

Student/Parent Handbook



St. Mary's Catholic School

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Welcome to St. Mary's Catholic School!

At St. Mary's, we believe that home and school are partners in children's education, and we feel privileged to partner with you.

This handbook is designed to be a guide and a general overview for students and parents/guardians as you interact with faculty, staff, and each other throughout the school year. The policies and procedures outlined here help to maintain an environment that will allow exceptional teaching and learning to happen.

This handbook answers many frequently asked questions and encourages home and school collaboration. Your understanding of these policies and procedures, and your cooperation, is essential to an extraordinary experience at St. Mary's and to the continuation of St. Mary's fine tradition.

This handbook is not comprehensive, nor is it all-inclusive. It provides general information and guidance to students and parents/guardians. The administration reserves the right to amend, terminate, or suspend the policies, procedures, programs, and practices described here at any time without notice and has the final word in all matters. Every effort, however, will be made to provide notice.

Parents/guardians who disagree with the judgment and/or decision of a teacher may consult with the principal. Parents/guardians who disagree with the process and/or the principal's judgment and/or decision may consult with the pastor and/or superintendent. The school administration reserves the right to require the withdrawal of a student if it determines the partnership is irretrievably broken.

"All Schools in the Diocese of Fall River are subject to the policies of the Diocese of Fall River. The *policy manuals of the Diocese of Fall River replace and supersede any contrary statement of policy, procedures, programs, or practices, including but not limited to, any such statement contained in any handbook or manual prepared by any school in the Diocese of Fall River.

* Available at The Catholic Education Center, 423 Highland Ave., Fall River, MA 02720"

Notice of Non-discriminatory Policy as to Students

St. Mary's, operating as a school within the Diocese of Fall River, admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights and privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to the students at the school. St. Mary's does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admissions policies, loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs. (Diocese of Fall River, Dept. of Education, Policy Manual, 5000 series Students)

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MISSION STATEMENT

St. Mary's Catholic School is a community of teachers, staff, parents, and parish family joined in partnership to educate our children in Catholic faith and values. Our parish school strives to create an environment of academic excellence built upon Christian spirituality for the children of Mansfield and the surrounding communities. We are committed to giving children the opportunity to develop the skills and gain the knowledge needed to attain their full potential as individuals, and as informed, responsible, and caring citizens. As a school community, we nurture and encourage our students to serve others as modeled by Christ.

THE SCHOOL DAY

Arrival

Doors open for students at 8:10 AM. Students may be dropped off by bus or car (in the assisted or unassisted car line). Students who arrive earlier will be placed in the Extended Day Program and parents will be charged accordingly.

Students changing their usual method of transportation, or needing to join the Extended Day Program before or after school, will bring to school a written note before or on the day this service is needed. Requests may be made to the office by phone when a last minute change is needed. Calls made by 1:30 PM will be processed, and every effort will be made to accommodate these requests. Later requests make it difficult to communicate the change to all supervising staff before dismissal and therefore cannot be guaranteed.

See [Arrivals and Dismissals Policy and Procedures](#) for further details on drop off and pick up including traffic flow and parking.

It is expected that students will arrive prepared for school with the necessary uniforms, books, supplies, homework, snacks/lunch etc. Office staff will attempt to contact a parent when a student reports that he/she has forgotten his/her belongings, lunch, etc. However, we do respect a parent's schedule that involves other responsibilities during the school day and hope to instill responsibility in our students. Therefore, calls will not be made for forgotten books, homework, projects, etc. without the express request of a teacher.

Students report immediately to their classrooms and begin the morning routines and homeroom procedures set forth by their teacher(s). Morning exercises include but are not limited to prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance, announcements, a review of the day's schedule, and attendance.

Attendance

The school reserves the right to make the final determination as to the legitimacy of absences, tardiness, or dismissals, as well as the requirement of additional documentation such as a doctor's note.

Absences

Parents/guardians must send [*A Note to St. Mary's School*](#) or call (508-339-4800) by 8:30 AM, if a child will not be attending school. The school nurse will call the parent/guardian if a student does not report to school and no note or voice message was sent.

Students absent (partial or full day) from school are responsible for obtaining and completing all assignments given during the absence.

- PS-2 Directions and a reasonable period for completion will be provided and should be arranged between teacher and parent.
- 3-8 Directions and a reasonable period for completion will be provided and should be arranged between teacher and student.

Teachers maintain attendance electronically. A student's attendance record is reported by trimester on the Report Card and can be produced at parent request.

Participation in After School Activities

A student may not participate in after school activities on the same day when he/she was absent from school. Students who arrive later than 8:20 AM or who are dismissed prior to 2:20 PM may not participate in after school activities that day unless the late arrival or early dismissal is deemed excused by the principal.

Excused/Unexcused Absences

All absences must be documented with a parent/guardian note indicating the reason for the absence.

Reasons for recording absences as "excused" include but are not limited to: sickness, doctor and dentist appointments, funeral or special religious services, specialized academic services, Diocese of Fall River high school visits (two one-day visits are excused for eighth graders), attending school-sponsored events off-site, etc.

These absences will be recorded as "excused" when students return to school with a note signed by his/her parent/guardian explaining the absence. Students who are absent for more than five consecutive days for a medical reason must return to school with a doctor's note in order to be readmitted.

Absences will be recorded as "unexcused" for reasons including, but not limited to: a family trip/vacation, a special activity, visiting other schools, visiting workplaces, parental neglect, truancy, etc.

Trips/vacations/activities scheduled during the school year, on school days, may cause gaps in the development of basic skills and abilities, which serve as a foundation for future learning and education. Such absences are discouraged and will be recorded as unexcused, as they can be disruptive to the student, teacher, and other students.

Students with unexcused absences are responsible for obtaining and completing all class work and assignments given during the absence from school. Teachers are neither required to provide assignments that will be missed in advance nor to re-teach lessons missed. Students will fully participate in assignments, including quizzes and tests scheduled for the day the student returns.

Absences due to reasons not listed here are deemed excused or unexcused at the discretion of the principal and will be recorded as such when the student returns to school.

Any student who is truant (absent unexcused and without permission of parent/guardian) from class or school is expected to:

- Make up, in an acceptable manner, class work and assignments missed, as decided and directed by the teacher and principal.
- Make up the time missed at the convenience of the teacher.
- Accept the grade for make-up work decided by the teacher and principal. Grades for work missed due to “unexcused” absences may be reduced.
- Conference with the teacher/parent/principal and, if requested, to present a written plan for regular daily attendance. This plan will be signed by all parties and filed in the office.

Tardies

Students not in class by 8:20 AM are tardy and will report to the office. After 8:30 AM parents must sign their child(ren) in at the office. Staff will give students a pass to be admitted to class. Parents/students should not go directly to class.

Tardies are deemed excused or unexcused for the same reasons as absences. Tardies due to reasons not listed are deemed excused or unexcused at the principal’s discretion. Delays at lockers can result in a tardy recorded.

Tardies are cumulative over the three trimesters. There may be notices sent home and/or consequences for students accumulating multiple tardy arrivals.

At times, a bus may arrive late, or inclement weather, an accident, or a community issue may slow the commute to school. At the principal’s discretion, attendance may be taken at a later than usual time. Students arriving after the bell and before attendance is taken are not recorded as tardy.

Early Dismissals

Students who are dismissed and return during the day or are dismissed early will report in and out at the office. Parents must sign their child(ren) out at the office. Staff will give a student a pass to be admitted to class upon his/her return. Parents/students should not go directly to classrooms.

Students dismissed before 2:20 PM will be recorded as an early dismissal. Early dismissals are deemed excused or unexcused for the same reasons as absences. Early dismissals due to reasons not listed are deemed excused or unexcused at the principal's discretion.

Daily Schedule

7:00 AM – 8:10 AM	Before School Extended Day
8:10 AM	Doors open for students
8:20 AM	School day begins. Students should be in their classrooms. Attendance is taken during homeroom from 8:20-8:30
Snack/Morning Recess	PS snack in classroom
9:30 AM – 9:50 AM	(Grades K-1)
9:50 AM – 10:10 AM	(Grades 2-3)
10:10 AM – 10:30 AM	(Grades 4-5)
Lunch/Recess	PS Lunch in classroom
11:30 AM – 11:50 AM	Recess I (Grades 4-8)
11:50 AM – 12:10 PM	Recess II (Grades K-3)
11:50 AM – 12:10 PM	Lunch I (Grades 4-8)
12:10 PM – 12:30 PM	Lunch II (Grades K-3)
2:10 PM	Students return to homeroom and prepare for dismissal
2:10 PM-2:20 PM	School wide prayer in the gym
2:20 PM	Dismissal
2:20 PM – 6:00 PM	After School Extended Day

Snack, Recess

Children are encouraged to bring a healthful snack and a water bottle. Candy, soda, and gum are not permitted at school at any time.

Students will adhere to the rules of all play spaces including the courtyard, field, blacktop, and gymnasium.

We encourage outdoor recess whenever possible. The weather and temperature will be checked by the nurse prior to any recess period on a day when the weather is inclement or temperatures are extreme. Parents are asked to send children to school with appropriate outerwear for recess (i.e. jackets/coats, hats, gloves, scarves, etc.).

Students may be kept inside from recess at the discretion of the principal, nurse, or teacher for documented health, academic, or disciplinary reasons.

Lunch

Students will bring lunch on bag lunch days and may bring lunch on hot lunch days if they choose not to buy hot lunch. Please do not send food that will spoil, that needs refrigeration, or that needs preparation. Parents are asked not to deliver or send fast food for lunch. Children are encouraged to bring a healthful lunch and a drink if not ordering milk.

Milk and hot lunch are available for students in grades K-8. Milk may be paid for in full or by the trimester while lunch is paid for monthly.

Students may be required to sit at assigned tables (and assigned seats if directed to do so by a teacher). Students are responsible for cleaning their area and disposing of trash when dismissed by the supervising teacher. Students will adhere to the rules of the cafeteria. Students may be sent to a classroom for a silent lunch period for disciplinary reasons.

A nut-free table is available for students who require it or students with a nut-free lunch who wish to sit there.

Enrichment Programs

The after-school Enrichment Programs are available to all students at St. Mary's. Registration forms are sent home with students or attached to the weekly office memo as sessions are scheduled. These sessions, when made available, may include arts & crafts, gym, etc.

A non-refundable \$10.00 registration fee is required per session. Most programs offered through the Enrichment Program are fee based. The usual fee for Enrichment Programs is \$7.00 per hour (same rate as Extended Day), unless, due to a higher cost to run, a higher fee must be charged.

Most programs offered through the Enrichment Program are run with a minimum and maximum participation capacity, and space may be limited.

Parents dropping students off to and picking students up from Enrichment Programs will come into the building to sign their child(ren) in and out. If students are not signed out of

an Enrichment Program at the designated ending time, staff will sign them into the Extended Day program, and the Extended Day charge will be billed to the family account.

Participation is a privilege and requires that participating students comply with policies and procedures, as well as demonstrate expected behavior.

Music Stars (instrumental music lessons) are charged based on the format of the lesson and include an annual non-refundable registration fee of \$25.00 as this program runs year-long. Music Stars registration fliers are distributed in September and are available to students in Gr. 3-8.

Music Stars lessons are \$20.00 per lesson. In the event the student is absent from the lesson and the instructor is present, the lesson will be charged to the student's family account. Lessons will not be charged in the event the instructor is absent.

Extended Day Program

The Extended Day Program is available to all students at St. Mary's on either a pre-registered or an as-needed basis. It is a fee-based program (\$7.00 per hour or any portion of an hour) and is available from 7:00 AM to 8:10 AM and 2:20 PM to 6:00 PM.

Refer to the [Extended Day Program Handbook](#) for details.

Parents dropping students off and picking students up from the Extended Day Program will come into the building to sign their child(ren) in and out. Parents will park in marked spaces and shut the engine off whenever leaving the car on school property. **Parents are not authorized to let other adults into the school for extended day pick-up. Extended Day Staff members are responsible for answering the door and allowing visitors to enter.**

Participation is a privilege and requires that participating students comply with policies and procedures, as well as demonstrate expected behavior.

Dismissal

Students will follow the homeroom procedures set by their teacher during dismissal time. Students will be seated in the gym with their class to pray as a school community at 2:10 each day. When students are dismissed from the gym, they will go to their appropriate dismissal line (Extended Day, bus lines, car line, extra-curricular activities).

Bus passes are sent home with students during the first week of school. Passes should be kept in the backpack for easy access when requested by a bus driver. Students must report to the buses immediately after being dismissed from school. Students must board the buses immediately and be seated in assigned seats. Riding the bus is a privilege. All students must follow the bus rules as posted on the bus or explained by the staff of St. Mary's, Michael J. Connelly & Sons Bus Co., or the Mansfield Public Schools. These rules include but are not limited to:

- Respect the bus driver who is in charge of the bus and all passengers.
- Enter and leave the bus by the front door, paying attention to traffic.
- Remain seated while the bus is moving.
- Do not cut in line or save seats. Sit in assigned seats when assigned.
- Keep hands inside the bus. Do not put or throw anything out a window.
- Respect the bus by keeping it clean and orderly. Do not eat on the bus.
- Follow the directions of the bus driver when crossing the street.
- Report problems of any nature, including suspected bullying behavior, immediately to the bus driver and school personnel.

Bus drivers write Conduct Reports for students who do not follow bus rules and submit them to the principal. The principal follows through with conferences and consequences as indicated on the Report. Disciplinary action may be taken by the school based on the severity and/or frequency of the infraction.

Any change in a student's dismissal for the day that is made after 1:30 PM may not be processed in time for dismissal. Students for whom these last minute requests have not been processed will be dismissed per usual.

THE SCHOOL YEAR

Open and Close of the School Year

The Diocesan Superintendent prepares the school year calendar. The school administration modifies the calendar as needed in light of the local school system's calendar, the availability of buses, and plans for local professional development days.

The office provides calendar updates through the weekly parent memo and website to parents and students. This indicates any changes to the school year calendar and includes important dates and programs specific to St. Mary's Catholic School.

The [*School Year Calendar*](#) includes 180 school days for students. St. Mary's takes three week-long vacations: between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day; the week of President's Day; and the third week of April. Diocesan and local professional days do not contribute to the 180 school days required for students.

Students are dismissed at 11:30 AM on half days. Half days contribute to the 180 required days for students, as long as the school meets the required annual hours of instruction.

In the event of a snowstorm or inclement weather, St. Mary's Catholic School will usually follow the decision of the Mansfield Public Schools. If the public schools are closed, St. Mary's will be closed. If the Mansfield Public Schools have a delayed opening, St. Mary's will have a delayed opening.

When school is cancelled, delayed, or dismissed early, a message will be phoned to parents via RenWeb's "Parent Alert" and emailed.

If St. Mary's Catholic School needs to cancel school for reasons other than inclement weather, or when the Mansfield Public Schools stay in session, this will be communicated in the same manner. School days cancelled will be made up. Make-up days are added to the original school year calendar. Please make note that absences on make-up days are considered unexcused, especially when scheduling vacation or travel plans.

THE LITURGICAL YEAR

Prayer

Prayer is an integral part of the day at St. Mary's. Each day begins with class prayer and ends with school-wide prayer. Students pray grace before snack and lunch. Students also may pray during classes, before/after field trips, and at many other times during the year.

Students learn the prayers that the curriculum suggests at each grade level. Students are given the opportunity for prayer experiences including but not limited to: Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, celebration of Feast Days, the Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, novenas, Crowning of Mary, retreats, lives of the saints, Holyween, etc.

Sacraments

Students will be given the opportunity to pray together at Mass and prayer services throughout the course of the liturgical year. Classes take turns preparing school prayer services and Masses. Students will attend Mass once per month and may attend more often during Advent, Lent, etc. Students will be given the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent.

According to Diocesan policy, students receive First Reconciliation and First Communion and prepare for Confirmation at their home parish. Second graders attending St. Mary's Catholic School will be prepared for these Sacraments and do not attend parish religious education classes in addition. They will attend practices just prior to the reception of these sacraments. Attending students who are not parishioners of St. Mary's Church will receive the same preparation and may make alternate arrangements to receive for the first time here at St. Mary's with permission of their Pastor.

Service

Students are taught and reminded about living a stewardship way of life. Identifying their own time, talent, and treasure is nurtured. Students will be given the opportunity to participate in service projects throughout the year.

CURRICULUM

Guidelines & Learning Outcomes

Diocesan curriculum guidelines are developed by committees of teachers and administrators throughout the Diocese. These committees are structured vertically to aid communication between elementary, middle, and secondary schools and are formed and directed by the Diocesan Superintendent.

St. Mary's faculty customizes Diocesan curriculum guidelines as needed to meet the needs of its student population. This customization involves mapping content and skills, preferred teaching/learning strategies or instruction, assessments, and values. St. Mary's teachers work cooperatively with each other and with the administration to do so. St. Mary's Curriculum is available in the office and in each classroom for easy reference. Overviews are posted to the [Academics pages](#) of our website for easy reference.

Teachers reference the curriculum guidelines in preparing a class schedule. Each teacher develops class schedules in September. Students study Religion, Math, English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Spanish (Gr. 5-8). Art, Library, Music, Physical Education, and Technology round out these major subjects each once per week.

Materials and Resources

Teachers use educational materials selected by the administration (based on teachers' review and trials) and may supplement these as needed and approved by the administration.

Assessments

The school year is divided into trimesters for the purpose of completing curriculum goals and reporting students' progress to parents. See the [School Year Calendar](#) for trimester end dates. Mid-trimester progress report and report card distribution dates are [posted on our website](#). Students are assessed and graded in all subjects as is appropriate at each grade level.

The ACRE (Assessment for Children/Youth Religious Education) religion standardized tests will be administered to students in grades 5 and 8 in the fall. Individual reports may be provided to parents upon request.

The Iowa Assessments will be administered in the spring to students in grades two through eight. The Iowa Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) will also be administered in the spring to students in grades three, five, and seven. Individual reports may be provided to parents upon request. Individual, class, school, and Diocesan results contribute to the evaluation and updating of teaching procedures, techniques, and curriculum.

Requirements

Students are expected to meet the requirements of the curriculum. Programs adopted and materials used are intended for all students, with the exception of modifications made for students working with Individualized Education Plans.

At times, a program or material used may be sensitive for a particular student. When parents are concerned about such programs or materials, they are advised to speak with the teacher first, and then with the principal. If the principal deems a program or material sensitive, he/she may provide a permission slip to be signed by the parent. Students not participating in school curriculum or programs with their class will be assigned an alternate classroom with teacher supervision if possible. Students will only be excused from curriculum with the permission of the principal.

Students are expected to follow the routines and policies set by classroom teachers for their own classrooms for Preschool – Grade 5. Middle School teachers strive to be consistent in general expectations for students throughout the Middle School.

Promotion and Retention

Expectations gradually increase as students progress through the grades. A student having difficulty mastering the academic requirements of a particular grade level shall be provided with a reasonable program of remediation developed by the teacher and with the assistance of the Resource Program in some grades. Students will be promoted to the next grade upon successful completion of the current academic year. See the Report Card for the grading scale. Promotion is in danger with the failure of two or more major subjects.

In all grades, the decision to retain a student is within the discretion of the Principal. Promotion of a student to the next grade will be primarily on the basis of academic ability. In the primary grades, consideration will be given to maturity and social development. St. Mary's may recommend that a student transfer to another school if, in the opinion of the teachers and principal, the school may not be equipped to meet the student's needs, academic and otherwise. (St. Mary's Catholic School policies and these retention and promotion policies are based on the Diocese of Fall River, Department of Education, Policy Manual, 5000 Series Students).

End of Year Awards, Honor Roll

In an effort to acknowledge students for their diligence and achievements, St. Mary's distributes awards to students at year-end. To receive an award is a special achievement; it is not possible for all students to receive an award at the end of the year, nor does it reflect a true appreciation for those who have exceeded expectations to earn an award. Students in Grades 1-5 may receive recognition for other achievements throughout the year at our year-end awards ceremony.

Students in Grades 6-8 may also be awarded an Honor Roll distinction according to the following criteria applied to the overall year-end average of all academic subjects including Spanish:

Highest Honors:	Total combined average 95 - 100
High Honors:	Total combined average 90 - 100
Honors:	Total combined average 80 - 100

Field Trips

Classes usually experience one to two field trips each year, usually one in the fall and one in the spring. Grades will groups together to share experiences that may appeal to multiple ages. Students will bring home a Field Trip Permission Form to be signed by his/her parent in order to participate in the field trip experience as well as a Field Trip Information Form with details about the trip regarding uniform, eating arrangements, cost, departure time, and any other necessary information. Parents must also complete a Field Trip Medical Information form for each student at the start of each school year. These forms will be kept with the nurse during the year and the nurse will bring the forms on each field trip for safety and emergency purposes.

Expenses are billed to families. Every attempt is made to keep the cost at or less than \$20.00 per student, and field trips should not create a hardship for any family. This cost charged to families covers admission fees, bus transportation, and a nurse. This cost may be adjusted or waived for families requesting financial assistance.

Students will be transported by bus if the destination is not within walking distance from St. Mary's. When buses are provided, all students must ride the bus with the class and teachers to the field trip destination and from the field trip destination back to school, unless otherwise approved by the principal. If cars are used to transport students to trips, such as an after school service project, drivers must be familiar with and agree to abide by the guidelines for school volunteers and complete and submit a [Field Trip Driver Information Sheet](#) as requested.

For most trips, teachers arrange a ratio of one chaperone to five students. Parents are invited to chaperone field trips in order to provide this additional supervision, particularly when classes will be divided into smaller groups. Teachers, in consultation with the principal, determine how many chaperones are needed and how they will be selected in the event that more parents volunteer than are needed.

Chaperones:

- May only participate on a field trip if a current CORI and verification of attendance at the Diocesan Abuse Prevention Training Workshop are on file in the school office.
- Must complete an Adult Liability Waiver and send in with the Student Permission Form at least 3 weeks before the trip in order to attend.
- Are responsible for their own field trip expenses, when not covered by the school, and as indicated on the field trip information form completed by the teacher.
- Will follow the teacher's directives and recognize the teacher's authority during this school activity.
- Will follow set schedules and promptly attend all meeting times.

- Will not buy food, gifts, or give money to students without consent of the teacher.
- Will not bring non-student siblings or relatives on field trips without the consent of the principal.
- Are appreciated for their assistance!

Field trips, though valuable to the overall educational experience, are privileges. Students who have not met the requirements, both academically and behaviorally, or who are not dressed appropriately or prepared with the necessary supplies will not participate in the field trip experience, and will remain in school.

Technology

Technology is integrated across the curriculum and is used as a tool in the teaching and learning process. St. Mary's takes pride in keeping current with providing students access to technology, implementing a technology curriculum K-Grade 5, teaching students how to use technology for educational purposes (vs. for entertainment or social networking), and instilling the responsibility for etiquette and safety when using technology.

Students and parents sign an [Acceptable Use Policy](#), provided by the Superintendent of Schools, each school year. (Faculty and staff also sign an Acceptable Use Policy provided by the Superintendent of Schools each year.)

Please refer to Diocesan policy relative to expectations and responsibilities for students in the Students - Discipline section of this handbook. This policy relates to student use of technology in any form.

Devices are distributed for student use. Students are responsible for returning devices in good condition and replacing damaged or lost devices. Use of the technology available at school, while integral to the curriculum, is a privilege. Access to the technology at school may be denied if the terms of the Acceptable Use Policy are broken, if the directions of the supervising teacher are not followed, or for negligence.

STUDENTS

Admissions/Withdrawals

St. Mary's Catholic School admits children from Mansfield and its surrounding communities based on available space and resources. St. Mary's does not discriminate based on religion, race, color, or national/ethnic origin.

Though admission cannot be guaranteed for any applicant, St. Mary's considers every complete application. Special consideration must be made, however, for students with special abilities, illness, disabilities, and educational histories that may require special accommodations for studies or participation in school programs in order to ensure that the school is equipped to provide for the student's needs.

Admissions Guidelines, Procedures, and Timelines are available on the [Admissions page](#) of our website. These are reviewed and revised annually, prior to the start of the new school year Registration and Application Period. The preferred class size is twenty-five students.

Parents who will be withdrawing their child(ren) mid-year or at year-end must speak directly with the principal to discuss the reasons for withdrawal. Parents also shall complete any and all financial obligations to the school per the [Tuition Refund Policy](#). The school office staff will prepare the student's records for release and forward them directly to the new school. Such records will be mailed or delivered by school staff once the exit process is complete for a mid-year transfer or at the close of the school year for transfers to be effective at the open of the following school year. Re-admittance to St. Mary's will be considered on an individual basis.

Backpacks

Consider appropriate size and comfort for students carrying full bags up and down stairs. Teachers do what they can to spread out textbooks and other things that need to be carried to and from school. Students may wheel backpacks to and from the school's entrance, and should use caution while wheeling the backpack while inside to avoid accidents while in lines, on stairs, etc.

Bullying and Harassment

Bullying and/or cyber-bullying are intolerable. The person or persons inflicting such distress will be subject to disciplinary action ranging from warnings and detentions to, but not limited to, suspension or expulsion. St. Mary's follows the [Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan](#).

Celebrations

School or class parties, when permitted by the principal, are typically limited to the last period of the school day. Refreshments may be part of the celebration although healthful when possible and with limitations due to allergies within the class. However, families are asked to defer to teachers' requests as these will be guided by directions from the Health Office.

Student's birthdays will be acknowledged at dismissal and by teachers within the classroom. Families are asked not to send party food to school. Invitations to private parties may be distributed at school only when distributed to all students (or all girls or all boys) in the class. In Christian spirit, parents/guardians and students are asked to please consider the feelings of other families (and the effect that excluding classmates can have on individuals as well as on the class) when planning off-site parties. As a rule, we do not receive envelopes/packages, etc. from one student to send home with another student. The office and teachers cannot be responsible for distributing a sealed envelope or package, not knowing its contents. Additionally, teachers and students have limited time to organize and prepare assignments, books, clothing, school notices, etc.

Discipline

St. Mary's faculty and staff work diligently to provide a safe and comfortable environment for all. Appropriate behavior and language (verbal, non-verbal, and body language) are expected of all students, at all times, and in all areas of school life. Self-control and self-discipline are expressed in one's attitude and care of self, friends, and property. Students are expected to follow the rules of the school and classroom and to conduct themselves at all times in a manner that aligns with the mission of the school. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior that may compromise the safety and comfort of others will be subject to discipline procedures.

“Catholic school students may be held responsible for conduct outside the school's jurisdiction. School officials may hold students responsible for any conduct on or off school property that violates school rules, common decency, or civil laws, and therefore reflects negatively on this school community. Such student behavior may be cause for student suspension or expulsion. Examples of behavior that may subject a student to discipline include, but are not limited to, behavior that 1) disrupts the educational process, 2) endangers a person or property, or 3) violates a policy of the school, Department of Education, or the Diocese of Fall River.” (Diocese of Fall River, Dept. of Education, Policy Manual, 5000 series Students)

At the beginning of each school year, the principal, or his/her designee, will conduct a meeting of the student body. The purpose of this meeting is to address the consequences for students who use threatening or violent language, or language perceived to be threatening or violent. Any person using such language shall be subject to discipline including but not limited to suspension or expulsion.

Our relationships include forgiveness and reconciliation. Students may never be subject to abusive verbal or physical reprimand. However, they will be held accountable for their actions and may be subject to the actions outlined in the [Discipline Philosophy and Expectations](#). Teachers will use the Parent Notification form as well as RenWeb to communicate with parents their concerns.

Dress Code

Students will dress according to the school dress code. See [Uniform Dress Code](#) and [Uniform Policy](#) and Parent Notification form. Additionally, certain standards are met by rules of consideration such as arriving at school clean and neat, not wearing hats in the building, and keeping shirts tucked in. Teachers will note the condition of uniforms and the principal will determine acceptability.

On days that the school will be attending Mass, students will wear uniform as scheduled for that particular day and season (i.e. warm weather uniform or gym uniforms are acceptable) unless directed otherwise by teachers.

Teachers enforce and monitor the dress code, and notify parents and the office of unresolved issues using the Parent Notification form that facilitates home/school

communication and provides consistency in the dress code. Students out of uniform may be asked to wear clothing borrowed from the Swap Shop or have it brought from home.

Periodically, a Dress Down Day or Spirit Day will be announced, usually in celebration of something school wide. See [Dress Down Requirements](#) and [Spirit Day Requirements](#). Dress themes and requirements for dress down days/spirit days may vary and will be communicated to parents at the appropriate time. The same rules apply for individual students using a Dress Down/Spirit Day Pass and are stated as such on the pass.

Students' clothing should be labeled (especially uniform clothing which may be difficult to differentiate from other students' clothing). Lunch bags, backpacks, and personal items should be labeled as well.

Emergencies

The school nurse will assess a student in the event of injury or illness and determine the need for medical treatment. In the event of an emergency, rescue will be called, and the student will be transported to the nearest hospital (unless otherwise directed). Parents or the next contact listed on the student's emergency form will be immediately contacted.

Parents should be sure to notify the school nurse/office/teacher of a student's known allergies and provide direction to the student/teacher regarding handling food that is brought into the school for a celebration, school project, or event.

Extracurricular Programs

Extracurricular programs are offered as they become available. Participation is a privilege. The sports program provides opportunities for students in Grades 4-8 to participate in Cross Country, Basketball, and Spring Track.

Students who choose to participate in sports will be charged a \$50.00 fee per year to contribute toward the costs of the programs, and this fee enables him/her to play one, two, or three sports. Students are also asked to pay for their own uniforms for certain sports and maintain them properly for as long as they play.

Although St. Mary's hosts games at home, players arrange their own transportation to away meets and games. Students playing in the C.A.L. must sign and adhere to the requirements of both St. Mary's and C.A.L. See the [Student Athlete and Athlete's Parent/Guardian Participation Agreement](#).

Students who choose to participate in the St. Mary's Theater Program will be charged a \$50.00 fee per year to contribute toward the costs of the program.

Health

Students not feeling well in the morning should be kept home to recover. Parents should notify the school nurse if a student is taking any medication, short or long term. Students needing attention at school due to an injury or illness will be excused from the classroom by a teacher and report to the office with a pass. The school nurse will be called to attend

to the student’s health needs. In her absence, the principal or designated staff member will attend to the student’s minor first aid needs (i.e. ice pack or band aid), and the parent will be contacted if deemed necessary.

In the event that it is determined that the student needs to be dismissed, the school nurse will contact the parent or next individual listed on the emergency form so that arrangements for release and transportation can be made. Please refer to the [Health Page](#) of our website for the details of our Health Policy.

In order to assist teachers/staff/school nurse in their understanding of students, it is most helpful if any changing condition or situation that involves a student or his/her family is reported to the principal. Conditions and situations in the family/home affect a child’s attention, behavior, and relationships. A phone call or visit to the principal, teacher, or school nurse would improve the school’s ability to respond to the needs of its students.

When it appears that a student or group may benefit from attention beyond that of the teacher, principal, and school nurse, a referral may be provided. The Diocese of Fall River’s Crisis Intervention Counselor from Catholic Social Services may be consulted to intervene as needed.

Homework

Students should be able to work independently on homework. Parents should provide the necessary study space and time and supervise and check their child(ren)’s work. In some cases, parents will be asked to sign student work or agendas/planners when they are sent home for parents to review. The following is a minimum guideline for daily homework. This is in addition to the recommended or required daily reading and long-term projects.

PS & K.....	Periodic	Grade 4.....	40 minutes
Grade 1.....	10 minutes	Grade 5.....	50 minutes
Grade 2.....	20 minutes	Grade 6.....	60 minutes
Grade 3.....	30 minutes	Grade 7 & 8.....	1-1.5 hours

Students will take various lengths of time to complete homework. If a student is spending much more or less than the suggested time on a regular basis, parents should notify the respective teacher.

Some families opt to have their children work with tutors. For some, this may be necessary to help keep up with the curriculum. For some, this may facilitate the family’s schedule. If a tutor is contracted, it is strongly recommended that the parent/guardian sign a *Release to Share Information* providing contact information to facilitate communication between the classroom teacher and the tutor to maximize the tutorial services.

Written homework is not assigned to be completed during vacation weeks. However, there may be a long term assignment or studying that will straddle over a vacation week. If so, teachers will ensure, in their judgment, that enough time is provided with the days

prior to and following vacation days for the project to be completed and will not require that the project be completed during vacation. Some students may choose to use vacation days to do so.

Lockers

Lockers/desks are the property of the school, and as such can be searched at any time by an administrator in the school. Police searches of student lockers may be permitted accompanied by a search warrant. The Superintendent, or his/her designee, shall be notified of all police searches. The Head of School, or his/her designee, shall be present during all police searches.

Lost & Found

School or personal items that are left behind in common areas and considered lost should be turned in to the office. These items will be stored in the lost and found cabinet in the gym. Students who think they have lost something may check the “Lost & Found” cabinet when given permission by a teacher to do so.

Personal Items

Students should bring to school only things that are necessary to accomplish school assignments or to participate in school activities. Items not permitted in school include but are not limited to: **electronic devices used for entertainment, fidget toys, skateboards, personal sports equipment, etc.** Such items are not permitted, unless approved in a special instance by a teacher or required by medical/other documentation.

St. Mary’s does not prohibit students from bringing cellular phones to school. However, cellular phones may not be taken out or used in school without the permission of a teacher or staff member. The same rules apply for field trips. Students must have a teacher’s or chaperone’s permission to use a phone to take photos and are reminded that consequences for violations of the Acceptable Use Policy will apply.

When students need to contact their parents, they are to request permission to use the office phone if the office is open (7:30 AM – 3:30 PM). Students may only use their cellular phones to call a parent or guardian and will only call with the consent of and in the presence of an adult staff member. Cellular phones will be confiscated by a staff member and returned only to the parent in the event of inappropriate use or disregard for these rules. Parents will call the school office (7:30 AM – 3:30 PM) to deliver routine messages to their child(ren). Parents are asked to refrain from contacting their child on their cellular phone during school hours.

Any personal items brought to school should be labeled and carried in backpacks or labeled bags. All property, school and personal, is to be used and handled with respect and care. Clean desks, covered books, gentle handling of computers and other equipment are signs of responsible actions by a person who cares.

Resource and Special Education Services

Classroom teachers will provide time before or after school if, at the teacher's discretion and with a parent/guardian's permission, or at a parent's request and with the teacher's consent, a student might benefit from some additional instruction.

Additionally, students may receive academic support in any subject area with parental permission through the Resource Program. The resource teacher may service students in the classroom or in a separate location, individually, or in small groups. This service may provide reinforcement of lessons or concepts previously taught or accommodations to the curriculum (such as additional time for assessments). Students will receive resource services when referred by the classroom teacher and in the manner agreed upon between the classroom and resource teachers.

Students may be referred by a classroom teacher, or at a parent's request, for evaluation by the resource teacher, special education teacher, or the local public school system, when students seem not to be progressing as expected, and after accommodations have been made in the classroom to support such progress. **Students who have had evaluations by the public school system may be eligible for a St. Mary's Accommodation Plan depending on the outcome of the evaluation.**

The special education teacher's primary responsibility is to support students who have Individualized Education Plans. **St. Mary's has no obligation to fulfill IEPs, 504s, or any other accommodation plans. We do however have the moral and ethical obligation to educate all students to the best of the school's ability.**

Students may register for after school or summer tutoring with a teacher if after school or summer tutoring is offered on site. Students referred for tutoring by teachers will be scheduled first. Student(s) requesting tutoring will be scheduled pending available spaces.

Textbooks and Supplies

Textbooks are distributed to students as needed and students may be directed to cover the textbooks. Students are responsible for returning textbooks in good condition and families are responsible for the replacement cost of damaged or lost textbooks. Consumable books are distributed to students as needed. Parents are responsible for the replacement cost of damaged or lost consumable books.

Students can check out library materials weekly and must return these by the due date. Students may not check out new items without returning or replacing due items. Students are responsible for returning library books in good condition and families are responsible for the replacement cost of damaged or lost library books.

The school provides basic supplies to students at the beginning of the school year. Students are responsible for returning non-consumable supplies in good condition and replacing damaged or lost supplies. Teachers do provide lists of other needed supplies to students at the end of the school year for the next school year.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS

St. Mary's operates within the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* when managing records. Accordingly, parents/guardians, or eligible students have the right to:

- Inspect and review the student's educational record.
- Request the amendment of the record to ensure that it is not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy or other rights.
- Consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's record.

St. Mary's abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of the non-custodial parent. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, the school will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the academic record and to other school-related information regarding the child. If there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the school with an official copy of the court order preventing the distribution of such information. Further details pertaining to this process are included in the Diocese of Fall River, Department of Education Personnel Student Policy Manual

Home/School Communication

The administration and teachers work diligently to communicate with parents and families. The school's methods of communication to families include, but are not limited to: e-mail, phone call, weekly school memo, teacher newsletters, student folders, fax, US mail, school events (Parent Teacher Conferences, Curriculum Night, etc.), progress reports/report cards, **RenWeb's "Parent Alert" call system**, Student/Parent Handbook, and so on.

Required parent/teacher conferences will be scheduled at the end of the first trimester. Conferences may be scheduled at other times during the school year at the teacher's or the parent's request and should be scheduled before or after school by appointment. Communication with parents is important on a regular basis.

Parking

Parents who need to come into school after student arrival should park in the parking spaces directly in front of the main entrance to the school. Parents who need to walk children in at arrival time or to pick children up at dismissal time (not using the queue) should park in the Middle School Parking Lot and walk along the sidewalk so as to avoid crossing the traffic of buses and cars in the queue. Parents/guardians are asked to be familiar with the policies and procedures for picking students up and dropping students off and to abide by these to help ensure everyone's safety. Please refer to the [Arrival and Dismissal Policy and Parking and Traffic Policy](#).

Payments

Payments made for Tuition, Extended Day or Enrichment Programs, Lunch or Milk, and other school services (unless directed otherwise) may be paid by cash or check (payable to St. Mary's Catholic School or SMCS). Checks are the preferred method of payment.

Tuition payments are due on the 5th or 20th of each month, July through April, or in two half payments July 1st and January 1st, or in full July 1st, according to the Tuition Payment Plan signed and submitted at the close of the previous school year or upon acknowledgement of admission. Please refer to the [Tuition Payment Plan](#) and [Tuition Refund Policy](#). Tuition payments are due per Tuition Payment Plan. Statements are e-mailed monthly and reflect current balances. Balance payments are due upon receipt of statement.

Families of graduating eighth graders must pay statement balances prior to Class Day to prevent any delay in presenting awards and diplomas. Charges reflected on the statement that are related to services provided for a graduate's sibling are also due by Class Day since all extraneous charges are due upon receipt of service. If these payments have not been received in full, an alternate payment plan may be arranged with the principal.

Confidentiality

Parents are asked to respect students' privacy and the confidentiality that student records, health issues, and discipline actions call for. Observations made while at the school and while with students must be kept confidential. Any questions, comments, or concerns should be brought only to the student's teacher or the principal. Thoughts regarding any student's progress, skills, or behaviors remain at school. Other parents see snapshots while the individual student's parents and teacher have the benefit of seeing the whole child and understanding the child's history and overall experience.

Addresses and telephone numbers of students, parents, faculty, staff, and alumni are confidential and shall not be released to any third party without authorization from the principal.

ST. MARY PARISH

St. Mary's is a parish school and as such, is a community within a community. St. Mary's students and families are invited and encouraged to attend Mass regularly, to take part in parish events, and to serve parish ministries and programs. St. Mary's Education Center, which houses the school during the day, is a multi-purpose facility, serving the needs of the entire parish and its many parishioners and ministries. Gr. 2 students who are registered parishioners are prepared to receive sacraments (First Penance and First Communion) in the second grade. Students who are registered parishioners at surrounding parishes are encouraged to prepare to receive sacraments at their "home" parish. Gr.8 students who are registered parishioners are presented with curriculum and requirements for the first year of the two-year confirmation program. Students who are registered parishioners at surrounding parishes are encouraged to prepare to receive

sacraments at their “home” parish, although this decision is made by the respective pastors. Since preparation programs vary between parishes, contact prior to seventh grade is recommended.

VOLUNTEERS

We believe that school and parents/guardians are partners in children’s education. We expect and encourage parent involvement and extend an invitation to parents to volunteer. See the Volunteer Section of the Parent Memo and the website throughout the school year to complete and return your [Volunteer Opportunities Sign Up form](#). Teachers will communicate additional and more specific needs and opportunities for parents throughout the year. Parents/friends may volunteer once a current cleared CORI and verification of attendance at the required Abuse Prevention Training. Verification of cleared CORI’s is kept on file in the school office. CORI Trainings will be held in the fall only. Parents who wish to attend a CORI/Abuse Prevention Training during the year other than the school trainings in the fall must contact the parish to inquire about the next upcoming training to do so. CORI paperwork is good for one year and renewal paperwork will be completed in June only.

Parents/volunteers must check in at the office upon arrival and continue on to the designated classroom, cafeteria, etc., after signing in. All guests, including parents and volunteers, will sign in and out at the office and wear a valid ID badge (unexpired) while in the school, regardless of how frequently they visit the school.

THE SCHOOL FACILITY AND SAFETY

Accidents

All accidents that occur on the property of the school will be reported to the administration immediately.

Building Access

Students should only be admitted into the building during school hours unless attended by a parent or other designated adult or attending a school sponsored event supervised by staff. Parents, volunteers, and all guests will enter and leave the building through the main lobby, and sign in/out at the main office immediately upon entering/leaving the building. Never prop or leave entrance doors unlocked without staff approval. Parents are not authorized to open the door for visitors when inside the building. All visitors must ring the bell and be allowed into the school by a staff member. Be aware that there is an alarm in the building and a security camera system in the building and on the grounds. Parents/students who return to the building after dismissal to retrieve forgotten items (homework, backpacks, etc.) will only be allowed to return to classrooms before 3:30 (while the office is still open).

Parents and/or volunteers who may need to use school facilities for school programs or events should reserve the appropriate and available space by contacting the principal for access to any school facility and for event set up.

Staff and volunteers who have been authorized to access the facilities must abide by the directions provided with the building access code and keys.

Building Supervisor

Designated teachers serve as Building Supervisor each school year. As Building Supervisor, certain teachers will be responsible for any necessary decision-making, particularly in emergencies, in the principal's absence.

Safety and Emergency Response Plans

Safety is of utmost importance. See the [Safety First](#) page of our website for a list of efforts made toward this priority.

Students are expected, for their own privacy and safety, and the privacy and safety of others, to follow the directions and procedures as instructed by teachers and staff to access bathroom facilities. These are guided by the [Bathroom Policy](#).

Communities throughout the Diocese of Fall River have developed and continue to update crisis intervention plans. The administration, having consulted with the local public safety officials and with the assistance of the school nurse, maintains a "Safety and Emergency Response Plan for St. Mary's. Designated staff make up the Safety and Emergency Response Team.

Teachers will be knowledgeable of the recommended protocols and procedures and be prepared to implement them when directed to do so. The nurse and principal periodically provide information on areas of recent concern and updates to procedures to the faculty/staff.

Fire Drills at regular intervals are required by law and are an important safety precaution. Every drill should be considered a real emergency. Silence is to be maintained throughout the drill. All persons move immediately, without running, keeping single file lines, out of the building through the nearest exit. No one stops for any items before leaving the building. Each class will be instructed about alternate routes and the location of all exits. Teachers take attendance upon arriving outside at the designated safe place. Classes and personnel return to the building quietly only when instructed by the principal or other designated personnel to do so. The church will provide an inside space to gather in the event this becomes necessary.

Elevator

The elevator is available for handicapped accessibility and maintenance purposes. Faculty and staff may use the elevator for moving heavy boxes, etc. Students may not use the elevator unless given permission from the office or escorted by a staff person.

Maintenance

All persons who use the school facilities will show respect for the facilities. They will follow the directions of the office and custodians with regard to cleaning up and leaving the used space as it was found (or better).

Photo/Video Release

Before the start of each school year, parents will be given the opportunity to sign a release (as part of the Family Demographic Form) granting permission to have their child(ren)'s work, photos, videos, and/or names published in school and diocese-approved media outlets. In addition to this release, parents may choose to share their contact information with the Diocese of Fall River Catholic Schools Office for contacting them regarding matters relating to the Diocese. Contact information will not be sold or shared with any other party. Parents will need to access ParentsWeb to complete these web forms before the start of the school year.

Telephones

Telephones are available in every classroom for teachers' use. Students who need to use a telephone do so in the office.

STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

After reviewing this handbook with your child(ren), please go to the web forms section of ParentsWeb and complete the *Handbook Acknowledgement Form*, signing the form and having your children sign as well. This form should be completed by the first day of school.