



FAMILY HANDBOOK

2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL
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ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL MISSION

St. Mary's Catholic School is a faith-filled community that illuminates the teachings of Jesus by using our hearts, hands and voices as Christian witnesses while striving for academic excellence.

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

We Believe....

- *We are each a child of God bringing our own unique gifts and talents.*
- *We are part of a team where students, staff, families and the broader faith community work together for the benefit of all.*
- *We nurture the dignity and respect of all people.*
- *We prepare students to embrace and live the gospel message and Catholic Faith.*
- *We educate students to respect and share the gifts that God has given them.*
- *We support the needs of all learners, realizing children learn in different ways.*
- *We empower students to work to the best of their ability and be proud of their achievements.*
- *We are here to help others succeed.*

Revised Jan 2018

Parents are the fundamental educators of their children. By choosing St. Mary's Catholic School for your children you have asked us to share that responsibility with you. To help students be successful spiritually, academically, and mentally we encourage parents to:

- Support school rules and encourage your children to follow school rules
- Talk to your children about God and faith
- Pray together
- Support your children by establishing a structured homework time, encouraging reading time and physical activity, and spending time together.
- Participate in parent/teacher conferences
- Participate in school activities in school and outside of school, especially our Catholic Schools Breakfast and Auction for Education.
- Check into Gradelink at least once a week.
- Communicate with SMS staff to support, encourage, and challenge your child.



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Revised August 2025

*Changes to the guidelines are highlighted; please make sure to thoroughly read the changes. Changes for the 2025-2026 have not been highlighted because of the extent of the changes. Contact the school office if you have any questions. Additional information on the guidelines can be found in the St. Mary's School Policy Book, located in the school office.

STATEMENT OF CATHOLICITY

At St. Mary's School, our Catholic identity is not just an aspect of who we are, but the very essence of our mission and purpose. Rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ and the rich traditions of the Catholic Church, our educational approach is holistic, nurturing the spiritual, intellectual, and moral development of each student. Every aspect of our curriculum, activities, and community life is infused with Catholic values, guiding our students to grow in faith, knowledge, and love. We are dedicated to fostering an environment where the Gospel message is lived and witnessed daily, creating a foundation for lifelong discipleship.

As Pope Benedict XVI said, "First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth (Benedict XVI, Address to Catholic Educators, 2008). This profound understanding underscores our commitment to excellence in education, while also ensuring that our students experience the love and truth of Christ in every aspect of their school life. At St. Mary's School, our Catholic faith is the heart of all we do, inspiring us to cultivate a community where each person is valued, and every student is prepared to contribute meaningfully to the world.

PURPOSE OF HANDBOOK

This handbook is designed to help parents, teachers, staff, and students partner together for success, and to provide a general framework for policies and procedures at our school. It is not all-inclusive, and when unique circumstances arise administration will provide direction on a case-by-case basis.

St. Mary's School retains the right to change, modify, suspend, or interpret any policies whether written or not, without notice, at its discretion. The provisions of this handbook do not, and should not be construed to, constitute a contract between any applicant, student, or parent, and St. Mary's School.

APPLICATION OF POLICIES

School policies are enforced year-round, for the duration of a student's enrollment. St. Mary's School may impose discipline for student misconduct on school grounds, at school functions or activities, or on school transportation. Discipline may also be imposed on any student whose misconduct or policy violation at any time or in any place interferes with or obstructs the mission or operations of the school or the safety or welfare of the student or other students, or materially and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges.



ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL DIRECTORY

2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR

PASTOR	Father Mitchell Bechtold
PAROCHIAL VICAR	Father Oswaldo Roche
BOARD OF EDUCATION	Pat Christenson Lindsey Gruber Greta Rademacher Jacob Primus Jenn Lubarski Cindy Hemmesch
ADMINISTRATOR/PRINCIPAL	Autumn Nelson
FACULTY/STAFF	
Little Saints Preschool	Heidi Hoppe
Little Saints Prekindergarten	Dana Finken
Kindergarten	Jennarae Barten
Grade 1	Peggy Stowe
Grade 2	Zachary Thell
Grade 3	Kathy Wolff
Grade 4	Amy Kloth
Grade 5	Holly Scholz
Grade 6	Nate Schreiber
Media	Jenn Ellering
Music	Kathy Peterson
Phy Ed	Katie Meyer
Art	Carrie Schulzetenberg
Title	Gloria Welle
Teaching Assistants	Amanda Hellermann, Joan Kuefler, Ali Arnzen
Administrative Assistant	Briana Worms
Custodians	Matt Grossinger/Roger Althaus
FOSTER GRANDPARENTS	Linda Klein, Julie Boecker, Linda Kraemer, Linda Lou Morton
ST. MARY'S KIDS TIME DIRECTOR	Amanda Hellermann



SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

ORGANIZATIONAL FLOW CHART FOR ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

- Corporate Board/ Bishop of the Diocese of St. Cloud
- Vicar General of the Diocese of St. Cloud
- Chancellor of the Diocese of St. Cloud
- Fr. Mitchell Bechtold, Pastor of Church of St. Mary
- Fr. Oswaldo Roche, Parochial Vicar of Church of St. Mary
- Parish Council of Church of St. Mary
- Board of Education of St. Mary's Catholic School
- Principal Autumn Nelson

HEAD OF SCHOOL

The principal is the head of the school and is responsible for day-to-day operations and management of the school and its activities. The principal has decision-making authority on all matters related to students, staff, facilities, curriculum, textbooks, athletics, discipline, health and safety, and extracurricular activities.

SCHOOL STRUCTURE

St. Mary's School is a parish school. This means that we are an integrated mission of the Church of St. Mary, and the school does not have a separate corporate identity.

PASTOR

The pastor is responsible for governing the school, providing high level oversight of all school operations and ensuring the Catholic identity of the school now and well into the future. Daily management and decision-making authority are generally delegated to the principal; however, the pastor remains the final authority on all school matters. Parish councils provide consultative support to the pastor in his role governing the school.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

St. Mary's School Board is composed of seven people. The committee's basic responsibility is one of policy-making. The committee is responsible for establishing, coordinating, and operating programs of education for St. Mary's School. Meetings are held regularly during the school year. These meetings are always open to concerned parents and parishioners. The right to address the Board at a meeting shall be limited to those whose request had been approved in advance of the meeting. The request must be presented to the board chair or principal at least one (1) day prior to the meeting.



ACADEMICS/CLASSROOMS

ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND EXPECTATIONS

Every St. Mary's Catholic School student is given the opportunity to learn and grow academically. Teachers work diligently in monitoring and ensuring that individual student needs are being met to provide an environment and expectation of learning.

When a student is not meeting their academic potential, a meeting with the principal, parent(s)/guardian(s), teacher, and student may be held to address the student's academic standing. A plan will be developed to ensure students are finding success at St. Mary's Catholic School.

ASSESSMENT PHILOSOPHY

At St. Mary's Catholic School, we believe an effective assessment system, using both summative (standardized) and formative assessments (capture levels of knowledge and skill along the learning journey), motivates students to learn, communicates with stakeholders, promotes school improvements, guides instructional decisions, and shares a common vision. Assessment tools and practices are varied, ongoing, authentic, and aligned with specific learning targets. Regular and descriptive feedback is then provided to students, parents, and stakeholders to positively promote learning.

Fountas and Pinnell (2-3 times/year):

Fountas and Pinnell (K-6) is a way to link reading assessment to instruction. It identifies instructional and independent levels and documents student progress through one-on-one formative and summative assessments.

FAST/STAR Assessments (3 times/year):

FAST (Formative Assessment System for Teachers) (K-5) combines Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) and Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) to transform the way teachers measure and monitor student progress in reading and math with faster, more effective results.

STAR (6th grade) Assessments are short tests that provide teachers with learning data. STAR tests are computer adaptive, which means they adjust to each answer your child provides. This helps teachers get the best data to help your child in the shortest amount of testing time (about one-third of the time other tests take).

ACCREDITATION

St. Mary's Catholic School is an accredited institution. The school has met the standards of the Western Catholic Educational Association (WCEA) in obtaining this accreditation.

Accreditation is a 7-year cycle. In years 1-5, the school works on a strategic plan, communicates to parents our accomplishments, references our plan, and submits our Annual Report. In year 6 we complete an internal review of our school, called a self-study, to verify we are meeting the standards. From that self-study we create a school strategic plan. In year 7 we host a team made up of volunteer teachers, staff, and administrators. The onsite team

reviews our self-study and school strategic plan and passes their recommendations to the Board of Directors who will make the decision on our accreditation. Our current strategic plan is available on our school website and our parent portal, Gradelink

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES AND VALUES/SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Christian attitudes and values are developed in a child primarily by his/her parents. As you attend and participate in Mass and the sacraments, you are preaching a very silent, yet very profound lesson to reverence, worship, obedience and love to your child. Whatever example you give is the most impressive and far-reaching. As teachers in a Catholic school, we are committed to support you in this development of Christian attitudes and values. The success we have in teaching religion through the experiential approach to Mass and the sacraments is related very closely to what the child experiences in contact with you, the parents.

At St. Mary's, the children participate in a religious experience every day. This may be in a formal class setting, a liturgy or a prayer service. Each teacher considers the teaching of religion of primary importance. This includes not only the daily religion class, but also the instruction that can be given in every subject area.

Teaching the children to participate in the liturgy prayerfully is an important characteristic of Catholic Education. Therefore, every possible effort will be made to make the Liturgy meaningful for your child. We highly encourage the family to sit together at Sunday Mass in order to worship as a family unit and to make the Sunday obligation more meaningful to the child. On school days a special schedule is set up for the children in order to help them to participate in the Liturgy. Parents are always invited to attend the school masses.

CLASSROOM VISITATION

Parents are welcome to come and visit classrooms during the school week. Upon approval of the principal, you may make arrangements with the teacher for a classroom visit. There may also be times when the teacher and students will invite parents for special events in the classroom.

CONFERENCES

As partners in the educational process, parents/guardians will assist the staff in understanding and supporting student learning. Parent-teacher conferences occur in the fall and the spring; signup for conferences is completed through our parent portal, SchoolSpeak. Parents can also request additional conferences at any time.

DAILY SCHEDULE

7:15am	Office opens
7:55am	Classrooms open
8:05am	Classes begin
8:30am	School Mass (Usually on Fridays)
	Lunch: PK - 2: 11:20am – 11:50am
	3 - 6: 12:00am – 12:25pm
	Recess: K - 2: 11:55am – 12:25pm
	3 - 6: 11:25am – 11:55pm
2:45pm	School day ends
3:30pm	Office closes

FIRST RECONCILIATION/FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

In coordination with our parish, St. Mary's School provides a preparation program for students in second grade for receiving the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion. Parental involvement is important in a child's preparation, so we ask parents to work at home with their children and to attend parent meetings relating to sacramental preparation and the actual date of the events. If you're unable to attend, it is your responsibility to contact the 2nd grade teacher about missing, plus contact the priest to set up an alternate date to receive your child's Sacrament.

FIELD TRIPS

Field Trips are part of the educational curriculum and are designed to support the curriculum and introduce students to learning opportunities beyond our campus. Since field trips are learning situations, they are counted as a school day and attendance is generally required.

At the beginning of the year you will be asked to sign one general permission slip for local trips within the Melrose area. All other field trips will require a signed permission with details about the event and a "statement of release" addressing the transportation of your child, which the classroom teacher will supply.

Prior to scheduled trips, an authorization form signed by a parent is required. Students without a signed form are not allowed to go on the field trip and must stay at school. Handwritten notes and phone calls are not accepted in place of a signed authorization form. Certain field trips require an additional fee which must be paid for the student to participate.

Whenever possible, transportation for field trips is by bus. If it is necessary to use transportation provided by vehicles, parents will be notified.

Chaperones may be needed for field trips; all chaperones must comply with all volunteer requirements.

All school rules and policies apply during field trips and overnight trips.

It is the parents responsibility to update contact and health information on the school information system especially for purposes of having the correct emergency contact information up to date for field trips. Notify the school if you update this information.

GRADES/REPORT CARDS/GRADING PERIODS

Report cards and progress reports are communication tools that measure student learning. For students in Kindergarten-6th grade, report cards are issued on a quarterly basis. Typically, 1st quarter report cards are given at parent-teacher conferences in the fall, 2nd and 3rd quarter report cards are sent home in the student's Wednesday folder, and 4th quarter report cards are mailed home.

St. Mary's Catholic School uses the following grading scale:

K-2nd Grade

Concept

Effort

O = Outstanding	96-100%	+	Usually
S = Secure	90-95%	✓	Sometimes
D+ = Developing	85-89%	-	Rarely
D	76-84%		
D-	70-75%		
B = Beginning	50-69%		
N = Needs Improvement			

3rd-6th Grade

Concept

Effort

A	95-100%	E	Excellent
A-	90-94%	S	Satisfactory
B+	87-89%	N	Needs Improvement
B	83-86%		
B-	80-82%		
C+	77-79%		
C	73-76%		
C-	70-72%		
D+	67-69%		
D	63-66%		

HOMEWORK

Homework consists of follow-up assignments not completed in school, projects connected with a subject being taught, learning prayers and commandments, reading good books and magazines that are both recreational and informative, listening to daily news, or just studying. Not all homework has to be in a written form. Whatever type of homework is assigned, the student must accept responsibility to be prepared for the upcoming class and do their best to complete the assignment. It is the student's responsibility to turn in completed work as assigned.

It is to your child's advantage that he/she does his/her assignments. It is recommended students are assigned 10 minutes of homework per grade level per night plus reading.

*Grade 1 – 10 minutes, Grade 2 – 20 minutes, Grade 3 – 30 minutes, etc.

If your child needs to spend more than this as a regular practice, please see his/her teacher and discuss the various reasons for this. Whenever possible, weekends and vacations will be free of assignments.

Homework Suggestions:

1. Schedule a time to do homework, showing that it is an important priority and that you value its worth.
2. Provide a quiet setting for your child to work, with good lighting and materials to work with.
3. Let your child work on his/her own, but let him/her know you are available to help. Be aware that there is a difference between being a resource/consultant, and hovering over a child with constant advice.
4. Be available to check work if needed and to check whether the assignment has been completed.
5. If possible, help your child see how this assignment or skill relates to everyday life and life skills.

6. Remember, nothing can help like a hug, smile, and a word of approval. Be encouraging and supportive. Your attitudes are contagious.

It is the student's responsibility to speak upon his/her return from an absence to make up homework/tests missed. If a student misses more than two days of school, parents are encouraged to pick up missed assignments and any needed textbooks to have the student work on items from home.

Distance learning is not an enrollment option for families. Distance learning will be used as a temporary option for students who are unable to be in school due to quarantine or illness. The classroom teacher and family will work together to decide if all or part of the missed day(s) will be completed using distance learning and which parts may be completed at school when the student returns to the classroom.

LIBRARY

If an item from the library is damaged or lost, the family will be responsible for covering the cost of that item. We do not charge fines for overdue books; however, students will be required to pay for any books or items not returned by the end of the school year.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Gym Shoes: Children are required to have tennis shoes or other approved footwear available for gym periods. This is a safety precaution for your child.

Excuses From Physical Education: Students unable to participate in physical education activities must have a doctor statement requesting non-participation. Excuses from physical education for temporary physical reasons will be handled on an individual basis by contacting the principal.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION

Promotion and graduation take place when a student demonstrates satisfactory completion of grade level work. Students will be placed at the grade level in which they will best adjust academically, socially, and emotionally. They will ordinarily progress from one grade to another annually, spending one year at each level.

Occasionally a child will benefit by staying another year at the same grade level. Such a decision will result from careful study and evaluation by the school personnel. In such cases the parent should be informed of this possibility and all concerns should be thoroughly discussed. Without parental agreement, it is doubtful whether retention will increase the child's social, emotional, or academic growth. Retention should be limited to one year and ordinarily will be more effective at the primary grade level.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

A wide range of special education services are available to students. They are meant to provide for a variety of disabilities, including serious learning problems, as well as serious physical/sensory problems that might affect a student's ability to get the most out of school.

A child study team (consisting of school psychologist, school social workers, diagnostic teacher, classroom teacher and principal) are available to assess the extent of learning difficulties and what the school might do to assist in the child's learning. Special assessment is also available for children with possible speech/language concerns.

No special assessment is ever done without obtaining a parent's agreement and approval. Special programming is only done with a team that includes the parents.

If you feel that your child has some difficulty in learning or you have other questions about the child's development or behavior, please call the principal to discuss the services available to you and your child.

STATE/FEDERAL AID

The State of Minnesota allocates a per-pupil allocation of money for textbooks and nursing services.

STUDENT RECORDS

St. Mary's School maintains and manages student records following its policies and practices and in accordance with federal and state law. Student records may include identifying data, academic work completed, level of achievement (grades, standardized achievement test scores), attendance data, scores on standardized tests, health data (maintained as separate records), teacher or counselor ratings and observations, and verified reports of serious or recurrent behavior patterns.

Parents can make a request with the school office to review their child's record. Such requests will be responded to in a reasonable amount of time.

No one except appropriate school personnel, parents of minors, and students who have reached legal age shall have access to student records without either a subpoena or appropriate written authorization from the parent.

Schools can disclose and or release a student's educational records to other schools, without parental permission.

TEXTBOOKS

St. Mary's Catholic School provides students with all textbooks. If school property assigned to a student is lost, stolen, or otherwise damaged in any way, the student is responsible for replacing the items or paying a fine if the item is still in usable condition.



ADMISSIONS

ADMISSIONS PROCEDURE

Enrollment for New Students

St. Mary's School accepts applications for new students year-round. Should more applications for admission be received than spaces are available, applications will be considered in the following priority:

- Siblings of students already enrolled at St. Mary's School
- Children of Catholic families who are members of our parish.
- Children of non-parish families.

Families must register their students annually. St. Mary's School will provide specific registration procedures for new students and returning students during the registration period.

St. Mary's School may admit students who are not Catholic, provided they understand and accept that participation in Catholic religious instruction and school religious activities is required, and that our faith is a part of everything we do at the school.

Enrollment for Current Students

Current students should enroll for the next school year by no later than the first Friday in March. Enrollments received after this date will not receive priority and will be considered alongside applications for new students.

Registration Requirements

To complete registration, each family must pay all registration fees, if applicable) and submit all required paperwork, including a completed application and tuition contract.

Probationary Period

All new and transfer students will be accepted on a probationary period of 90 days. This period is intended to allow both the family and the school the opportunity to determine whether the school is a good fit for the student. During this time, the student should maintain passing grades, display good behavior, have no disciplinary concerns, and no attendance issues. If there are academic or behavior concerns, the student may be asked to unenroll.

AGE REQUIREMENTS

A child entering kindergarten must be 5 years old before September 1st. Students entering Kindergarten should have their Preschool Screening completed before beginning their Kindergarten year.

Preschool students must be 3-5 years of age and toilet-trained to attend Little Saints Preschool. Please refer to the Little Saints Handbook for more information regarding the preschool program at St. Mary's Catholic School.

NEW STUDENTS

Health information will be requested by the public school at the time of pre-school screening. All immunizations must be completed for a child to register in school, or a conscious objector form needs to be provided by families who choose not to vaccinate.

If your child is Catholic and was baptized in a parish other than St. Mary's, a baptismal certificate is required for our files.

If your child is not Catholic but is Christian, he/she is very welcome to attend St. Mary's School. All students will be taught the Catholic faith in school, but non-Catholic students will not receive the Catholic sacraments during their time at St. Mary's School.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

At St. Mary's School, we are committed to fostering an inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment for all members of our community. Rooted in our Catholic values, we uphold the dignity of every individual and ensure that all students have equal access to the benefits and opportunities provided by our school, without discrimination.

In alignment with Catholic social teaching and applicable federal and state laws, St. Mary's School prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national or ethnic origin, sex, disability, age, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, or any other characteristic protected under applicable law in the administration of our educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and tuition assistance, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

As a Roman Catholic religious institution, the school also has the right and duty to conduct its school, programs, and activities in a manner consistent with the Catholic faith and doctrine. Accordingly, nothing in this handbook precludes the school's ability to act in conformance with its Catholic beliefs and identity, including taking appropriate actions with respect to students, parents, or volunteers, whose actions are inconsistent with the religious teachings of the Catholic faith. This applies to actions on school grounds, at school functions, or off school grounds if such actions interfere with or obstruct the mission or operations of the school.

SCHOLARSHIPS

While we strive to keep tuition at an affordable rate, we understand that private school tuition can be a major expense for families. With this in mind, St. Mary's School has financial assistance funds available. Distribution of funds is based on financial need and availability of funds.

St. Mary's School offers tuition scholarships to families with students in Preschool through 6th grade. St. Mary's School will provide specific scholarship information through email communication and on the school parent portal, Gradelink.

Scholarships are strictly confidential between parents/guardians and St. Mary's School. We understand that a family's financial circumstances are private, and we assure all families who apply for scholarships the utmost care and diligence in upholding and respecting that privacy.

TUITION AGREEMENTS AND PAYMENT POLICY

St. Mary's Catholic School operates with the use of parish subsidy funds, fundraising activities, and a set tuition. Each year the St. Mary's School Board, prior to registration for the next school year, will establish the tuition rates for the next school year. Rates will be based upon the projected budget and enrollment.

Families must complete a tuition agreement form during the registration period for enrollment at St. Mary's School for the upcoming academic school year. This agreement ensures financial viability and integrity to budgetary planning.

Families who are members of a parish other than St. Mary's will have subsidy requests sent to their home parish to offset educational expenses. It would be an appropriate gesture for families to send a letter of thanks to their home parish.

When signing their tuition agreement, parents/guardians will select their payment plan from the following: annually, semi-annually, or over nine months. The ACH payment option is highly encouraged. Upon signing the tuition agreement, parents/guardians take the responsibility for paying the agreed upon tuition charges in full and on time. Returned payment fees will be assessed if payments are returned for any reason.

Tuition payments/collections remain confidential between parents/guardians and the school office. If, at any time, circumstances prevent timely payment of tuition, please contact the principal in advance. If full payment is not received at the conclusion of a school year without speaking with the principal, a payment plan will be set up for the upcoming year.

Students who withdraw during the school year will have their tuition prorated to the end of the last month attended. Students who take an extended leave during a semester for family vacations, illness, etc., shall not have their tuition reduced.

In the event that a family does not fulfill their tuition agreement, the following will occur:

Step 1: Notice is sent to parent(s)

Step 2: Principal phones parent(s)

Step 3: Principal informs parent(s) that the child(ren) will no longer attend school until alternative payment arrangements have been made

All outstanding tuition, fees, and hot lunch balances must be paid in full to re-enroll at St. Mary's School if an alternative payment plan is not reached.

TUITION INCENTIVE PROGRAM

As a means of promoting continued increases in enrollment at St. Mary's School, and to reward existing families for their efforts in promoting our school, an Enrollment Referral Incentive Program will be offered for the school year. Any current SMS family whose outreach and referral efforts result in a new family registering their child(ren) at St. Mary's School for the school year will receive a credit of \$100 in May of the school year for each new family they refer.

TRANSFER AND WITHDRAWAL

Transfer students may be accepted at any time of the school year. Age and academic achievement will be considered for grade level placement. If applicable, admission to the school is contingent upon having met all financial obligations at a previous private school. If

enrolling during the school year, the principal and the parent/guardian will agree on a prorated tuition amount and other financial obligations, and additional expectations concerning completion of the school year. Formal acceptance will not be granted until all previous school records have been released and reviewed. Full disclosure of academic, behavioral, emotional, or learning difficulties must be shared at time of registration or admission may be denied or revoked without refund of any paid fees or tuition.

Parents who are transferring children to another school must inform the principal and the school in advance. Requests should be made in sufficient time to prepare for the transfer of records. Records will be transferred directly to the school; they may not be transferred via parents. Parents may request a copy of information at any time. The family's tuition commitment must be completed at the time of withdrawal.



ATTENDANCE

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Students may arrive at school starting at 7:30am. Students arriving in the morning before 7:30am must wait in the designated area. The students are allowed to enter the classroom at 7:55am. Our school day begins at 8:05am. The school provides supervision of students at the school beginning at 7:30am and until 2:45 after school. Students must have the permission of their parents and/or teacher to stay after school.

AUTHORIZED PICKUP

Students will only be released to parents or an authorized pick-up person. If you have designated another person to pick up your child on a specific day, please inform the school no later than that morning.

ATTENDANCE

When students are tardy or absent, this causes interruptions and hinders learning for both the individual student and the classroom. The purpose of this policy is to encourage punctuality and regular school attendance.

Parents are asked to contact the school in the morning on or before the day of the absence if a child is to be absent or tardy for any reason. This can be done via email, phone call, or voice message to the main office. Please provide your child's name, grade, and the reason for the absence.

The school office will contact parents of children who have not arrived at school by 8:30am if the school hasn't been previously notified of the absence.

- Students who arrive after 8:05am and before 9:30am will be marked tardy. Tardiness caused by late buses is not charged against the students.
- Students who arrive after 9:30am will be marked absent for a half-day morning absence.
- Students leaving before 1:45pm will be marked absent for a half-day afternoon absence.

Appointments should be scheduled outside of school hours; if this is unavoidable, please notify the classroom teacher 24 hours before the appointment.

Tardiness

St. Mary's Catholic School follows Stearns County truancy procedures for children ages 12 and under. Children having 7 or more unexcused absences will be assessed as educational neglect. When this occurs, a school is legally required to make an educational neglect report to the Stearns County Family and Children's Services Division. (MN Statute 260C.163 Subd. 11) [Stearns County Truancy](#)

Absence due to illness

If a student misses one day due to illness, please do not call for make-up work. The student will receive any missed work the following day. If a student will be absent longer than one day, families should contact the student's teacher regarding make-up work. Teachers will decide which items may be given during the absence and which will be made up after the absence. If a student is absent for an entire day due to illness, they are not allowed to participate in after school activities.

Absence due to vacation

Vacations taken while school is in session are strongly discouraged. If a family takes a vacation while school is in session, the school office must be informed as far in advance as possible, and at least 48 hours before the planned absence. Teachers are not expected to prepare assignments in advance to accommodate vacation plans. When the student returns to school after a vacation, the assignments will be given out together with a deadline for their completion.

DISMISSING STUDENTS DURING SCHOOL HOURS

Students are dismissed from the office during school hours. If you must take your child out of school, a 24-hour advance written request should be sent or emailed to the classroom teacher stating the date and time of dismissal. Parents must come to the office to meet your child and sign him/her in or out of the building. Children will not be released to waiting cars or to anyone that cannot identify him or herself to the satisfaction of the school administration. **ANY STUDENT COMING INTO THE BUILDING OR LEAVING THE BUILDING NEEDS TO BE SIGNED IN AND OUT AT THE OFFICE BY AN ADULT.**



COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

Gradelink, our parent portal, is the main communication tool for St. Mary's Catholic School. It is important that families utilize this tool for accessing all classroom and school information. Administration and teachers will also occasionally email families with information as needed.

Please feel free to call the school 320-256-4257 or email office@smsmn.org at any time to have questions answered, express concerns, or to simply let us know we are doing a good job of educating your child. We need your support and encouragement.

With open communication between the home and school, we can just about guarantee a successful school experience for your child.

COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS/TEACHERS DURING SCHOOL

Teachers and children will be called to the phone only in case of an emergency, as classes should not be disturbed. Children are not allowed to use the phone without permission, and then only in case of an emergency or specific need.

To communicate with your student during the day, please contact the school office by phone or email. The school office will deliver a message to your student at an appropriate time. We do not encourage parents to contact students on their electronic devices. Students may only look at the device before school, before going to recess, and/or at the end of the school day.

To communicate with a classroom teacher during the school day, please email the teacher. He/she will respond at an appropriate time. Staff are not expected to respond to parent emails or phone calls outside of school hours (7:45am-4:00pm). The purpose of this consideration is to create a healthy balance between work and personal life.

EMERGENCY CLOSING/DELAY

SMS families will be notified by email through SchoolSpeak of emergency closings and/or delays. Please also listen to local radio stations for information on closings/delays.

The Melrose Area School District also uses a parent notification system to notify parents of closings, late starts, early outs and other important information. The primary phone numbers that parents provide the school will be notified by this system. It is important to keep St. Mary's School updated on any phone number changes so we can keep you on the notification list.

PASS FOR BUS CHANGE

If your child is to ride a different bus or get off at a different stop, they will need to bring a note and get a bus pass from the office. This pass is to be received in the office before 9:00am. The bus driver reserves the right to refuse an extra passenger, which would overload the bus above its legal capacity.



DISCIPLINE

STUDENT CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

The education of boys and girls for responsible citizenship is a shared responsibility of the home and school. The success of the school program depends upon the cooperation of all persons involved in its operation - students, parents, teachers and administrators.

Each student is responsible for behavior that maintains a respectful, welcoming, and joyful learning environment within the school. Respect for oneself, others, authority, and property is expected from each student. Students are to behave in a manner that is morally responsible and brings credit to themselves, their families, and the school community, and to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment.

As a Christ-centered school, we value learning, respect, and responsibility. Our general school conduct expectations are:

Be respectful

- Speak and act with respect to everyone and all property
- Follow directions in a timely manner and without argument
- Be attentive and respond appropriately when greeted or spoken to

Be responsible

- Be on time, prepared and ready to learn
- Complete work carefully and punctually
- Be in control of your own words and body

Be safe

- Follow school rules
- Avoid conduct that could hurt someone else
- Seek an adult if you see anyone being unsafe

Be like Jesus

- Be kind to others
- Include others and make everyone feel welcome
- Be a peacemaker
- Be willing to forgive

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Minor Misconduct

Consequences for minor misconduct will typically be managed by the classroom teacher. Generally, minor misconduct or policy violations will result in lighter discipline. This may include, but is not limited to, a verbal warning, time-out, written warning, call to parents, reparation of damage, loss of privilege, detention, or being placed on a behavior plan. Continued infractions, aggravating factors, or more severe behavior may result in more substantial

discipline. Because each child and situation is unique, in determining the appropriate response to a disciplinary situation the school may consider contextual factors such as the age of the student, the type of misconduct, the frequency of the student's misconduct, and the severity of the problem.

Examples of minor misconduct include (but are not limited to):

- Inappropriate language
- Leaving a classroom or school without permission
- Not following directions promptly
- Dress code violations
- Teasing, insulting, or otherwise being unkind to others
- Turning in homework late
- Any disruptive behavior
- Other minor policy violations

Major Misconduct

There are certain behaviors that, due to the severity of the action, are considered major misconduct, and more substantial and immediate consequences are necessary. Discipline may include any minor misconduct disciplinary actions, as well as immediate removal of the student from the classroom, meeting with parents, in school or out of school suspension, and expulsion. Disciplinary actions for major misconduct are determined by the principal. If necessary for the safety of other students or to avoid significant disruption to the school's social or academic environment, the student may be placed on a temporary out of school suspension pending appropriate resolution.

Examples of major misconduct include (but are not limited to):

- Continued misconduct
- Pushing, shoving, or yelling that is excessive
- Violence or threats of violence
- Bullying/Harassment
- Disrespect for authority, refusing to follow directions
- Lying, cheating, plagiarism, or academic dishonesty
- Use or possession of alcohol, drugs, or weapons on school property
- Abusive behavior (verbal or physical)
- Inappropriate language or actions
- Sexual misconduct
- Theft, property destruction, or vandalism
- Other major policy violations

Students, employees, or volunteers who are aware of major misconduct should report it to the principal as soon as possible.

Guidelines

The disciplinary procedures set forth in this handbook are intended as general guidance policies. Any step in the procedures may be bypassed or modified at the discretion of the teacher or administration. The school has the right to discipline or require student withdrawal for any reason. Failure to comply with expected standards of conduct will subject the student to potential disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion or dismissal.

Parent Responsibilities

- Review the discipline plan each year with your child(ren) and help them recognize the importance of appropriate and respectful behavior.
- Discuss with your children reasons they may receive a discipline form and help them work on ways to make appropriate choices and decisions.
- Sign any needed forms and help your children be responsible for returning the forms to school.
- Communicate and work with school staff to support, encourage, and challenge your children.

HARASSMENT GUIDELINES

St. Mary's School, in partnership with families, strives to create and maintain a positive learning environment where students are treated with dignity and respect so that they can celebrate and grow in their faith, discover their academic potential, and become concerned, respectful, and responsible young people. This philosophy is the foundation of our harassment policy.

Harassment Definition

Harassment is any unwelcome behavior (verbal, physical, written, or electronic) which has the intention or effect of intimidating, degrading, humiliating, or offending another person, or that interferes with another person's academic performance or participation in school activities. Whether an action constitutes harassment is determined by school administration, and not by the intentions of the accused.

Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- Bullying: Intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct that is objectively offensive and: (1) an actual or perceived imbalance of power exists between the student engaging in the prohibited conduct and the target of the prohibited conduct, and the conduct is repeated or forms a pattern; or (2) materially and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges.
- Cyber-Bullying: Bullying performed using technology or other electronic communication.
- Physical: Unwelcome physical force or unwanted touch that shames, hurts, alienates, threatens, intimidates, or attacks another person, or stealing, damaging, or destroying another's property.
- Psychological: Humiliating or abusive behavior that lowers a person's self-esteem or causes torment or emotional harm.
- Sexual: Includes unwelcome sexual advances, gestures, jokes, comments, actions, or symbols, unwelcome sexual questioning, remarks, or touching, pressuring for sexual activity, displaying sexual images, videos, or sounds, and/or promoting rumors of a sexual nature
- Verbal: Face-to-face or otherwise spoken harassing action, including the use of offensive speech, taunts, name-calling, put-downs, intimidation, slander, and threats of any kind toward another person or group.
- Written: Written statements that taunt, name-call, put down, intimidate, slander, or threaten another person or group.

Procedure

Any student who is a victim or witness of harassment is encouraged to deal with the situation immediately by politely and firmly advising those involved that the behavior is inappropriate and should stop. However, if the individual does not wish to deal with the problem directly, if the harassment is severe, or if a request to stop is not respected, the student should report the incident to the principal, or any teacher or staff member.

Teachers and staff members who witness harassment or receive a report of harassment should make reasonable efforts to promptly address the harassment and must inform the principal as soon as possible.

The school will promptly initiate an investigation into any reports of harassment. The investigation may include interviews with the complainant, the alleged harasser, and others who may have knowledge of the alleged incident. The investigation will be conducted in a confidential manner to the extent possible, but confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

The school may take immediate steps, at its discretion, to protect the victim, complainant, or others pending completion of an investigation of alleged harassment.

The school will determine, based on the preponderance of the evidence ("more likely than not"), whether the alleged conduct occurred and was a violation of this policy, and if so will take appropriate disciplinary action. If appropriate, an investigative report documenting interviews, conclusions, and outcomes will be completed. The complainant, victim, alleged harasser, and their parents, will be informed of the outcome of the investigation, to the extent permitted by law. However, the school may not disclose private educational or personnel data regarding an alleged perpetrator who is a student or employee of the school.

SCHOOL BUS CONDUCT AND CONSEQUENCES FOR MISBEHAVIOR

Riding the school bus is a privilege, not a right. The school district's general student behavior rules are in effect for all students on school buses, including nonpublic students.

Rules at the Bus Stop

- Get to your bus stop five minutes before your scheduled pick up time. The school bus driver will not wait for late students.
- Respect the property of others while waiting at your bus stop.
- Keep your arms, legs and belongings to yourself.
- Use appropriate language (no swearing or use of negative language).
- Stay away from the street, road or highway when waiting for the bus.
- Wait until the bus stops before approaching the bus.
- After getting off the bus, move away from the bus.
- If you must cross the street, always cross in front of the bus where the driver can see you. Wait for the driver to signal to you before crossing the street.
- No fighting, harassment, intimidation, horseplay, bullying, or hazing.
- No use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs.

Rules on the Bus

- Immediately follow the directions of the driver.
- Sit in your seat facing forward.
- Talk quietly and use appropriate language.
- Keep all parts of your body inside the bus.
- Keep your arms, legs and belongings to yourself.

- No fighting, harassment, intimidation or horseplay.
- Do not throw any object.
- No use of alcohol, tobacco or drugs.
- Do not bring any weapons or dangerous objects on the school bus.
- No movement from seat to seat or standing while the bus is in motion.

Consequences for school bus/bus stop misconduct will apply to all routes. Decisions regarding a student's ability to ride the bus in connection with co-curricular and extracurricular events (for example, field trips, or competitions) will be at the sole discretion of the school district. Consequences are progressive and may include suspension of bus privileges. Parents or guardians will be notified of any suspension of bus privileges. It is the school bus driver's responsibility to report unacceptable behavior to the school district's School Office. Serious misconduct may be reported to local law enforcement.

1st Notice – Warning

2nd Notice – Assigned Seat

3rd Notice – 3 day Suspension of Riding Privileges

4th Notice – 5-day Suspension of Riding Privileges

5th Notice – 10 day Suspension of Riding Privileges

6th Notice – Suspension of Riding Privileges for remainder of year

PLEASE NOTE: Depending upon the severity of the behavior, administrative discretion may be used regarding issuing consequences.

WEAPONS

The school strictly prohibits the unauthorized carrying or possession of weapons on its premises. For the purpose of this policy, the term "weapon" shall include, but not be limited to, firearms, ammunition, knives, explosives, or any device, material, or substance that is used for, or readily capable of, causing death or serious injury or any other object that can reasonably be considered a weapon (including replicas).

A student who finds a weapon on the way to school or in the school building and takes the weapon immediately to the principal's office shall not be considered in possession of a weapon. Parents will be called immediately if a child is found with a weapon. If necessary the police will be called.

Possession of a weapon by a student will result in:

- An initial suspension for up to five (5) days
- Confiscation of the weapon
- Contact parent(s)
- Contact with the Melrose Police Department
- A possible recommendation to the Board of Education that the student be expelled for the remainder of the school year.

CHEMICAL POSSESSION

The use, possession, sale, purchase, transfer, or being under the influence of tobacco, nicotine, alcohol, marijuana, mood altering chemicals, or any other illegal or controlled substance by students on school grounds, or at any school event is strictly prohibited.

When it is determined that a student has violated this policy, the following actions may be taken:

- Parents notified
- Law enforcement officials notified

- Required drug screening at a facility approved by the school, with results of the screening shared with the school
- Chemical use evaluation
- Referral to an outside agency for treatment/counseling options
- Detention/suspension/expulsion
- Parent-student conference with the principal required before the student can resume attendance at school

PROPERTY SEARCHES

St. Mary's School is committed to maintaining a safe learning environment. To help ensure the safety of students and compliance with school policies, the school reserves the right to inspect and search student lockers, desks, and any other school property provided for student use (including electronics) at any time, with or without notice, to ensure compliance with school policies. The school reserves the right to search students' personal property, including backpacks, purses, other containers, and electronics, when there is reasonable suspicion that the search will uncover evidence of a violation of school rules or laws. Students should not expect privacy for personal belongings brought onto school premises.



EMERGENCY/SAFETY

ENTRY INFORMATION AND VISITORS

All entrances to the school are locked during the day, except during designated arrival and dismissal times.

All visitors (including parents) may enter the building through the main front doors. You must ring the bell and be buzzed into the building. All visitors must report to the main office and sign in.

Any person in the building or on school grounds without permission will be considered a trespasser. If any student believes a person is in the school building or on school grounds without permission or without having followed visitor procedures, they should immediately inform a teacher or staff member.

Students should not open an exterior school door to anyone, even if they know the visitor. Visitors must ring the bell and be buzzed in by the main office.

CHILD ABUSE/MANDATED REPORTERS

Minnesota statute requires that school employees, as mandated reporters, report to the Stearns County Human Service department any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect within 24 hours. If the report is made verbally, a written report must be filed within 72 hours of her verbal report. Once a report has been made, official representatives of the county Human Service department have the right to and may come to the school to interview the child. The department need not obtain parent/guardian permission.

Maltreatment is defined by Minnesota Statutes Section 260E.03 and includes egregious harm, neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, substantial child endangerment, threatened injury, mental injury, and maltreatment of a child in a facility.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

Throughout the school year, several emergency drills will be scheduled. Teachers will inform students:

1. Of the exits and/or safe locations they should use for fire, tornado, and ALICE drills.

FIRE: When the fire alarm is on, staff, students, and visitors are to leave the room quickly, quietly, and orderly. The school personnel that the students are with will lead them outside the building following the assigned route. Once outside the building, students and visitors will be moved a safe distance from the building. Staff, students, and visitors will remain outside the building until the "all clear" signal has been given.

1. Anyone found maliciously tampering with fire alarms will be subject to arrest.
2. If a fire drill should occur while students are in the hall or restroom, the students should go to the nearest exit and report to an adult.

TORNADO: Staff, students and visitors are to move quickly to the area designated for the classroom. All persons are to remain in the assigned area until the "all-clear" signal has been given.

ALICE/LOCKDOWNS: In situations that require the securing of our schools, St. Mary's will use the **ALICE** method. **ALICE** stands for: **Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate**. Using the ALICE method will teach our students and staff in the event an armed intruder enters our school. They:

1. Listen carefully to their teacher's directions
2. Get to and/or remain in a secure area until it is safe to evacuate
3. Should an intruder evade their area, apply skills to distract, confuse, and gain control
4. As soon as it is safe to do so, evacuate

St. Mary's School will also hold soft lockdowns in the event that the school itself is not in direct harm but an event may be occurring in the area. All students and staff should immediately report to a secure location, lock doors, and continue with educational activity until an administrative "all clear" is given.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

To ensure that the school can contact families should the need arise, and especially in case of emergency, families are responsible to keep their contact information current. Each school year, emergency information must be completely filled out for each child, including parent phone numbers and emergency contact phone numbers. Parents must notify the school office of any changes in address or phone number.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

St. Mary's Catholic School has an emergency operations plan to address most emergency situations. A copy is available on Gradelink and in the school office if parents wish to review the plan. The school has two designated relocation sites to bring students if students and staff need to be removed from the building. These sites are: True North Marketplace/Cornerstone Cafe and Melrose Bowl.

EMPLOYEE BACKGROUND CHECKS

Currently, it is mandated that all schools in the St. Cloud Diocese must perform criminal background checks on all employees as well as volunteers who have regular or unsupervised contact with minors. The following positions at St. Mary's School are subject to mandatory background checks:

Administrators, Administrative Assistant, Teachers, Substitute Teachers, Specialist Teachers, regular Volunteers, Athletic Coaches, Paraprofessionals, Food Service Personnel, and Custodial Service Personnel.

SCHOOL CLOSING

In case of an emergency or severe weather, the school will notify families by email or text. Melrose Area Schools also communicates through text if there is a school closing. As we share busing with the public school district, if the school district closes schools or has a late start or early closing due to weather, in most cases our school will act accordingly.

SCHOOL PATROL

Children who walk to and from school are to cross only at corners where the school patrol is present. The Melrose Police Department or the Highway Patrol may swear in 5th and 6th grade boys and girls, with their parents' permission, as patrol members. Children are expected to obey these patrol members when they are functioning in their official duty.



HEALTH/WELLNESS

HEALTH SERVICES

Services of a school nurse are provided by the Melrose Area School District. Health records are kept on all students as required by law. Records must be current regarding booster shots, illness, surgery, allergies, or asthma. Any special health problems of the child should be known so that adjustments, if any, can be made in the classroom setting.

The school nurse, secretary, or principal may approve the dismissal of a student who becomes ill or hurt during the school day. Parents will be contacted when a student reports to the office or school nurse with an illness. If a parent is unable to come for the student, arrangements for a relative or other authorized person must be made to pick up the student. No student will be sent home due to illness if no one is at home to be with the student.

HEAD LICE

When school personnel verify a case of lice, the child's parent/guardian will be asked to come to school and take the child home. Students found with lice will be excluded from school until treatment has occurred. Written or verbal verification is needed from the parent that treatment has been completed. If the school sees a growing number of head lice cases, a letter will be sent home to all parents in a class or grade. Please see the Minnesota Department of Health informational sheets on Head Lice posted on SchoolSpeak under Handbook-Medical Forms.

HEARING/VISION SCREENING

Students in kindergarten-sixth grade all have their hearing and vision screened in the fall of the year. Parents will be contacted if their child has a suspected hearing or vision loss.

ACCIDENTS/INJURIES

If a student is injured at school, our first concern is to care for the student's comfort and safety, followed by contacting the parents. If it is determined that the injury requires immediate emergency health care, 911 will be called for emergency vehicle transportation to the hospital or to the urgent care center identified by the parents.

ILLNESS

We believe it is important that children are in school as often as possible in order to provide the best opportunity for learning and development. However, it is everyone's responsibility to help stop the spread of contagious conditions and communicable disease.

We ask that parents refrain from bringing children to school if they are sick or displaying symptoms of illness such as:

- Fever of 100 degrees or more
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Inflammation, crusting, or redness of the eye
- Any contagious or infectious disease of the skin, mouth or eyes or unidentified

- rash
- Chronic cough
- Sore throat with fever and/or swollen glands
- Heavy nasal discharge/mucous-any color (the first two to three days of mucous are contagious)
- Taking prescription medication such as antibiotics for contagious illnesses must be taken for a full 24 hours before returning to school.

A child with a temperature of 100 degrees or greater, or a child that is vomiting must be picked up by a parent/guardian as soon as possible. In addition, a child must be fever-free (without the use of fever reducing medicine) for a period of 24 hours before being allowed to return to school.

On occasion, episodes of biting occur in the school setting. Because of the potential of exposure to contagious illnesses, the school plan is to notify the parents of the students involved. When a biting incident occurs, the school may recommend contacting your student's physician for his/her input. The potential exists for exposure to blood and body fluids by all students.

A child may not be given any medication without the permission of the parents, and in the case of prescription medicine, at a doctor's written request.

MEDICATION/FIRST AID

The school is supplied with first aid materials by the Melrose Area School District in case of need. The staff have been trained in basic first aid and CPR.

If parents send prescription medication to school, it must be accompanied by a prescription for all prescribed medication to the **teacher** and the **office** stating the times and amount of medication the child is to take. The school is not permitted to give any type of medication to children without written permission. Students who are taking over the counter medication need a signed "medication release" form on file in the office. Please see Gradelink or ask in the office for a release form.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION MUST BE IN A PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE INDICATING THE NAME OF THE MEDICATION, DOSAGE, DATE, CHILD'S NAME AND DOCTORS NAME. All druggists know this law and will make duplicate containers available if necessary.

All medication must be kept in the school office. NO medications, including cough drops, ointments, or over the counter medications are allowed in the student's possession.

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

The School Social Worker, one part of the school district's auxiliary services to students, is primarily interested in those children who are having difficulties, which are interfering with their learning, their attendance, or their social adjustments. If you feel your child is not making the best use of his/her potential or the available resources within the school setting and would like to have an opportunity to talk with the school social worker, please consult the principal.

WELLNESS

St. Mary's promotes healthy eating and physical activity. We encourage all students to make age appropriate, healthy selections of food and beverages, including those brought for snack and classroom celebrations. Children need access to healthy foods and opportunities to be physically active to grow, learn, and thrive.



TECHNOLOGY/ELECTRONIC MEDIA

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Cellphones, Apple Watches, iPads, etc. are to be silenced and in backpacks during school hours. St. Mary's School is not responsible for damage or loss of this equipment. If any student is found using an electronic device from home during class time, the device will be taken and the item will be returned at the end of the day. Students may look at the device before school, before going to recess, and/or at the end of the school day. If you want to make sure your child gets your messages during the school day, call or email the office. If students are found using devices more than 3 times, they will be banned from bringing the device to school.

TECHNOLOGY/INTERNET USE

St. Mary's School recognizes that it is the student's responsibility to use the internet appropriately. Electronic information research skills are now fundamental to preparation of citizens and future employees. Access to the Internet enables students to explore thousands of libraries, databases, and other resources while exchanging messages with people around the world. Every family must read the Technology Guidelines and complete the consent form by having parents and students sign. This is done annually. Failure to follow the rules listed on the guidelines will result in restriction and/or suspension of computer lab privileges and may involve further consequences.

DEVICES

All students in Little Saints & Kindergarten will have individual access to technology devices in their classrooms. Students in 1st through 6th grade will have their own Chromebook at school and the ability to bring it home is at the discretion of each classroom teacher. All students will also have access to the computers in the library.

Students are responsible for the general care of all technology devices which have been issued by the school. iPads and/or Chromebooks that are broken or fail to work properly must be taken to the Media Specialist. The apps and operating system originally installed by SMS must remain on the iPad or Chromebooks in usable condition and must be easily accessible at all times. The Media Specialist is the only person allowed to add additional apps or perform any upgrades.

The use of the SMS technology resources is a privilege, not a right. These guidelines are provided to make all users aware of the responsibilities associated with efficient, ethical, and lawful use of technology resources. If a student violates any conditions named in the Technology Agreement, privileges may be terminated, access to the school's technology resources may be denied, and appropriate disciplinary action shall be applied.



MISCELLANEOUS

ASBESTOS/PEST CONTROL NOTIFICATION

St. Mary's School is inspected for asbestos every three years under the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act of 1986 (AHERA). Some asbestos-containing building materials are found to be present in the school building. A management plan detailing the location and description of ACM's has been submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education and is available for your viewing in the school office. St. Mary's Catholic School is inspected by a certified Asbestos Building Inspector.

Minnesota law requires nonpublic schools to provide notification to parents when pesticide applications will be done. All pest control materials are chosen and applied according to label directions per Federal law. We make every attempt to have the applications completed when students are not in the building. See Minn. Stat. §121A.30.

BIKES

Bikes may be used for transportation to school. Bikes must be parked and secured in the bike rack provided near the school. St. Mary's School is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged items.

BUILDING USE

Any person or group can request to use the school facility during non-school hours. Requesters will be required to complete an application for use, must certify that their use will not violate our policies or contravene Catholic doctrine, and may require a fee and proof of insurance. Please contact the school office to inquire about building use.

FUNDRAISING

To ensure success at St. Mary's School, we need our families and faith community to donate their time, talent, and treasure to our school. Fundraising is an essential part of meeting our annual budget and ensuring that a solid Catholic education is affordable for our families. St. Mary's School offers multiple fundraising opportunities throughout the year, including the following options that don't cost our families any additional money:

ARVIG, BOX TOPS FOR EDUCATION, COBORN'S MORE REWARDS PROGRAM

If you're an Arvig Internet customer, sign up for the School Partnership Program and Arvig will donate \$1.00 each month to St. Mary's School at no additional cost to you. Since 2010, Arvig has donated more than \$360,000 to local schools through their School Partners. <https://arvig.net/supportyourschool>

Scan your store receipt with the Box Tops mobile app to identify participating products and instantly add cash to your school's earnings online.

<https://www.boxtops4education.com/>

Families are expected to support and promote our fundraising efforts. All families are expected to work at the Catholic Schools Weeks Breakfast & Auction4Education. It is the parents responsibility to make different arrangements if unable to work.

Coborn's More Rewards Program is available by signing up at

<https://www.morerewards.com/> and indicating St. Mary's School as the recipient of your reward points.

SMS\$4KIDS (SMS Cash for Kids)

In October 2012, St. Mary's School launched a new and improved SMS\$4Kids program for St. Mary's School. With this program you can shop locally and/or 100's of national brands. SMS\$4KIDS is done in partnership with Great Lakes SCRIP Center (GLSC). Every purchase means more for the students of St. Mary's School - more technology, more library books, more tools for learning, tuition rebates, etc. Please support this program.

<https://www.shopwithscrip.com/>

LOST AND FOUND

The school maintains a lost and found for misplaced items. It is located near the main office. Please check the lost and found if you are missing an item. St. Mary's School is not responsible for lost items, and the lost and found is periodically cleaned out. Items that remain in the lost and found for more than one month will be donated to charity. The child's belongings are to be clearly marked with their name. This is especially true of boots, caps, and mittens. The school discourages keeping valuables in the child's desk or backpack.

MONEY

Families should use an envelope when sending any money to school. A used envelope is fine. Please have the child's name, amount enclosed, and intention for the money written on the outside of the envelope. Please send separate checks for tuition, lunch, and other payments.

RECESS

The purpose of the recess period is to provide the child with an opportunity to get exercise, to learn group cooperation, and to develop skills in various games and sports. We require all children to spend recess periods in open air and to participate in games and sports. During cold weather, a child is expected to dress accordingly so that there should be little reason why a recess period cannot be taken outside, or to participate in games and sports. Indoor recess may be held on days of inclement weather, or when the temperature or wind chill is -10° or colder.

If, for a good reason, a child is unable to go outside, or to participate in sports and games, a written excuse is required. However, we caution against being over-protective of the child in this matter. A child who is well enough to come to school should be well enough to spend a few minutes out in the fresh air.

SCHOOL BAGS/BACKPACKS

We ask all the children to carry their books in a plastic or cloth bag of some kind. It is imperative that each child's bag is labeled and used daily. Children must care for the books they use and pay fines if they are damaged. If a book is lost or damaged, the child will have to pay the purchase price to replace it.

SCHOOL DRESS CODE

The dress code policy is designed to reflect the dignity of the body and the modesty taught by our Catholic tradition. It enhances a sense of school pride and belonging, while encouraging discipline and eliminating unnecessary distractions. Additionally, it creates opportunities to share our mission in the wider community. Because of this, all students are expected to dress in a neat, clean, respectful, and modest manner. Complying with the dress code is a requirement for attending school.

The following dress expectations list covers many specific expectations but is not exhaustive, and school administration reserves the right to amend the dress code as needed:

- No specific uniform is required at St. Mary's School. Clean clothes that are neat and well-fitting are expected. Clothes must be modest and provide sufficient coverage.
- Clothing and other items or grooming in a manner that represents and/or promotes politics, political candidates, inappropriate messages, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana or other illegal substances, violence, threats, gangs, hate groups, or any messages that are immoral or contravene the teachings of the Church, are prohibited.
- All students are asked to dress appropriately for Masses on Fridays. Nice pants, shirts, skirts, and/or dresses. No shorts are allowed at Mass; students who arrive at school on a Mass day with shorts on will need to call a parent to deliver pants to school before Mass OR wear a pair of pants provided by the school. Students may change clothing after Mass.
- In the spring, students will be notified when conditions warrant the wearing of shorts. In the fall, shorts are allowed as long as weather permits.
- Shirts which are see-through or low cut in the neck or armhole are not permitted. Bare stomachs, spaghetti straps, and inappropriate messages on shirts are not acceptable.
- Hats, caps, and hoods are not permitted indoors. They may be worn on the playground.
- Boots are required for recess during the winter months.
- No excessively ripped, holey, or torn clothes.

If a student violates the dress code policy, they will be informed and the student's parents may be notified. Students will be sent to the school office for violations that are substantial, relate to modesty, or create a distraction to the academic environment. Options to address the violation may include turning clothing articles inside out, being provided replacement clothing (when possible), parents bringing other clothes, or being sent home. Ongoing dress code violations, or individual instances of severe violations, may result in disciplinary action.

FOOD PROGRAM INFORMATION

Our school food program provider is Melrose Area Public School; lunch will be served in the SMS gym. Before lunch each day teachers will have students wash their hands and pray. Adequate staffing and supervision will be available every day in the lunchroom/gym area.

The state government has allocated funds to provide free breakfasts & lunches for students in grades Kindergarten-6th grade for the 2025-2026 school year. Even though this is the case, families with students in Kindergarten-6th grade who think they may qualify for free and reduced lunches are strongly encouraged to complete the eligibility form included in the open house folder as this qualification ties directly to our Title I services.

School staff will take food counts every morning, asking students if they would like hot lunch or if they brought cold lunch from home. Please instruct your children regarding their responsibility for ordering meals and milk, because your lunch funds will be deducted per their choices. This

is also why it is very important to notify teachers and/or the office ahead of time if your student has an appointment and will not be present for lunch.

Menus will be posted monthly on Gradelink.

BREAKFAST

Breakfast will be offered to K-6 students from Melrose Area School as part of their lunch program. When students arrive at school each morning, they will be offered the choice to have breakfast or not.

***Per state guidelines for the Universal Lunch Bill, only students in K-6 will be offered the FREE breakfast and lunch option.*

Pricing for Breakfast

Students enrolled in Little Saints Preschool	Students enrolled in K-6 Provided by MAS
No Breakfast Offered	Breakfast is FREE

LUNCH

There will only be one hot lunch option per day served with white or chocolate milk. As always, you may choose to send cold lunch, and can purchase milk to go with it.

Families with students enrolled in Little Saints Preschool MUST pay for lunch by check and send to SMS. All checks should be payable to St. Mary's School.

Families with students enrolled in K-6 can pay for additional entrees and milk online at School Pay or send checks to SMS. All checks should be payable to Melrose Area Schools. You will be able to track your student's choice of lunch and view the dollar balance on your MAS lunch account though School Pay online.

If your balance falls below \$10.00 for your family, you will get an automatic email and phone call from MAS. If additional funds are not added in a timely manner, you will receive calls and/or emails from MAS until funds are replenished.

Pricing for Hot Lunch

	Students enrolled in Little Saints Preschool Lunch Provided by True North/Cornerstone Catering	Students enrolled in K-6 Lunch Provided by MAS
Hot lunch w/ choice of white or chocolate milk	\$3.75	FREE
Extra Hot Lunch Entree	N/A	\$1.35
Extra and/or Cold lunch milk	\$.35	\$.35
Snack milk (white milk ONLY)	paid in full at start of year	N/A

Students are taught appropriate expectations for the use of the cafeteria during lunch. The following lunchroom zone SMS Spirit expectations are taught and students are required to follow them.

- Use quiet voices (0, 1, 2)
- Keep hands, feet and tray to yourself
- Calmly wait your turn in line

- Clean up after yourself - stack trays
- Show good table manners
- Walk at all times
- Stay at your table until dismissed

Students may not bring pop or flavored drinks to school as their lunch beverage unless designated for special events.

- Allowed: water or seltzer water, without added caloric sweeteners; fruit and vegetable juices and fruit-based drinks that contain at least 50% fruit juice and that do not contain additional caloric sweeteners.
- Not Allowed: soft drinks containing caloric sweeteners; sports drinks; iced teas; fruit-based drinks that contain less than 50% real fruit juice or that contain additional caloric sweeteners; beverages containing caffeine.

Federal Education Funding

In Minnesota, Title I Service money is designated based on the number of Free and Reduced Lunch Program participants a school has. PLEASE complete the form included in your Open House packet so we can receive federal aid for Title I Services, regardless of if your family chooses to participate in the free/reduced lunch program.

SNACKS/BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Please encourage healthy snacks for daily snack time and birthday celebrations. If children wish to bring a treat for the class to celebrate their birthday, it must be wrapped individually or store bought; homemade items are not allowed. Contact the classroom teacher regarding any potential food allergies in the classroom.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are a vital part of St. Mary's School. Volunteers are encouraged to sign up in the fall of the year or anytime during the school year if they have time to offer to the school. The volunteers who have worked in our school during the past years have contributed greatly to the success of the students and the school. We will be looking forward to working with them again this year. If you would like to volunteer in any area of the building, please contact the principal.



PARENT INVOLVEMENT, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

PARENT/GUARDIAN

For purposes of this handbook, the term parent includes both parents and legal guardians of a child.

PARENT CONDUCT

Our school community is a special place, rich with opportunities for learning, growth, and belonging. It takes all members of our community, working together, to maintain our strong school environment. We expect all parents of our students to commit to support the faith, support the school, be respectful and positive, and follow school policies.

If the partnership is no longer viable in the principal's opinion, the school reserves the right to ban the parent from school grounds/events, require the parent to unenroll their child, or to not accept registration for the next school year.

NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

It is the school's policy to comply with federal and state laws regarding parental rights. If a court order exists which limits a parent's access to a student or to student or school information, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the school with an official copy of the court order. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, the school will provide a non-custodial parent with access to records and other school-related information regarding the child upon request.

If a legal document is on file for a student limiting non-custodial access to the child, but arrangements are made between the custodial and non-custodial parent to pick up or see a child, the custodial parent must inform the school.

FAMILY GRIEVANCE POLICY

As we work together in partnership to educate children, difficulties and differences of opinion and approach inevitably arise due to human nature. When concerns or conflicts arise, all members of our community are expected to work together in good faith to find solutions.

Whenever possible, concerns should be raised first with the person with whom you have a concern or complaint, to try to come to an understanding or mutually agreeable resolution. Only after this has been attempted and is unsuccessful, should concerns be brought to the principal. *Note: if at any time concerns exist regarding student safety or mistreatment, such concerns should be immediately brought to the principal's attention.*

When a concern is brought to the principal in accordance with this policy, the principal will determine appropriate action, which may include but is not limited to mediating a conversation between the parties, proposing a resolution, or investigating the issue.

Throughout the process, all parties are expected to remain respectful, professional, and to act in good faith. While parents of course may discuss the situation at home, they should remember that their child must still function within the school setting and that these conversations can undermine the administrator's and teacher's authority to do their jobs. Just as the teacher or administrator is responsible to respect the child and parents even when difficulties arise, the parents are responsible to see that the problems do not affect the child's respect for the position of the teacher or the administrator.

If open communication between the parent/school principal is also unsatisfactory, that person must then state their concern in writing and submit to St. Mary's Catholic School's Pastor so that he may address it in an effort to resolve this, and any issue. This written concern will initiate a process, which will work to gather more information and to take corrective action if the situation warrants.