



Saint Mary SCHOOL

FAITH • FAMILY • ACADEMICS

PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK

2026-2027

MISSION STATEMENT

*Saint Mary School is a Christ—centered educational community
dedicated to fostering Catholic faith and Gospel values,
while striving for academic excellence
within a nurturing family atmosphere.*

**St. Mary School
24 Dodgingtown Road
Bethel, CT 06801**

Phone: (203) 744-2922

Website: www.stmarybethelct.org

Facebook: St. Mary School, Bethel

SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of St. Mary School is to develop students' knowledge of God and self, educate their minds, enhance students' capabilities and skills, and teach them to respond to spiritual and social obligations.

The tradition and foundation of St. Mary School is Catholic Christian education based on Gospel values. The school fosters respect for God-given freedoms and dignity, global awareness, and acceptance of cultural differences.

St. Mary School exists to meet the Christian and academic needs of each child and challenges each student to think critically, evaluate, justify, and draw conclusions intelligently. St. Mary School provides a nurturing environment which develops each child's potential and enhances an appreciation of faith, family, and community.

Common goals form a partnership between parents and faculty which is a key element in the development of the whole child. At St. Mary School, our responsibility is to mold effective citizens of the world. A strong commitment to peace and social justice, as well as a genuine concern for others, is shared and encouraged in our faith community.

St. Mary School does not discriminate on the basis of religion, race, sex, national origin, age, or handicapping conditions.

Religious, Administration, Faculty & Staff of St. Mary School 2025-2026

Pastor:	Father Corey Piccinino
Parochial Vicar:	Father Johnson Singarajan
Principal:	Mrs. Michelle Powrie
Administrative Assistant:	Mrs. Beth Hegarty
Director of Enrollment:	Mrs. Geraldine Henn
PK4 Teacher:	Mrs. Rebecca Press
PK4 Teacher:	Mrs. Erica Monson
PK3 Teacher:	Ms. Toni Fiorillo
Kindergarten:	Mrs. Melissa Zilliox
1st Grade:	Mrs. Rose Schlemmer
Second Grade:	Mrs. Karen Johnson
Third Grade:	Mrs. Alicia Mazzone
Fourth Grade:	Mrs. Jennifer Griek
Fifth Grade HR:	Mrs. Cathy Kallberg
Sixth Grade HR:	Mrs. Sarah Herring
Seventh Grade HR:	Mrs. Haylee Morrison
Eighth Grade HR:	Mr. Americo Mendes
Music (PK-3):	Mrs. Wendy Mitchell
Music Production (Gr.4-8):	Mr. Bob Sirois
Art & World Language:	Mrs. Danielle Falconieri
Physical Education:	Mr. David Burke
PK Aides:	Mrs. Jaenine Lostumbo, Mrs. Alice Fiorillo Mrs. Christy Capone
Interventionist:	Mrs. Cathy Huffman
Counselor:	Mrs. Katrina Egan
Nurse:	
Bookkeeper	Ms. Kathleen Nugent

Faculty/staff email address: firstinitiallastname@stmarybethelct.org

GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION

SCHOOL HOURS

Full day session for Grades K-8:

7:40 A.M.* to 2:00 P.M.

**School BEGINS at 7:40 A.M., students should arrive no later than 7:30 A.M.
No student should be dropped off before 7:10 A.M.*

Pre-Kindergarten

9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. or

9:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.

PK DropOff: 8:50am-9:00am

After-School Club PK-8

2:00 P.M. - 5:30 P.M.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

St. Mary School will *delay/dismiss early/close* whenever the Bethel Public Schools *delay/dismiss early/close* due to inclement weather (or other reason).

Inclement Weather Schedule

	Gr. K-8	PreK 3 & PreK 4	ALL	ALL
2- hour delay	Doors open 9:10 am; students must be present by 9:37am	No Before Care Class begins at 9:15am, drop off at 9:10 am	Regular lunch time	Regular dismissal; AfterCare available
UNSCHEDULED Early Dismissal (weather related or other)	School dismisses At 10:50am, no aftercare	School dismisses At 10:50am, no aftercare	No lunch period	No AfterCare available

Notifications will be sent via emergency notification system by text to the phone number that families have designated at the beginning of the year. Notifications will also be posted to the school Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/StMaryBethel>. Please make sure to notify the office of any changes in phone numbers or email addresses.

In the event of an unscheduled early dismissal, there will be no After School Care (Club) services available, therefore all students will need to be picked up or transported home on their bus route.

NOTICES

In an effort to “go green”, notices will be emailed to parents and/or available on the school website on a password protected Parent Page. Please check your email daily to ensure proper communication between home and school. When need be, print out notices that need to be returned to the office.

TRANSPORTATION

Riding the bus is a privilege. Improper conduct on the bus will result in that privilege being denied. Bus drivers are the authority on the bus and at bus stops. Students are required to wear seat belts according to state law. Pupils attending St. Mary School, who reside in the Town of Bethel, are eligible for transportation to and from school under Public Act 653 (State of Connecticut). **Non-Bethel residents may not ride to or from school when going to the home of a Bethel resident.**

All students are expected to follow certain rules and regulations regarding safety and bus behavior specifically:

1. Remain in given seats until the bus stops.
2. Eating or throwing objects on the bus or out of windows is not allowed.
3. Loud or abusive language will not be tolerated.
4. If there is a problem with bus conduct, disciplinary action will be taken which could result in suspension from riding the bus.

5. If your child is taking a different bus home for any reason, a note MUST be sent into the school office so that the proper dismissal notifications can occur.

ABSENCE-TARDY

If your child will be absent **YOU MUST SUBMIT the [Student Absence form](#) found on our website** to verify his/her absenteeism before 8am. **DO NOT email the office or teacher.** Prolonged absences due to illness will be handled through the school nurse and principal.

A written explanation from parents or guardians for a student's absence is mandatory upon return and will be kept on file in the school office for at least one year. **In the case of an absence of three days or more, a doctor's note will be required.** Daily attendance records should be kept indefinitely.

Anyone entering the school after the 7:40am bell is tardy.

Student attendance in Catholic schools of the Diocese of Bridgeport shall be in accordance with the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut. **Students who have four unexcused absences in one month, or ten unexcused absences in a school year, are considered to be truant.**

Excessive tardiness may be reported to the State Department of Family and Children Services. Students may not participate in any school-sponsored event if they are not in school on the day of the event without the express permission from the Principal.

Students ‘shadowing’ or spending the day at another school will be marked with an excused absence, provided the following has occurred:

1. Prior notification to the Principal from the parent.

ABSENCE-TARDY (continued)

2. No more than three school visits to be considered as excused absences during a school year.
3. Multiple visits to a single school within one school year will be counted as unexcused absences.

These excused absences will not affect a student's eligibility for perfect attendance recognition.

Family vacations should not take place when school is in session. Should such a vacation occur during school time, such vacation will be deemed as an unexcused absence. It is expected that all missed assignments for any reason will be made up in a period of time determined by the teacher and approved by the Principal. Teachers will not provide work before a vacation.

While regular school attendance is most important and is always strongly encouraged, we ask all parents to make sure that students are in good health before sending them to school. A child who is not well is unable to work productively, and his/her illness jeopardizes the health of fellow students and faculty.

A student's well-being is far more important than a perfect attendance record. **Parents may arrange to have work picked up outside of the school after 2:30pm.**

If parents/guardians are out of town for a period of time, the school should be notified with the contact information of the temporary caregiver.

DISMISSAL

School is dismissed at 1:53pm and students should be picked up at 2pm if they do not ride a bus. Bus students are dismissed first and then students being picked up are called to the front entrance and dismissed to a parent. Please note: if a child is not picked-up by 2:12pm, they are brought to AfterSchool care and families will be charged accordingly.

Cars are not permitted in the bus lane (in front of school). The parking lot on the side of the gym should be utilized to park for drop off and pick up.

Appointments should be made outside of school hours, including on early dismissal days. When a student is released early from school, it not only impacts the student leaving, but the students in the class who are being distracted by the early dismissal student, and interrupting teaching time for student dismissals. Our school hours are convenient for afternoon appointments.

A student will not be released from the school during the school day or from After Care (Club) without the written request and consent of the parent/guardian. Students should be released only to a custodial parent/guardian; a non-custodial parent/guardian only after the school makes a determination that such non-custodial parent/guardian is authorized to take the child; or to a person designated and authorized by the custodial parent/guardian. The individual to whom the student is being released is required to show identification and sign the student out.

DISMISSAL (continued)

Parents/guardians must be notified by telephone to make suitable arrangements when it is necessary to send a student home because of illness or other reason. Documentation of this notification must be made. **A student must be picked up within 30 minutes of being notified by the school of an illness or other incident.** Every diocesan school is expected to have an emergency information form on file for each student.

Under no circumstances should the student be sent home from school or a school-related function without the knowledge and permission of his/her parent/guardian. Under no circumstances are students to be sent home alone.

TUITION

The continued functioning of Saint Mary School depends upon tuition and the fund-raising activities of the school and the HomeSchool Association.

Tuition payments run July through April of each school year for a monthly plan; July and January for a semester plan; July, October, January and April for a quarterly plan; or a one-time payment in July.

Non-payment of tuition for more than two months is grounds for removal of the student(s) from St. Mary School.

Diocesan policy states that if tuition is not current, students may not receive their report cards, will not be able to attend field trips, or participate in any extra-curricular activities. Academic records will not be sent

for students who transfer to another school (including high school).

Other fees associated with tuition [i.e., Registration, HSA, Technology, and 8th grade dues)

must be paid as well.

If there are issues regarding the payment of tuition, the responsible parent/party must arrange a meeting with the principal.

DRESS CODE

All students, PreK - Grade 8, wear the school uniform, purchased through Lands End. The uniform is worn from the first day of school to the last day of school unless otherwise specified. *All clothes should be labeled with the child's name or initials.*

To view Uniform guidelines, as well as ordering information from LandsEnd.com, click [HERE](#)

Miscellaneous Uniform Reminders:

- Corduroy or denim is not acceptable. Blue or black belts must be worn with long pants and khaki shorts. All boys wear dark socks with pants.
- Shirts and blouses having long sleeves must have the cuffs buttoned. The top button must be buttoned and the tie in the correct place.
- Extreme or fad hairstyles, such as mohawks, are not permitted. Boys' hair length may not exceed beyond the shirt collar or be covering the ears; girls and boys must not have hair hanging in their eyes. No heads may be shaven. Colored hair is not permitted.

DRESS CODE (continued)

- **St. Mary School** fleece/sweatshirts are allowed in cold weather. **No other SWEATSHIRTS or jackets, including St. Mary basketball sweatshirts or hooded sweatshirts, may be worn in class.**
- Wearing any shirt with sleeves hanging below school short sleeved shirts is NOT allowed.
- Shirts having sayings, numbers, pictures, and/or designs which can be seen through the school shirt are NOT acceptable.
- Leg warmers/leggings may be worn to and from school and for recess during the winter months. They must be removed in the bathroom and not worn underneath skirts during the school day.
- Colored nail polish, nail tips, glitter, sparkles, and make-up are not allowed. Tattoos are not allowed.
- Jewelry - only stud earrings, one in each ear on the lobe, religious medals, patriotic pins, one bracelet and wrist watch may be worn to school. No headbands with ribbons or tails, nor other decorative headbands (crowns, cat ears, etc.). Jeans with rips, crop tops and sleeveless shirts are never allowed to be worn to school by any student.
- On casual dress days, instructions will be provided regarding appropriate attire.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

St. Mary School has a regulation physical education uniform ordered through Land's End (Landsend.com). See link above for details.

Students without proper gym clothing will not be allowed to participate in class on that day and it will be noted as an absence from that class.

*No student may phone home for physical education attire.

*Borrowing other peoples' physical education clothes and/or sneakers is NOT allowed.

*A child may be excused from physical education with a note from his parent or doctor due to health reasons.

LUNCH

The lunch and recess period begins at 11:15 A.M. and ends at 11:55 A.M

Outside Food Policy

To promote student safety, consistency, and respect for food allergies and dietary needs within our school community, **outside food may not be brought or delivered to Saint Mary School during the school day for individual students.**

This includes restaurant or takeout meals, fast food, coffee shop beverages, specialty drinks, and food-delivery services.

Students should arrive at school with their lunch, snack, and beverages for the day or participate in the school lunch program when available.

If a student forgets a lunch or there is a special circumstance, parents or guardians

should contact the Main Office so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Food provided as part of a **school-sponsored celebration, classroom activity, or special event must receive prior approval from the teacher and/or school administration** and must follow all school allergy and food-safety guidelines.

Thank you for helping Saint Mary School maintain a safe and consistent environment for all of our students.

RECESS

Behavior and sportsmanship are required. There should be no pushing or pulling of other students. No hard balls of any kind are allowed.

STUDENTS

HEALTH

All students attending schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport will be expected to comply with the existing policies of the local Board of Health as they pertain to required physical examinations and immunizations. All forms provided by the local Board of Health will be used.

Physical examinations are required for all students entering preschool, kindergarten, grade six, and students entering school if requested by the nurse. Yearly sports physicals are also required to participate in our athletic program. All immunizations must be up to date according to the CT mandated standards.

Emergency telephone numbers are required for all pupils and must be updated as changes occur.

If, in the judgment of the school nurse or administrator, a child should be sent home, the parent(s) will be notified. If the parent is not available, the emergency number will be used. Any emergency contact needs to be able to reach the school within 30-minutes.

Please keep the school updated on any changes in your child's physical/mental health. All medical information shared with the school is kept confidential and is only shared with those who need to know.

ILLNESS AND INJURY

All communicable diseases including the following must be reported to the school office along with the name of the diagnosing doctor: strep, mononucleosis, conjunctivitis, chicken pox, impetigo, measles, German measles, rheumatic fever, pneumonia, scarlet fever, whooping cough, mumps, fifth's disease, meningitis. Please also notify the nurse if your child is experiencing flu-like symptoms, including, but not limited to, any COVID type symptoms.

After your child has been sick, they may not return to school until they have gone 24 hours without symptoms or medication to control fever, vomiting or diarrhea.

ACCIDENTS

All accidents on school premises shall be reported to the Principal immediately. The Principal shall complete an accident form. The Diocese shall be informed by the Principal of any accidents. It is the responsibility of the Principal to immediately inform the Diocese of any accidents that occur on school premises or off-premises relating to students or faculty.

MEDICATION

Administration of medication by school personnel should be in compliance with the city/town in which the school resides. Proper medical authorization forms must be used.

Students requiring prescription **and/or over-the-counter medications (oral/topical/other)** in school must present a [physician's authorization and written parent/guardian permission](#). Such medication must be in its original pharmacy container and shall be kept in a locked file in the nurse's office. **All medications must be brought to school and returned home by a parent or guardian. Students may NOT carry medications to and from school.**

In some circumstances, a student may be allowed to self-administer medication with a physician's written authorization.

FOOD ALLERGIES

In keeping with the Diocesan policy regarding life threatening food allergies, parents are required to notify the school in writing if their child has an allergy. We make every effort to work with families to keep children safe regarding allergies, but please know that we cannot be 100% nut and peanut free in our school.

BIRTHDAYS

No edibles are to be sent in or dropped off for birthday celebrations. Sending in stickers, pencils, or something similar is acceptable, but no food items may be consumed.

If party invitations are handed out at school, they must be delivered to ALL the girls in the class, or ALL the boys in the class, or to the ENTIRE class. No student is to be left out.

SPECIAL SERVICES

Public Act 481 (State of Connecticut) affords our pupils the services of the following personnel on a limited basis: Language, Speech and Hearing Clinician, School Nurse, Learning Disabilities. Schedules for the above are determined by the individuals involved and the principal.

TOBACCO

Smoking and chewing tobacco are prohibited by law in the school building and on school buses. Disciplinary actions will be in accordance with regulations provided by the administration.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

No student shall possess, use, or attempt to possess, use, or be under the influence of a prohibited substance on school premises during any school term or off school premises at a school-related activity, function, or event. A "prohibited substance" is defined as:

1. Any controlled substance or illegal or dangerous drug as defined by law, including but not limited to, marijuana, any narcotic drug, hallucinogen, stimulant, depressant, amphetamine, or barbiturate;
2. Alcohol or any alcoholic beverage;
3. Any abuse of glue, aerosol paint, or any other volatile chemical substance for inhalation;
4. Any other intoxicant or mood-changing, mind-altering, or behavior altering drug; and
5. Any prescription drugs used in amounts or purposes not contemplated by the prescription.
6. The transmittal, sale, or attempted sale of a prohibited substance is also prohibited under this policy.
7. Students who violate this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action, including

SUBSTANCE ABUSE (continued)

SUBSTANCE ABUSE (continued)

expulsion and if necessary, notification to the proper law enforcement agencies.

“Use” means a student has smoked, ingested, injected, imbibed, inhaled, drunk, or otherwise taken internally a prohibited substance recently enough that it is detectable by the student’s physical appearance, actions, breath, or speech.

“Under the influence” means a student’s faculties are noticeably impaired, but the student need not be legally intoxicated.

An interview with the parent/guardian of the student is required before a decision is made regarding the student’s readmission to school.

The school reserves the right to require professional counseling as a condition of maintaining a student’s enrollment.

CONDUCT-DISCIPLINE

School discipline should, in all cases, encourage the development and growth of each child toward “self-discipline”. To this end, the following basic regulations for conduct and discipline are in effect:

- Self-control is required to facilitate the teaching and learning process for each class member.
- Respect is encouraged to create a positive Christian attitude toward themselves, classmates, and authority.
- An atmosphere conducive to learning is maintained throughout the school.
- Proper behavior and sportsmanship prevail during school related activities (basketball games, etc.) on or off the school premises.
- **No gum is allowed at St. Mary School.**
- Parents will be financially responsible for damage or destruction of school property.

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

Any time a student is being disciplined, he/she will be fully informed of the reason.

The student will be given the opportunity to tell his/her side of the story before action is taken. The Principal has the right to suspend those pupils whose presence in the school has become a serious impediment to the school operation.

Expulsion of a pupil from school will only follow a period of suspension unless the situation calls for immediate action. Any student who brings a weapon of any kind to school which could prove to be harmful or dangerous to the safety and welfare of other students and members of the school community, will be automatically dismissed from school. If a student’s conduct outside of school results in an arrest, the student may face disciplinary action from the school up to and including expulsion.

The Principal and/or his/her designee may search student desks, lockers and personal belongings, including, but not limited to, handbags, briefcases, purses, backpacks, clothing and other items in a student’s possession.

The local police, using drug detecting dogs, may be invited into the school on a random basis to search lockers and classrooms as a proactive, preventative measure.

BULLYING

Bullying is prohibited in all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport. It will not be tolerated during the school day or during any school-sponsored activities on or off school grounds. Bullying and intimidation are actions that are contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

*******Any behavior deemed by the school administration to be considered as bullying shall result in disciplinary actions, which may include detention, suspension and expulsion from school.**

Any student who retaliated against another student for reporting bullying may be subject to disciplinary actions, which may include detention, suspension and expulsion from school.

Bullying is defined as the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, directed at or referring to another student (B) a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student, that: (i) Causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property, (ii) places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property, (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for such student, (iv) infringes on the rights of such student at school, or (v) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Bullying shall include, but not be limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity

or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

School employees, students, and parents who become aware of any act of bullying must report the incident to the school administrator for further investigation.

Students may report acts of bullying anonymously. Parents or guardians of students may make written reports of acts of bullying or speak with the teacher or principal the day the bullying incident is observed.

Upon learning about the bullying incident, the administrator shall thoroughly investigate the circumstances. Their investigation may include interviews with students, parents/guardians, and school staff, review of school records, and identification of family issues.

If it is concluded that an act of bullying has occurred, the parents or guardians of the student who committed such acts and the parents/guardians of the student against whom such acts were directed shall be notified. Consequences for students who bully others shall depend on the results of the investigation and include parent conferences, professional counseling, detention, suspension, or expulsion. Depending on the severity of the incident, or the series of incidents, the administrator may also take appropriate steps to ensure student safety. These may include implementing a safety plan; separating and supervising students involved, providing staff for students as necessary, reporting incidents to law enforcement if appropriate,

BULLYING (continued)

and establishing a supervision plan with the parents.

Bullying incidents that demand suspension or expulsion shall be reported to the Superintendent before any final decision is reached.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Students attending Saint Mary School relinquish certain rights they might otherwise be entitled to if they were attending public school. For example, a student's freedom of speech is limited in many important respects here at our school. Speech, either written or oral, contrary to the Roman Catholic Faith, the teachings of the Church or the directives of the local Bishop or Ordinary is prohibited, as is any other speech which is contrary or disruptive to the philosophy and purposes of our school.

INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE

St. Mary School has Internet access in the classrooms and the office. Faculty, staff, parents, and students sign a Diocesan Internet Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) which remains on file. The school maintains a web-filter to block inappropriate content; however no tool is 100% effective. Web logs are maintained and viewed regularly. Any student engaging in inappropriate use of the Internet at school will not be able to use the school computers and may be subject to additional disciplinary actions up to and including expulsion. Internet safety and computer ethics are taught as part of the technology curriculum. Parents are strongly encouraged to develop their own rules and policies for safe Internet use at home.

COMPUTERS/TECHNOLOGY (SCHOOL ISSUED)

School issued iPads will be used by Grades K-1 and Chromebooks will be used by Grades 2-8. I-Pads and Chromebooks will be used at the discretion of each classroom teacher.

All students and parents will sign an Acceptable Use Policy in order to be allowed to access and use of these devices.

If any student damages their assigned iPad or Chromebook, parents will be invoiced for the replacement.

Other Electronic Devices

At St. Mary School we recognize the educational benefits that your child may receive from reading on an electronic reading device. These devices may include, but are not limited to: Amazon Kindle, Barnes and Noble Nook, Sony Reader, iPads and others.

Saint Mary School will not be liable for lost/damaged/stolen devices. If your student uses his/her electronic reader for its internet capabilities, downloadable games, or shares with classmates, that student will lose the privilege of bringing the electronic device to school for the remainder of the school year. If the device is taken away, a parent needs to come to school to pick up the device after school.

Cell phones are NOT permitted during school hours. If a student must bring a cell phone to school, it must be in the off position and in their backpack until after dismissal.

SEARCH & SEIZURE

Another important right all students at Saint Mary School surrender involves searches and seizures. School administrators may search a student's person and belongings if there is a reasonable belief, in the sole opinion of the school administrator, that contraband, illegal substances or inappropriate objects are being concealed. Any unauthorized items found may be seized. Additionally, student desks, which are at all times under the joint control of the school and the student to whom the desk has been assigned, may be searched by school administrators at any time, for any reason or for no reason at all. Students should have absolutely no expectation of privacy with regard to any item in their desks.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community service is an important part of the community at St. Mary School. Each class is required to participate in a community outreach project during the school year.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In keeping with the purpose of a Catholic school, all students, whether Catholic or non-Catholic, are required to participate in the religious education program of the school. The religion program shall present the central doctrines of the Catholic faith in keeping with the norms set by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *National Directory for Catechesis*.

We begin each day with prayer as a school community. Religion classes are conducted daily.

Mass is celebrated at least once a month with seasonal themes. Students in grades K – 8 attend the 9:00 First Friday Mass each month. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered to the children several times throughout the year. The closing of each day ends in prayer.

GUIDELINES FOR THE EDUCATION OF NON-CATHOLICS

Parents must be made aware of the intentional Catholic identity in our schools. Saint Mary School, as a Catholic school within the Diocese of Bridgeport, has as its primary mission the formation of children in the Catholic faith.

According to the norms of our Church, it is expected that non-Catholics participate as fully as they can in the liturgical and prayer life of the school. The religious educators of our schools are committed to teaching the fullness of revelation as it is taught by the Roman Catholic Church. While our teachers value ecumenical education, and respect the traditions of other ecclesiastical communities, they always teach within the context of fidelity to the doctrine and traditions of the Catholic Church.

ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS

The Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools has adopted the i-Ready diagnostic testing platform, a key component of our personalized learning initiative.

i-Ready encompasses two essential components: the i-Ready Diagnostic and i-Ready Personalized Instruction. It is an adaptive assessment that customizes questions according to each student's needs. The test dynamically adjusts; for instance, if a student answers correctly, they will receive slightly more challenging questions, while incorrect answers lead to easier prompts.

i-Ready Personalized Instruction delivers lessons tailored to each student's skill level and areas for improvement, allowing learners to progress at their own pace.

We conduct diagnostic testing three times throughout the school year—September, January/February, and April/May—with immediate access to assessment data. Parents will receive reports after the second marking period and at the conclusion of the school year.

In addition to i-Ready, students in Grades 5 & 8 complete the ARK (Assessment of Religious Knowledge) assessment for catechesis in our schools. This online assessment, is based on The Catechism of the Catholic Church and aligns with leading Catholic religion textbooks. It serves as a comprehensive tool to measure students' religious knowledge and beliefs.

GRADING

The Grading System for the elementary schools of the Diocese of Bridgeport shall be as follows:

Pre-K: A skills based report will be sent to parents after the second marking period and at the end of the school year.

Grades K-2

E	Exceeds grade-level standards
M	Meets grade-level standards consistently
W	Working toward mastery of the standard or is inconsistent
N	Not yet meeting grade level
I	Insufficient evidence provided usually due to lack of attendance or effort
X	Not assessed at this time
*	Modified curriculum due to approved Accommodation Plan

Grades 3 & 4

4.0	Distinguished: Student demonstrates knowledge which exceeds grade level standards.	1.0	Emerging: With help, the student demonstrates some understanding of foundational skills and grade level standards.
3.5	Student demonstrates some understanding beyond grade level standards.	0.5	With some help, student demonstrates some understanding of foundational skills.
3.0	Proficient: Student demonstrates mastery on grade level standards. This is the target/goal for success.	0	Deficient: Even with help, the student is not successful.
2.5	Student demonstrates partial success on grade level standards.	I	Insufficient evidence provided for demonstration of mastery when assessed - usually due to lack of attendance or effort.
2.0	Developing: Student demonstrates basic understanding and is partially proficient at meeting grade level standards.	X	Not assessed at this time.

GRADING (continued)

Grades 5-8

A	94-100	C+	77-79	Skills	
A-	90-93	C	74-76	1	Excellent
B+	87-89	C-	70-73	2	Good
B	84-86	D	66-69	3	Improvement Needed
B-	80-83	F	0-65	4	Unsatisfactory
				*	Modified program

HOMEWORK

Homework is assigned each evening. The homework will be assigned depending on the age and ability of the children. Failure to complete homework will affect the overall grade.

Approximate time schedule:

Kindergarten	10-15 minutes
Grade 1	20 minutes
Grades 2&3	30-40 minutes
Grades 4&5	45-60 minutes
Grades 6	60-75 minutes
Grades 7&8	90-120 minutes

It is expected that long term assignments and make up work will be done on weekends. Children needing additional reinforcement in their work should also use weekends to strengthen their skills.

SEMESTER EXAMINATIONS

Semester examinations will be administered to students in grades 6, 7, and 8.

The purpose of these examinations is four-fold:

1. To improve study skills;
2. To cultivate organizational skills;

3. To develop the skill of retaining information; and
4. To prepare students for high school.

REPORT OF PUPIL PROGRESS

Report cards are issued four (4) times during the school year. Graded papers are sent home at regular intervals. Developmental evaluations may be used for Pre-K at the discretion of the Principal.

Parent-teacher conferences are held in November for all students. If a teacher or parent would like an additional conference(s), arrangements should be made between parent and teacher to meet on a mutually agreeable date and time.

PROMOTION/RETENTION

If the final grade is an "F" in a major subject, summer school is strongly recommended. If the final grade is "F" in two or more major subjects, retention is strongly recommended.

PROMOTED means that the pupil has completed the grade's work and has attained a minimum of a "D" average in all major subject areas. Major subjects: Religion, Social Studies, Math, Science, Language Arts.

PROMOTION/RETENTION (continued)

ADVANCED means that the pupil has failed to meet the minimum level of achievement of grade level. After consideration of all factors (social, emotional, physical, academic, age) and in consultation with the Student Study Team, a decision will be reached and parents will be notified.

RETAINED means that the pupil has failed on the final average, two or more major* subjects.

*Major subjects: Religion, Social Studies, Math, Science, Language Arts/English, Reading/Literature.

If consideration is being given for a pupil to either be advanced or retained, the parents shall be notified in writing no later than the end of the third marking period. Prior to this time, teachers should have been in frequent contact with parents and administrators to discuss the difficulties the student might be experiencing.

In all cases concerning advancement or retention, teamwork between school and home is essential. A positive attitude should be maintained.

Written notification of the determination to advance or retain a pupil shall be sent to the parents by the administrator no later than May 1 of the school year.

ATHLETIC PROGRAM -

Basketball for boys in Grades 5,6,7,8
Basketball for girls in Grades 5,6,7,8

Our athletic program is directed by volunteers; therefore, your support is greatly appreciated.

No students will be selected for the athletic program if he/she is not maintaining at least a solid “C” average in each subject. The academic status of students selected will be reviewed periodically.

Students who are selected will be suspended if they do not maintain at least a solid “C” in each subject. Reinstatement will be considered after two weeks if the student attains a solid “C” average.

- *If a student falls below a “C” average a second time, he/she may be removed from the team for good.*
- *Any student receiving an “F” in a subject will be removed from a team or squad.*
- *A “3” in conduct may result in suspension from the team.*
- *A “4” in conduct will result in removal from the team or squad.*
- *Poor attitude and lack of self-discipline in the classroom or on the school campus will also be grounds for suspension. Good sportsmanship should be displayed everywhere.*

All students taking part in athletic activities are required to have a YEARLY SPORTS PHYSICAL. A copy of this physical must be dated for the 2026-2027 school year. Example, if dated January 2026 it must be renewed by January 2027, etc. This physical must be on file in the school office. Students who do not have a physical may not participate in the Open Gym prior to tryouts, tryouts, or in any Athletic League Program.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

St. Mary School strives to offer a variety of extra-curricular, athletic, and cultural arts activities. Programs may vary from year to year and require a fee to participate. Activities generally take place after school and participation may be limited to students in certain grades.

PARENTS

CONFERENCES

Conferences are held in the fall. Additional conferences can be requested at any time convenient for both parent and teacher during the school year.

COMMUNICATION

As parents, you are your child's first teacher and our partner in their education. Therefore, regular communication with you is an essential part of your child's school experience.

Scheduled parent/teacher conferences allow teachers and parents to discuss student achievement as well as to develop a means to assist students in areas of difficulty.

A parent may request a meeting with a teacher at any time by simply sending a note or email to the teacher and the teacher will arrange for this meeting outside class time at a mutually convenient time. The meeting should take place in the classroom or someplace that ensures privacy, never in the hallway or off-campus. A parent who is refused a meeting should notify the principal.

Parents are asked not to have impromptu meetings with teachers at morning arrival or afternoon dismissal. It is important that we have your current e-mail address and home/cell number for all communications.

When communicating with your child's teacher via phone, email or written note, you can expect

a response within 2 business days. If you do not receive a response within two (2) business days, email the school principal.

NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT

Release of Copies of Report Cards, School Notices, etc.:

In the absence of a court order to the contrary, the school will provide a non-custodial parent access to academic records and other school information regarding your child. If there is a court order specifying that this should not happen, it is the custodial parent's responsibility to provide the school with a copy of the court order.

Non-custodial parents are generally entitled to receive duplicate sets of report cards, school and special event notices, school calendars, etc.

Release of Children

Non-custodial parents may pick up a child only if previous arrangements have been made and the custodial parent has notified the school office in writing.

PARENTS AS PARTNERS

Just as the parents look to the school to provide the facilities and the trained personnel that are essential to their child's proper development, so the school looks to the parents to assume active responsibilities that cannot be delegated to others. No school can be completely effective in teaching the values of religion and the virtues of honesty, respect for authority, consideration for the rights and property of others, and standards of personal morality and integrity unless these principles have been established, upheld, and valued in the home.

PARENTS AS PARTNERS (continued)

If parents cooperate with the school, instill respect for authority in the home, this is likely to be reflected in the positive attitudes of their children. Parents are asked to take an active role in their child's education by:

- Assisting their child in his/her academic and moral development by carefully reviewing class work, test results, progress reports, and report cards; supervising home study; and reinforcing school policies.
- Explaining and reviewing periodically the school behavior code with their child. (Parents should discuss school disciplinary episodes in relation to the school behavior code).
- Seeing that the dress code, including gym uniform and summer uniform, is enforced, and insisting that children dress in a modest, age-appropriate manner.
- Insisting on their child's regular school attendance and punctuality and on complying with attendance rules and procedures.
- Making all tuition and fee payments on time and participating in fund raising activities.
- Providing proper supervision at home, and not tolerating harassment, inappropriate or violent behavior, or the viewing of such videos, movies, song lyrics, or inappropriate use of the Internet.
- Teaching their child respect for law, for authority, for the rights of others, and for public and private property (This includes showing respect for the work of others by not tolerating plagiarism or cheating in any circumstance).

- Arranging for a time and place for their child to complete homework assignments.
- Working with the school in a cooperative effort to carry out recommendations made in the best interest of their child, including those related to educational evaluations and counseling.
- Attending all Parent-Teacher Conferences and Parent/Teacher Organization meetings.
- By always interacting in a respectful manner when speaking with or about the administration, teachers and staff of the school (Verbal abuse or physical harassment may result in your child being required to withdraw from the school immediately or not being allowed to re-register for the following year).

The education of a student 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 broken.

SCHOOL WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA

St. Mary School maintains a school website, which provides helpful reminders and useful information for existing parents as well as helpful information for prospective parents. The website can be found at <http://www.stmarybethelct.org>.

Additionally for the most up to date information you can follow us on Facebook at St. Mary School, Bethel and on Instagram at stmaryschoolbethel.

PARENT PORTAL

Parents may access their student(s) progress on PlusPortals. All parents are assigned a log-in through the school which is emailed to parents at the beginning of the school year. Included in the Parent Portal is a student/family directory.

SAFETY

All school entrances are locked at all times. No doors may be propped open at any time. Only specified school personnel may admit visitors. All visitors must report and register at the school office. No visitor is exempt from this policy.

Saint Mary School currently has a school safety crisis plan in place that all staff are privy to. The plan is not for public distribution. **Parents MUST sign IN and sign OUT each time you are at the school. This is mandatory.**

Upon entry and dismissal, students are supervised by school personnel. Parents are not permitted to enter the building during these times. During the school day, classrooms are locked. All egress doors are locked during the school day.

Anyone needing to enter the building must come to the front doors where a camera and intercom system greets visitors. Please be prepared to show ID if asked.

To ensure the security of the building and the safety of each child, Saint Mary School strongly enforces its policy of requiring all visitors, even parents, to report to the office.

To avoid interruption of the learning process, no one may enter a classroom

without the permission from the school office.

Once students are dismissed to their parents, it is no longer the responsibility of school personnel to supervise the students. This includes the playground area and parking lots. Please do not allow children to run around or play in the front parking lot of the school.

Siblings of Preschool students being dropped off should enter through the main (front) doors of the school. Students and parents may only enter and leave the building by the front doors. Gym doors that exit to the outside parking lot are to be used **ONLY** in the case of an emergency. Fire-drills and lockdowns are practiced throughout the year.

Food delivery services (i.e Uber Eats, GrubHub) are expressly prohibited for students. We ask parents to refrain from bringing in fast food items for their children, and under no circumstances should it be brought in/shared with other children.

Restrooms in the hallways are for student use only. Adults in the building should use the restroom in the nurse's office when visiting school.

AFTER-SCHOOL CLUB (Preschool - 8th grade)

St. Mary After-School Club provides a safe, enjoyable after-school environment while assisting parents with childcare needs. Time is allotted for a change of clothes, snack (provided by the member), recreation and homework time. Club is located in the PreK building as well as in the school gym or on

AFTER-SCHOOL CLUB (continued)

occasion, in regular classrooms, and meets Monday - Friday from dismissal to 5:30 P.M. when classes are in session, including early dismissal days. A list of pre-determined early closing dates are included on the Club registration form.

Club closes promptly at 5:30 P.M. A late fee for anyone picking up after that time will be charged, per 15 minutes (or any portion thereof per child). All charges are billed through your FACTS Tuition Management account, and payments must be made on a monthly basis. Continuous late pick-up or accounts in arrears will result in the need to find childcare elsewhere.

Please know: Club is CANCELED during emergency weather-related scenarios. Please plan ahead if this situation occurs. Please have an alternate plan in place for these situations, as you will need to have someone come to the school to pick-up your child(ren) right away.

LUNCH VOLUNTEERS

Lunch duty volunteers assist the teachers in supervising the students at lunch and recess time. Parents supervising on the playground are assigned a particular area and are responsible for students playing in that area. Careful attention should be given to the students during recess time.

Lunch duty volunteers **must** be in the school building by 11:15 A.M.

SCHOOL TRIPS

Each grade, K-7, takes one educational field trip per year. Grade 8 takes a larger scale graduation trip at the end of the school year.

A student who does not have a signed, official Diocesan permission form may not go on the planned trip. Parent phone calls and/or handwritten notes are not acceptable. A faxed permission slip is allowed.

Except in extenuating circumstances, parents and teachers are not permitted to transport students in private vehicles on field trips. Parents and teachers should be aware that the school's insurance policy does not cover them and that they can be held personally liable in the event of an accident.

The Principal always reserves the right to exclude a student from participation in a field trip due to concerns regarding behavior. A student is not to be excluded due to delinquent tuition. No student shall be denied a trip because of parental inability to pay.

HOME SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

Every parent, by virtue of having a child enrolled in St. Mary School, is a member of the Home School Association (HSA). The HSA plans activities for the school, including fundraisers and social events. A weekly newsletter is emailed to all currently enrolled parents/guardians, and meetings are held periodically throughout the school year.

Any notices, publications on social media or any other format for any activity or event sponsored by the Home School Association must be approved by the Principal prior to being published or distributed. Prior to scheduling any committee meetings or Home School events, the School Office calendar and the Parish Office calendar must be checked and permission must be granted by the Principal.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are an integral part of our community and we rely heavily upon them. Some of the volunteer opportunities we have include:

1. Room Parents
2. Lunch and Recess Duty
3. Fundraisers/Socials run by the Home School Association
4. Coaches/Athletic Committee
5. Chaperones

All parents and volunteers, as directed by the Diocese of Bridgeport, are required to register for and complete **Protecting God's Children® for Adults**, a training conducted by VIRTUS® certified facilitators on the prevention of child sexual abuse. The training makes participants aware of the signs of child sexual abuse, the methods and means by which offenders commit abuse, and five easy steps one can use to prevent child sexual abuse. All volunteers **MUST** complete a background check before they are permitted to work in the school. For more information regarding this policy, as well as a list of training classes, please visit www.virtusonline.org.

MISCELLANEOUS

The office telephone may be used only with permission or in the case of emergency.

Students are NOT permitted to text parents during the school day. Please do not text your student during the school day.

All lunchboxes, lunch-bags, clothing (i.e. uniforms, sweaters, sweatshirts and sweatpants) and book-bags must be labeled.

All money that is sent in with a student should be in a marked envelope with name, grade, and purpose. We are unable to make change if needed.

SCHOOL'S RIGHT TO AMEND

Saint Mary School reserves the right to amend this handbook. Notice of amendments will be sent as necessary.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Once students have met the necessary admission requirements and have been accepted in Saint Mary School, the school warmly welcomes these students for the coming school year and will strive to provide them with a solid Catholic spiritual and academic education in a supportive learning environment. Students and parents must always be mindful that attendance at Saint Mary School is by invitation. It is not a “right” because this is a private school. Admission to and continued enrollment in this school include responsibilities regarding conduct, both inside and outside the classroom and the school, and students are expected to conduct themselves in such a manner as to be a credit both to themselves and to their school.

In order to protect its standards of scholarship, discipline and character, Saint Mary School reserves the right, and students and parents or guardians concede to the school the right to require the withdrawal of any student at any time, for any reason deemed sufficient in the sole discretion of the school and its administrators. By the student's attendance at the school, a student and his or her parents or guardians acknowledge the important obligations and restrictions contained in this handbook and agree to be bound by the terms of this handbook.

Students attending Saint Mary School relinquish certain rights they might otherwise be entitled to if they were attending public school. For example, a student's freedom of speech is limited in many important respects here at our school. Speech, either written or oral, contrary to the Roman Catholic faith, the teachings of the church or the directives of the local Bishop or Ordinary is prohibited, as is any other speech which is contrary or disruptive to the philosophy and purposes of our school. Another important right all students at Saint Mary School surrender involves searches and seizures. School administrators may search a student's person and belongings if there is a reasonable belief, in the sole opinion of the school administrator, that contraband, illegal substances or inappropriate objects are being concealed. Any unauthorized items found may be seized. Additionally, student desks and lockers, which are at all times under the joint control of the school and the student to whom the desk or locker has been assigned, may be searched by school administrators at any time, for any reason or for no reason at all. Students should have absolutely no expectation of privacy with regard to any item in their desks.

It should be noted that any mention of prohibited conduct is set forth by way of example only and to provide guidance to the student and his or her parents or guardians. It is not meant to be an exhaustive listing of improper conduct or resultant disciplinary action.