

Our Lady of Mercy School Parent/Student Handbook 2024-2025



**Our Lady of Mercy School
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Dear Parents,

Thank you for entrusting your child to us. We hope that your entire experience as members of the Mercy Community will be one that you will treasure long after your child has graduated from 8th grade. We believe you will have a common experience of a caring and nurturing community that is small enough to know each child intimately, but big enough to offer your child all the experiences that you expect from a well-established and thriving school.

Every member of our school is here because we desire to work in a Catholic school and teach the Catholic faith to our students. This means that we hold ourselves to a very high standard regarding not only our professional knowledge, but the way we interact with each other and the tone we set at the school each day. One overarching method for achieving this is our reliance on the “Mercy Way.” These are traditions and habits of the mind that have been here at Mercy for generations, and which we believe make a school outstanding. Some of them come from the tradition of the Mercy Sisters, who founded our school. Others have grown over time. Whatever the starting point, the Mercy Way includes striving for excellence and instilling a spirit of service, warmth, and care throughout the school community. We feel it is palpable and is just one of the truly unique aspects of our school.

Whether as a parent or as a teacher, it is a deeply spiritual experience to love a child. Everything we do at Mercy (not just religion class) is not only of great importance to the children but also to the adults. We know that children learn best when they feel secure, know what to expect, and are given multiple methods of experiencing and responding to new ideas and information. Many of the procedures and rules in this handbook are designed to help to achieve a predictable, pleasant learning environment for all.

Thank you again for choosing to be part of our school community. Let’s make it a meaningful and wonderful year.

In the spirit of Mercy,

Christine Green



PART ONE: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Catholic Identity

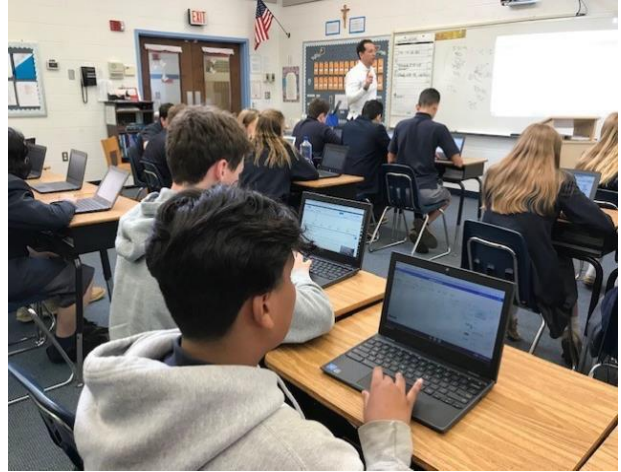
Our Lady of Mercy School was founded in 1960 by the Sisters of Mercy as a ministry of the parish. The school exists to teach the Catholic faith and in particular to assist those members of the parish who desire a parochial education for their children. The ways in which we teach the faith extend far outside our classroom lessons in religion, and include the following:

- A strong presence from our priests, Fr. Charles, Fr. Kyle, and Fr. Stephen who are on-site daily
- School-wide Benediction and Mass each Wednesday at 8:30; parents are encouraged to join us
- Prayer partners: older students paired with younger students for activities and prayer
- Rosary during the months of October and May
- Lenten and Advent practices
- Faith formation including virtues and character formation
- A focus on the saints and prayers
- Service opportunities appropriate for each grade and developmental age
- Altar servers for parish Masses
- Retreats for Middle School students
- An atmosphere of respect and reverence, with daily prayer
- Appropriate inclusion of Catholic values and the history of the Church throughout our curriculum



Academics

As the only school in Maryland to have won the National Blue Ribbon Award three times, Our Lady of Mercy has a decades long experience of excellence. Those familiar with this award know that it requires that *every single student in the school make significant measurable progress*. This is where our small size and knowledgeable faculty play a key part, because we know and focus on every single child in each classroom. We understand that children are just that – children. They are not fully-formed, and their passion for school, along with school interests and needs, will change particularly over the eleven years that many children stay with us. Toward that end, we strive to create an orderly environment where learning truly is enjoyable. Our small groups for key subject areas such as reading and math allow students to participate fully every single day and receive the attention they need to succeed. We offer a plethora of “extensions” – the professional term for the additional educational enrichment opportunities that students gifted in a particular area or fascinated by a subject require.



Our Learning Center offers academic support to those students who need it, and guidance for parents who may be asking questions about child development or whether outside services would be helpful for their child. From principal coffees to informal conversation at your request, we are truly eager to help your child be the best student he or she can be, while avoiding unnecessary pressure. Do become familiar with our Writing Center, Summer Spectrum, and enrichment and after school opportunities.

Communication

Communication among parents and teachers is essential to each child having an incredible school experience. Please do come to Mass here, join our principal coffees, attend Back-to-School Night, sign up for fun events like “Friday Night Lights,” attend the Mercy PTO meetings, and just generally feel very welcome and part of our Mercy family. Parents have differing amounts of time to devote to being at their child’s school, but research is very clear that children whose parents simply attend activities such as those mentioned above perform better in school by any measure. Therefore, your participation is a win-win for your child.

We strongly encourage parents to keep up to date by viewing *Mercy Matters* – our school newsletter that is emailed every Wednesday morning. Every teacher in grades PreK 3 – 5th grade will provide a weekly “newsletter” with basic information for the coming week. As your child ages, involving him or her in the conversations about “what’s coming up” will help your child anticipate the coming day or week, and thus be well prepared. Our Middle School is committed to posting grades via Rediker on a regular basis so parents can get timely reports of student progress in any subject. Finally, no one – and particularly not the principal – is too busy to receive your personal email with any questions you may have. Our only ask is that your email be courteous and that you give us 24 hours to reply. If there is **any emergency** please call the office line immediately.



Social & Emotional Needs

Children who are worried or anxious cannot enjoy their childhood and cannot learn at the optimal level. Our Mercy parents care about careful parenting, and we see that in the attention and love that is given to our students by their parents each day. There are circumstances beyond anyone's control (the recent pandemic comes to mind) that can lead any child – no matter how secure or loved – to go through a period of concern or worry. We are here to help. Our counselor, Mrs. Heather Bradley, is highly skilled and a wonderful resource for both students and parents. As you learn more about our procedures, you will see that they are designed to help your child know what to expect and feel very competent to meet and exceed those high expectations. We have extensive protocols in place for respecting privacy so that you can confide in us with confidence. We will also be in touch if we see your child may be experiencing any signs of stress.



Faculty

Mercy has a truly outstanding faculty. In recent years, faculty at Mercy has participated in, received, or been asked to do the following:

- Give national presentations for NCEA and local presentations for Inclusive Education
- Participate in the Archdiocesan Leadership Academy, to train to become a Catholic School Principal
- Received the Golden Apple Award, for excellence in Catholic education
- Received the Catherine T. McNamee Award, for increasing access to Catholic education for more children nationally
- Been recognized for outstanding service by area Catholic high schools and professional organizations
- Assisted other area Catholic schools by mentoring their new staff
- Taken graduate coursework in subject areas ranging from Leadership to Reading to Social Emotional Health
- Trained student interns from Catholic University
- Received the Making IT (Inclusive Teaching) Happen Award from CCSC
- Received the MEGGY award from MEGS, Maryland Educators of Gifted Students



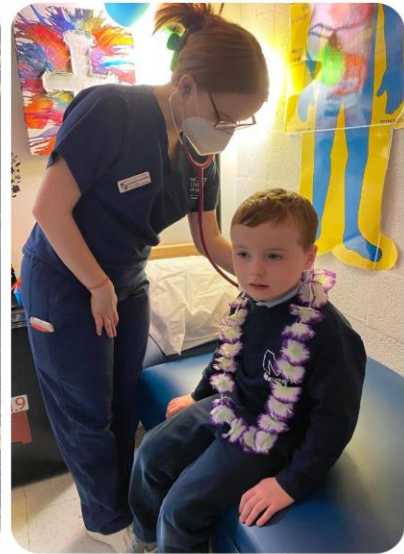
The interview process at Mercy is extensive, and as our seasoned parents know, we prefer to wait to hire the right staff member than simply fill a position because it is open. Our principal, assistant principal, and Learning Center educators have a wide range of teaching experience, and we feel it is better for us to fill-in until an excellent teacher is found. In many area schools, teachers are working on “emergency certificates,” which means they do have a teaching certificate, but they have not actually completed the coursework and training needed for a permanent certificate. This is not the case at Mercy – each teacher is fully qualified for the position which he or she holds. The majority of our faculty is Catholic. Everyone who teaches at Mercy must take a course called “Living Catholic,” whether they are Catholic or not.



Health & Safety

Keeping children safe and healthy is the number one job at Mercy. We are fortunate to have a full-time nurse on-site, with a substitute nurse available as needed. Our school guidance counselor can speak with parents, meet with small groups of children, and do in-class lessons. Parents will find information on the following:

- Physicals and vaccination requirements
- Fire drills, intruder drills, relocation practice, and other safety training for staff and children
- Social – Emotional Health and Support



Procedures



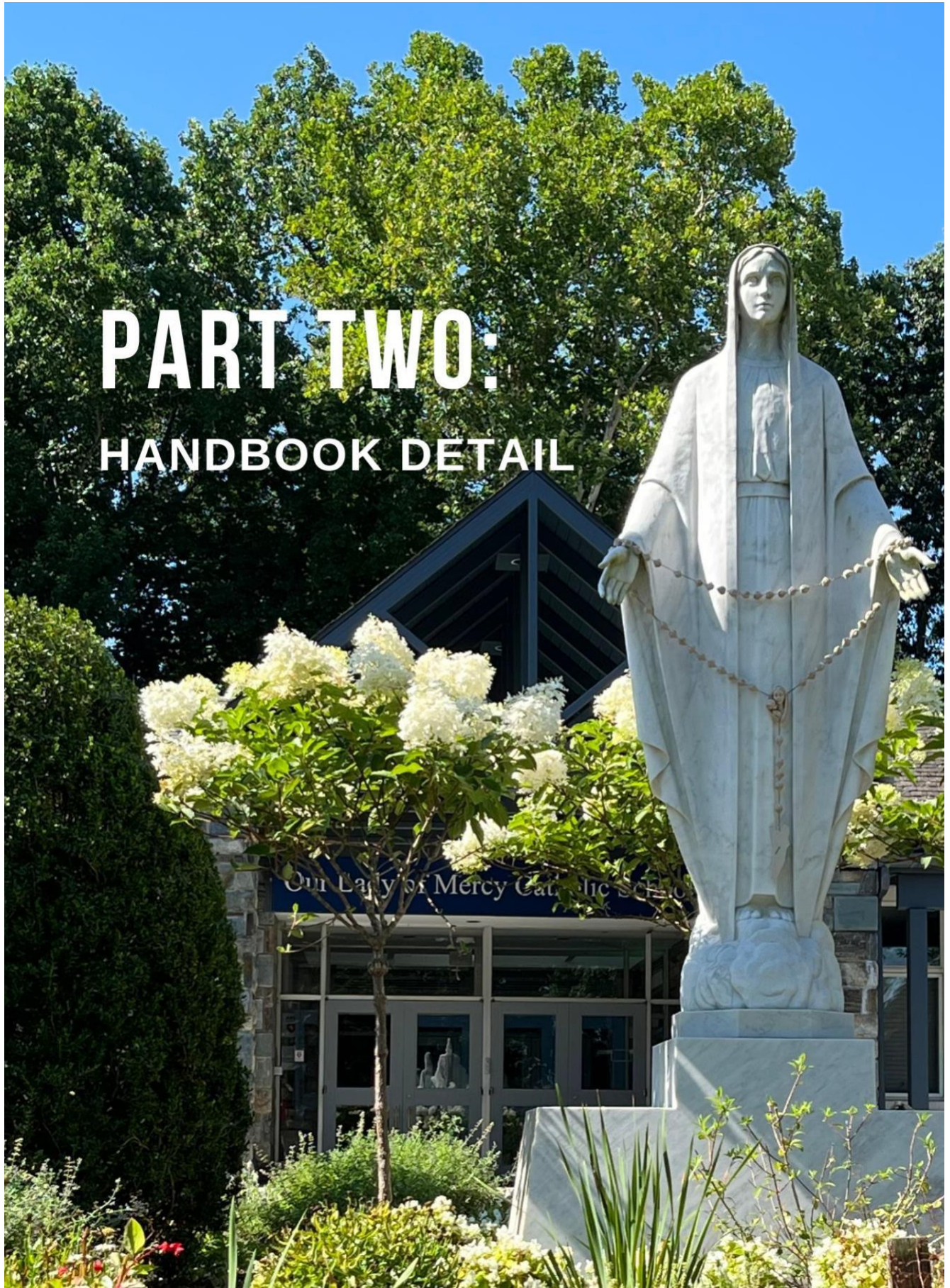
Children learn best when they feel safe, happy, and secure. Security often comes from a child being able to predict “what will happen next.” Thus, schools are run on having school-wide and in-class procedures so that children know what to do and how they are expected to behave. We do not expect perfection from children, but we do want to help them develop consistent school behaviors that will work in any setting. Examples include when to ask a question, how to organize one’s materials, and persevering when a task is difficult. The structure of a PreK 3 to 8 Catholic school is ideal for helping children develop these skills gently and consistently over-time.

Traditions

Mercy traditions help to build a sense of community and are often the things that brothers and sisters will share memories of long after they graduate! Examples of school-wide traditions include our Christmas Pageant, St. Patrick’s Day Celebration, Field Day, 8th Grade Clap-Out and Roll Call, and May Crowning.



PART TWO: HANDBOOK DETAIL



Mission & History - 14

Admissions - 16

- Tuition & Fees
- Financial Assistance
- Withdrawal

Code of Conduct - 19

- Guidelines
- Consequences
- Care of School Property
- Detention
- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Threats
- Drug/Alcohol Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Responsibility
- Technology Use & Responsibility

Child Protection & Support - 30

- ADW Policy
- Counseling
- Custody

Academics & Curriculum - 31

- Criteria for Advanced Math
- Placement
- Evaluation
- ADW Grading Scale
- Honors
- Academic Resource Support
- Year-End Awards
- Final Report Cards
- Academic Probation
- Exams
- Homework
- Graduation

Educational Extension Program - 38

- Enrichment Opportunities
- Service
- Leadership
- Instrumental Music Program

Health, Safety & Security - 40

- Entering the Building
- Emergency Threats
- Emergency Contact Information
- Medical Information
- Publicity Release

School Day Procedures - 43

- Schedule
- Attendance
- Communication
- Carpool
- Closing
- Cell Phones
- Field Trips
- Lost & Found
- Parties
- Recess
- Lunch
- Uniforms

Family Services - 50

- After Care
- Hot Lunch Program
- School Store

Parent/Guardian Agreements - 51

Appendix - 52

MISSION AND HISTORY

Our Lady of Mercy School, a Catholic parish community, is dedicated to creating a nurturing, inclusive, and challenging environment. With Christ as our model, we foster the spiritual, intellectual, moral, and physical development of each student. Our mission is to inspire our students to reach their full potential, to live with faith and integrity, and to share their unique gifts and talents in service to others.

Be inspired. Be challenged. Be you.

We believe...

- in the inherent dignity of each person as a child of God
- in the presence of God and the power of prayer in our daily lives
- the celebration of the Eucharist is central to our faith
- we are called to teach and model the values found in the Gospel
- each child has the right to a safe and nurturing environment with freedom to question and explore
- individual differences should be appreciated and celebrated
- differentiated instruction allows children to experience success
- our school community must be committed to continuous reflection and improvement
- children should be provided the tools to become life-long learners in a rapidly changing world
- high ethical and moral standards are essential
- character development is a vital and fundamental aspect of a child's education
- students must be provided opportunities for leadership and to learn the value and importance of service to others
- learning experiences should be relevant to the real world
- the integration of curriculum enhances the learning process
- in promoting thoughtful, appropriate, and respectful behavior
- the education of our children is a shared responsibility of the entire Mercy community
- communication, partnership, and cooperation between home and school result in a positive learning experience for children

History

Our Lady of Mercy is a Catholic, co-educational parish school which educates students of varied academic abilities in pre-kindergarten through grade eight. Located in Potomac, Maryland, the school was dedicated in 1960 under the authority of the Archdiocese of Washington, DC, and the educational leadership of the Sisters of Mercy. Our Lady of Mercy has a tradition of academic excellence, strong moral and religious values, and an atmosphere of respect and acceptance.

Our Lady of Mercy School has been recognized three times by the U.S. Department of Education as a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence in 1998, 2009 and 2020. It is one of about 100 schools in America, public or private, to achieve this distinction and the only school in Maryland to do so. This achievement places Mercy in the top 1% of all Maryland schools. Eligibility for this honor is based on our students performing in the top fifteen percent of schools nationwide on nationally-normed standardized testing.

Accreditation/Affiliation

Our Lady of Mercy is a Cognia Global Commission accredited school. This distinction is the result of extensive self-study, ongoing evaluation, and continual striving for academic excellence.

Members of the faculty are affiliated with many professional organizations including: the National Catholic Education Association, International Reading Association, Maryland Educators of the Gifted, Phi Delta Kappa, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, National Council of Teachers of English, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Council for Exceptional Education, National Science Teachers Association, the Catholic Coalition of Special Education, and the Associates of the Sisters of Mercy. The school participates in and has received recognition from the acclaimed Johns Hopkins Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth. Faculty members are required to have the necessary certification for the position which they hold, OR to pursue and achieve such certification within three years of hire.

ADMISSIONS

Our Lady of Mercy School admits and provides services for all students.

Admissions Policy

The order in which children may be admitted may be determined by the family's active participation in the parish community, as evidenced by the following:

- Sunday attendance at Eucharistic Liturgy,
- Sharing of time and talent with regard to parish life and ministry, and
- Regular contributions through the use of the offertory envelope

Students may be accepted in the following order:

- Siblings of students presently enrolled or graduates of the school,
- Registered parishioners of Our Lady of Mercy Parish and children of faculty members
- Students of families registered in other Catholic parishes not having a school,
- Students of families registered in other Catholic parishes and
- Non-Catholic students.

Children entering pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, or first grade must be three/four/five/six respectively by the date determined by the State of Maryland. (Potty training is required.)

Care is taken to establish whether a child will benefit from, or is an appropriate fit for, our program of studies. Screenings, review of school records and report cards, teacher recommendations, and reports of conduct are some of the criteria used in making admission decisions. Shadow days are also required for students in grades 3-7. New students will be accepted on a probationary basis for a period of three months. Mercy has a long history of including students with a variety of identified learning needs. The Learning Center is an important part of Our Lady of Mercy School and Parish mission and reflects our deep commitment to living our Catholic identity. The existence of this program and the services provided to our children depend on the parish/school community commitment to the value and support of all people. Priority is given to families with all siblings enrolled at Mercy.

Parents of children who will need support services in order to thrive are directed to speak with our principal, Mrs. Green, and Mrs. Dwyer, Director of Resource and Learning Center, during the application process.

Enrollment of a child in Our Lady of Mercy implies the willingness of both parents and students to comply with all policies and regulations of the school. Parents and students must agree with and support the philosophy of the school and the Code of Discipline.

Archdiocesan Admissions & Non-Discrimination Policy: The Archdiocese's Admissions & Non-Discrimination Policy can be found on the website of the Catholic Schools Office of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington at:
<https://adwcatholicschools.org/non-discriminationpolicy/>

Tuition and Fees

All families are required to set-up a Tuition Agreement through TADS. This is a contractual agreement with Our Lady of Mercy School. Responsible parties are asked to meet their financial obligations to the school promptly. The re-enrollment fee is non-refundable but is applied to tuition. The application fee is applied to tuition if the child is accepted and refunded if the child's application is denied. Should the application be withdrawn the fee is non-refundable.

Tuition payments for grades PreK3-8 may be paid in 1,2,3 or 10 installments through the TADS tuition management system. We are very grateful to our parent community that we have an exemplary record in terms of tuition payments. This helps us to operate in an efficient and fiscally responsible way and devote more and time and energy to the educational, rather than the business, aspects of running a school. We do ask families who unexpectedly encounter a financial hardship to please inform us at the earliest opportunity.

In accordance with Archdiocesan Policy, the school reserves the right to withhold a student's school records and report cards when a family fails to meet tuition obligations. In addition, re-registration and/or readmission may be denied. In the event that an emergency makes payment impossible, families must request a meeting with the principal or pastor. **No student recommendation forms will be completed if a family has failed to meet tuition obligations.** Schools to which Mercy students may be transferring will be notified of outstanding tuition obligations and records will be withheld. This same policy applies for outstanding fees for after care, extracurricular activities, and the replacement of damaged school property

Eighth grade high school applications: no fee for the first 6 schools; \$65 per school for additional transcripts/recommendations to be sent.

Financial Assistance

Mercy is committed to helping all families who desire a Catholic education for their children. Any family in need of financial aid is asked to apply by completing the application found in TADS. The pastor and principal make all awards based on the data entered on this application without exception. Applications must have a TADS rating of "Good" or better before being considered. Awards are announced in late April for the following year. Deadlines for application, which usually occur in early March, are announced via the weekly parent newsletter.

Additionally, the Archdiocese of Washington offers financial aid. Award amounts are determined automatically as part of the TADS application. ADW awards, scholarships, or grant money received for tuition will be applied prior to parish assistance. Any questions are to be directed to the school administrative manager. Assistance may be given to families on an annual basis and must be applied for every year.

Withdrawal from school/tuition contract

Families considering withdrawing children from the school are asked to notify the principal as soon as possible. Records will be transferred upon the receipt of a signed Release of Records form. Parents requesting transcript information to be sent to another school will be charged \$75 per school for this service. There is no charge for records and recommendations sent to high schools.

Families who move to a location out of the Montgomery County/Washington DC/northern Virginia area during the school year that makes commuting impossible will be reimbursed a pro-rated amount tuition.

All financial obligations must be met before records or recommendations are released, including records released for high school applications. The heads of school and admissions will be informed of outstanding tuition balances for Mercy students.

The education of a child is a partnership between the parents and the school. Just as the parent has the right to withdraw a child if desired, the school administration reserves the right to require the withdrawal of a student if the administration determines that the partnership is irretrievably damaged. If a student is asked to leave Mercy for whatever reason, no tuition will be refunded. Fortunately, this is a rare and unlikely occurrence, as our parents spend a great deal of time thoughtfully choosing the right school for their child, and our school has many supports to offer children who develop health or behavioral issues unexpectedly.

Mercy's budget is based primarily on tuition income. As such, parent commitment to enrollment is essential to ensure Mercy can fulfill its financial obligations including payroll and benefits for faculty and staff. The partnership between parents and the school regarding enrollment is a tuition contract. After **March 7**, any family enrolled for the following academic year who withdraws from Mercy is breaking the tuition contract and is responsible for paying the **first quarter tuition** for the following academic year for each withdrawn child. No school records are released or recommendations completed until the tuition has been paid. After **May 1**, the family withdrawing is responsible for **half of the full tuition** with the same provisions. After **June 1**, the family withdrawing is responsible for the **full tuition**, again with the same provisions. Mercy does not make exceptions to this tuition contract, which is supported by both the School Advisory Council and parish Finance Committee and will pursue collection as needed. Questions or concerns about this policy are to be directed to the principal.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Proper Catholic Christian behavior, based on the principles of respect, charity, responsibility, and honesty, is expected of all students attending Our Lady of Mercy School as well as of all faculty and staff members and parents. We are human, and when human failings prevent us from meeting this standard, we reflect on our behavior and strive to do better, with God's unfailing love and assistance, in the future.

Student discipline for inappropriate behavior is developed

- to help the student identify, understand, and correct the inappropriate behavior,
- to set goals for immediate behavior change, with outlined consequences for failed compliance including detention, suspension, and expulsion,
- to provide the student internal and external support for improved behavior, and
- to work in partnership with parents/guardians to support the student in correcting the behavior.

All students are minors, and at no time will parish and school administrators share discipline specifics with anyone other than the student's parents/guardians. If a student fails to improve behavior as outlined in an age-appropriate behavior plan or exhibits behavior that is an immediate threat to students and adults, a student will be asked to withdraw and will no longer be able to attend Mercy. School and parish administrators are expected to consistently follow the behavior expectations and policies in this handbook.

Parent Support: Respecting the Dignity of Every Student

All disciplinary action is handled by the school faculty and, if needed, school administration. Each student at Mercy is to be respected, and the goal of disciplinary action is to promote learning of acceptable behavior. All children make mistakes and need support and boundaries to reach their greatest personal potential. Our goal is that parents can get the information they need from faculty and administration.

When parents are on the premises, either volunteering or visiting, they will undoubtedly observe many interactions among students and teachers. Teachers are professionals and are held to a high adult standard of conduct at all times. Children, on the other hand, are expected to make mistakes, have a bad day, or be upset from time to time. This does not make them “bad” or “difficult” – just young. **We expect that parent volunteers understand that part of their agreement to volunteer is that they will refrain from discussing the behavior of children other than their own child outside of school.**

We are fortunate that the parents who choose Mercy for their children strive to be positive role models for their children in terms of constructive conflict resolution and supporting all members of the Mercy community. **Any parent with a concern regarding any student behavior, classroom procedure, or management is asked to speak directly with the faculty member.** If this is not sufficient to resolve the situation, parents are strongly encouraged to contact the principal so that the situation can be addressed as soon as possible. Parents should find the faculty and administration very responsive to phone calls or emails expressing a concern. Parents should expect a response the same day if the behavior in question is dangerous, and within 24 hours in all other cases.

Academic Honor Code

Copying from another student or taking an idea from another source without giving due credit (plagiarism) is not acceptable. If a student fails to respect this code of honor, the student may receive a grade of zero and/or a detention for the assignment. If a student allows another student to copy his/her work, that student may also receive a grade of zero and/or a detention. This applies to all work, projects, quizzes, and tests.

Students may not use artificial intelligence (such as ChatGPT or any other AI tool) to craft written work unless it is expressly part of an assignment or approved by the teacher.

Code of Conduct Guidelines

Each student attending Our Lady of Mercy School will:

- Display a positive Christian attitude when interacting with others
- Speak and act in a respectful and responsible manner
- Contribute to a positive and productive classroom environment
- Exhibit respect for personal and school property
- Follow the Academic Honor Code
- Be sensitive and aware of others by quiet movement throughout the school
- Have all assignments, supplies, and materials necessary for class and a productive school day
- Follow rules of proper classroom decorum as posted in the classroom
- Adhere to the uniform code (see Appendix)
- Obey the rules governing conduct in the cafeteria, hallway, gym, lavatory, field, and playground
- Enter a classroom in the presence of an adult
- Follow the class schedule and arrive to class on time
- Remain on school premises
- Follow the rules outlined in the Acceptable Use Policy for Technology

In a complimentary fashion, all adults are asked to remember when they were young and understand that our Catholic faith teaches us that perfection is not possible, nor necessarily desirable. The desire for perfection can create unnecessary stress and obscure the observation of the many wonderful accomplishments and attributes each child possesses.

Consequences for Code Infractions

Teachers have primary responsibility for the redirection and discipline of students. If a situation is deemed to be of a serious nature, the parents may be contacted by the teacher and/or the administration may become involved.

Teachers may establish individual classroom behavioral guidelines and consequences. Students and parents will be provided with this information at the beginning of the school year.

The use of stress relieving devices must be documented in order for use in the classroom. The faculty in the Learning Center can discuss this need directly with classroom teachers and with parents.

Middle school students are expected to be role models for the younger students. Their conduct is held to a high standard, and infractions of the Code of Conduct may result in consequences such as after school detention, parent conference, behavioral contract, suspension, or possible expulsion. **A detention notice issued to a student must be signed by a parent and returned to the homeroom teacher the day after issue.**

Care of School Property

Students at Mercy learn to respect and care for their personal and school items so as to be good stewards of the many blessings they have. They are expected to take proper care of all school texts, computers, and materials. Textbooks are required to be covered at all times. Loss or damage to any school text or library book will be subject to a fine covering the cost of replacement.

School furniture, lockers, computers, equipment, and property are to be cared for responsibly. This applies to all after-school program participation. Any student who damages, defaces, or destroys school property will be penalized. Parents/guardians will be responsible for assuming the cost of necessary repairs or replacement.

Code of Conduct: Extra-Curricular Programming

Parents of students participating in an extra-curricular program (in-school/after-school) must agree to the Mercy Student Code of Conduct and Care of School Property prior to participating. Participation in an athletic program can involve physical activity and competition, which poses the potential for serious injury. Parents acknowledge that risks vary from sport-to-sport/program-to-program and can occur under direct supervision and with the use of proper safety equipment.

Detention

In the event that a situation for a student in grades 5-8 warrants a disciplinary action, a detention notice may be given. **The notice must be signed by the parent and returned to school the day after the notice is issued.** Detention must be served from 3:00 pm until 4:00 pm on the Wednesday afternoon following the notice. Repeated detentions may result in a suspension. Parents are asked to pick up their child at the front entrance promptly at 4:00 pm.

Suspension

In serious cases of the violation of the Code of Conduct, it may be necessary to consider temporary in-school or out-of-school suspension. Offenses which make a student liable for immediate suspension may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Disrespect to faculty/staff
- Damage to school or Church property
- Actions causing the *continued and significant* disruption of a class
- Physical, verbal, or emotional abuse of another
- Threat of harm to another, including on social media platforms
- Talk or discussion of guns, shooting, or violence
- Use of profane, inappropriate, or abusive language
- Stealing/cheating, *particularly when repeated*
- Sexual harassment or inappropriate behavior
- Leaving school grounds without permission
- Repeated detentions
- Inappropriate use of technology
- Drinking alcohol/smoking in school, on school grounds, or at any school-related function
- Conduct on or off school grounds that is detrimental to the reputation of the school

Any child suspended for the above reasons may be excluded from participation in special school events. A child suspended may be reinstated in class only after the parents have a conference with the principal. Corrective measures must be taken in order for the student to remain at Our Lady of Mercy School.

We are fortunate that these are not common occurrences among our student body. They are listed here so that all parents will know how we would proceed in the unlikely event of their occurrence.

Expulsion

Expulsion is viewed as a radical action which indicates that the student's interests would be better served in another environment, that the individual behavior is a serious threat to the school community, or both. Situations may arise in which expulsion may be merited. Offenses which make a student liable for immediate expulsion may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Assault of a teacher, staff member, or another student
- Threat of violence
- Shooting, a planned attack, or planned violence
- Using, taking, selling, giving, or possessing alcohol or drugs of any type at school, on school grounds, or at any school-related function
- Possession of a weapon or dangerous or harmful material, or misuse of any object or material so as to cause harm to oneself or others, or to cause damage to school property
- Repeated suspensions
- Conduct on or off school grounds that is detrimental to the reputation of the school
- Possession of a weapon or dangerous or harmful material, or misuse of any object or material so as to cause harm to oneself or others, or to cause damage to school

The principal is the final recourse in all disciplinary situations and reserves the right to waive and/or deviate from any and all disciplinary regulations for just cause.

Threats

Per ADW policy: In the event of any actual or perceived threat of violence or other inappropriate/illegal behavior, Our Lady of Mercy School reserves its right to take any and all actions it deems necessary for the health and safety of its school community, including the individual(s) making the threat. These actions may include contacting law enforcement officers, mental health professionals, and/or any other outside experts as the school official(s) deems necessary. A student who makes a threat of violence will be required to remain off school property until a mental health professional certifies that the student is not a danger to him/herself or others and may be subject to disciplinary action, including expulsion.

Drug/Alcohol Policy

According to Archdiocesan regulations, the following procedures will be followed if any student is found taking, selling, or possessing drugs/alcohol on school property.

- The student will be detained in the principal's office.
- The drugs/alcohol will be confiscated.
- Parents will be contacted.
- The student will be immediately suspended pending determination regarding expulsion.
- Law enforcement officers will be contacted.

The school reserves the right to search if there is probable or reasonable cause. This includes searching the student's personal items, such as coat pockets, a backpack, purse or gym bag and the student's locker or desk. Students may be asked to turn out their pockets to show that they are empty. If there is a reasonable suspicion that a student has an illegal substance inside their shoe, or otherwise on their person (aside from pockets), the student will be immediately supervised at all times by an assigned faculty member until such time as a parent can arrive at the school and supervise any search of the child's person. The school reserves the right to seize any of the above substances. Any illegal activity will be reported to the police.

Parents are reminded that students are forbidden to have **any** medications on their person or in their belongings during the school day (including cough drops). This constitutes a violation of the school's drug policy. Parents are welcome to send in medications to the school nurse for administration. Medication must be in the original container, which must have the child's name and dosage on the container. (In the case of over-the-counter medications, please contact our nurse for guidance on how to send such items to school.) The rules and regulations of this current policy are fully applicable and binding, in accordance with established and approved Archdiocesan Disciplinary Policies.

Anti-Bullying Policy

Mercy maintains an anti-bullying program to promote awareness among staff and students; to promote a safe environment in accordance with the Child Protection Policy; and to provide evidence of a framework that supports the ongoing mission of preventing and eliminating bullying within the school.

As a Catholic school, Mercy believes and teaches that each of us is called to love our neighbor and to treat them with respect. Mercy is committed to providing a physically safe and emotionally secure learning environment that is free from bullying, harassment, and intimidation in any form, including cyberbullying. Bullying, harassment, and intimidation of any member of the school community is prohibited. All reports of bullying, harassment, and intimidation will be treated seriously. Students should report such acts to the teacher, principal, assistant principal, or counselor. The parent or guardian of the alleged victim will be notified within 3 business days after the date the act is reported. The parent or guardian of the alleged perpetrator will be notified within 5 business days after the date the act is reported. The principal's review and investigation of a credible allegation will be done in a prompt, confidential, and thorough manner. Reprisal or retaliation against anyone who reports acts of bullying, harassment, and intimidation is strictly prohibited. All reports of reprisal or retaliation will be treated seriously. The principal's review and investigation of a credible allegation will be done in a prompt, confidential, and thorough manner.

Bullying, harassment, or intimidation means any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, including electronic communication (telephone, cellular phone, computer, pager, iPod, etc.), that:

1. Physically harms an individual; damages an individual's property; substantially interferes with an individual's education or learning environment; or places an individual in a reasonable fear of harm to the individual's person or property; and
2. Occurs on school property, at a activity or event, on a school transportation vehicle or bus; or substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a school.

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying, harassment, and intimidation. Cyberbullying means a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device and includes the use of social media sites and texting. Cyberbullying shall include any future applications that fall under electronic communication. Electronic communication means a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device, including a telephone, cellular phone, computer, Chromebook, laptop, or tablet.

Support for victims or bystanders of bullying, harassment, or intimidation may include counseling, resource support, and other support services as appropriate.

Students involved in repeated harassing/bullying behavior will face disciplinary action up to and including suspension and/or expulsion. Students who commit acts of bullying, harassment, or intimidation will be required to participate in anti-bullying programming or counseling. Students making false accusations of harassment/bullying will face disciplinary action up to and including suspension and/or expulsion.

Responsibility to Report Bullying, Harassment, and Intimidation

Anyone who endures, witnesses, or hears of a bullying, harassment, or intimidation incident is responsible for reporting the incident promptly to the school. Reporters may be parents, guardians, close relatives of the victim, faculty, students, or members of the parish or community. The reporter is to complete the Bullying, Harassment, and Intimidation Report Form, found on the school website under the [Current Families/Important Forms](#) tab and submit it to the principal. The forms are also available in the school office. Filers must share their name; however, the report will be kept confidential. The report will be investigated by administrative staff within four days of submission and then reviewed by the Discipline Committee, consisting of the principal, assistant principal, counselor, and one faculty member. All investigative notes will be maintained confidentially in the school office.

Disciplinary Response to Bullying, Harassment, and Intimidation

The Discipline Committee will determine if the report is an incident of bullying, harassment, or intimidation and outline an appropriate disciplinary plan including a parent conference, behavior plan with expectation for immediate change in behavior and subsequent consequences for failure to comply, referrals for required professional evaluation/counseling, detention, suspension, or expulsion. Additionally, the team will make recommendations for victim/student support and will inform faculty of the findings. The pastor and parent of the student victim will be apprised of the findings and that a disciplinary plan is in place. If a student presents an immediate safety concern and/or grievous threat to the community or him or herself, he or she will be removed from Mercy. Community agencies and Archdiocesan offices will be notified as needed for the safety of all students.

Response to Inappropriate Behavior

If the Discipline Committee finds the report is not a case of bullying, harassment, or intimidation, but is inappropriate behavior for a Catholic School, disciplinary action will be taken and again include the elements of a parent conference, behavior plan, consequences for repeated behavior, possible recommendations for professional evaluation/counseling, as well as detention, suspension, or expulsion if warranted in extreme cases. Victims and students will be supported through class meetings, lessons in religion class, and intervention by the school counselor. Parents of the victim will be informed of the findings and support plan. If a student presents immediate safety concerns and/or grievous threats to the community or him or herself, he or she will be removed from Mercy.

At no time will the disciplinary actions for students be shared with members of the Mercy community other than a child's parent(s). All policies for behavior management are strictly followed as outlined in this handbook.

Responsibility

Mercy's mission is to help each child reach his or her greatest personal potential. Accordingly, Mercy wants each child in grades kindergarten through eighth to learn and practice responsibility and independence. As such, all forgotten items (supplies, assignments, projects, sports equipment, etc.) are **not** to be brought to school or requested by a student via a phone call or text message. Students in need of food may request an "emergency lunch" in the office; be assured that no child will go hungry. A parent dropping off assignments also raises the issue of fairness, as many students have parents who are unable to leave work to bring homework to school. Students who submit an assignment a day late may earn a reduced grade but will not fail the assignment.

Additionally, printing of assignments needs to be done at home. On an emergency basis, a student may request permission from a teacher to print an assignment.

Parents may continue to bring purchased lunches to school for their children if pre-arranged. The student should be aware of this arrangement before school and parents are to leave the lunch in the school office.

Technology Use and Responsibility

The technology program at Our Lady of Mercy School provides the students and staff with modern multimedia equipment, including data and video networking. Access to this equipment promotes effective teaching, interactive learning, research, and computer/video literacy. Students and parents are required to review and sign the school's Archdiocesan Acceptable Use Policy for Technology (TADS) and to adhere to its rules.

ADW Policy 3212: Technology and Internet Usage (See Appendix)

Acceptable Use of Technology and Internet by Students in Catholic Schools: Students shall use all Technology Equipment, including, but not limited to computers, networking systems, Internet, mobile devices, communication devices, cell phones, email, social networking sites, calculators, DVD players, and cameras ("Technology Equipment") with care and respect, whether at school, at home, or elsewhere. Students shall not type, send or otherwise use any inappropriate or offensive words, or display, send, or otherwise use inappropriate or offensive images, sounds or messages from or on Technology Equipment. Students shall not use Technology Equipment in a manner which violates any local, state or federal laws. Students shall immediately report to a teacher or supervising staff member any inappropriate material or misuse of Technology Equipment of which the student becomes aware.

Students shall not use Technology Equipment in any way to engage in cyber bullying behavior. Any student use of cell phones and mobile devices during school hours is prohibited, with the exception of medical emergencies.

When using the School's Technology Equipment, all students shall not reconfigure any school hardware, software, or network settings; shall print, download, or otherwise transfer only that information approved by the teacher or supervisor; shall obtain the permission of a teacher or supervisor before loading a file or disk onto a school computer; shall not use any school Technology Equipment to create, store, transfer or use software or electronic content in a manner which violates the rights of the holder of copyright in the software or the content; shall not plagiarize works on the Internet; shall not load any software onto school computers without first obtaining the teacher's permission; shall only use the Internet for school-related projects and shall visit only the sites assigned by the teacher; shall not 'surf' the Internet or visit 'Facebook,' or any other social networking websites while at school; shall not log-on to the Internet without permission from a teacher or supervising staff member; shall not give out, post, or otherwise distribute personal information such as photographs, home addresses, telephone numbers, parents' work addresses or telephone numbers or the name and location of the school. Each student's parent/guardian must review the Technology and Internet Usage Agreement with the student that is included in the TADS re-enrollment process each year.

Chromebook Program, Use and Responsibility

Mercy provides students in grades 1 through 8 with a Chromebook for use in school. The use of this device is a privilege, and the student is expected to use the Chromebook with proper care. If a Chromebook is mistreated and damaged, the family will be held responsible for replacing the Chromebook for the school. The technology coordinator will provide instruction for the students on proper care and provide a written use policy that includes student liability if the Chromebook is damaged. Parents will be required to review and sign the policy at the start of school before the student is allowed to use the Chromebook. If a device is used at the wrong time or wrong site, the device may be taken away.

CHILD PROTECTION AND SUPPORT

Archdiocesan Child Protection Policy

All persons who have contact with children are required by the Archdiocese of Washington to attend an awareness workshop entitled *Protecting God's Children* and to be finger-printed. This policy extends to all parents who volunteer at school in any capacity where children are present. **Parents who do not fulfill these requirements will not be able to assist at school or on field trips.** All parents are always welcome for parent-teacher conferences or for events where any member of the public is invited, such as school masses or large assemblies.

Information required for proceeding with the criminal background check and Virtus training can be found on the [school website](#), or by contacting the school office. The Archdiocesan Website [Child Protection Training](#) page has all the current information regarding the required workshop, *Protecting God's Children*.

Counseling

To support students, families, and faculty, Mercy's faculty includes a school counselor. Students may request to see the counselor at any time. Parents may contact the counselor directly by phone or e-mail. The counselor provides one-on-one listening sessions (not on-going) with students, group meetings, sponsors special projects, and conducts classes on peer relationships, respect, and problem solving. Heather Bradley will be on campus Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:00-3:00.

In the event of an emergency or crisis, the Archdiocese of Washington may send a team of school counseling professionals to Our Lady of Mercy School. One-time, initial counseling services may be rendered to students by school or Archdiocesan counseling staff in the event of a crisis or emergency.

Custody

The school abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, a school will provide the non-custodial parent with access to academic records and other school information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the custodial parent's responsibility to provide the school with a court-certified copy of the court order.

Child Abuse and Neglect

The Archdiocese of Washington, in compliance with the laws of the State of Maryland concerning child abuse and neglect, mandates all professional members of an institution report any suspected child abuse or neglect. The law does not require the reporter to have definite proof that abuse or neglect has occurred before reporting. Any doubt about reporting suspected child abuse is to be resolved in favor of the child.

ACADEMICS & CURRICULUM

Curriculum Grades Pre-K-4

The classrooms are self-contained with small group instruction for both math and language arts. One of the many strengths of Mercy is that our children in PreK and K receive instruction in Spanish, art, music, library, PE, and technology by specially trained subject teachers:

Subject Areas

- Religion
- Mathematics
- Language Arts (Reading, English, Spelling/Vocabulary)
- Science, STEM (K-grade 3)
- Social Studies
- Spanish (Pre K3-grade 4)
- Technology
- Library (Pre K3-grade 4)
- Physical Education
- Art (Pre K4-grade 4)
- Music

Curriculum Grades 5-8

Our Middle School program allows students to practice the demanding organizational challenges of middle school in a small, supportive environment. Our study skills program, offered to children in grade 6 and again for students new to Mercy, prepares students to handle the challenges of managing their materials and time for effective study. Mercy has an outstanding reputation with area Catholic high schools, based on decades of sending them well-pared young people who are true students (in that they have the personal skills necessary for effective study and learning) and scholars (in that they set high standards for themselves and work to achieve them.) The Middle School is departmentalized by subject. This provides the individualized attention necessary for high school preparation.

Subject Areas

- Religion
- Mathematics/Algebra/Opportunity for advanced math including Geometry Enrichment (Faculty approval required)
- Language Arts (Reading, English, Vocabulary)
- Science
- Social Studies
- Spanish
- Physical Education
- Art
- Technology (Integrated), Gr 5-7
- Music (Gr 5-6)
- Study Skills (Fall, Gr 6)
- Leadership (Gr 7-8)
- Electives (Gr 6-8) (May include: Art Studio, Music, Health/Fitness, TV Broadcasting, First Aid/Response)

Criteria for Advanced Math Placement (Grades 5-8)

A student is eligible for advanced placement in math if the student meets the following criteria:

- maintains an 'A' average in math and is highly motivated to excel
- successfully completes a comprehensive math placement evaluation and complies with a plan to cover any missed concepts
- evidences a serious attitude toward learning by completing homework assignments on time and being prepared for class
- contributes to a productive class atmosphere
- meets required standardized assessment learning objectives
- obtains approval of administration, faculty, and parents

Process for Identifying and Serving Students with Learning Needs

Mercy has many and varied resources for supporting children who have specialized learning needs. Routine review of all student progress via screenings, assessments, work samples, observation and professional discussions are all part of our educational program. Parents are always encouraged to share any concerns with the child's teacher. The Director of our Learning Center, Mrs. Jeanne Dwyer, and our principal, Mrs. Green, are delighted to field questions any parent may have about whether a child would benefit from learning support. Parents who desire more information about the Learning Center and our specific process can email [Mrs. Dwyer](#) or [Mrs. Green](#).

It is our practice that any forms, evaluations, questionnaires, etc. are overseen by our Director of Resource/Learning Center and completed by the student's team of teachers. After the information is complete, documents are sent directly to the professional group, evaluator, or doctor requesting the information and feedback.

The same format is used for students applying to other schools or eighth graders applying to high schools. Documents are emailed or mailed directly to the academic institution after the transcript release has been signed by a parent or guardian.

Evaluation - Grades Pre-K4-8

A parent/teacher conference to discuss student performance is held for all students at the end of the first quarter in conjunction with the distribution of the first report card. Mercy also maintains an on-line grading system, Rediker, which gives middle school (Gr 6-8) parents continuous access to student progress. All parents are encouraged to monitor grades often and consult with faculty as needed. An optional parent-teacher conference can be scheduled in February.

A portfolio conference is held in the spring for Grades 1, 3, 5, and 7, enabling parents, student, and teacher to discuss the contents of the student's writing portfolio. This conference is designed to share the growth that has taken place during the academic year. Portfolios of students in K, 2, 4, 6, and 8 are sent home during the portfolio conference timeframe. Writing portfolios provide authentic samples of student growth and interest. Self-reflection is a key component of the portfolio process. Parents, students, and teachers collaborate in the spring and share areas of strength and prepare suggestions for the onset of the writing process in the fall.

Report Cards are issued quarterly in grades 1-8 and twice per year in Pre-K4 and Kindergarten.

In grades 4-8, a grade of D or F is a serious concern. Parents and students are strongly encouraged to work cooperatively with the faculty to address the student's needs.

ADW Grading Scale

Subject Grades- Pre-K – Grade 3

EE	Exceeds grade level expectations
ME	Meets grade level expectations
AE	Approaching grade level expectations
NE	Not approaching grade level expectations
X	Not assessed

Special Area Grades 1-8

E	Excellent
G	Good
S	Satisfactory
I	Improvement Needed
U	Unsatisfactory

Note: A check mark indicates an area of concern. No mark indicates satisfactory progress.

Traditional academic subject letter grades are issued for grades 4-8 per ADW report card.

Honors- Grades 4-8

First Honors: Given to the student who has maintained either all A's, or A's with one B.

Second Honors: Given to the student who has maintained all A's and B's with a minimum of three A's.

Year-End Awards (Grades 5-8)

We strive to help children have a healthy respect for their own talents and encourage them that developing these God-given talents is what is expected of them. At the same time, children do benefit from receiving recognition for significant accomplishments. The following Awards are customary at Mercy:

- An **Exemplary Achievement Award** will be presented to students who earn four quarters of First Honors.
- An **Outstanding Achievement Award** will be presented to students who earn four quarters of Second Honors or a combination of First Honors and Second Honors.
- **National Spanish Award (Grades 7-8)** – awards are given for national performance in the bronze, silver, and gold medal categories.

Students will be recognized for participation in activities such as: student council, choir, altar server, etc. The Awards Mass will be held the last day of school for grades 5-7. Grade 8 will receive awards during the graduation ceremony.

Probation

Failure in two academic subjects is basis for academic probation. The student, parent/guardian, administration, and teachers will meet to discuss strategies for improving work. The student has one report card period to raise all grades to 'D.' Progress is reviewed periodically. Failure to satisfy requirements of academic probation may result in dismissal from the school. Mercy has many programs and supports to offer students who need academic assistance to succeed, but there are requirements to access this services that parents must follow. Please contact your child's teacher or the principal for more information.

Promotion and Retention

Students will be promoted on the recommendation of the teachers and the principal, following their evaluation of the child's academic performance with consideration of maturity and social development. Ongoing conferencing will focus on the appropriate procedures to be followed in the best interest of the child. Retention is a very unlikely possibility and will be discussed with parents by the end of January if it is to be considered.

Conditional promotion, assuring a child of placement in the next grade provided successful summer work is accomplished, may be used in exceptional cases.

Graduation

In order to be presented a diploma at graduation, a student's tuition and fees must be paid in full.

Exams

During the 4th quarter, an exam schedule for Grade 8 will be distributed to students and parents. Only under an extreme situation will an exam be changed to another date. Exams in math and language arts will be held at the end of the second quarter and fourth quarter. The purpose of exams at this grade level is to help students prepare for a cumulative test and prepare for high school expectations.

Homework

Homework reinforces learning that has taken place in class and is meant to develop personal responsibility. Individual teachers' homework policies will be communicated to students and parents at the beginning of the school year. Students should pace their work schedules when completing long-term assignments. Attempting to complete projects at the last minute results in inferior work, frustration, and stress.

Parents are requested to send a note or email to the teacher if an unusual circumstance has interfered with completing a homework assignment. The completed assignment may be accepted at a later date determined by the teacher. Requests for homework for an absent student should be emailed directly the teacher. Books and assignments will be available for pick up in the office at 3:10 pm. Note: Grades 5-8 homework assignments are posted on the website.

Parents are strongly discouraged from taking their children from school during the academic year. Extended absences impede learning and academic progress. In the unusual case that a child has an extended absence, assignments will be **issued upon the return of the student, not prior to the departure.** It can be very difficult for a teacher to assign material in advance as class pace varies with each lesson.

Grades 1-5:

Students are responsible for recording homework assignments in their Homework Assignment Book. Tests must be signed and returned to the subject teacher the day after receipt. **For students in grade 5**, four homework notifications in one quarter will result in after school Homework Detention on the Wednesday following the email notice.

Grades 4-8:

Students are responsible for recording assignments in their Homework Assignment Book and should not rely solely on Rediker/Plus Portals. Although students should take responsibility for their work, they need the support of their parents to assure continued progress and academic success. Therefore, parents are asked to regularly examine the Homework Assignment Book and to check Rediker/Plus Portals for assignments and current grades.

Homework notification is issued by e-mail for missing or incomplete assignments. Incomplete or missed assignments not due to absence result in a lower grade for that assignment. **For students in grades 5-8, four homework notifications in one quarter will result in after school Homework Detention on the Wednesday following the notice.**

Grades 6-8:

Grades are also posted for students and parents to review. The Rediker/Plus Portals tool enables consistent and proactive communication among students, parents and teachers. Any concerns need to be shared well in advance of the close of a quarter.

Tutors

Mercy families who hire faculty members for tutoring maintain a contract solely between the parent and tutor. Mercy accepts no responsibility or liability for these tutoring agreements

Mercy cannot facilitate any on-site tutoring from outside tutors unless the tutor works virtually with the student. This is made available in a handful of special circumstances. Parents who desire this for their child must speak directly with Mrs. Green.

Teachers working off site to tutor may be paid directly, and parents accept all responsibility for the arrangement. Parents are strongly encouraged to think carefully about tutoring arrangements. Sometimes tutoring masks a diagnosable condition a child may have, and therefore is only a temporary salutation that inevitably will one day fail.

Note: Families behind in their tuition payments may not hire a Mercy faculty member to tutor a student until all financial obligations are met or arrangements are made with the school administrative manager. Questions concerning this policy may be directed to the school administrative manager.

As a courtesy to parents who would like their child to have speech therapy during the day, Mercy allows a private speech therapist from a company that we have selected to work on-site with the students. We also are beginning to offer Occupational Therapy on-site, although this will continue only if there are enough children who need the service. Contact Jeanne Dwyer for information on procedures.

Mercy is also working with MCPS, and if we have enough children who qualify, we will have an on-site therapist set from MCPS who will work with children who have an IEP that indicates the need for speech.

Due to liability and ADW insurance protocol, private therapists and tutors, other than the ones that Mercy has selected, cannot work with children on-site at Mercy, whether during the school day or after school.

Note: Currently, occupational therapy, speech and Orton Gillingham services are offered on campus. This agreement is made between the school-approved vendors and parents.

EDUCATIONAL EXTENSION PROGRAM

Educational Extension

An unique feature of the school's curriculum is the Educational Extension Program. This program is designed to provide an optimum school experience for all children based on their various educational strengths and needs.

An Educational Extension Program is offered for the highly motivated/gifted student in which methods and strategies are combined with differentiation so that the students experience opportunities to enjoy learning and explore challenges. A student's individual program may be adjusted and tailored to meet his/her needs. Throughout the year, parents and students are informed about school and local enrichment program opportunities to enhance learning.

Enrichment offerings include:

- Drama Club, Grades 5-8
- Chess Club, Grades per notice
- Coding/Robotics, various grades
- Science Investigation
- TV Broadcast Team, Grades 6-8
- Choir, Grades 2-8
- Band, Grades 4-8
- Art Enrichment Classes, Grades K-6
- Mercy Great Reads, various grades
- Language Enrichment, French, Spanish
- Intramural and CYO Sports

See Mercy Matters for updated program.

Additionally, Mercy offers a wide variety of service opportunities and extra-curricular activities for the students' growth and enjoyment:

Service:

- Altar Service, Grades 5-8
- Safety Patrol, Grades 6-8
- Homework Support, Grades 4-8

Leadership

- Student Council, Grades 5-8
- National Junior Honor Society, Grades 6-8

Students participating in any extra-curricular programs that take place on school grounds are governed by the same codes of behavior that are expected during the school day. If students are not picked up at the end of an after-school activity, they will be sent to after care, and a bill will be forwarded at the end of the month. If a student is sick and doesn't attend school, he/she can't attend after-school activities.

Student Council and National Junior Honor Society

Election to the Student Council and National Junior Honor Society is an earned recognition and a privilege for participating students. Students serving in these positions are the student leaders of the Mercy community. As such, members of these organizations are expected to maintain high standards of involvement, academic achievement, and behavior. Eligibility to participate in both organizations requires faculty recommendation. Requirements for application and acceptance to the NJHS are:

- Earning First Honors (maintaining all A's or A's with one B), or Second Honors (maintaining all A's and B's, with a minimum of 3 A's) for the current and previous quarters being considered.
- Two or more detentions may be a reason to be denied from NJHS.
- 7th and 8th grade will be invited to apply after the first quarter. 6th graders must wait to apply until after the 3rd quarter (7th and 8th may also be invited to apply at this time).

Instrumental Music Program

Our Lady of Mercy has a band composed of interested students in grades 4-8. A qualified instrumental music instructor is provided to Mercy by the ADW Band Program. The school permits students in grades 4-8 participating in the band to be released from class for a lesson each week. This schedule is set up on a rotating basis so that the same academic class is not always missed. It is the responsibility of the student to make up any missed classwork. We strongly encourage participation in this program.

HEALTH, SAFETY & SECURITY

Entering the Building

For the safety of our students and staff and the security of our building, all outside doors are locked. Students are not permitted to open the doors for any parents or visitors. Parents and visitors enter the building by way of the main door near the office.

Emergencies and Threats

In case of an emergency or threat, our faculty and staff have been trained to execute the ALICE model.

ALICE is an acronym for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate. The procedure is not designed to be sequential but rather to be utilized as needed in each exclusive situation. At appropriate grade levels, discussion and role playing takes place in the classroom to promote responsive behavior. **Parents will be given multiple notices that an ALICE drill (where children will have to practice staying out of sight) is scheduled.** Parents may choose to have their child stay home for that portion of the day if they prefer that their child not participate. Children in younger grades are told that the drill is what we do in the unlikely event that an animal entered the school and we needed to catch it. This is less scary for most children than discussions of an intruder. Mercy has implemented new security measures for protection.

In the event that students need to be evacuated from the school premises, Mercy's relocation area is the German International School, 8617 Chateau Drive, Potomac, 20854.

Emergency Contact Information

It is essential that the information in a student's emergency contact file is accurate and current at all times. **The school office should be notified in writing immediately should there be a change of address, phone numbers (home, work, or cell), or emergency contact person.**

Private Use of School Facilities

Beyond school events or CYO activities, use of the school facilities requires proper insurance and protocol. As much as we would like to accommodate these requests, we are required to fulfill ADW policies and procedures.

Medical Information

Allergies

Please identify on your child's emergency form ANY allergies he/she has. If a child requires medication for his/her allergies (i.e., inhaler, Benadryl, Epi-pen), please complete an Authorization to Administer Medication (ADW Form 6) and provide the Health Room with these necessary medications.

Mercy is not a peanut-free school. If your child has a peanut allergy, any possible accommodations must be discussed at the time of application to Mercy.

Communicable Diseases

A nurse will oversee the medical files, dispense prescribed medications, and attend to minor illnesses and injuries. Parents will be notified of any major injury. Parents will also be called to take a sick child home for the following reasons:

- temperature above 99 degrees
vomiting
- diarrhea
- pinkeye (with drainage)
- head lice

Students may **not** return to school until they have been free of a fever and any signs of illness for 24 hours. Additionally, students prescribed an antibiotic must be taking the medication for 24 hours before returning to school.

Medical Records

It is the policy of the Archdiocese of Washington that all students attending schools in the Archdiocese must be fully immunized in accordance with the immunization requirements against contagious diseases published by the local Health Department. The Archdiocese does allow for medical and moral exemptions. Parents must work directly with the Archdiocese in regard to this process. If you intend to ask for one of these, please let our nurse know at the first possible opportunity.

Immunization in accordance with the Archdiocese of Washington's policy is a condition for admission into all Archdiocesan Catholic schools. To be admitted to attend classes, there must be two forms related to immunization on file at your child's school by the first day of school and they are:

- Immunization Policy Acknowledgement – ADW Form 3, completed and signed; and
- Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Immunization Certificate, (adapted for use by Archdiocese of Washington's Catholic Schools in Maryland) signed by a medical provider and parents.
- Medical records must be presented for students entering grades Pre-K – 8. Records must provide proof of the following:
 - 4 doses of Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (DTaP/DTP)
 - 3 doses of Oral Polio Vaccine
 - 2 doses of Measles, Mumps, Rubella
 - 2 doses of Varicella
 - 3 doses of Hepatitis B Vaccine

There is no requirement for children of any age to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Children who do not provide proof of the vaccine will be excluded from attending school. In compliance with Maryland law, a child may not return to school until Mercy's nurse has received the proper records.

Medication

All prescription and non-prescription medications (including cough drops) are to be labeled with the student's name and specific instructions for administering the medication. All medication is to be sent to the Health Room where it will be administered by a designated adult. Students are not permitted to keep medication with them. There is an Archdiocesan form (ADW Form 8) which can be obtained from the school nurse that must be completed and signed by you and your pediatrician for prescription **and** over the counter medications. Phone requests to give a child medication are not permitted.

Publicity Release

Through TADS reregistration each year, we ask that parents accept the Archdiocesan Publicity Release policy in order that we may use student pictures (not names) for marketing, on the website, and on our social media pages. If you do not wish to give this permission, please select "No" when completing the online TADS registration form.

SCHOOL DAY PROCEDURES

Schedule

The school day begins at 8:00 am and concludes at 3:00 pm. Students may begin to arrive at 7:30 am and must report to the Kennedy Room for supervision between 7:30 am and 7:45 am. Any student arriving after 8:00 am is considered late and must report to the office.

The school is not responsible for the supervision of students before 7:30 am or after 3:15 pm (unless the student is in After Care). Therefore, the school is not responsible for any injuries or accidents which may occur if parents permit children to be on the school grounds during unsupervised times. If a child is found to be unsupervised after 3:15 pm or at the end of an after-school activity, she/he will be sent to After Care, and the parent will be charged accordingly.

Coaches of sports teams practicing after school must arrange for supervision of students beginning at 3:00 pm.

Attendance

Punctuality and regular attendance are necessary for a child's progress in school. Absenteeism and tardiness are contributing factors to a child's academic difficulties and may seriously impact his/her grade and consideration for high school acceptance. Late arrival directly affects classroom procedures, management, and the learning process. Parents are strongly encouraged to plan vacations and trips around school holidays.

Students arriving after 8:00 am are late.

Requests for a student to be dismissed early should be made in writing to the **homeroom teacher** by 8:00 am. Persons picking students up at times other than regular dismissal must meet the child in the school office. No child will be dismissed early without the explicit request of the parent/guardian.

The following are valid reasons for **excused absences** from school (if properly documented upon the student's return to school):

- Illness of the student (after three days of illness, student must provide medical documentation indicating that he/she is able to return to school);
- Medical or dental appointments;
- Death in the student's immediate family;
- Necessity for a student to attend a judicial proceeding;
- Lawful suspension or exclusion from school by the chief administrator;
- Temporary closing of facilities or suspension of classes due to severe weather, official activities, holidays, malfunctioning equipment, unsafe or unsanitary conditions, or other conditions requiring closing or suspension of classes; and
- Other absence(s) approved in advance by the chief administrator upon the written request of a parent or guardian. Sufficient notice should be given to the school in order to provide anticipated student work that the student is expected to complete during their absence. Failure to provide sufficient notice may result in an unexcused absence.

Any absence that does not fall into one of the above categories or is not properly documented by the student's parent/guardian is an unexcused absence. The school maintains attendance records for each student on a daily basis. Records will indicate any excused or unexcused absence and tardiness. **Unexcused absences** will be addressed as follows:

- When any student has three (3) or more unexcused absences, the principal shall notify the student's parents/guardians in writing of a mandatory conference to address the issue.
- No later than two (2) days after any student has accumulated ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absence, those absences must be reported to child protective services in the school's jurisdiction. In addition, a School Incident Report will be completed and filed with the Catholic Schools Office and the Office of Child Protection Services.
- Any student accumulating forty (40) or more unexcused absences within a full school year shall not be promoted, and the school must file a formal truancy complaint in the appropriate jurisdiction. The student will not be able to re-enroll at Mercy for the following school year.
- Academic consequences for truancy are to be determined by the local school chief administrator and communicated to their teachers, students, and parents/guardians through the faculty and student handbook.
- In the event of an extended, excused absence of four (4) weeks or more for medical reasons, specific arrangements must be made for the child's instruction at home or in the hospital, to the extent allowed by the child's health. In most cases, this will involve guiding the parents/guardians to contact the LEA (local education agency) in order to arrange for free tutoring via the local "Home and Hospital" program.

Communication

Our Lady of Mercy School's newsletter, *Mercy Matters*, is published on a weekly basis and is distributed electronically. Copies are also available in the school office. Additionally, school-wide information and announcements are shared via Constant Contact emails. Teachers will establish a direct communication line with parents at the beginning of the school year.

Open communication between teachers and parents is encouraged. **Parents are to contact the teacher directly to discuss an area of concern.** If, after that meeting, a concern remains, parents are welcome to make an appointment with the principal.

Teachers are not available for unscheduled meetings during the school day. Parents wishing to contact a teacher may do so by note, voicemail, e-mail, or by calling the school office. The teacher will respond as quickly as possible. Please do not contact teachers at home.

All parents and visitors to the school must report to the school office. Parents may not visit a classroom during the school day without the permission of the teacher or administration. It is disruptive for parents to visit a classroom unannounced. If a parent needs to speak with his/her child, the parent should come to the office and the child will be called.

Carpool/Transportation (See Appendix)

All families are required to follow the carpool procedures. For safety, children are not permitted to cross the parking lot unattended during carpool. Students must have written parental permission on file in order to walk home from school. ***It is the parents' responsibility to verify age requirement to use a rideshare.*** Students who have not been picked up by 3:15 pm are taken to After Care, and parents will be charged accordingly.

Inclement Weather School Closing

In the event of inclement weather, Our Lady of Mercy School follows all directives given for Montgomery County Public Schools. These are announced on local radio and TV stations, through Constant Contact.

When there is a two-hour delayed opening (for all grades), our school will open at 10:00 am with morning drop off beginning at 9:30. If Montgomery County announces that schools will close early, we will adjust our dismissal time accordingly and **there will be no After Care.**

In the event that our school has a scheduled 12:15 dismissal and it is announced that Montgomery County Public Schools are opening two hours late, Mercy **will be closed.** Should emergency situations arise that effect only Our Lady of Mercy School, parents will be contacted by means of our emergency contact system, Rediker/text, email and/or the school website.

Cell Phones

Students are not permitted to use the school telephone during the day without permission. **Cell phones in school are strongly discouraged.** If a student brings a cell phone to school, **it must be turned off and kept in a common area** designated by the homeroom teacher until dismissal. Parents must come to the school office to retrieve confiscated cell phones. Additionally, cell phones are discouraged on field trips. Cell phones brought to school for a field trip will be held by the teacher, who may elect to keep the phones on the bus or leave the phones in the school office. Please note that Mercy maintains plans for emergency communication in all situations, including field trips, so that students do not need to carry cell phones.

Mercy maintains this policy for the protection of our students. Cell phones in school are a distraction, and students may be tempted to use the phones to receive inappropriate assistance on assessments and homework, take inappropriate pictures or videos at school, text or post unkind comments in the event of a peer conflict, or to access inappropriate websites and videos that are in conflict with our Catholic values. Our Mercy computers and Chromebooks have multiple safety features. Additionally, we want students to engage in conversation and problem solving with their peers and adults in the community.

Also, please be aware that SMART watches fall into the same category as cell phones. Please, keep them home for after school use. **At no time is Mercy or any member of the faculty or staff responsible for lost or damaged cell phones or computerized watches.**

Field Trips

Classes participate in a variety of field trip experiences. The trips are designed to be of an educational nature and are initiated by the subject area teacher. Participation is expected in these curriculum-based activities including outdoor education experiences for grades 6-8. When a field trip is planned for a class, parents are required to sign an official school permission form in order for students to participate. Faxed or scanned and e-mailed permission forms are acceptable; however, telephone calls may not be accepted in place of written permission.

Information will be sent home explaining upcoming trips and the appropriate dress code for that day. Students represent Mercy when off campus, and their behavior must adhere to the school's code of conduct. Teacher and parent chaperones will meet the recommended student/adult ratios. Parents who are asked to be chaperones are given a protocol to follow. Additional parents should not arrive at the trip via their own transportation unless permission is granted by the teacher prior to the trip, nor are siblings allowed to join the class. The school expects students to travel to and from sites with the school group. **In order to chaperone a field trip, parents must have completed the Archdiocesan Child Protection Policy requirements.**

Field trips are considered a privilege and a class celebration. The school reserves the right to exclude from field trips any student whose conduct in school does not reflect acceptable school behavior.

Lost And Found

The Lost and Found cabinet is located in the school office. Lost items are displayed in the school lobby for two days at the end of every quarter. Unclaimed items are donated to charity. **Please label all articles of clothing and materials with your child's name, as, of course, all uniforms do look alike.**

Parties

Class parties: may be held to celebrate various holidays. The parties are coordinated by the homeroom teacher in conjunction with the room parents. Parents are encouraged to provide healthy snacks for these occasions. Parents are asked to please coordinate party plans with our nurse, as many students have food allergies.

A student's birthday may be celebrated with cookies, muffins or fruit snacks.

Private Parties: Children will naturally want to celebrate their birthdays or other special days with friends. We ask parents to please be very thoughtful about who is invited. When possible, it is ideal to invite at least all the boys or all the girls in the class. Occasionally, parents are able to invite all the students in their child's grade. When this is not possible, we ask that **parents never exclude just one child from a party**. If parents need help in graciously navigating a particular social situation, our principal or school counselor would be happy to offer suggestions with complete confidentiality. In keeping with the spirit of our Catholic community and to foster sensitivity to the feelings of others, party invitations are not to be distributed at school unless the entire class or all boys/girls are included. In addition, unless all boys/girls are included, **please be sensitive regarding transportation arrangements and do not leave as a group at afternoon carpool**.

Recess

Students in PreK have at least one morning recess (if they are here for half a day), or one morning and one afternoon recess depending on the weather.

Students in grades K-8 participate in a 20-minute morning recess supervised by faculty members. Students go outdoors unless there is extremely cold or inclement weather.

All students enjoy a 20-minute afternoon recess, supervised by faculty members and parent volunteers. Students must display courtesy and respect to each other, as well as to the supervising adults.

Lunch

Students have the option to purchase hot lunch five days per week. The Hot Lunch Program is managed by Vignola and purchases are made in advance on-line. White or chocolate milk may be purchased at the beginning of the school year for a nominal fee and is distributed each school day for Kindergarten through grade 8. For safety reasons, students may not bring glass containers to school.

Proper cafeteria conduct for students includes remaining seated, using indoor voices, displaying proper table manners, and cleaning the table and floor around their eating area. Napkins should be included with lunches brought from home.

Parents bringing lunches (see guidelines under Responsibility) for children during the school day are asked to label them with the child's name and grade and leave them in the school office. Students should be notified before school that a lunch will be delivered. No lunches or other items will be delivered to the classrooms.

Uniforms (See Appendix)

We encourage our students to take pride in their appearance. Our uniform dress code helps them to focus on what is appropriate attire for school and reflects the identity, unity, and spirit of our school.

Dress Down Days/Out of Uniform Days

There are times throughout the year that students have the opportunity for “free dress” days. On these occasions they are still expected to wear clothing that is suitable for school. We rely heavily on the support of our parents in seeing that this expectation is met. Students are asked to respect the theme of a particular dress down day. Importantly, face paint, hair dye, makeup, and nail polish are not allowed. Clothing must be clean and appropriate- short shorts, tank tops, cropped tops, halter tops, ripped clothing, or slippers are not permitted. Clothing must be in the nature of the school uniform.

Students who are in Scouts may wear their Scout uniforms on the day of their meeting if the meeting takes place immediately after school.

Students who disregard the dress and uniform code of the school will be subject to disciplinary action. **Repeated uniform infractions will result in a detention.**

Any student serving in a leadership role, such as student council or the National Junior Honor Society, is viewed as a role model for all students. Students in such positions will be given one notice to comply with uniform infractions. If a second offense occurs, the students will be placed on probation and asked not to attend meetings or participate in activities until the uniform is correct. If a third offense occurs, the students will be removed from the leadership role.

Mercy’s Gym Uniform is to be worn on Field Day. Students may accessorize the uniform with the assigned class color. Hats, caps, bandanas, tape, nail polish, and color socks are allowed. Gym uniforms are not to be torn or cut. Students in grades without gym uniforms are to wear comfortable shorts and the assigned color of T-shirt.

FAMILY SERVICES

After Care Program

An After Care Program is available at an additional charge for any student enrolled at Our Lady of Mercy School. This service is available from 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm on all days that the school is in full day session and on half-days, *with the exception of those that begin an extended holiday and those specified on the registration form*. Registration forms and the fee schedule are available on the school website.

The discipline policies of the school extend to the After Care Program. Students whose behavior is a cause of concern to the adults supervising the program will not continue in the program. If a family is in arrears on their After Care payment, the school may withhold the student's report card until the account is settled. Additionally, the school will not release student records associated with delinquent accounts. Please consult the office for additional information.

Hot Lunch Program

Vignola Gourmet has been providing local schools with Hot Lunch service since 2008. Every day, they prepare nearly everything from scratch, focusing on kid-friendly, healthy lunch options.

To register for hot lunch, please go to <https://vignolas.ahotlunch.com/login> and activate an account. The campus name is OLOM and the school code is 9222. If you have any questions or need assistance, please click on the Software Support option on the left-side menu.

PARENT/GUARDIAN AGREEMENTS

Statement of Support

Parents/Guardians and students understand and acknowledge the Roman Catholic religious nature of Our Lady of Mercy School. Parents/Guardians and students agree not to publicly repudiate the teachings and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church and will respect and support the unique identity that Our Lady of Mercy derives from its Catholic faith. As the primary educators of their children, parents/guardians will not act in ways that contradict the Catholic nature of Our Lady of Mercy School. Parents/Guardians shall cooperate fully with the school, and the students shall participate in all required school programming, including instruction in the Catholic faith and attendance at Mass. As the primary educators of students, parents/guardians agree to act in ways that promote the best interests of the church and school and will comply with the policies of the Archdiocese of Washington and Our Lady of Mercy School.

Use of School Directory

Information in class lists, on the school listserv, and in the school directory is to be used for communication regarding Mercy only. It is not to be used to promote outside companies or organizations.

Parental Agreement

Through TADS reregistration each year, parents must agree that they and their children have read the school handbook, comply with the technology policy, and certify permission for use of photos in Mercy's marketing efforts. Additionally, parents agree to the terms of the tuition contract during the enrollment process.

Right to Amend the Handbook

The pastor and principal retain the right to amend the Parent/Student Handbook for just cause. Parents will be given notification if changes are made. This handbook is in effect until it is superseded by any amendments.

APPENDIX

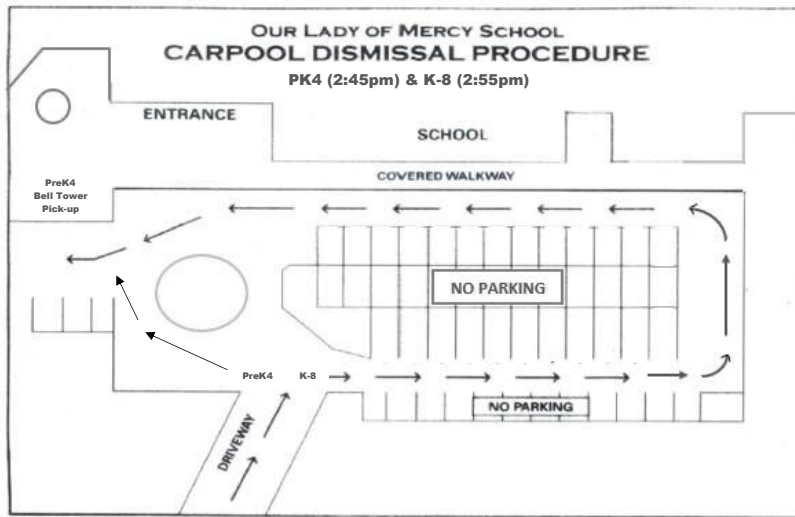
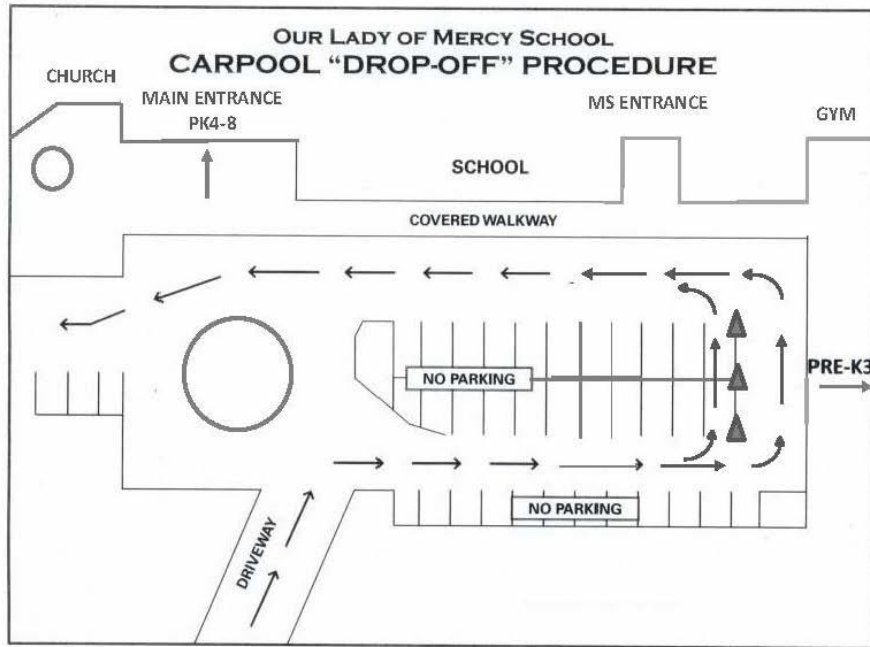
Carpool

Note the driving patterns below, and the fact that Montgomery County **does not allow a direct left turn onto the property from 2:30 to 3:30 per the sign at the school entrance.**

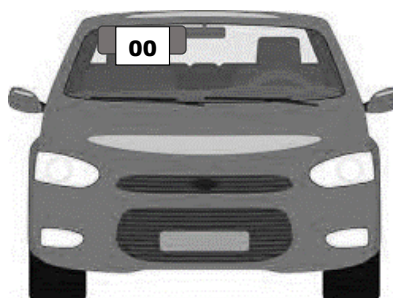
For pick-up, parents will be issued a family number. The number should be placed in the front passenger-side windshield of the car (refer to the summer packet for details on number placement). Students will be dismissed when their family number is called.

Walkers

“Walkers” are dismissed before all other students. Some parents may desire to park their cars on the left side of the church and come to pick up their child at the front of the school, so as to be able to say hello to other parents or to avoid the carpool line. Other parents who live very close by may want their children to walk home. Parents should complete the Transportation Form and submit it to Mrs. Lynne Rutland. The form is in the summer info packet sent to all parents, or can be downloaded on the school website [here](#).



IMPORTANT!! PLEASE DISPLAY YOUR CARPOOL NUMBER ON YOUR **PASSENGER SIDE VISOR ONLY** AS SHOWN BELOW:



2024-2025 School Uniform

GIRLS

PreK-Grade 5

- White golf shirt, short or long sleeved, white Peter pan collar uniform blouse, or white turtleneck (“M” logo on left collar of golf shirt and blouse)
- Blue plaid jumper, no more than 3” above the knee, from Flynn O’Hara only
- Flynn O’Hara navy cardigan uniform sweater, Mercy crewneck gym sweatshirt (**not** hooded) from Flynn O’Hara, navy full-zip fleece from Flynn O’Hara or navy ¼ zip fleece from Mercy spirit wear store.
- Navy knee socks, white or navy crew socks (no logos), navy tights or leggings (straight only)
- K-5 students wear **sturdy** black, brown, tan, or navy shoes (**no Sanuks**)
- Pre K3 & Pre K4 students wear sneakers: navy, black, gray, white solid color preferred.

Grades 6-8

- White golf shirt, short or long sleeved (“Mercy” logo on left chest)
- Mercy plaid uniform skirt, Flynn O’Hara, no more than 3” above the knee
- Gray uniform pants from Flynn O’Hara
- Flynn O’Hara navy cardigan uniform sweater, Mercy crewneck gym sweatshirt (**not** hooded) from Flynn O’Hara, navy full-zip fleece from Flynn O’Hara or navy ¼ zip fleece from Mercy spirit wear store.
- Navy blazer (Mercy shield patch on left chest) from Flynn O’Hara; must be labeled with name
- Navy knee socks, white or navy crew socks (no logo), navy tights or leggings (straight only)
- **Sturdy** black, brown, tan, or navy shoes (**no Sanuks**)

All Girls

- Make-up, nail polish, necklaces, bracelets, and large earrings may not be worn with the school uniform. Small post earrings, religious articles such as miraculous medals or crucifix are permitted.
- All hair accessories must be navy, light blue that matches blue in jumper, white, black, or Mercy plaid.
- Students’ hair and overall appearance should reflect the tone of the dress code: traditional, neat, and appropriate. The school reserves the right to determine what is appropriate.

BOYS

PreK-Grade 5

- Light blue golf shirt, short or long sleeved (“Mercy” logo on left chest)
- Navy uniform pants from **Flynn O’Hara**
- Flynn O’Hara navy cardigan uniform sweater, Mercy crewneck gym sweatshirt (**not hooded**) from Flynn O’Hara, navy full-zip fleece from Flynn O’Hara, or navy ¼ zip fleece from Mercy spirit wear store.
- Navy or white crew socks (no logos)
- K-5 students wear **sturdy** black, brown, tan, or navy shoes (**no Sanuks**)
- Pre K3 & Pre K4 students wear sneakers: navy, black, gray, white solid color preferred.
- Black, navy, or brown belt (no prints, solid color only)

Optional for fall and spring: Navy uniform walking shorts (Flynn O’Hara), belt, with the light blue golf shirt

Grades 6-8

- White golf shirt, short or long sleeved (“Mercy” logo on left chest)
- Gray uniform dress slacks from **Flynn O’Hara**
- Flynn O’Hara navy cardigan uniform sweater, Mercy crewneck gym sweatshirt (**not** hooded) from Flynn O’Hara, navy full-zip fleece from Flynn O’Hara or navy ¼ zip fleece from Mercy spirit wear store.
- Navy blazer with Mercy logo from Flynn O’Hara Must be labeled with name.
- Navy or white crew socks (no logos)
- **Sturdy** black, tan, or brown school shoes (**no Sanuks**)
- Black or brown belt (no prints, solid color only)

Optional for fall and spring: Gray uniform walking shorts (Flynn O’Hara), belt

All Boys

- Students’ hair and overall appearance should reflect the tone of the dress code: traditional, neat, and appropriate. The school reserves the right to determine what is appropriate.

GYM UNIFORMS – ALL STUDENTS

Preschool- Grade 3

- No gym uniform - students wear sneakers to school, girls wear navy mesh shorts under jumper
- PreK 3 & 4 wear sneakers every day
- Grades K-3 may wear sneakers to school on gym days
- Gym sneakers: black, navy, blue, gray, or white **only** (solid colors preferred)

Grades 4-8

- Flynn O’Hara Mercy navy mesh shorts or navy sweatpants
- Flynn O’Hara Mercy white t-shirt, Mercy crewneck sweatshirt from Flynn O’Hara (no school uniform polo)
- Gym sneakers: black, navy, blue, gray, or white **only** (solid colors preferred)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

New! Mercy ¼ crew socks (optional)- available for sale in the school office. Sizes: XS = children’s shoe size 7-12; Small = children’s 12.5 – women’s 5; Medium = women’s 6 – women’s 9 OR a men’s 4.5 – men’s 8.5; Large = women’s 9 – women’s 12 OR a men’s 8.5 – men’s 12

Grade 8 Uniform Privilege:

When announced by the homeroom teacher, alterations to the uniform are permitted. The date for wearing high school sweatshirts will be announced in the spring in homeroom.

Uniform Infractions

Grades 4-8: For every 3 uniform infractions, a detention will be issued.

TECHNOLOGY AND INTERNET USAGE AGREEMENT

ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON - Catholic Schools

Purpose

Archdiocesan parents, educators, and administrators work together every day to ensure the safety and security of all God's children. With our schools' ever-growing and abundant technology resources, it is more important than ever that we communicate clear expectations of our students. The following guidelines were developed from Archdiocesan curriculum and have been adapted, with permission, from the [International Society for Technology in Education](#). For more information regarding each school's individual rules, please refer to your school policy. Thank you for your consideration and cooperation.

Our schools provide students with an opportunity to access computers and computer networks, including the Internet. Our goal in providing this service is to promote educational excellence in our schools. Access to this technology is a privilege, not a right. All students are expected to abide by the following technology rules and to sign the user agreement.

Students

1. Students will cultivate and manage their digital identity and reputation and demonstrate awareness of the permanence of their actions in the digital world. T.PKS.DC.1. All Students:
 - a. Shall always represent themselves in a manner that respects the values of the Catholic Church when using electronic devices, network and the Internet and demonstrate an understanding that digital content is everlasting, even when deleted or within privacy settings;
 - b. Shall only use accounts assigned to them or authorized by the school, supporting others' positive digital identity by not accessing the accounts of others or falsely representing themselves as others;
 - c. Shall keep all accounts and password information private and secure.

2. Students will engage in positive, safe, legal and ethical behavior when using technology equipment, including social interactions online or when using networked devices. Students will demonstrate an understanding of and respect for the rights and obligations of using and sharing intellectual property. T.PKS.DC.2, T.PKS.DC.3. All Students:
 - a. Shall always demonstrate kind and respectful behavior towards others when using electronic devices, network and Internet; following school policy agreements and [anti-cyberbullying laws](#) at the local, state and federal levels;
 - b. Shall immediately report any known cyberbullying behavior to a teacher or supervising staff member;
 - c. Shall protect the rights and privacy of others, by never photographing or filming an individual without consent, and never posting and/ or distributing videos or photographs without consent of the school and the persons depicted;
 - cl. Shall behave in a safe manner when using technology by protecting and not sharing personal information and personal images in the public domain. While on school property, students will only use technology to communicate with individuals within the school community or organizations/ experts approved by teachers. While on school grounds students shall only use communication platforms approved by the school and all communication shall be only for educational purposes;
 - e. Shall abide by all copyright and intellectual property laws, avoiding plagiarism by using proper citations or permissions. Students shall only use work product that is their own, not taking credit of the work of others;
 - f. Shall immediately report to a teacher or supervising staff member any inappropriate material or misuse of technology equipment of which the student becomes aware.

3. Students will manage their personal data to maintain digital privacy and security and are aware of data-collection technology used to track their navigation online. T.PK8.DC.4. All Students:

- a. Shall protect and manage personal data in a safe manner by never posting, or otherwise distributing personal information such as photographs, home addresses, telephone numbers, parents' work addresses or telephone numbers or the name and location of the school;
 - b. Shall respect networking protections and security within the school infrastructures by working within the designated login and security parameters and never reconfiguring or hacking any school hardware, software, or network settings;
 - c. Shall use school issued email accounts for authorized educational purposes only;
 - d. Shall respect the right of the school to monitor student use of technology.
4. Students will treat all technology equipment including issued devices, software and networking systems with **care and respect, whether at school, at home, or elsewhere. All Students:**
- a. Shall demonstrate proper physical care for technology equipment;
 - b. Shall protect the proper functioning of technology equipment by downloading only teacher approved files and not intentionally writing, producing, generating, copying or introducing dangerous codes or programs designed to cause harm, including, but not limited to viruses, bugs, 'worms', etc.;
 - c. Shall respect the digital property of others by not accessing or searching files, directories, or folders for which the student does not have authorization, and by not intentionally erasing, renaming, moving, or disabling anyone else's files or programs;
 - d. Shall maintain the settings of any issued device by not manipulating any device settings or functionality.
5. **Students understand and acknowledge that:**
- a. Any violation of this policy may result in permanent revocation of their technology privileges and other disciplinary action may be taken in the sole discretion of the principal.
 - b. Schools may require that technology used in a bring your own device program must meet certain compatibility requirements, use certain security measures, and include certain hardware, software, or applications, which may include applications that grant the school control over the content on the technology.
 - c. Use of all technology may be monitored, and there is no expectation of privacy for issued devices, or for any information stored on any technology used on school grounds, including any information or files stored in students' personal accounts (such as social media or file sharing accounts) that are accessible via such technology.
 - d. The school reserves the right to maintain, access, or retrieve an issued device at any time, at its sole discretion; the school reserves the right to access a student's computer files or any other technology equipment when required for the maintenance of the school's technology equipment, in emergencies, in the course of investigation of possible wrongdoing, or at the discretion of the principal.

Parent/ Guardian

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) shall support both school and ADW-wide policies and procedures as they relate to the use of technology and our Catholic Identity

1. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will monitor online behavior and social media within the home and notify the school in the event of any incident contrary to the school policy, providing evidence when applicable.
2. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will monitor their child's use of the Internet when the school networks and accounts are accessed from home or a non-school location
3. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) agree that students' schoolwork should be limited to school authorized accounts only (if provided by the school)
4. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) shall respect the right of the school to monitor student use of technology
5. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are responsible for all fees as determined by school policy related to loss, damage, or misuse of school technology.

Additional resources related to digital safety and digital citizenship; <https://adwcollaborators.weebly.com/parent-resources.html>

Student & Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement

By signing this agreement, the guardian(s) acknowledge(s) that he or she has read the above expectations and reviewed with the student below. Both parent and student understand and agree to abide by those terms. Violations of this agreement are subject to disciplinary action by the appropriate administrators.

Student's Name

Parent/Guardian Name

Student's Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Definitions

Cyber-bullying/Harassment: of others online, whether against a student, non-student, or employee, is serious, is prohibited, and is contrary to the School's policy and values. Harassment/ cyber-bullying whether it is initiated on or off campus, online or in person, should be reported immediately to a faculty member, and may lead to disciplinary action and possible criminal prosecution. <https://cyberbullying.org/>

Data-Collection Technology for Tracking Navigation: Entities that track an individual's personal data when using networked devices, for example, website cookies, search algorithms return results based on past searches, website analytics, GPS on cell phones, the "Internet of Things" where data is exchanged between networked devices and objects

Digital Identity and Reputation: How an individual is represented online in the public domain, based on activities, connections or tagging. For example; social media posts, photos, public online comments/reviews, awareness and monitoring of how others are depicting you online

Digital Privacy and Security: For example; activate privacy settings on social media accounts and search engines, recognize sites that use encryption, secure login and password information on shared devices, read and be conscientious about accepting privacy policies and access requests from apps and websites

Educational/ Academic Purposes: Those tasks performed by students, which are directly related to the schools curricular assignments, projects or research.

Electronic Device: Any device (personal or school-issued), including, but not limited to desktop computers, laptops, Chromebooks, Smartphones, iPads, tablets and e-Readers.

Ethical Behaviors: Interactions that align with one's moral code, for example, preventing or not engaging in cyberbullying, trolling or scamming; avoiding plagiarism; supporting others' positive digital identity

Legal Behaviors: Interactions that are mindful of the law. For example, abiding by copyright and fair use, respecting networking protections by not hacking them and not using another's identity.

Intellectual Property: Content or ideas created by an individual or entity, for example, music, photos, narration, text and design

Internet: A global computer network providing a variety of information and communication facilities, consisting of interconnected networks using standardized communication protocols.

Issued Device: Device that is the property of the school and is provided to a student as part of the student's educational program.

Managing Personal Data: For example, creating effective passwords, authenticating sources before providing personal information, sharing personal data conscientiously, not posting address and phone numbers visibly

Network: The system of devices, kiosks, servers, databases, routers, hubs, switches and distance learning equipment.

Online or Networked Devices: For example, internet-connected computers or tablets, multiplayer gaming systems and cell phones

Parent: The biological or adoptive parent, legal guardian or person acting in the absence of the parent or guardian.

Permanence of their actions: Digital content is everlasting, even when individuals delete it or believe privacy settings fully protect them from scrutiny.

Positive Behaviors: Interactions that convey a portrait of the way you want to be perceived and healthy interactions with technology itself, for example, moderating the time online or gaming, ergonomic issues and balancing use of media with daily physical activity.

Rights and Obligations of Using and Sharing: Abiding by copyright and fair use, citing resources, gaining or giving permission to use (content), avoiding plagiarism, understanding and using creative commons.

Safe Behaviors: Interactions that keep you out of harm's way, for example, knowing the identity of who you are interacting with; how much and what kind of information you release online; protecting oneself from scams, phishing schemes and poor purchasing practices (e-commerce theft)

Student Authorized Users: Any student enrolled in this school who is assigned a username and password.

Technology (equipment): Any electronic device or system that uses, stores, manages, carries, or supports audio, video, text or data and includes, but is not limited to, information transmitted or received via radio, television, cable, microwave, telephone, computer systems, networks, copiers, scanners, cell phones/smart devices and fax machines.

Parent Review Confirmation

Please read the statement below and click on the Docusign link at the bottom. This link will take you to an electronic signature form which needs to be completed no later than September 1, 2024.

I have read the 2024-2025 *Our Lady of Mercy Parent/Student Handbook* and understand compliance with the regulations is necessary for enrollment and attendance of my child/ren. In addition, I have reviewed the contents with my student/s and agree to reinforce the policies with my child/ren.

We thank you for the opportunity to work in partnership with you on the critical task of educating your child, mind, body, and soul.

[Click Here for 2024-25 Handbook Review and Agreement Confirmation](#)