purposes only. Items left at home such as books, homework, lunches, band instruments, or physical education uniforms/equipment or extracurricular items are not considered emergencies.

Additionally, phone calls to arrange after-school activities are not allowed; these arrangements should be made prior to the beginning of the school day.

## **L. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND MESSAGES**

Announcements and messages are most often sent via Flocknote. It is imperative that parents sign up for and receive Flocknote messages in order to be up-to-date on the latest happenings at

SMCS. We also encourage all families to be on ClassDojo (especially elementary families), as teachers use this as a primary way of communicating with parents about classroom activities.

#### **M. EMERGENCY CLOSURES**

Inclement weather or other emergency decisions for the Catholic schools will be disseminated to the schools from the Office for Catholic Schools by county with input from the local Catholic schools. Any changes to the schedule will be communicated via Flocknote, Class Dojo, social media, and email. Our primary concern when making these decisions is always and foremost the safety of all students.

## **VII. DISCIPLINE**

### **A. CODE OF CONDUCT**

As a Christ-centered community, we believe that a life of virtue is essential for spiritual growth and eternal happiness. Students grow closer to Christ by imitating His life and virtues in their daily lives. By living virtuous life, we unite ourselves to God's will. It is our goal at SMCS to help our students live a life of authentic Truth by following a code of conduct that is focused on the virtues.

The philosophy of our Code of Conduct is rooted in teaching and forming kids to think, speak, and act properly in accordance with the Catholic faith we profess. Students are with us for a fixed period of time and while they are here it is our goal to form in them habits of right living so that when they leave SMCS, they will conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the way they were taught and formed. To that end, our expectations are the following:

- demonstrate an eagerness to learn, fully participate, and be a part of the SMCS community
- exhibit virtuous behavior and speech at all times
- demonstrate courtesy, respect, and hospitality for school employees, students, and visitors
- show respect and stewardship for all school, parish, and personal property
- be diligent in obeying all classroom, cafeteria, church, bus, playground, and hallway behavior policies and procedures
- demonstrate academic honesty and studiousness at all times
- behave in a manner that allows learning to take place without interruption
- communicate their thoughts and engage with differing points of view while respecting the rights of others
- respect the personal space of others by not engaging in physical displays of affection, horseplay, or acts of aggression
- adhere to the uniform policy and wear the uniform correctly at all times
- recognize that they represent SMCS at all times, whether on or off campus

### **B. CAMPUS RULES - NEW**

Students must adhere to all rules established by administrators, teachers, cafeteria staff, bus drivers, and other authority figures. Students who fail to meet expectations for maintaining an atmosphere of academic excellence will undergo a process that identifies and communicates unmet expectations. The school will collaborate with parents to develop a behavior improvement plan. If no progress is made, the student may be placed on probation to remain enrolled at Saint Mary Catholic School.

### **C. LEVELS OF OFFENSES**

At Saint Mary Catholic School, our goal is to provide a positive, caring learning environment where students can reach their full potential. Students and parents are provided a list of specific classroom procedures and expectations at the beginning of each year. Each teacher has his/her own classroom management system. Please be aware that any one list of rules is not all-inclusive but serves as a general guide. It is our intention to work together to ensure that each student progresses. As part of this partnership, the school requests that parents discuss classroom expectations and procedures at home.

### Classroom Discipline:

Each teacher develops a discipline plan that is implemented prior to sending a student to the office. Teachers send a discipline plan home to parents/guardians at the beginning of each school year. A Disciplinary Report (DR) is sent home for conduct violations in all grades. These reports must be signed by a parent/guardian and the student and returned to the issuing teacher the next school day. Failure to return the DR or to bring a note from home results in an automatic Detention. When a student's behavior fails to be corrected in the classroom, the teacher will conference with the parent.

#### 1. Level One Offenses

Minor offenses that include but are not limited to:

- Failure to bring materials to class
- Excessive talking in class
- Uniform/hair/makeup violations
- Tardiness to class
- Issues of mild disrespect

Level one offenses are cumulative for each semester.

#### 2. Level Two Offenses

More serious offenses that include but are not limited to:

- Foul and/or abusive language
- Destruction of school property (reimbursement is required)
- Fighting
- Defiance
- Dishonesty
- Misuse of computer privileges or mistreatment of laptop

Level two offenses are cumulative for the entire year.

#### 3. Level Three Offenses

Extreme offenses that include but are not limited to:

- Serious and/or repeated disrespect to persons in authority (faculty, staff, volunteers) or other students
- Disruptive, immoral, or indecent behavior
- Any actions dealing with tobacco, drugs, alcohol, or weapons
- Harassment/sexual harassment
- Bullying
- Inappropriate use of computer privileges
- Any other infractions deemed serious by the principal

Level three offenses can result in automatic expulsion.

In the event of serious misconduct, the administration will notify parents/guardians in writing on the Principal's Discipline Report (PDR). A copy is sent home outlining the disciplinary consequence. PDR forms must be signed and returned the next day to the teacher/administrator who sent home the report. Serious offenses include, but are not limited to:

- Violations of the accepted code of conduct
- Jeopardizing the safety of anyone
- Seriously impeding the learning of others
- Serious insubordination
- Bullying or other harassment

## **D. CONSEQUENCES**

### Detention

Lunch/Recess detentions may be assigned by administration. Before or after-school detention will be scheduled administration for the duration of 1 hour. Teachers and the assistant principal will supervise detentions on a rotating schedule. A student in any detention setting will not be allowed to do homework, study, or sleep.

Failure to arrive on time will be considered a level two offense. Detention may be assigned for the following offenses:

- Three level one offenses accumulated during any semester.
- One level two or level three offense
- Failure to return a discipline report
- Any infraction deemed detention-worthy by the principal or assistant principal

Teachers, as well as administrators, may assign detention.  
Parents are notified by the person assigning the detention.

### Suspension

This is a serious disciplinary measure and is used only after other actions have not succeeded in correcting the problem. Students may be assigned either in-school or out-of-school suspensions depending on the level of severity of the behavior. Parents or guardians are notified by telephone of the suspension and are requested to come to the school for the student unless the suspension is in-school. All concerned parties will meet to discuss the problem and seek a solution.

Suspension may be assigned for the following offenses:

- \*Three detentions accumulated during the school year
- \*Any level two or level three infraction deemed suspension-worthy by the principal

During In-School Suspension (ISS), the student is in isolation at school and completes the work of the day.

Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) results in the student remaining home. He/she may or may not be able to complete work for credit.

Suspensions are cumulative for the entire school year. Any student with two suspensions on their record at the end of the school year will be placed on probation for the first semester of the following school year.

### Probation

If a student does not meet the school's expectations to maintain a positive learning environment, they may be placed on academic or disciplinary probation. This is a period when a student must demonstrate good behavior and a willingness to cooperate with other students and the school's staff. Continued academic or behavioral struggles may result in further disciplinary action, including potential dismissal.

### Expulsion

This is a disciplinary measure used only when incorrigible behavior or conduct threatens the physical or moral welfare of other students or seriously affects the learning process. A parent conference is imperative when such a problem is discovered. The principal, with the approval of the pastor, may expel a student for a grave reason. The Superintendent of Schools is made aware of such problems prior to the parent conference and expulsion.

\*Three suspensions are grounds for expulsion

\*Any level three offense may result in an automatic expulsion regardless of prior behavioral record.

In the event of a serious disciplinary issue, the principal will convene a Disciplinary Action Committee to discern the best course of action.

## **E. FOOD IN SCHOOL**

Students who fail to follow the guidelines below may receive a Disciplinary Report.

Prohibited Items: Gum, sodas, bottled or canned sweetened drinks, caffeinated or energy drinks, and coffee drinks are not allowed.

### Water Bottles:

- Allowed, but only plain water (no flavored water)
- Must be fully closable (no open tops or separate straws)
- No handles or cups; must be plastic or metal (not glass)
- Stored in an outer backpack pocket or as directed by the teacher during class
- Can only be filled before/after school, between classes, or during lunch.

Eating Restrictions: No eating during class, on the playground, or in hallways without permission from a school employee.

## **F. TOBACCO/SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY**

Saint Mary Catholic School policy strictly prohibits students, employees, and visitors from possessing or using alcoholic beverages, mood-altering substances, tobacco products (including electronic smoking devices like vapes), drug paraphernalia, or illegal substances on school property, at school-sponsored events, or when under school authority. It also restricts the use of over-the-counter or prescription drugs by students unless under the direct supervision of an office employee.

The definition of tobacco products explicitly includes electronic devices that deliver nicotine or other substances, resembling smoking.

## **G. OFF CAMPUS CONDUCT**

Saint Mary students must behave in a manner consistent with the beliefs, values, and code of conduct of the school both on and off school property. Behavior includes but is not limited to

electronic communication. Any conduct deemed by the principal and/or pastor to be inappropriate or disrespectful to the integrity of Saint Mary Catholic School or any of its students may be subject to school disciplinary action.

## **H. LUNCH AND RECESS BEHAVIOR**

### Cafeteria Behavior

Students are expected to follow all cafeteria policies. The cafeteria monitors are in charge of the students during their lunch period. Teachers bring students to the cafeteria, get the students seated and then will have duty-free lunch. The monitors will supervise the lunch time for each class and will guide the students in appropriate manners. Students are expected to use good table manners which includes, but is not limited to:

- a) keeping conversation to an appropriate noise level.
- b) remaining in their seats during lunch, unless given permission by one of the supervising adults.
- c) cleaning tables when assigned.
- d) putting trash into the container, cleaning up the floor, and exiting quietly when instructed to do so by the monitors or their teachers.

### Playground Safety Rules

- a) Common sense and safety prevail on the playground. Children who do not obey will be given a “time out” and/or issued a discipline note.
- b) Students will use all equipment only in the manner for which it was designed.
- c) One person is allowed per swing. Students must keep their hands on their own swings. Students must swing at the height where the swings have been set.
- d) No pulling/pushing anyone on equipment or the ground is allowed.
- e) No one is allowed on top of any equipment.
- f) Students must stay away from the fence line.
- g) Students must stay off the PE field if there is a class on the field.
- h) Students may not climb trees.
- i) Students may not throw anything at any time except balls.
- j) Students may not tumble or perform gymnastic stunts on equipment or on the ground.

## **I. PHYSICAL VIOLENCE**

Physical violence is never tolerated and could result in suspension or expulsion.

## **J. OTHER DISCIPLINE POLICIES**

Saint Mary Catholic School may impose disciplinary actions for any conduct that violates the rules established by school staff. In the event of a serious disciplinary issue, the principal will convene a Disciplinary Action Committee to discern the best course of action.

### Restitution Liability

- According to Florida State Law parent(s) are liable for up to \$2,500 for damage done by a student.
- Saint Mary Catholic School students and their parent(s) may be required to pay for loss of or any new damage to textbooks and library books that are assigned to them or checked out by them.

- Any destruction or defacing of school property, buildings, equipment, or materials must be paid for by the student responsible for the damage and/or by his/her parents.
- Parent(s) of and any student(s) responsible for the injury of another student or students may be held liable for medical expenses.

## VIII. UNIFORMS

### A. GENERAL UNIFORM GUIDELINES

1. Students will wear a uniform each school day unless another option is announced by the school.
2. Cleanliness and appropriate wear of the uniform is expected at all times.
3. Parents have the responsibility to assure that their children wear only the regulation uniform and adhere to dress code policies.
4. The school reserves the right to determine if a student's dress and appearance satisfy the school's policy.
5. School uniforms will be clean at the beginning of each day.
6. The uniform is to be worn properly until the student leaves school grounds or bus.
7. PE shirts are the ONLY shirts that are not required to be worn tucked in for grades 3-8.

### GIRLS

#### 1. Grades K-5

- Light blue SMCS logo polo with khaki uniform shorts or pants (with brown or black belt), plaid jumper, skirt or skort. Shirts must be tucked in at all times.
- White Peter Pan collared shirt may be worn with plaid jumper only

#### 2. Grades 6 - 8

- Royal blue SMCS logo polo with khaki uniform shorts or pants (with brown or black belt), plaid skirt or skort

#### 3. "Dress Your Best" Days

- Dresses and skirts must be modest and be no more than 2-inches above the knee.
- Dress slacks are permitted.
- No form-fitting pants, leggings, or jeans are permitted.
- Sleeveless dresses must have a shoulder band of at least 2 inches in width.
- Blouses must cover the midriff and cannot be graphic tees.
- Heels on shoes cannot be higher than 1.5 inches and must have a heel strap; no flip-flops

**Birthdays are NOT Dress Your Best days for students. Uniforms must be worn.**

### BOYS

#### 1. Grades K-5

- Light blue SMCS logo polo with khaki uniform shorts or pants
- Shirts must be tucked in at all times
- Brown or black belt

#### 2. Grades 6-8

- Royal blue SMCS logo polo with khaki uniform shorts or pants
- Shirts must be tucked in at all times
- Brown or black belt
- SMCS plaid bowtie or necktie
- French Toast Navy Blue Blazer

3. “Dress Your Best” Days

- Dress slacks or khaki UNIFORM shorts are permitted
- Only collared shirts are permitted and must be worn tucked in
- Uniform shoes or other dress shoes and socks are permitted
- No tee shirts, non-uniform shorts or jeans are permitted

**Birthdays are NOT Dress Your Best days for students. Uniforms must be worn.**

**ALL STUDENTS**

1. Khaki Pants and Shorts

- Must be of the uniform type sold as uniform pants.
- Pleated, flat front, or pull-on, plain, straight or gently flared are acceptable
- No capris, cargo style, or skinny/legging style, hip-huggers, bellbottoms, corduroy,
- No denim or jean style – 5-pocket look, decorative pockets, decorative stitching, double-stitched seams, decorative buckles, lace, ruffles or edging.
- Must be worn with a brown or black belt.

2. Skirts, Skorts, Shorts, and Jumpers

- Must be hemmed and worn no higher than 2 inches above the knee.

3. Socks

- Must be solid white, and must be worn and visible at all times.
- No ruffles, lace, beads, charms, edging, or decoration.
- Girls may wear solid white or navy opaque seamless tights.

4. Shoes

- Solid white, black or gray athletic shoes and laces
- Solid brown or black leather-type dress shoes (non-PE days only)
- NO stripes, lights, characters, sparkle, glitter, charms, high-tops, platforms, or boots are permitted

5. Shirts/Undershirts

- Uniform shirts must be tucked in at all times.
- PE shirts may be worn untucked.
- Must be plain white and not visible below the sleeve of the uniform shirt.

Items that must be purchased from Stitch FX:

- Light blue SMCS logo polo (K-5)
- Royal blue SMCS logo polo (6-8)
- White SMCS logo dress shirt/blouse (8)
- SMCS logo PE shorts and pants
- Plaid jumpers, skirts, and skorts

- 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls SMCS plaid crisscross tie
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys SMCS plaid bowtie
- Royal blue SMCS logo fleece jackets
- Royal blue SMCS logo sweatshirts

#### Coats and Jackets

- Any coat may be worn to school for use in the hallways and outdoors.
- A coat is defined as a heavier garment with a zipper or buttons. A coat is NOT a fleece jacket, sweatshirt, or hoodie.
- Only SMCS sweatshirts and fleece jackets may be worn in the classroom.
- Non-uniform fleece, sweatshirts, and hoodies may NOT be worn at any time.
- Student's name MUST be written in all outerwear.

#### 6. Hair

##### Boys:

- Neat, combed, clean, out of eyes, and not touching ears or collar.
- It may not be worn tucked behind the ears.
- No facial hair or unkempt hair is permitted.

##### Girls:

- Neat, combed, and out of eyes.
- No distracting styles (including but not limited to hair wraps, color, etc.) are permitted.
- Hair bows and headbands should be school uniform colors only (blue, white, yellow, beige, red, or school plaid), of appropriate size and free of sequins, glitter, decoration, or charms.

### **B. MASS DRESS**

- Boys Grade 8 - Dress/Mass Uniform
  - White SMCS logo dress shirt
  - Shirt must be tucked in at all times
  - Khaki uniform pants (no shorts)
  - Brown or black belt
- Girls Grade 8 - Dress Uniform
  - White SMCS logo dress blouse
  - Plaid skirt or skort (no pants)
  - SMCS plaid crosstie
  - French Toast navy blue blazer

### **C. PE UNIFORMS**

- Students in grades K5 through 8 grades will wear their PE uniform with athletic shoes to school on their PE days.
- PE grade and ability to participate may be affected by failure to wear the correct uniform and/or shoes in all grade levels.
- PE shirts must be purchased in the front office of the school.

## **D. STUDENT APPEARANCE**

### **Hair**

#### Boys

- Neat, combed, clean, out of eyes, and not touching ears or collar.
- It may not be worn tucked behind the ears.
- No facial hair or unkempt hair is permitted.

#### Girls

- Neat, combed, and out of eyes.
- No distracting styles (including but not limited to hair wraps, color, etc.) are permitted.
- Hair bows and headbands should be school uniform colors only (blue, white, yellow, beige, red, or school plaid), of appropriate size and free of sequins, glitter, decoration, or charms.

### **Jewelry**

- Boys and girls are allowed to wear one religious medal as a necklace, and one non-Smartwatch wristwatch.
- Girls may wear one stud-type (no hoops or dangles) earring in each earlobe. Boys may not wear earrings. No other piercings are permitted.
- NO other jewelry is permitted.

### **Nails, Makeup, Tattoos**

- No nail polish, artificial nails, French manicures, or acrylic tips or overlays may be worn at any time.
- No makeup may be worn at any time.
- Students are not permitted to have any permanent or temporary tattoos or other visible markings at any time.

## **E. DRESS DOWN DAYS**

### **Jeans Days**

- Jeans, plaid skirt or skort, khaki uniform shorts or uniform slacks are permitted.
- Any SMCS uniform or SMCS spirit wear tee shirt is permitted and must be tucked in.
- Uniform shoes and socks must be worn.
- Jeans may not be tight-fitting or torn.
- Students may always choose to wear the regular uniform on Jeans Days.

## **F. DRESS CODE CONSEQUENCES**

Students who do not follow dress code may be issued a Disciplinary Report and parents may be called to provide the correct attire for the day.

## **G. LOST AND FOUND**

All clothing, outerwear, lunch boxes and water bottles **must** be marked with student's name. This is extremely important, as all uniform items look the same. Please use your child's full name rather than initials for labeling purposes. You can use a fabric marking pen on the clothing labels.

## **IX. HEALTH SERVICES**

Saint Mary Catholic School encourages student health and fitness to promote a safe and healthy school environment. All students enrolled in Saint Mary Catholic School must have a Florida Physical Examination on file with the school and a Florida Certificate of Immunization for polio, measles, DPT, hepatitis, mumps, and rubella. Enrollment is not possible unless both are on file.

### **A. MEDICATION GUIDELINES**

Should it be necessary for a child to receive prescription or non-prescription medicines during the school day, the following regulations shall apply:

- A written consent form signed by the parent or legal guardian must be in the office before any medication can be dispensed, non-prescription and/or prescription. Verbal permission will not be accepted.
- Prescription medication must be in the original container and have the pharmacy label indicating the physician's name, child's name, and strength of the medication.
- Medication shall be given to the child listed on the label only and will be given in accordance with the label instructions.
- The only non-prescription medications that can be dispensed are Tylenol (acetaminophen), Motrin (Ibuprofen) and Benadryl and must have a signed medical form on file.
- The dosage for non-prescription medicine shall not exceed the label instructions, unless prescribed by a physician, for the particular age of the child.
- No child will be allowed to take medicine without supervision.
- Children will not be allowed to have in their possession ANY medications. Rescue medications such as inhalers for asthma, EpiPens for severe allergies, and glucose medication for Type 1 diabetics as prescribed by a physician will be kept in an emergency bag that will travel with the child's class for ease of access in the event the child is in acute need.
- Parents will need to provide the prescription medication to be left at school. Medication will not travel back and forth from school to home with the child. Parent must put the request for this into writing accompanied by a doctor's note illustrating the need.
- The parent must supply all medication. All medication left in the school office at the end of the school year will be destroyed.
- It is the parent's responsibility to apprise the teacher and office personnel of any medication a child is taking.

NOTE: According to Diocesan and County policy, the school will not dispense prescription medication unless the signed authorization to dispense prescription medication form is on file in the school office. These forms are available from the Office Manager at the office.

### **B. INDIVIDUAL MEDICAL PLANS**

#### Medication

No medication of any kind will be dispensed at school, or at a school-sponsored event, without written permission from the parent or guardian.

### **C. MEDICAL EMERGENCIES**

Parents are called for all medical emergencies and are encouraged to take the child to a doctor or hospital for immediate help. If necessary, emergency personnel (911) are called before parents are notified. If a child is injured, parents will be notified according to the numbers listed on the Emergency Cards kept on file in the office. It is essential that contact information is kept current in the office.

### **D. CLINIC**

Students may not possess any medication, including over-the-counter (OTC) medications, while on campus. All medications to be administered during the school day must be delivered by a parent or guardian to the front office, and a completed Medication Dispersion Form must be on file for office staff to dispense medication.

### **E. ALLERGIES**

Parents must notify the school of any severe allergies that could potentially affect a student's health and/or safety while at school or school-sponsored events.

Parents of students with diagnosed, severe food allergies must notify the school upon registration (or diagnosis) that their child is on a restricted diet. They must also provide food for their children while at school. This includes snack, lunch, extended care snacks and a supply of treats to be used for special occasions such as holiday celebrations. The school will not provide any food to children with diagnosed severe food allergies which require a specific diet, including but not limited to: peanut, tree nut, dairy, wheat, gluten, soy and fish allergies.

### **F. LICE POLICY**

SMCS has a "no nit" policy. Any student found with head lice or nits will be sent home and may return to school only after being rechecked and found to be free of lice and nits.

If notified of a lice case, parents of students in the infested student's classroom and the student's sibling(s) should be examined in a private setting for evidence of either the lice or lice eggs (nits). In the event that one-third (1/3) of the students in a classroom are identified with active cases of head lice, the Principal/Nurse shall send home notification to the parents in the affected class.

### **G. ILLNESS AND INJURY**

Students complaining of minor ailments with no fever are allowed to rest in the classroom. Students are not allowed to "rest" in the office. If a student is not well enough to remain in the classroom, the parents are called to pick up the student. Minor scrapes are handled in the classroom. All classrooms have a first aid kit.

Parents/guardians are contacted immediately for information and instructions in case of serious illness or accidents. If the parents/guardians are not available, the Emergency Form is consulted for directions. If no responsible person can be reached, and an illness or injury is serious enough to require medical attention, the administrator in charge will arrange for the student to receive appropriate emergency or hospital care.

## **H. ACCIDENTS**

In cases of minor abrasions, the injury will be washed with soap and water. For other minor injuries, ice may be applied. In cases of more serious mishaps, children will be taken to the office and parents will be notified. School law prohibits the use of first aid equipment and medicine given orally.

## **I. ACCIDENT INSURANCE**

The Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee provides accident coverage to school students while they are in school or participating in school sponsored events, including sports. Payments are made on an excess basis, which means the parents first file the medical expense claim with their insurer, and then the diocesan policy can provide payment for the deductible or co-pay. If the family does not have medical insurance, the diocesan policy will reimburse the medical expenses (on a primary basis) subject to the terms and conditions of the coverage.

## **J. SICK POLICY**

If children are sick, they should stay home. To minimize the spread of illness, we ask that you abide by the following school policy when deciding whether or not to send your children to school.

Please keep your child home if he/she has ANY of the following symptoms:

- Fever: 100.4 degrees F or higher. Child MUST be fever free without medication for 24 hours.
- Vomiting: No vomiting for 24 hours AND keeping down solids and liquids.
- Diarrhea: Two or more loose stools
- Persistent pain
- Cough
- Severe congestion
- Skin rash or sores: Check with your child's health care provider.
- Head lice: It is important to notify the school if your child has lice.
- Chicken pox: Must stay home until all sores are scabbed over.
- Strep throat: May return to school 24 hours after treatment has begun.
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye): May return to school 24 hours after treatment has begun.
- Impetigo: May return to school 24 hours after treatment has begun.
- Ringworm: May return to school 24 hours after treatment has begun.

A physician's note is REQUIRED before your child may return to school after being diagnosed with a contagious disease.

## **K. DIRECTOR OF GUIDANCE**

Our full-time, Director of Guidance plays a key role by:

- Facilitating communication
- Coordinating support services
- Assisting with administration of standardized testing
- Promoting well-being: Leading safe-environment courses and addressing students' social, emotional, and general well-being needs
- Providing individual and group support as well as peer mediation

## **L. HEALTH SCREENING**

School health screenings can be an excellent way to detect problems that interfere with students' education. The hearing and vision tests are important because difficulties with these senses are often subtle, and parents, teachers, and children may not even recognize that a problem exists. Growth and Developmental screenings give parents vital information regarding their child's height and weight and whether there may be cause for concern for associated health conditions.

The purpose of the screening for scoliosis in sixth grade is to detect signs of spinal curvature at the earliest stages so that the need for treatment can be determined.

- (1) Vision screening shall be provided to students in Grades Kindergarten, 1, 3, and 6.
- (2) Hearing screening shall be provided to students in Grades Kindergarten, 1, and 6.
- (3) Growth and development screening shall be provided to students in Grades 1, 3 and 6.
- (4) Scoliosis screening shall be provided to students in Grade 6.

In accordance with Florida Administrative Code 64F-6.003, the school is required to inform parents in writing that their children will be receiving screening services. Parents may opt-out of these health screenings on a yearly basis. Screening permission forms will be sent home with your children during the school year.

## **X. SCHOOL SAFETY**

Saint Mary Catholic School takes precautions to ensure the safety of the students, both on school grounds and within the immediate vicinity of the school campus.

### **A. SEARCH AND SEIZURE**

In order to preserve the safety and well-being of all students in the school Saint Mary Catholic School reserves the right to search any items brought onto school property, including electronic devices. SMCS is not responsible for loss or damage to any items brought to school by a student. This includes, but is not limited to, all electronic devices. No student may sell any items to classmates in school.

Middle school students are assigned lockers. Lockers are subject to inspection by teachers for neatness at any time. Students are never permitted to switch their assigned locker, to open another student's locker, or to use unassigned lockers. The administration has the right and authority to search lockers in order to insure the safety and security of all its students.

### **B. CUSTODY ISSUES**

In the absence of a court order to the contrary, Saint Mary Catholic School school will provide the non-custodial parent with access to academic records and other school information regarding his or her child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the custodial parent's responsibility to provide the school with a court-certified copy of the court order."

SMCS, in accordance with Florida Statute 61.13(3), will make school records and in-person conferences available to both parents unless a court order specifically revokes this right, in which case it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the court order to the school. It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of the addresses where the student's records should be sent.

### **C. COOPERATION WITH LEGAL AUTHORITIES**

It is the practice of the school to cooperate with any local, state, or federal investigators or law enforcement officers that contact the school in the course of any criminal investigation, including cases of possible child abuse. The school may only notify the parents of the investigation with permission of the investigating authorities. The school will ask to have a representative present during an interview with the students, unless this is not permitted by the investigators, which is often the case in these types of investigations. The first obligation of the school is protection of the student.

### **D. SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM**

The Diocese of Pensacola/Tallahassee uses the Circle of Grace curriculum for grades K-8. It is a children's safety curriculum created by the Archdiocese of Omaha. It serves the dual purpose of prevention/safety education and informing children and youth about the value of positive relationships with God and others.

The Director of Guidance uses the Circle of Grace curriculum to teach students to identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual and sexual boundaries; recognize when boundary violations are about to occur; and demonstrate how to act when boundaries are

threatened or violated. Circle of Grace is clinically sound and grounded in the Catholic tradition.

Parents may choose to opt out of these classes if they are not comfortable with the Circle of Grace Program and desire to teach their children about these matters themselves.

Parents will receive a letter and opt out form before the Circle of Grace program is presented.

#### **E. ANIMALS ON CAMPUS**

Per Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee Operations Policy 312- With the exception of certified service animals, pets are not permitted on School Property.

#### **F. EMERGENCY CRISIS PLAN (Include drills, emergency school closings)**

##### **1. Safety Drills**

Students will be asked to practice emergency procedures in the event of fire, tornado, lockdown (intruder), etc. Teachers will review the procedures and inform the students exactly what they are to do in that situation. The school will then have scheduled drills to ensure a timely response can be made to emergency situations. Specific directions are given at the beginning of the school year and are posted in appropriate places. Silence is to be observed throughout the entire drill - in the classroom, halls, and on school grounds.

##### **2. Emergency Closing**

Inclement weather or other emergency decisions for the Catholic schools will be disseminated to the schools from the Office for Catholic Schools by county with input from the local Catholic schools. Any changes to the schedule will be communicated via Flocknote, Class Dojo, social media, and email. Our primary concern when making these decisions is always and foremost the safety of all students.

#### **G. SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE**

State law requires designated persons in a supervisory role, having reason to believe that a child under the age of eighteen years has had physical injury or injuries inflicted upon him or her by other than accidental means, where the injury appears to have been caused as a result of physical or sexual abuse or neglect by an adult, must report the matter promptly to the Department of Children and Families in the county where the suspect injury occurred. Parents need not be notified of such a report.

#### **H. WEAPONS**

Students are prohibited from bringing weapons or look-alikes to school and school-sponsored activities or having weapons in school or at school-sponsored activities, on the school premises, or in the immediate vicinity of the school. State law requires the reporting of possession of a "dangerous weapon" to the local law enforcement agency. "Dangerous weapon" includes a firearm, dagger, dirk, stiletto, and any knife with a blade over 3 inches long, pocketknife opened by mechanical device, iron bar, or brass knuckles.

##### **1. Definitions**

- A weapon is any object which can be used to threaten or injure another. It includes but is not limited to "dangerous weapon" as defined by the State law.

- School premises include the school building and the adjacent grounds, including but not limited to parking lot, playground, parish office and rectory grounds as well as SMCS buses.
- Immediate vicinity of the school means a one-block radius of the school. Any student discovered to be, or suspected of, carrying, possessing, concealing, or transferring a weapon on school premises or in the immediate vicinity of the school shall be immediately excluded from classes pending investigation.

## 2. Search and Detainment

A search can be conducted to verify the suspicion or clarify the discovery. It may include, without prior warning, an inspection and search of a student's person, pockets (the student empties his/her own pockets), book bags, purse, locker, cubby, lunch bag, automobile, etc. Questioning of the same purpose may include questioning by the principal, a member of the administrative team, a teacher, the pastor, or a person acting in the place of any of these. When a body search is conducted, it shall be in the principal's or pastor's office or other appropriate place. A person of the same sex will conduct the search of the student. If a student refuses to cooperate or interferes with a search of a person or possessions or premises, she/he will be warned that refusal to cooperate without legitimate reason will result in disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion from school. Depending on the nature of the weapon, the local police department shall be notified immediately.

If possible, a student will be detained whenever the school has reason to suspect a student may have a weapon or when a weapon is present on school premises. Any student found to be in violation of the school's weapons policy is subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion. The principal may exercise the option to both keep non-school persons out of the school and/or retain students in the school until police have completed their investigation. Any student determined to have brought a firearm to school will be expelled. The term "firearm" means:

- any weapon including a starter gun which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive;
- the frame or receiver of any such weapons;
- any firearm muffler or firearm silencer; or
- any destructive device.

## **I. ASBESTOS**

The Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) of 1986 requires that all schools be inspected to determine if there are any building materials that contain asbestos. Saint Mary Catholic School has complied with AHERA by completing the following requirements:

- Inspecting all facilities for both friable and non-friable asbestos-containing building materials.
- Samples taken during the inspections of all materials suspected of containing asbestos, and the samples were analyzed at an EPA-accredited laboratory.
- A Management Plan based upon the inspection report and laboratory findings, outlining the administration's intent in controlling and abating any asbestos-containing building materials.

- The inspection results are available for review in the administrative office. The Management Plan, maintenance and custodial actions required by the plan, and training of personnel are all dedicated toward a serious and careful effort to always ensure that any potential health hazard from asbestos is eliminated. Students, faculty and employees have, and will continue to have, a safe environment in which to learn, teach, and work.

## **J. VISITORS**

All guests and visitors must sign in the front Office through our Raptor Security System. A name badge will be provided. Identification is required.

## **K. BULLYING AND HARASSMENT (includes sexual harassment)**

Saint Mary Catholic School expects students to conduct themselves as appropriate for their level of development, maturity, and demonstrated capabilities with proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students and school staff, the educational purpose underlying all school activities, and the care of school facilities and equipment.

SMCS upholds that bullying or harassment of any student or school employee is never acceptable and is prohibited:

- During any education program or activity conducted by Saint Mary Catholic School.
- During any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity.
- While using school-provided technology, or while accessing the network of Saint Mary Catholic School.

### Bullying

Bullying is systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or employees. It is further defined as unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behavior by a student or adult, that is severe or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment; cause discomfort or humiliation; or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school performance or participation; and may involve but is not limited to:

- a) Teasing
- b) Social Exclusion
- c) Threats
- d) Intimidation
- e) Stalking
- f) Physical violence
- g) Theft
- h) Sexual, religious, racial, or personal insults
- i) Public humiliation
- j) Destruction of property
- k) Dehumanizing words or gestures

### Harassment/Sexual Harassment

Harassment is defined as communication or conduct designed to reduce the dignity of an individual in the form of requests for favors, unwelcome teasing, or other verbal or physical

contact. It includes any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, use of technology, or written, verbal or physical conduct directed against a student or school employee that:

- a) places a student or school employee in reasonable fear of harm to his/her person or damage to property.
- b) has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits.
- c) has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of a school.

Sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

### Consequences

Concluding whether a particular action or incident constitutes a violation of this policy requires a determination based on all the facts and surrounding circumstances.

Complaints of bullying or harassment made to any teacher, administrator, or staff member will be addressed in the following manner:

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Offense

- An investigation of accusations will take place.
- The parents of all parties will be contacted.
- The parents of the offender will conference with the principal and teacher.
- The offender will receive detention.
- All parties will sign an infraction form.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Offense

- An investigation of accusations will take place.
- Principal will conference with parents and student.
- The principal will suggest counseling.
- Offender will be suspended (in school or out of school) at the discretion of the principal.
- All parties will sign an infraction form.

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Offense

- An investigation of accusations will take place.
- Parents of the offender and the victim will be contacted.
- Parents of the offender will conference with the pastor and the principal.
- Parents will seek counseling for the offender. If parents do not wish to seek counseling, they will seek other educational arrangements for their child.
- Offender will be suspended (in school or out of school) at the discretion of the principal. Student may be expelled if behavior warrants.
- All parties will sign an infraction form.

## **L. CYBERBULLYING**

Cyberbullying (or cyberstalking) means to engage in a course of conduct to communicate, or to cause to be communicated, words, images, or language by or through the use of electronic mail

or electronic communication, directed at a specific person, causing substantial emotional distress to that person and serving no legitimate purpose.

Students can be held accountable for material presented via texts or in their social media, including posts about other students, teachers, or the school. Harassment will not be tolerated. Threats are considered serious, and law enforcement may be notified.

#### **M. OTHER SAFETY MEASURES**

##### **Bicycle Safety**

Students will make sure they have the proper equipment, including helmet, to ride their bikes to school. Students riding bikes will chain and lock their bikes to the rack near the office. Bikes will be walked on and off the school grounds. The school is not responsible for bicycles damaged or stolen on school grounds.

## **XI. ATTENDANCE**

### **DAILY SCHEDULE**

Schedule	Times
Teachers in classrooms, doors open for students; gates open	7:40 a.m.
Gates close	7:55 a.m.
Class begins	8:00 a.m.
Dismissal for bus students	2:55 p.m.
Dismissal window	2:55p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

#### **A. ABSENCE AND TARDY GUIDELINES**

Regular school attendance is a necessary part of a student's education, and it is closely related to student learning and academic success. Excessive absences impair a student's educational progress and may, at the principal's discretion, impact whether the student passes or fails a grade.

Extended absences other than illness must be approved in advance by the principal. Students missing school for vacations or trips of any kind are approved only with advance permission. Students are required to obtain assignments that are missed in advance and turn the work in the day they return.

#### **B. EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES**

##### Excused Absences:

Excused absences are those for which the student is granted the privilege of making up the work that was missed while out of the classroom and for which the school has been properly informed by the parent by telephone and/or in writing.

"Excused" absences include:

- Sickness or injury
- Medical or dental appointments of an emergency nature
- Serious emergencies (death in the family, serious illness, or some unpredictable event which makes it necessary for the student to remain home)
- Approved family travel
- Authorized school-sponsored trips or activities

##### Unexcused Absences:

An unexcused absence is one for which the student may not be allowed to receive credit for the work missed. The student may receive a zero for all missed tests and assignments during an unexcused absence.

If the student does not present a written excuse from the parent or guardian within three school days after his/her return, the absence will be considered "unexcused."

### **C. EXCESSIVE ABSENCES**

Any student who has not been in attendance for instruction for a minimum of 90% of the class each semester may not pass the subject unless the student demonstrates mastery of the student performance standards by passing a comprehensive final exam in the course. This will go into effect after 10 days absent in any semester.

### **D. TARDINESS**

It is important for students to arrive on time each day in order not to disrupt the beginning of the school day and also be present for important announcements. School begins promptly at 8:00 a.m. To fully benefit from the instructional program, students are expected to attend school regularly, be on time for classes, and satisfy all course requirements. Poor attendance or excessive tardiness may result in low or failing grades.

Students who are not in their homeroom by the 8:00 a.m. bell must check in the office for a tardy pass. Signing in does not automatically excuse the tardy. Tardiness is excused only if it is a result of serious or unavoidable circumstances. Excessive tardiness will result in disciplinary action.

If a student arrives tardy more than 2 hours late (10:00 a.m.) or leaves school more than 2 hours early (1:00 p.m.), the student will be counted as ½ day absent.

### **E. EARLY CHECKOUT**

There will be no dismissals after 2:30 p.m. except for medical appointments with a doctor's note. This is both an instructional and safety issue. Early dismissals disrupt the class routine for the whole class and it is a safety and security issue during carpool.

Appointments for the doctor and dentist should be scheduled after school. In the event a student must leave school during the day, a note must be given to the teacher at the beginning of the day. A student will not be dismissed from class before the parent arrives. If a student checks out early, they are responsible for the next day's homework and any class work missed. The student is responsible for acquiring the assignments.

### **F. ILLNESS**

Students who are ill, especially those with fever or other serious ailments, should not attend school. Students should be fever-free without medication, clear of vomit and/or diarrhea without medication, and free from other serious ailments for 24 hours before returning to school. In order for student's absence to be considered Excused, student must return with a doctor's note. A doctor's statement permitting the student to return to school is required for any contagious disease.

### **G. MAKING UP WORK**

Parents may request short-term homework for absent students. Such requests must be made at the school office before 10:00 a.m. and then be picked up at school dismissal time in the school

office. This will allow teachers an opportunity to write assignments without interrupting ongoing learning activities.

Due to Illness:

- When health allows, older students should monitor their teachers' Class Dojo or Google Classrooms for assignments while absent.
- Parents of younger students should monitor Class Dojo for updates to assignments.
- Students are allowed three school days to turn in missing assignments upon returning to school from an excused absence for illness. Failure to complete missed assignments may result in a reduction in grades.
- It is the student's responsibility to obtain assignments and turn in missing work.
- If a student is absent the day of an assessment but was present the day the assessment was assigned, the student will make up the assessment upon his/her return to school.

**H. OTHER ATTENDANCE MEASURES**

Students may not check into school after 1:00 p.m. unless they have been checked out earlier the same day and are returning to school from an excused appointment. Please provide doctor's note.

## **XII. GENERAL POLICIES**

### **A. ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

#### **MORNING:**

Students not participating in a sponsored before-school activity may not be on campus before 7:40 a.m. unless they are in Extended Care or accompanied by their parent. If students are on campus prior to 7:40 a.m., they will be sent to Extended Care and will be charged an Extended Care fee.

- PK3-Grade 3: Students in grades K3 – 3rd are to be delivered to the covered drop-off in the main parking lot. Staff members will be on duty beginning at 7:40 a.m. to assist students.
- Grades 4-8: Students in grades 4-8 may be delivered to the circle drive in front of the school's office. As an 8<sup>th</sup> grade privilege, families with an 8<sup>th</sup> grader and younger siblings of any grade level may utilize the middle school circle drive drop off.

#### **AFTERNOON:**

- We will follow indoor dismissal procedures (see below) for the first 2 weeks of school for the elementary and HOV carlines. Middle school carline will begin the first day of school.
- Drivers shall display car tags on the dashboard of the car for all carpool lines.
- No students will be dismissed to parents who are not in the carpool lines until the end of carpool.
- Do not leave your car to get your student.
- Cars that are parked in parking spaces WILL NOT be allowed to move until AFTER carline is completed.
- Students will not be dismissed from the office once carpool has begun.
- Please do not check students out after 2:30 or you will interfere with carpool. For safety reasons, carline always takes priority.

#### PK3-Grade K4

PK3 and K4 will begin dismissal at 2:40 p.m. for those students who do not have older siblings in the school. The teachers will bring the students to the area outside the Hub and load the students into the cars. Parents are asked to remain in the cars. PK3-K4 students who ride the bus, go to Extended Care, or have older siblings will be delivered to the appropriate carpool area at 2:50 p.m.

#### Grades K5 – 4<sup>th</sup>

K5 – 4<sup>th</sup> grade will begin dismissal at 2:50 p.m. for those students who do not have older siblings in the school. The teachers will bring the students to the area outside the Parish Life Center and load the students into the cars. Parents are asked to remain in the cars. K5 – 4<sup>th</sup> grade students who ride the bus, go to Extended Care, or have older siblings will be delivered to the appropriate area at 2:50 p.m.

### HOV (High Occupancy Vehicles)

Families and carpools that pick up 3 or more students will be assigned an HOV car tag. The HOV carline takes place outside the Hub where the PK3-K4 carline loads.

### Grades 5-8

Families in grades 5 -8 with no siblings younger than grade 5 will be picked up in front of the school's office at Middle School Dismissal. Cars must remain in line and not pass other cars until after the horseshoe curve. The middle school carline lot is RIGHT TURN IN AND RIGHT TURN OUT ONLY. When you enter the line, please pull as far around the curve as possible. Do not pass cars until you reach the wide area at the second overhang.

### **INDOOR/RAINY DAY DISMISSAL PROCEDURES:**

Indoor/rainy day dismissals for grades PK3 - 5 will take place in the classrooms. Families with more than one student in grades PK3- 5 should pick up all family members or carpool riders in the classroom of the youngest student. This will be the procedure on any days when indoor dismissal is necessary.

Beginning the FIRST DAY of school, families who utilize the middle school carline will always pick up students in carline, unless weather conditions are severe enough to require indoor dismissal. In such cases, these students will follow the same procedure as grades K3 - 5.

### **ALTERNATE TRANSPORTATION:**

Students who will be using transportation other than their normal plan must provide a note from home and must be given to the Office. Any transportation changes the day of must be called into the school office by 2:00 p.m. Teachers are busy and might not see an email correspondence. Do not leave messages regarding changes to transportation on the school voicemail.

### **B. TRANSPORTATION/BUS POLICY**

Safety is our primary concern on our school buses. The safety rules apply to all students. The bus adheres to a strict schedule and does not wait for late students. The bus stops at scheduled stops only. Drivers will not make unscheduled stops. This is for the safety of our children and ensures the bus is on time.

In accordance with Saint Mary School regulations, the following guidelines have been set forth to ensure that all students and parents/guardians are aware of what is expected of students and parents who utilize the SMCS bus system. These guidelines are in place to ensure the safety of all riders.

- Students should arrive at least 5 minutes early to their bus stop to account for the bus running early.
- Students who ride the bus will be ready for departure at the last bell. Buses will leave the grounds at 3:00 p.m.
- Students may not get off the bus once they board the bus.
- Except for ordinary conversation, students shall observe quiet conduct on the bus.
- Seatbelts must be used.

- Students must stay seated in their seats while the bus is in motion. Bus drivers have the right and responsibility to ask students to move seats while at a designated stop if needed for safety or behavioral reasons.
- Students must sit upright with their feet on the floor or aimed toward the floor.
- Students shall not discard garbage on the floor or seats of the bus.
- No part of the body shall be extended through the bus window.
- Students may not possess any object or substance that may cause injury to any individual on the bus.
- Eating while on the bus *may* be allowed with the consent of the driver and if the area is cleaned of crumbs, containers, wrappers, etc. prior to departing.
- Throwing anything inside the bus or out the window is forbidden and is illegal. A fine can be assessed that the parent will be responsible to pay.
- Students are allowed to ride the bus home with a friend on a space available basis. The cost for a student (who is not a regular bus rider) is \$5.00.
- Students may not ride without permission on any bus that the student is not normally assigned.
- Students are expected to follow all school behavior rules while riding the bus. Students may not exhibit any inappropriate behavior or use inappropriate language.
- The use of student-owned electronic technologies is acceptable unless the driver or other riders deem it to be a distraction and must comply with our “Acceptable Use Policy”.
  - Saint Mary School is not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage of these devices.
  - Inappropriate videos, songs, or content recorded, viewed, shared, or discussed are strictly prohibited.
  - The use of these devices must not be deemed a distraction by other riders or the driver.
- Students will close their windows when they get ready to exit the bus.
- If no one is at the assigned bus stop to pick up the students, they are returned to Extended-Care at the school and the parents are charged.

Violations of the rules will be reported by the bus driver or a student on the to the Principal or Assistant Principal. The Principal will determine the action to be taken. The Principal may direct one or more of the following consequences depending on the severity of the violation:

- (a) The Principal will notify the student’s parents/guardians of the violation.
- (b) One (1) Violation: The student will be issued a warning, outlining the consequences s/he will face in the case of a repeat violation. Additionally, the student will forfeit his/her ability to choose a seat and an assigned seat will be issued.
- (c) Two (2) Violations: The student forfeits his/her privilege to bus transportation for up to one (1) week after the second violation of bus regulations.
- (d) Three (3) Violations: A subsequent referral will result in suspension from the bus service for an extended period of time, which will be determined by the Principal.
- (e) More than three (3) Violations: Any further violations of these rules by a student may result in forfeiture of busing service for the rest of the school year.

The school bus driver is in complete charge of the bus and students. Riding privileges may be revoked at any time for rule violations or for conduct that is detrimental to the safe operation of

the school bus. In addition, if parents/guardians are repeatedly late meeting the bus at the designated stop, riding privileges for the student(s) may be revoked.

Vandalism, unauthorized use of the emergency door, or other major disruptions caused by a student may result in immediate forfeiture of busing services for the rest of the year. Any cost incurred or repair necessary as a result of a student's actions to or on the bus will be assessed to the family or families involved.

Students or parents who have comments or concerns about bus behavior guidelines should direct them to Saint Mary Catholic School.

### **C. CHANGE OF INFORMATION**

Please notify the office in writing of any change in contact information (address, phone number, email, authorized pick up list, etc.). Please update phone numbers in Flocknote and information in ClassDojo as well.

### **D. LUNCH/CAFETERIA POLICY**

Saint Mary Catholic School is a participant in the USDA Federal Lunch/Breakfast Program. Hot and nutritionally balanced meals are prepared daily. The five menu categories are Meat/Protein, Vegetable, Fruit, Grain, and Milk, (usually fat-free, reduced fat, chocolate reduced fat and whole milk choices). On most days, there is more than one selection in each of the categories offered. Students in PK3-grade 1 will have their trays prepared with 4 lunch items by the cafeteria staff.

Lunch costs \$3.50 for students at all grade levels. The non-student (adult) meal cost is \$4.50. A la carte items & extra entrees will cost \$1.75. Students who bring a sack lunch may purchase milk or juice for 75¢.

It is a parental responsibility to provide for a child's lunch. Students can charge meals if they forget their lunch or lunch money; however, charging should not be considered a normal procedure. Students may not charge for extra servings.

Lunches may not be dropped off or brought into school by parents once the school day has started. Students will purchase or charge a lunch from the cafeteria if they are without a lunch from home.

Canned, energy, or carbonated drinks are not allowed.

As we are a USDA Meal Program, foods from outside vendors (i.e., McDonalds, Subway, Sonic, etc.) are NOT to be brought in for students to eat at lunch. Parents may send in cookies or other treats for a student's birthday in accordance with and approval from individual teacher's classroom policies.

Saint Mary School utilizes [My School Bucks](#), an online meal payment program that allows parents to pay for meals online.

Lunches and milk for the week may be purchased in advance from the cafeteria cashier. The money should be sent to the homeroom teacher in a labeled envelope. Prepaid credits are maintained by the cafeteria cashier. Parents may also pay online through My School Bucks.

## **E. RECESS POLICIES**

### **Playground Safety Rules**

- Common sense and safety prevail on the playground.
- Students will use all equipment only in the manner for which it was designed.
- One person is allowed per swing. Students must keep their hands on their own swings.
- Students must swing at the height where the swings have been set.
- No pulling/pushing anyone on equipment or the ground is allowed.
- No one is allowed on top of any equipment.
- Students must stay away from the fence line.
- Students must stay off the PE field if there is a class on the field.
- Students may not climb trees.
- Students may not throw anything at any time except balls.
- Students may not tumble or perform gymnastic stunts on equipment or on the ground.

Children who do not obey will be given a “time out” and/or issued a Disciplinary Report.

## **F. MEDIA CENTER**

The Saint Mary Catholic School Media Center is comprised of the Monsignor Cunningham Library and the Josephine Gerlach Computer Lab. The facilities are used for library and computer skills instruction; they are also available to support the curriculum. Teachers and students are always welcome in the Media Center and are encouraged to use resources to the fullest extent possible. The Media Center strives to enrich the learning experience and serves as a resource bank for both teachers and students.

### Library

The Library is available for students to use throughout the school day. Students who have overdue material are not permitted to check out additional resources. Library skills are taught during class library visits.

### Computer Lab

Saint Mary Catholic School has an open format for use of the computer lab. Under this policy teachers are encouraged to bring their classes to the computer lab when space is available. This is in addition to the scheduled computer instruction time. In order to ensure optimal facility usage, teachers reserve their desired time for their class and will accompany them in the lab.

### Computer Skills Instruction

Computer skills instruction is a regularly scheduled activity. Each class from K5-grade 6 is assigned weekly computer time. Students in grades 7 and 8 have the option of taking a computer science course as an elective.

### **G. CELL PHONE USE FOR STUDENTS/ PARENTS**

Student cell phones are permitted on campus as long as they remain turned OFF and in homeroom teacher's possession between 7:45 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Students in extended care must leave cell phones OFF and in their backpacks for the duration of their extended care time.

Cell phones will be confiscated if found on a student's person, turned on in backpack, locker, or cubby, and/or used in any way on school property within the above times.

Apple watches, other Smartwatches, and Fitbit-type trackers that have internet access are not permitted on school property and will be confiscated.

Any confiscated phone or Smartwatch must be picked up from the principal by a parent.

Any student who has a phone or Smartwatch taken more than once will lose the privilege of having it on campus.

Parents are not to use cell phones while in drop-off and pick-up carlines.

### **H. BACKPACKS AND LAPTOPS**

Backpacks are to be used to bring materials and books to and from home. They should be zipped when not in use to avoid items falling out and being lost or destroyed. Middle school students may use backpacks throughout the school day. Girls will also be allowed to use a small purse. Students in grades PK3-4 will not be allowed to use rolling backpacks. Students in grades 5-8 may use either type of backpack. Backpacks for grades PK3-5 are not used within the school day.

Laptops are to be always carried in school-provided cases, not in backpacks or by hand. Cases should be zipped and worn over the shoulder or carried by the handles.

### **I. SOCIAL ACTIVITIES/BIRTHDAYS**

Class parties for special occasions (holidays, etc.) are allowed with the prior approval of the teacher and administration.

Birthdays are NOT Dress Your Best days for students. Uniforms must be worn.

Birthday parties, balloons, flowers, etc., for individual students are not allowed during school hours. With prior approval from the teacher, treats for special occasions (e.g., birthdays) may be sent to school with the students to be distributed by the teacher. Please do not send items that need to be stored in a refrigerator or freezer, and please follow the guidance of the teacher pertaining to student allergies, etc.

Any social activities occurring after school hours are the responsibility of the parents. Party invitations or any other type of correspondence about outside activities may not be distributed via your child's classroom unless there is an invitation for everyone (or all boys/girls), and your child's teacher has given prior permission. Teachers may not email invitations or correspondence about any non-school sponsored activities.

## **J. BOOKS**

### Textbooks

Students are instructed on the first day of school on the proper care of textbooks and workbooks. All books must be covered with a cloth book cover. Students are responsible for any and all equipment or materials issued.

There are periodic book checks throughout the year and each student must have their assigned books. If workbooks are abused or become unsightly, the teacher may ask that the book be replaced at the student's expense.

Students may not write in textbooks.

Damage done to school property is the full responsibility of the offending student's parents/guardians.

### Library Books

Students are encouraged to check books out from the library. Students who have overdue books will not be allowed to check out until overdue books are returned or paid for. Families will be billed for books that are damaged or lost.

## **K. OTHER GENERAL POLICIES**

### Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee Policy on Privacy

It is the policy of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee not to disclose information about any of our students consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This is done not only to protect privacy but to provide a safe and secure environment in which the students may learn and grow. All media requests must be referred to the Diocesan Communications Office (except for Athletics).

### **XIII. EXTENDED CARE POLICIES**

The Extended Care program provides quality supervision that fosters development and is available to children enrolled at Saint Mary Catholic School. Parents must first complete a registration form before they may enroll their children. Extended Care student enrollment is limited, with priority for families that need daily care. The Extended Care form should be returned to the Extended Care staff (see Registration section of the school website for costs). Extended Care is offered at Saint Mary Catholic School during the school year from 6:30 a.m. until 7:45 a.m. and from 3:00 p.m. until 5:45p.m. (5:15 for K3/K4). The program provides students with the opportunity to meet before and after school in a supervised environment for both play and study. Before care is offered on early release days, but aftercare will not be available. Please arrange to pick up your student at 11:30 a.m.

Parents must fill out the Extended Care form to utilize our after-school services. Pick-up and drop-off are through the side gate of the Parish Life Center (PLC). Only approved persons are allowed to pick up students. This is the only time that parents may enter the school campus through the PLC. More information can be found in the Extended Care Information sent home in the Welcome Packet.

A small snack is provided for all students in Aftercare. Feel free to send an additional snack for your child as children are often hungry again before pick-up. Also, if your child has special dietary needs, you will be responsible for providing a suitable snack.

Drop off – Teachers of small children will escort students to the cafeteria. All other students must report to the extended care staff immediately after school is dismissed. The extended care program is not responsible for students who do not check in after school.

Pick up – By 5:45 p.m. all students must be signed out by someone listed on the attached Family Record Form. If other arrangements need to be made for pick up, please notify the school at (850) 243-8913 during school hours or call the Extended Care office after school (850) 865-2945. Person picking up students will be required to show picture I.D.

Late Pick up – A fee of \$2.00 PER MINUTE will be charged for students who are not picked up on time. After the third time students are picked up late, they will be removed from the Aftercare program.

#### Extended Care Rules

All applicable SMCS Student Handbook rules apply to the Extended Care Program. In addition, the following rules must be followed:

- Cell phones must remain turned off and in your student's backpack unless specific permission for use is given by program staff and used in the presence of that staff member.

- Please leave all electronics at home. We are not responsible for any lost, damaged, or stolen items. Any electronics brought in will be collected and returned to the parent/guardian. The only exception is for middle school issued laptops which can be used during homework time only.
- When students are on the playground, they must stay within the fenced area.
- Students will be in the cafeteria if the weather does not allow outside activities.
- Students must have the permission of the staff to exit or re-enter the cafeteria so that staff know where students are at all times.
- All students will be expected to respect the staff and each other as well as the materials and environment provided.

Student offenses will be handled on an individual basis. Failure to comply with the rules listed here can result in a phone call to the parent/guardian and then subsequent removal from the program.

#### **XIV. SCHOOL COMPUTER USE POLICY**

Computer and photocopy equipment is for Saint Mary Catholic School-related work only. Parents, former students, teachers, and volunteers are not allowed to use school computers or copiers for their own personal use.

Middle school students participate in a 1-to-1 computer initiative that began during the 2018-2019 school year. Each student in middle school is issued a Dell laptop for use both in and out of the classroom. Students in lower grades have access to laptops or iPads to use as needed. Before a device is issued to the student, s/he and his/her parent/guardian must sign the Acceptable Use Contract and pay the user fee where applicable.

##### Internet Policy

Controlled Internet access for educational purposes is available at Saint Mary Catholic School. As with other forms of educational media available in our school, every reasonable effort is made to supervise and limit all children's viewing to age-appropriate material that is consistent with Catholic teaching. Parents should take the time to review the following rules with their child(ren).

Each child is expected to follow these directions:

- Students will not attempt to access the Internet without adult supervision.
- No material will be downloaded without teacher permission.
- Students will not post messages without the teacher's approval.
- Students will not enter chat rooms unless under the direct supervision of the teacher and then only to communicate with individuals known to the teacher.
- Students will not use rude or profane language at any time.
- Students will not give their names or other personal information to anyone on the Internet unless approved by the teacher in charge. (For almost all purposes, a first name or phrases such as "fifth grade student" will suffice.)
- Students will only go to web sites approved by the teacher.
- Students doing net searches will not enter a new site on the search results list unless the teacher approves it first.
- Students may not instant message without express teacher permission and supervision.
- Students must honor copyright restrictions regarding the use of electronic resources.
- Students may not share passwords or other account information.
- Students may not impersonate another person nor use another person's accounts or passwords.
- Students may not use school resources to annoy, abuse, threaten, or harass another person.
- Students may not view, send, receive, or display inappropriate materials.