



DIVINE MERCY
CATHOLIC CHURCH & SCHOOL

**Parent/Student Handbook
and Policies
2025-2026**

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DIVINE MERCY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

STUDENT-PARENT HANDBOOK

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Mission Statement and Philosophy

Divine Mercy Catholic School

A community grounded in faith, dedicated to the development of the whole child: mind, body, and soul.

Illuminating Minds. Cultivating Faith

“Christ is the foundation of the whole education enterprise in a Catholic School.”

(The Catholic School #34)

In a faith filled atmosphere, the message of Christ takes priority and becomes integral in all areas of school activities. Our school assists parents in the formation of their child both spiritually and academically. We have high expectations and provide a strong Catholic foundation for a child to continue his/her Christian life in society.

Divine Mercy Catholic School meets the needs of its students by providing creative and competent teaching, a rigorous traditional curriculum, proven research-driven programming, and strong faith formation. DMCS encourages students to achieve academic and moral excellence. We prepare them to assume their proper roles in Church and society and develop in them respect for all peoples and cultures.

SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

Divine Mercy Catholic School is accredited by both Lumen and the Minnesota Non-public School Accrediting Association (MNSAA). Annual reports are submitted to this agency to meet association standards, and an on-site in-depth review occurs every seven years. Curriculum evaluation is an on-going process as part of accreditation. The written curriculum is carefully reviewed and updated on a continuous improvement cycle.

SCHOOL HISTORY

Divine Mercy Catholic School's roots date back to 1860. The school has evolved from the area's three Catholic schools.

Immaculate Conception Catholic School

Alexander Faribault deeded land to the area's first resident priest, Father George Keller. The old Immaculate Conception Catholic Church building still stands on this deeded land today. Immaculate Conception opened their school in the basement of the Berglehner residence in 1860, later moving instruction to the church basement. Lay teachers were the first instructors until the sisters of the Dominican Order in Sinsinawa, Wisconsin, came in 1865 to lead the school. Families paid one dollar a month for each child in addition to the necessary books and supplies needed for education. In 1872, after outgrowing the church basement classrooms, a new school was built for Immaculate Conception. This school served as the parish school until 1925 under the direction of Father Dolphin. Due to continued increases in enrollment, Monsignor Foley built on a large addition. The Immaculate Conception school building was added on to over the years and remains standing today.

St. Lawrence Catholic School

In 1869 Bishop T.H. Grace gave the German Catholic people of Faribault permission to form their own parish. A small frame building was built, and their first celebrated Mass was on February 2, 1870. St. Lawrence began teaching school that same year in the basement of the church. In 1872, they purchased new land to build a larger church and school. Beginning in 1881, the Dominican Sisters walked from Immaculate Conception to St. Lawrence to teach the children. Father John Pavlin helped to build up the school until his death in 1896. In 1913, St. Lawrence built a new school building. This building is used today as the location for the Discovery Charter School.

Sacred Heart Catholic School

Sacred Heart Catholic Church was built in 1878. It opened a mission school in 1916. Four Sisters of the Third Order of St. Dominic worked side by side with Father Monge teaching Catholic education and the French language. In 1952, under Father Houle's direction and increasing enrollment, the parish purchased property for a new school. Students began in their new school building in 1956 with hot school lunches at only 15 cents a lunch. This school building now houses a St. Vincent DePaul outreach center.

Consolidated Catholic School (CCS)

The three Catholic schools were consolidated in 1969. Until 2006, the joint schools were called Consolidated Catholic Schools (CCS). CCS was originally a kindergarten through eighth grade educational institution. At the time of this consolidation, all three parish school buildings were still in use. In 1986, the St. Lawrence School building was closed, and the 7th and 8th grade classes were moved to Bethlehem Academy. That same year, preschool programming became part of CCS. By 2010 the Sacred Heart School building was sold to the St. Vincent DePaul Society and the preschool moved to the Mother Samuel Building (old convent).

Divine Mercy Catholic School

In 2009, the three Catholic parishes were merged to form Divine Mercy Catholic Church. With this merger, Consolidated Catholic School ceased to be its own corporation and became a parish school under archdiocesan rules. This precipitated the name change to Divine Mercy Catholic School (DMCS). Sixth grade DMCS students began attending Middle School at Bethlehem Academy in 2013 due to lack of space in the Immaculate Conception School building. In the fall of 2024, Divine Mercy Catholic School, moved into the new school building that adjoins the church and was constructed at 139 Mercy Drive. DMCS currently educates students in preschool through 5th grade.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Divine Mercy Catholic School intends to manage its school and policies in a manner that is consistent with applicable federal, state, and local laws. In those cases, in which our policies conflict with applicable law, the conflict is unintentional, and the law will take precedence.

Divine Mercy Catholic School retains the right to change, modify, suspend, or interpret any policies, whether written or not, without notice, at its discretion. Nothing in this Student-Parent Handbook should be construed as a contract between you and Divine Mercy Catholic School.

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

Divine Mercy Catholic School complies with applicable federal, state, and local laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or disability in the administration of its educational programs. This policy does not prohibit giving Catholic students priority for admission.

Divine Mercy Catholic School has the right and duty to conduct its programs and activities in a manner that it is consistent with its Catholic identity. Accordingly, nothing in this handbook precludes the ability of the school to act in conformance with its Catholic beliefs and identity, including undertaking appropriate actions with respect to students who advocate on school property or at school functions any practices or doctrines which are inconsistent with the religious tenets of the Catholic faith.

ADMISSION POLICIES

Kindergarten Admission

It is the policy of Divine Mercy Catholic School that admission into kindergarten be allowed for children who are five years old as of September 1st of the year in which they are enrolling. **(see Policy #5225)**

Enrollment Prioritization

It is the policy of Divine Mercy Catholic School to utilize a prioritizing system for determining the order for registration in case there are more registrants than class positions. This system allows for the following priority:

Priority #1: All families and employees who currently have children attending DMCS and are committed to continue sending their children to DMCS.

Priority #2: All parish families and employees who will make a commitment to continue sending their child to DMCS.

Priority #3: All non-parish families who will make a commitment to continue sending their child to DMCS.

(see Policy #5150)

Visiting Students

Prospective students who are applying for admission and their families are welcome to visit Divine Mercy Catholic School. Parents must arrange all student visits with the school admissions personnel. Students may not arrange for visits. Visitors must follow all rules and regulations that are binding for current students.

ACADEMIC POLICIES

Program Offerings

Preschool

Faithful Beginnings Preschool programming for 3 to 5-year-old children is held daily at Divine Mercy Catholic School. We maintain both a Kindergarten Readiness curriculum for students one year from kindergarten and a preschool curriculum for children with two years until kindergarten. Inside these programs there are a number of scheduling options including three and five-day classes. Parents can choose full day or half day programming. Parents/guardians are encouraged to register children for preschool in the spring due to a limited number of openings after June 1. Students who attend the five-day all-day programs are given priority in scheduling and class placement. Further information is available in the Faithful Beginnings at Divine Mercy Catholic School Preschool Brochure and Handbook.

Grades K-5

Along with a rigorous academic curriculum in grades K through 5, students participate in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Art, Music, Library/Media, and Physical Education through our specialist classes.

Parent-Teacher Communication and Conferences

The school has established the following ways of communicating with the parents and guardians of its students to increase understanding of the school's mission, programs, goals, and the progress of their children.

Parent/Student Handbook

The Parent/Student Handbook is made available to school families upon enrollment to school and on the school website. Physical copies are made available by request.

Thursday ENews and Communication

The DMCS ENews is sent out electronically each Thursday. This contains important information for parents such as the main newsletter, lunch menus, and other news. Any paper copies of notices or flyers are sent home with the oldest student from each family. Parents/guardians are asked to be sure to check for important notices each Thursday.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent/Teacher Conferences are held before school begins, in the Fall, and in the Spring. A parent/guardian and/or teacher may request a special conference at any time as the need arises.

We invite and encourage parent/guardian visits and participation at any time during the year. This is your child's school, and we invite you to share it with them. Parents/guardians are always welcome to discuss successes, problems, or concerns with the faculty. Appointments can be made during non-school hours for this purpose by calling or emailing your child's teacher. Parents/guardians will also be kept informed of school events through letters sent home with the children and via email as often as needed.

Parent/Guardian Attendance at Conferences

Parents/guardians, students, and teachers are part of the educational process. We request the attendance of a parent or guardian at scheduled conferences so we can maintain communication on a student's progress.

Communication Procedure

To help with the lines of communication between teachers and parents/guardians, the following actions should be taken:

1. If the parent/guardian has a concern about what is happening in the classroom, please make an appointment with the teacher.
2. If you have met with the teacher and are not satisfied, then call, email, or make an appointment with the principal. At that time, a meeting with the teacher, student, principal and parents/guardians may be called.
3. If you are still not satisfied with the results of the meeting with the principal, then make an appointment with the pastor.
4. If still not satisfied, a written statement may be filed with the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, who will decide whether to pursue the concern.
(see Policy#4105)

Custody Information

We ask parents to clearly communicate custody and custodial situations with the school. Please understand that parents have the right to pick up their child from school unless there is legal documentation provided to us that describes a custody arrangement that would prohibit this.

Homework

Homework refers to tasks that the student is assigned to do on his/her own time after school hours. Homework assignments serve as a means of providing a bond of collective effort between parents, guardians, children, and teachers. For homework to be effective, each participant--teacher, student, and parent/guardian--must understand and be committed to carrying out his/her responsibility. If any of the three (parent/guardian, teacher, student) do not fulfill their responsibilities, then the positive effects of homework will be reduced and may have a negative impact on the student's learning.

Homework Responsibilities of Teacher

1. Communicate to students and parents/guardian homework goals and expectations.
2. Set clear and concise expectations concerning assigning, returning, and evaluating homework.
3. Coordinate homework assignments with other teachers with whom students work, and who may assign homework.
4. Assign appropriate homework according to students' needs.

Homework Responsibilities of Student

1. Know and understand the purpose of the homework assignment.
2. Be responsible for copying assignments into assignment notebook if utilized, understanding directions, and knowing what is required for completion of the assignment.
3. Be responsible for completing and returning assignments.
4. Understand when some assignments are to be completed independently, others as a team effort.
5. Complete assignments neatly and do quality work.

Homework Responsibilities of Parent/Guardian

1. Maintain a positive attitude towards learning and the value of homework.
2. Be aware of the homework policy and individual teacher requirements.
3. Help your child find a study area that is quiet and relatively free of distractions.
4. Be patient with your child and praise him/her for any effort made.
5. If the child has trouble understanding the directions, help her/him with explanations.
Do not do homework for the child.
6. Look over the assignment to affirm completion and quality. Praise your child.
7. Support the teacher and the child. Get both sides of a story before making a judgment.

Make-up Work

It is the student's responsibility to make immediate plans to do all make-up work upon return to school. If a parent wishes to request homework be sent home or prepared to be picked up, it should be requested in the morning before classes begin and will be available for pick-up in the school office. Teachers will have assignments ready for pick-up **after the regular school day in the school office.**

Graduation Requirements

Promotion/Retention

Promotion/retention will be based on academic achievement and physical, emotional, psychological, and developmental maturity. In the case of retention, parents/guardians will be notified of their child's situation as soon as possible. If a recommendation is made to retain a child and is rejected by parents/guardians, the parents/guardians sign a written acknowledgment of the school's recommendation. That acknowledgment shall serve to release the school from any responsibility for the parents' failure to follow the school's recommendation.

Grading/Report Cards

Report Cards

Divine Mercy Catholic School utilizes a combination of standards-based assessment (K-2) and traditional grading (3-5) for elementary students. Students are evaluated based on their competence and mastery of the standard. Each assessment is linked to curriculum standards so that student progress is efficiently tracked. Reports on student progress are issued at the end of each quarter. Parents are encouraged to contact their child's teacher with questions or concerns.

Our preschool reports on a child's intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development twice each year at conference times. These reports are based on teacher assessment and observation. Parents are encouraged to attend conferences and ask questions to understand the information. (Please see the preschool handbook for in-depth information about preschool conferences)

Achievement Testing

At Divine Mercy Catholic School, we believe an effective assessment system includes formal, informal, formative, and summative assessments. Our assessment plan promotes student learning and mastery of skills along with guiding instructional decisions and school improvement. We assess student learning to identify and address areas of concern while promoting and celebrating areas of success.

All areas of our curriculum are assessed in some way. Students are assessed by classroom teachers in all subject areas. We use both formative and summative assessments including observation, project, performance, oral and written tests, and other methods.

At DMCS we use the following standardized tests.

Grades K-3; Aims Web

Grades K-5; NWEA (Fall, Winter, and Spring)

Student Records

It is the policy of Divine Mercy Catholic School to collect and maintain the record of students while they attend school. Student records may contain:

1. Identifying data
2. Sacramental Records
3. Academic work completed.
4. Level of achievement (grades, standardized test scores, etc.)
5. Attendance data
6. Health data (may be maintained separately)
7. Accommodation plans or ISP plans (maintained separately)
8. Verified reports of serious or recurring behavior patterns (maintained separately)
(see Policy #5400)

Access to Records

No one except appropriate school personnel, parents/guardians of minors, and students who have reached legal age, shall have access to individual pupil records without either a subpoena or appropriate written authorization either from the parent/guardian (in the case of a minor student), or from the adult student or former student.

Parents/guardians may ask to review the contents of any records or data collected regarding their child. A written request to view student records must be made to the school office.

(see Policy # 5400)

Transfer of Records

To transfer records, parents/guardians are asked to inform the school office as soon as possible when transferring a child to another school. If the tuition and other financial obligations of the student have been paid in full, school records will be sent directly to the new school upon request of that school. Parents, guardians, and students understand, acknowledge, and agree that in the event the tuition or other financial obligations have not been paid in full, Divine Mercy Catholic School shall have the right to withhold all records, including grades, and academic transcript. (see Policy # 5400)

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Daily Arrival and Dismissal Policies

***Preschool parents should refer to the preschool handbook for details on arrival and dismissal.**

Due to safety and supervision of children before school, Divine Mercy Catholic School requests that children be dropped off no earlier than **7:40 AM**. Students arriving before 7:40 AM will be sent to our morning childcare program and parents will be charged the applicable fee. Certified staff will assume supervision starting at 7:40 AM. Students are dismissed at the end of the day at **3:00 PM**. Students not picked up by **3:10 PM** will be sent to school age childcare for supervision and parents will be billed accordingly.

Drop Off

All students should enter the school building through Door #1 or #2. For your convenience, there is a drop off lane for easy pull up and drop off. Enter the lane at the parking lot entrance on Mercy Drive. Follow the signage. Pull up alongside the school and let your child get out of the car. Cars should not park in this area and drivers should not exit the car. Staff and patrols will be available to assist children if needed.

Students may also walk up to the school using the crosswalks with patrols. Parents should park in the parking lot and walk children to a patrol crossing for safety in crossing the drop off/pick up lane. Patrols are located at both crosswalks for your convenience.

Students riding the bus will be dropped off at the bus parking area at the front of the school building. **Please make sure to yield to the bus in the drop off lane.**

No students will be allowed to be dropped off or picked up at the back of the school building at any time. This is to ensure the safety of all students.

Pick-Up

The pick-up lane is the same as the morning drop off lane. It enters the parking lot on Mercy Drive and pulls up at the side of the school by the front entrance. Parents are issued family name cards at the beginning of each school year. These cards can be picked up at the initial parent meetings before school. Parents should display their family name card on their visor so that it can be seen by the teacher on duty. Students will be called to the front door after staff sees the family name. Staff and patrols will assist students needing help. Parents should not exit their car.

Students who meet a parent parked in the parking lot will be dismissed from the front doors by staff members. Parents should walk up to the front entrance (door #1) and wait

for their child's name to be called. Please be patient and utilize the patrol crosswalks to cross the drop off/pick up lane. **Do not cross in the middle of the drop off/pick up lane.**

Students in grades 3 or higher will be allowed to walk to a vehicle parked in the first parking lot section if they have completed and returned a permission slip to do so. These permission slips will be available from the child's teacher and at the front office.

Students with siblings in preschool or KR classes will be allowed to wait in the preschool hallway for parents to pick up at the end of the day. If this is what you desire, please communicate with your child's teacher.

Students riding the bus will be escorted to the bus stop by school staff.

Students attending our extended day programming will meet program supervisors at designated areas in the school building after school. They will be escorted to the programming. This includes after-school clubs such as Robotics.

Absence and Tardiness

To be a successful student at Divine Mercy Catholic School, attendance is necessary. It is a DMCS school policy to adhere to the state of Minnesota regulations concerning school attendance.

Minnesota law recognizes the importance of school attendance and requires children between the ages of 7 and 17 attend school. Children under 7 who are enrolled in school are also subject to Minnesota's compulsory attendance law if enrolled in kindergarten. For children under the age of 12, parents are legally charged with making sure that their children attend school unless lawfully excused.

Examples of excused absences:

- Sickness
- Medical, Dental, Orthodontic or Mental Health Appointments
- Extreme Family Emergency
- The Death, Funeral, or Serious Illness of an Immediate Family Member

Examples of unexcused absences:

- Missing the bus
- Oversleeping
- Cold Weather
- Babysitting

A parent or guardian will call or email (dmcs-office@dmcs.cc) each morning of a student's absence by 8:00 AM. If the school does not receive a call or email from a parent/guardian

when a child is absent, the parent/guardian will be called to confirm the reason for the absence. **Failure to notify the school may result in an unexcused absence.**

Unexcused Absences

An unexcused absence occurs when a student is absent from one or more classes or for an entire day of school without valid parental permission, without communication, or without providing the reason for the absence. When conditions have not been met and the student remains unexcused, the school may request a meeting with the parents and student. Students who are unexcused may not receive academic credit for work missed.

Anticipated Absences

If a parent anticipates their child being absent from school on a particular day, they must notify the school. This can be accomplished through a written note, email, or phone call to the office or the classroom teacher. It is up to the school's discretion to designate an absence excused or unexcused based on the reason for the absence.

Family trips and sport events are not necessarily excused. Breaks are scheduled into a school year, and parents should strongly consider this when scheduling vacations. Missing school days due to these things is just as detrimental as any other unexcused absence. Nothing can replace classroom instruction. If you are planning an absence outside of scheduled breaks, please notify the principal and classroom teacher. **Consideration will be given to the extent of the absence, student's educational needs, and number of days missed per year in the decision-making process of how to classify this absence. Discussion with the principal and pre-approval will aid in the decision-making process.**

Students who have anticipated absences must make appropriate arrangements with teachers to ensure that all missed academic work will be completed. Parents must understand that some work (projects, experiments, etc.) cannot be replicated.

Teachers have **no obligation** to prepare work ahead of the anticipated absence. It is often best to have students make this up upon return to school.

Excessive Absenteeism

Excessive absenteeism, including unexcused and parentally excused absenteeism, may adversely affect a student's academic standing. Students with poor attendance may be subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal.

When excessive absenteeism is due to a medical concern, the school may ask for physician verification. Even with physician verification, the student may be dismissed if academic requirements cannot be maintained.

Tardiness

Punctual attendance is important. Being “tardy” is defined as not being present in the classroom at the sound of the bell that begins and ends each day. Children arriving late or leaving early (any time after 8:00 AM or before 3:00 PM) must report to the school office. Students will be marked tardy up to 9:00 AM and after 2:00 PM. If absent one or more hours of instructional time, a student will be marked ½ day absent.

Excessive tardiness (more than three times in a four-week period) will result in the parent/guardian being notified by the school secretary. Five tardy marks will result in a call by the school nurse or principal to the parents/guardians. Excessive tardiness leads to missed instructional time and is disruptive to the classroom. It may require that the missed time be made up by the student. Regular or excessive tardiness may result in further additional discipline. **(see Policy #5315)**

Consequences to Parents for Educational Neglect

Minnesota truancy law states that **any elementary school child missing three full days without a valid excuse is considered continually truant**. Law requires that a school sends written notice to parents when a child has had more than three full days of unexcused absences from elementary school **that have not been explained**. School officials may require a meeting with a parent to discuss the reasons for the absences and to assist parents in finding a solution to the attendance problem. A school may evaluate the contributing factors to a student’s absences and offer appropriate services or a referral to another community-based agency.

In Minnesota, **a child under age 12 is considered truant if they miss a total of 7 unexcused days that have not been explained in a school year**. When this occurs, a school is legally required to make an educational neglect report to the County Family and Children’s Services Division. If a child’s attendance does not improve after intervention, a parent may face more severe legal consequences. **(see Policy #5315)**

SAFETY AND WELFARE POLICIES

Policy on Prevention of Harassment and Child Abuse

It is a policy of Divine Mercy Catholic School to provide a learning and working environment that is safe and respectful of all persons. Therefore, no student shall be subjected to harassment or abuse of any type. This behavior compromises the safe environment of the school and will not be tolerated. **(see Policy #5200)**

State law defines sexual harassment as including, but not limited to, the following behavior:

- *Verbal Harassment (epithets, derogatory remarks, sexual comments, jokes, or stories, etc.)
- *Physical Harassment (grabbing, touching, gestures, unwelcome physical contact, etc.)
- *Visual forms of Harassment (explicit notes, letters, cartoons, drawings or graffiti, etc.)

Reporting

Any person who alleges harassment by a staff member or student in the school may report directly to a teacher, principal or pastor. Filing of a grievance or otherwise reporting harassment will not reflect upon the individual's status. Divine Mercy Catholic School will act to investigate all complaints, either formal or informal, student or employee, who sexually harasses or is sexually violent to a student or employee of the school. A timely and documented investigation of the alleged harassment will be conducted by the administrator (principal). Complainant, alleged harassers, and parents will be advised of the outcome of the investigation. The appropriate school official will further monitor the situation. **(see Policy # 5375)**

A substantiated charge against a student or staff member of Divine Mercy Catholic School shall subject the student or staff member to disciplinary action which may include suspension or expulsion consistent with the applicable discipline code.

The staff members of the school are legally required to follow the requirements of Minnesota law pertaining to reporting child neglect and/or abuse.

Divine Mercy Catholic School directs all paid employees and volunteers, even those who are not mandated reporters, to report knowledge or belief of the abuse of children, as such knowledge or belief is obtained while engaging in the ministries of Divine Mercy Catholic School, to Rice County Law Enforcement (Investigative Department, 334-0633), or to Rice County Social Services (332-6214 or 332-6115). This must be done if they know of or have reason to believe there is abuse or neglect presently or has been within the past three years. A written report must be filed within 72 hours of the verbal report.

Neglect is defined as failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or medical care. It also precludes prenatal exposure to a controlled substance.

Abuse can be physical abuse, sexual abuse, or emotional maltreatment.

Virtus Training, Background Checks, Code of Conduct

To protect and ensure a safe environment for all our students, the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis has mandated that any parent/guardian or person who will be in charge of a small group of students on a school sponsored field trip/event or be alone with a student within the school must complete a background check, complete Virtus training, and a Volunteer Code of Conduct. There is also an additional background check for people who will be drivers for students on a field trip.

All elements must be completed successfully **before** the event. Background checks that require additional follow-up will be placed for review by the principal and pastor. Parents or guardians could be asked for additional information or contacted for an interview before being cleared for service. After completion of this process, files must be updated every three years using an online system.

Entry and Security Information

Divine Mercy Catholic School has a secure facility that is locked during school hours. To gain access to the building during school hours, visitors must enter the main school entrance (door #1) and be buzzed in by the front desk receptionist. If the receptionist is not at her desk, visitors are asked to ring the bell to alert office staff that someone is at the door.

Emergency Plan

Divine Mercy Catholic School has developed an emergency plan for crises and emergencies. This plan is updated frequently and includes protocol for emergencies such as fire, tornado, and intruders. Every effort is made to instruct staff in their appropriate roles and responsibilities so that all students are kept safe.

Emergency Response Team

An emergency is defined as an intolerable situation or event that disrupts the life cycle, and/or routine of individuals in such a manner that the usual methods of coping are no longer effective. In a time of emergency, it is important for everyone to know what to do and to do it to the best of their abilities. Divine Mercy Catholic School has assembled an Emergency Response Team that, in the event of a crisis, is responsible for providing the leadership and communication needed. This team meets as needed to provide the foundation and framework to deal effectively with any crisis that may occur. Emergency

Management Team members are members of administration and staff. In the event of an emergency, families are encouraged to contact the Main Office at 507-334-7706.

Fire, Tornado, and Safety Drills

Divine Mercy Catholic School participates in fire, tornado, and lockdown drills. When an alarm sounds, students are expected to act quickly, quietly, and in an orderly fashion and to follow the directives of Divine Mercy Catholic School personnel. Plans for these drills are posted in classrooms and on file in the office.

Emergency Dismissal Procedure

DMCS closely follows the attendance calendar of the local school district, including dismissal for emergencies (i.e. dismissal because of inclement weather). The principal may make some adjustments to the school calendar. Official announcements for school closing will be emailed to parents, posted on the school Facebook page, posted on the school website, and announced via media such as KDHL radio and WCCO school closings. Be sure that students know where they should go (i.e. home, a neighbor's home, etc.) in the event of an early dismissal.

An emergency dismissal will be used when a situation arises that can create an unsafe and disorderly environment for the students. When an emergency exists, no students will be dismissed until an announcement is made via communication networks by the principal. In the absence of the principal, the office personnel will decide if an emergency exists and will make an announcement.

All teachers will be held accountable for their students during an emergency. All teachers will be present until students in their class have been safely picked up, sent home, or another staff member has been put in charge of them.

Lockdown Procedures

Divine Mercy Catholic School participates in lockdown drills. If a situation warrants Divine Mercy Catholic School to go into lockdown, students and personnel are required to act in accordance with the school's lockdown procedures. If possible, parents will be notified of the situation via email. The lockdown will continue until the "all-clear" signal is given.

HEALTH PROCEDURES

Emergency Information

Family emergency information is completed at the time of registration through PowerSchool. Parents are asked to make the school aware of any health issues at that time. If changes occur during the year, it is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to update their PowerSchool account and notify the school in writing, by phone, or over email.

Health Records

Health records are required for each student. Students entering preschool are required to provide a health screening form filled out by their physician. It is recommended that the student have a physical before entering kindergarten or first grade, and again in fourth grade to keep current with immunizations.

At the time of enrollment, parents are asked to indicate any health concerns such as allergies and illnesses. If warranted the school nurse works with each family to develop a health care plan addressing these concerns.

Immunizations

DMCS follows the requirements of the Minnesota School Immunization Law, (Minnesota Statutes Section 123.70).

All immunization dates are to be submitted to the school prior to the fall start date of the school's present school year. Students will not be admitted if immunizations are not current or appropriate paperwork is not completed. The parent or guardian is responsible for providing this information in writing to the school office and including additional immunizations each year as they are administered to the student by the family's physician.

Health Screening

Annual hearing and vision examinations will be conducted for students as outlined by law. Our school nurse, with the help of public-school personnel and volunteers, will conduct examinations each school year.

Accidents and First Aid

If a medical emergency arises during school hours and the parents cannot be reached, medical personnel at District One Hospital will be notified or 911 will be called. Any serious infections or communicable diseases will be reported to all parents.

Illness

Students who are running a fever or too ill to participate in all school activities must be kept at home. Students may also not attend school if they have rashes, lesions, or suspected communicable diseases unless they have permission of a physician. **Students must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school. If vomiting or diarrhea is present, the child must be excluded for 24 hours.**

Students who feel ill or need health assistance during the school day should report to the school office. The principal, the school nurse, or school delegate dismisses or approves the dismissal of a student who becomes ill or hurt during the school day. Parents or guardians are notified when it is determined a student needs to be dismissed. If they are unable to come for the student, they must plan for a relative or other authorized person to pick up the student in the school office. No student will be sent home due to illness if no one is at home to be with the student.

Medication Administration

Medications should be taken at home if possible. Except as otherwise covered by law, when a student under age 18 is required to take medication during the school day, the administration and storage of the medication must be in accordance with the following stipulations:

- Designated school personnel will administer or supervise the administration of prescribed medications.
- A physician's order and a parent authorization form are required and must be on file with the student's health records. Orders may be emailed or faxed to the school (fax #507-332-2669).
- Medications must be in a prescription bottle labeled by a pharmacy with the student's name, name of medication, dosage, time to be given, and the pharmacist's date of dispensing.
- Medications are stored in a locked cabinet or drawer.
- Students who wish to carry and administer their own medicine (e.g., an inhaler) must have written consent from the parent and physician to carry the medication on file in their health record.
- Except in extreme circumstances, no over-the-counter medication, including aspirin, will be given to a student without a doctor's order.

School Nurse

Divine Mercy Catholic School has a part-time nurse on staff. She is available by appointment or through email at **dmcs-nurse@dmcs.cc**.

School Counselor

Divine Mercy Catholic School contracts with Phoenix School Counseling to employ a licensed school counselor for two days per week. Students may see the counselor when referred by a teacher or requested by a parent. The counselor can be reached by emailing **dmcs-counselor@dmcs.cc**.

POLICIES ON STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND BEHAVIOR

Code of Conduct/Responsibilities and Expectations

To maintain a Christian learning environment, it is necessary to have a Code of Conduct which provides a safe and secure setting for students, faculty, and administration. Students are given clear and specific expectations as they are led toward becoming self-disciplined individuals. Students are responsible and accountable for their behavior and must accept the consequences for their actions.

Responsive Classroom

DMCS utilizes the *Responsive Classroom* program. This program has several components and works to build a positive classroom culture. Daily Morning Meetings create a safe, caring community where every child can learn. They help focus on social and emotional growth as well as honoring academic and character strengths. Research has shown that children learn best when they have both academic and social-emotional skills. This program helps our teachers build these skills.

Responsive Classroom utilizes logical consequences and helps students solve problems caused by their mistakes. They are not punishments, rather they help students see the effects of their actions, repair the situation, and learn to do better next time. Three basic kinds of logical consequences are:

Take a Break- If a child is losing self-control, s/he goes to a designated spot to cool off. The break is short, and the child rejoins the group as soon as they have gained control.

Loss of Privilege- If a child misuses material or acts out during an activity, s/he will be told to stop using the material or doing the activity for a brief time. The privilege will be restored when the child and the teacher have talked about how to prevent a similar problem in the future.

You Break It, You Fix It- If a child damages something or hurts another's feelings, s/he will try to fix the damage. This can be done with such things as writing an apology card, helping with an activity, or taking some other action beyond saying sorry.

Our goal is to help children believe in their ability to create a caring learning environment. Learning to live by the rules is a crucial step.

Discipline Policy

Responsibilities and Expectations

Divine Mercy Catholic School is a Catholic community. Students are expected to act in accordance with Catholic principles in their behavior with others, including their peers. The teaching and example of Jesus is a model for our behavior. Students are expected to respect the property rights of other students, faculty, and the school. Divine Mercy

Catholic School expects parents and families to cooperate with the school in reaching these goals.

Improper behavior will not be tolerated and is grounds for disciplinary measures, up to and including dismissal. Disciplinary action will be conducted in a way that provides due process and is respectful of all people. Behavior at school events, whether on or off school property, and while using resources provided by the school, whether on or off school property, is governed by all expectations and policies outlined in this handbook. In addition, Divine Mercy Catholic School reserves the right to discipline students for behavior outside of school or school events, which disrupts the school or the school environment. (**see Policy # 5350**)

Consequences

Divine Mercy Catholic School reserves the right to determine in its sole discretion the appropriate consequence for any violation of its policies. Consequences for violations may include, but not be limited to loss of privileges, detention, suspension, disciplinary probation, and disciplinary dismissal.

No Expectation of Privacy

Divine Mercy Catholic School is a private school. Students have no expectation of privacy while on school-owned property or in their use of school-owned or school-provided resources. Divine Mercy Catholic School reserves the right to inspect property at any time, with or without notice and with or without the consent of students or their families.

Disrespectful Behavior, Profanity, and Bullying

Purpose

Divine Mercy Catholic School is committed to providing a safe educational environment for its students and teachers. DMCS acknowledges that it cannot monitor all activities and eliminate all incidents of negative behavior, particularly when one or more of the students is not on school property or under direct supervision of school personnel. However, to the extent that such conduct affects the educational environment at Divine Mercy Catholic School, DMCS reserves the right to act to investigate and respond to such conduct.

The purpose of this protocol is to assist Divine Mercy Catholic School in its goal of preventing and responding to acts of disrespectful behavior, bullying, intimidation, harassment, violence, and other disruptive behavior. (**see Policy # 5360**)

Definitions

For purposes of this protocol,

1. “Disrespectful Behavior”: Behavior that shows a lack of respect for people or property.
2. “Bullying:” Deliberate or intentional behavior using words or actions that is intended to cause or that does cause fear, distress, intimidation, or harm. Bullying is a repeated behavior or a pattern of behavior that involves an imbalance of power.
3. “Cyberbullying:” The use of any electronic means to harass, intimidate, or bully, whether on or off school grounds. “Cyberbullying” is a form of bullying, and provisions of this policy that refer to “bullying” are intended to refer to cyberbullying as well.
4. “On school property or at school-related functions:” Divine Mercy Catholic School buildings, school grounds, and school property or property adjacent to school grounds; school buses, school vehicles, and school-contracted vehicles; the area of entrance or departure from school grounds and premises; and school-related trips, functions, activities, or events. While prohibiting bullying at these locations and events, the school does not represent that it will provide supervision or assume liability at these locations and events.

Provisions

1. Divine Mercy Catholic School expressly prohibits disrespectful behavior or bullying, by either an individual student or a group of students, on school property or at school-related functions. Divine Mercy Catholic School also expressly prohibits cyberbullying, regardless of whether such acts are committed on or off school property or with or without the use of school resources. These prohibitions apply to students who directly engage in an act of bullying and to students who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support another student’s act of bullying. This policy also applies to any student whose conduct at any time or in any place interferes with or obstructs the mission or operations of the school or the safety or welfare of the student, other students, volunteers, or employees.
2. Alleged Consent Irrelevant: Apparent permission or consent by a student being bullied does not lessen the prohibitions contained in this policy.
3. Reporting: A person who observes an act of disrespectful behavior or bullying or becomes aware of such an act must report it to a teacher. Anyone with any behavior concerns should also contact the principal.

4. No Retaliation: Retaliation against a victim, good-faith reporter, or a witness of negative behavior is prohibited.
5. False Accusations: False accusations are prohibited.
6. Violations: A student who violates this policy shall be subject to discipline for that act in accordance with Divine Mercy Catholic School's policies and procedures. Divine Mercy Catholic School may consider all factors it determines to be relevant. Depending on the circumstances, such factors *might* include: the age, development, and maturity levels of the parties involved; the levels of harm, surrounding circumstances and nature and severity of behavior; past incidences, or past or continuing patterns of behavior; the relationship between the parties involved; and the context in which the alleged conduct occurred.

Depending on the level and severity of the offense, discipline may range from positive behavioral interventions to more serious consequences as outlined in Divine Mercy Catholic School discipline policies, including but not limited to, suspension or dismissal. Consequences for other individuals engaging in acts of negative behavior may include, but not be limited to, exclusion from Divine Mercy Catholic School's property and events or termination of services or contracts.

Divine Mercy Catholic School retains the sole discretion to determine the appropriate response, including the appropriate discipline or consequence, for violations of this behavior protocol.

Theft, Vandalism, or Destruction of Property

Theft, vandalism, or destruction of school property or the property of others will result in discipline. Students are expected to exercise reasonable care in the use of school property and school-provided resources and equipment. Students may be required to pay for damage to desks, lockers, other equipment, or property. Unauthorized use of school equipment is forbidden.

Weapons Policy

Divine Mercy Catholic School strictly prohibits the carrying or possession of weapons on its premises. All weapons are prohibited within the school environment and school zones, except for educational purposes as authorized in advance by the building principal or designee. A weapon includes any object that can reasonably be considered a weapon, such as a knife, firearm, explosive, or any device that can be used to threaten, intimidate, or cause bodily harm or fear of such.

Any student attending DMCS found possessing or using a weapon within 300 feet of the school grounds could face immediate suspension by the principal. The principal in such instances will:

- confiscate the weapon,
- immediately notify the parents/guardians of their child's consequence,
- if warranted schedule a conference with the parents/guardians and student to discuss the incident,
- make a referral to the police or other law enforcement agency, if warranted.

Before any suspension would be lifted, the parents/guardians and student will be required to:

- agree to being placed on a six-month probation at DMCS (If summer vacation intervenes, the probationary period will extend to the next school year),
- agree to immediate expulsion and/or exclusion from DMCS if a second offense against the school's weapon policy should occur.

When determining appropriate action, the administrator will consider the extent of the disruption to the safety of an individual or a group or the disruption of the learning environment in the school. A student who finds a weapon on the way to school or in the building and takes the weapon immediately to the principal's office shall not be considered in possession of a weapon. (**see policy #5500**)

Prohibited Substances and Inappropriate Materials

Smoking/Tobacco Use

It is the policy of Divine Mercy Catholic School to provide a tobacco free environment. No smoking or tobacco use is permitted at Divine Mercy Catholic School or on school grounds. (**see policy #5425**)

Drugs, Alcohol, and other Inappropriate Materials

Divine Mercy Catholic School expressly forbids the use of drugs, alcohol, and other inappropriate materials in the school or on the school grounds by any student, staff, or visitor during school operations and student events.

Excessive Scents

Divine Mercy Catholic School requests all students and staff respect others and limit the use of heavily scented fragrances of any kind. These items can cause people difficulty.

Dress Code and Personal Appearance

It is the policy of Divine Mercy Catholic School that students will dress in dress code appropriate attire. (for complete description see **policy #5325**)

Boys' pants — Black, or Khaki/Tan full-length dress pants or walking shorts of knee length. (*No low rider or hip hugger, side cargo pockets, side zippers, decals, beads, carpenter loop, rivets, decorative stitching, or corduroy.*)

Girls' pants/skirt/jumper — Black, Khaki/Tan, or uniform plaid from Donald's full-length dress pants, capris, skorts, skirt, walking shorts, or jumper of knee length. (*No low rider or hip hugger, side cargo pockets, side zippers, decals, beads, carpenter loop, rivets, decorative stitching, or corduroy. No jeggings or leggings unless worn under a skirt or jumper.*)

Girls' one-piece polo dress- Red or Black one-piece polo dress. (*No Pockets or other decorative stitching.*)

Shirts — Solid color red, white, or black shirt with or without DMCS logo. Must have collar and be **long enough to be tucked in**. Turtleneck or mock turtleneck shirts may be worn. No tee shirts.

School crew or quarter zip sweatshirt/jacket— embroidered **with** DMCS logo in Red or Black. Must be worn over a collared shirt. Available in the school store. **NO** hooded sweatshirts.

Sweater or sweater vest — solid red, white, or black with or without DMCS embroidered logo. **No** belts, fringe, or hoods.

Belts (optional) must be solid color (black, brown, or tan). No distracting buckles, embellishments, or fringe.

Footwear — **White, red, black,** or **tan** solid-colored socks, tights or leggings must be worn at all times. Shoes must be clean, safe, and in good condition. Shoes must have backs or straps. (**NO Crocs**)

Dress Down Day Attire

Throughout the year different days will be designated as dress-down days. On these days students may wear the attire of their choice provided it falls within the following guidelines:

- No sleeveless shirts or low necklines
- No offensive words, phrases, or pictures
- No bare midriffs
- Knee length shorts, skirts, and dresses only
- All clothes must be clean, neat, and in good repair
- The same sock and shoe criteria apply

FINANCIAL POLICIES

Tuition Policy

It is our intention and hope that all children will receive a Catholic Religious Education. We want no one to be denied entrance to our school because of financial need. To implement this, the Divine Mercy School Advisory Council has approved the following policies related to Tuition:

Tuition and Fees

The principal, pastor, and parish administrator will recommend annual rates for tuition and fees to the Divine Mercy Finance Committee for their approval in conjunction with the annual budget development. The tuition and fees must be established yearly by January 31st. (see Policy #3200)

Tuition Collection

Each family's account must be kept current according to the contractual arrangements between the parent/guardian and Divine Mercy Catholic School as established at the time of executing each student's Tuition Contract. All families are required to enroll in the tuition management program at Divine Mercy Catholic School. All families must have their payment plan for the upcoming school year in place PRIOR to the start of the school year or their child will not be able to enroll for that school year.

If the tuition management company contacts the school regarding a family with overdue payments, the principal will bring this information to the DMCS Tuition Committee for determination of appropriate action. Deviations from the specified payment plan may be considered at this time.

The committee will review all past due accounts on a monthly basis. In the event that a family has continually not paid their required tuition payments and has not contacted the principal to determine a solution, the DMCS Tuition Committee will evaluate whether that family will be allowed to remain in the DMCS system. A determination will be made on which accounts will be forwarded to a collection agency for repayment. Families which have been forwarded to a collection agency will not be allowed to remain at DMCS. (see Policy #3200.1)

Lunch Accounts

All family lunch accounts need to remain current. Currently Minnesota provides support to ensure that all K-5 students receive a free breakfast and lunch. These payments do not include milk with a cold lunch or adult meals. All lunch payments are to be made to DMCS Hot Lunch, which is a separate account from tuition. Periodic statements will be

sent to families who have a balance in their account. When an account falls below negative ten dollars, parents will also be notified. (**see Policy # 3400**)

We encourage families to fill out Free and Reduced lunch forms each year. This helps the school qualify for federal and state funding in other programs as well as assuring that student lunches are paid for by the appropriate agency. Forms are available through our website (www.dmcsc.org) or by clicking into the lunch side after signing into PowerSchool. Please contact the school office with questions.

Fundraising

All financial matters and activities within the school affect the operation of Divine Mercy Catholic School. All fundraising efforts require prior approval by the principal and pastor. This process eliminates scheduling conflicts and ensures compliance with the school's mission statement and philosophy. Archdiocesan and legal regulations should be considered when planning fundraising programs/events. The procedure for approval at DMCS is the following: a) request through Principal, b) Principal accepts request and forwards or refuses proposal adoption, d) pastor accepts proposal. No money or gifts-in-kind, nor any fundraising drives, collections, raffles, etc., may be solicited in the name of Divine Mercy Catholic School without the direct approval of the principal. (**see Policy # 5175**)

GENERAL POLICIES

Textbooks/Supplemental Materials

At the beginning of each school year, each student is provided with textbooks. Students are required to return these and other loaned materials in good condition at the end of the course. Families must compensate Divine Mercy Catholic School for damaged or lost books and materials.

Parents or guardians will provide school supplies for their child. A list of needed supplies is provided each year and is available on the website. To streamline this process, families are offered the option of ordering supplies through an online supplier.

Student Property

Divine Mercy Catholic School is not responsible for student property, including money or other valuables, which is lost, stolen, or misplaced. School insurance does not cover the loss of personal possessions; therefore, students are to refrain from bringing valuables and electronic devices to school.

When money is sent to school for any reason, it should be placed in an envelope and labeled with the student's name, grade, and the purpose for the money.

Lost items will be kept in the school office or in the lost and found. Parents should encourage students to check for lost items in the Lost and Found area when something is missing. All Lost and Found items left at the end of each quarter and at the end of the school year will be boxed and given to charity.

Photos

From time to time, Divine Mercy Catholic School produces various documents, electronically and in print, such as advertisements or school publications. As part of the production of such items, pictures of students or their activities and work may be included. Divine Mercy Catholic School requests that parents who are not willing to allow use of their child's photograph, name, and work on such documents, indicate this by contacting the school office through email (dmcs-office@dmcs.cc) or by calling (507-334-7706).

Individual and classroom pictures are taken by a professional photographer at least once each year. At that time, parents are invited to purchase picture packages if they wish. Notification of this will be given well in advance of the photography session.

The school publishes a yearbook each school year. Individual or classroom pictures are featured in the yearbook, as well as other photographs portraying the many activities and events that take place. Notification regarding the cost and time when the yearbook is available is sent to the parents/guardians.

Guests and Visitors Policy

Divine Mercy Catholic School is pleased to welcome guests to our campus for school day visits, extracurricular activities, and special events. All guests sign in at the Main Office and abide by the regulations outlined in this handbook. Guests visiting while school is in session must wear the provided visitor's badge. Visitors who wish to observe classrooms are asked to make an appointment with the appropriate teacher and check in at the school office before going to the classroom.

Throughout the year, assemblies are held with invited guests to enhance the students' learning opportunities. Guest speakers and topics discussed will be consistent with the mission, philosophy, and objectives of the school.

Field Trips

Field trips are part of the educational program. These trips are designed to support the curriculum and introduce the students to community resources. Students are expected to participate in field trips and parents/guardians will be notified of the scheduled field trips.

Insurance regulations of the archdiocese require the use of a parent/guardian authorization form **EACH TIME** the students participate in a field trip. Failure to return the form or provide written permission might mean that the student may not go on the field trip and must stay at school.

Many field trips require fees to be paid for the activity. These fees are non-refundable and are due before the student leaves on the trip.

Whenever possible, field trip participants travel by bus. Should it be necessary to use transportation provided by parents in private vehicles, parents/guardians will be notified. All private vehicles used to transport students must have documented current registration and proof of insurance. All drivers must have a completed driver license check on file as well as a background check and VIRTUS training.

Communications

Contacting Divine Mercy Catholic School

Normal business hours during the school year are 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Divine Mercy Catholic School's main phone number is 507-334-7706. After these hours the voice mail system is available for any messages. To contact a staff member directly, please visit the employee phone directory for each staff person's voice mailbox information.

If it is more convenient, please feel free to e-mail us. You can do so by typing the staff member's first initial and last name at dmcs.cc (i.e. msmith@dmcs.cc). We encourage

staff to respond to email within 24 hours. Please be advised that teachers are working with children and are often unable to check email until the end of the day. **All urgent or time sensitive communication must be done through the main office (dmcs-office@dmcs.cc).**

Telephone Use/Messages for Students

Telephone usage is discouraged during school days. We discourage children from calling home to have a parent/guardian bring forgotten band instruments, books, assignments, gym shoes, etc. Learning to cope with small challenges is part of growing up and maturing.

As a rule, neither teachers nor pupils are called to the phone during the hours of class. Messages may be left with the school secretary or voice mail if it is necessary to contact either a student or teacher. Children may not use the school phone except in cases of an emergency. **Student cell phones and smart watches are prohibited and may be confiscated by teachers or staff members until the end of the day.**

Inclement Weather/School Closings

The decision to close Divine Mercy Catholic School due to inclement weather is made by the public-school District #656 and Faribault Transportation. The announcement will state that schools in Faribault District 656 are closed.

School closings will be announced on Divine Mercy Catholic School's website and on local radio and television stations, namely: KDHL (920 AM) and WCCO (school closings). Families are also alerted via email.

If inclement weather causes school to be dismissed early, the school will follow its Early Dismissal protocol found on page 25.

Flexible Learning Days

When will DMCS use e-Learning days?

The first three full school day cancellations due to winter weather will not be replaced with a Flexible Learning Day. Subsequent school closures will be replaced with Flexible Learning days. If the district closes school after initially identifying a two-hour late start, a Flexible Learning Day will be implemented using the same parameters as if it were a standard school closure.

Why Flexible Learning Days?

The purpose of Flexible Learning Days is to maintain instructional momentum when Minnesota winter weather disrupts the ability to provide in-person instruction rather than extend the school year later into June.

Staff availability

Teachers, administrators, and other licensed professionals will be available by email, phone (via voice mail), or through the grade-appropriate digital learning space (Google Classroom, SeeSaw, or Teams) during the schedule outlined in the next paragraph.

Student attendance and activities

Students are marked “present” for the Flexible Learning Day if they hand in the assigned work. A minimum of one activity must be completed in each curricular area on the Flexible Learning Matrix passed out by the child’s teacher. Follow the instructions on the matrix. Teachers are available between 9:00-11:30 a.m. and 1:00-3:00 p.m. to support students and their work.

On Flexible Learning Days, parents may call the school office to leave a message or send an email to dmcs-office@dmcs.cc and notify the school of their student’s absence. This absence will follow the same protocols as for an absence when students physically attend school.

Not all Flexible Learning activities will be graded. Graded activities will be allowed additional time for submission on a case-by-case basis. Students who need additional time because of limited internet access or other family responsibilities should contact their teacher for an extension.

Transportation, Parking, and Car Safety

Divine Mercy Catholic School expects all individuals on its premises to act in accordance with safety regulations, particularly when picking up and dropping off students from school. Students and parents should obey traffic signs and posted parking restrictions at all times.

School Patrol

Divine Mercy Catholic School is happy to support a school safety patrol program. It is operated under the supervision of a faculty advisor assigned by the principal. This advisor coordinates the program on behalf of the school. Fourth and fifth grade volunteer patrols are trained to assist students crossing the drop-off/pick up lane near the school and to assist students in the drop-off/ pick up process. There is patrol presence both before and after school for the safety of our students.

Bus Transportation

The local public-school district handles bus arrangements. Please contact Faribault Transportation at (507) 334-5121 to obtain information on riding the bus.

Instruction and review on bus and pedestrian safety is required each year. Instruction materials appropriate to grade levels are provided by the Faribault Transportation Company. They also schedule an onsite bus safety training for our elementary students each fall.

Bus transportation is a privilege. Students must conduct themselves properly and respect the rights of others. The school bus driver is the authority on the bus and has been directed to maintain order to ensure the safety of passengers. Therefore, parents, guardians, and students need to support the rules and guidelines regarding the safe transportation of students from home to the school, etc. Parents and guardians whose children do not follow the bus rules will be notified. Denial to ride the bus may be given for misconduct on the bus. Parents/guardians are notified when such action is necessary.

Parent Organizations

Divine Mercy Catholic School has a parent group, the Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO), which is responsible for promoting community opportunities and providing support in planning and running class events. It is the Parent/Teacher Organization's responsibility to support the principal, teachers, and overall school program.

All parents and guardians of students enrolled in Divine Mercy Catholic School are automatically members of this group and are welcome and encouraged to attend the meetings. The Parent/Teacher Organization dues aid in providing events throughout the year for the students and families.

COMPUTER USE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICIES

Technology and Social Media Policy

Use of Divine Mercy Catholic School's technology equipment and network is a privilege. Parents sign a technology agreement on PowerSchool through the enrollment process. This agreement states that they have read and agree to the conditions contained in our acceptable use policy. (**see policy #3800.1**)

Students read and sign an acceptable use agreement at the beginning of each school year. These agreements are tailored to the age of the student and put the policy language at their level.

Student Devices

Students are issued a school device for use at teacher discretion and direction during the instructional periods of the day. **Students are prohibited from accessing personal cell phones or electronic devices at any time.** This includes smart watches, fitness bands, and any other devices with recording, internet, or communication capabilities. Teachers and other school staff reserve the right to direct students to keep these items in their backpack or to collect these items if found. Once collected, parents may be required to come in to retrieve the device.

SERVICES

School Breakfast, Lunch, and Milk Program

All students are welcome to participate in the school breakfast and lunch program. These programs work to provide healthy options for student meals. The school's breakfast, lunch, and milk programs are subsidized by the federal and state funds. Free and Reduced-Price meals are available to those who qualify. We encourage parents to fill out the form if they believe they should qualify. Forms are available at the DMCS business office, online on our website (www.dmcs.cc) or through an on-line application process through a PowerSchool sign-on.

Lunch at school is part of the total learning situation and as such, good conduct is to be expected. Table manners and lunchroom conduct is discussed and enforced.

Title I

The purpose of Title I is to aid state and local education agencies in meeting the learning needs of children in grades Kindergarten through 3rd grade. These services are targeted to reading and math intervention.

Working with the classroom teacher, the building Title I contact teacher, or non-public school proctor identifies students and schedules them for appropriate, consistent Title I services. Parents will be notified if their child qualifies for this service.

In Faribault, District #656 has received some special programming funds from the state that increase the availability of Title I assistance to more students. Because Divine Mercy Catholic School resides within District #656, our Title I teacher can work with students in Kindergarten through 5th grade.

Special Education

The special needs of students at Divine Mercy Catholic School are addressed through the public-school district special education department.

Classroom teachers see the needs of their students and consult with the principal and resource teachers. Interventions may be suggested to meet the needs of the students. The needs may be in the areas of academic, behavior, health, or motor skills.

If the interventions are not successful, the student may be referred for assessment by the public school. This request can be initiated by the parent or school. If the school initiates the assessment, written parent or guardian permission will be required. Once the assessment is complete, a meeting is set up to report on the results and possibly develop an Individual Student Plan (ISP).

If an ISP is written it will include the goals to help improve the areas of need. The services may be direct or indirect. Indirect service is done at the non-public site. Direct service is done off site and transportation is provided by the public school.

Reading Specialist

DMCS has a reading specialist on staff. This teacher provides coaching to teachers through our Believe and Read program and addresses student learning challenges.

Students qualify for this support through Aims Web testing. Parents will be notified if their child qualifies for this support.

Math Specialist

DMCS employs a math specialist. This teacher provides coaching to teachers and addresses student learning through remedial and advanced intervention. Students qualify for this support through NWEA Map testing. Parents will be notified if their child qualifies for this support.

STATE AND FEDERAL PROGRAMS

There are several state and federal programs that non-public students may participate in on an equal basis with public school children. These programs are administrated through the local public-school district. Our school qualifies for funds based on the number of free and reduced lunch participants we have. Divine Mercy Catholic School receives state and federal entitlements allocated on a per pupil basis.

STATE PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

Education Aids for Non-public School Children - provides textbook and related individualized instructional materials, health services, and secondary guidance and counseling.

Transportation - Minnesota public school districts must provide "equal transportation" within the district boundaries. The public school shall have sole discretion, control, and management of scheduling, routes, bus stop locations, and discipline.

School Lunch Program - State funds along with the federal free and reduced lunch program work together to assist families to provide a free lunch to all elementary school students.

FEDERAL PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

Special Education - Districts shall identify students and make available special education to all who are disabled, regardless of whether they attend a non-public school. The district must provide assessment, periodic observation, review of progress and establish an ISP (Individual Student Plan), which generally involves tutoring by a special education teacher.

Title I - This program provides supplementary instruction in math, reading, and language arts to students who have been identified as "at risk." Computer-aided instruction may be an acceptable alternative to direct services.

Title IV - Safe and Drug-Free Schools - Nonpublic schools receive monies, on a per-pupil entitlement basis, for programs which address drug and safety issues.

Title VI - Block Grant - Non-public schools receive monies, on a per pupil basis, to be used for technology-related reform programs, professional development, and other student-directed improvement programs and materials identified in the school's improvement plan.

Extended Day Policies

School Age

DMCS offers before and after school childcare programs. The morning childcare program is available from 7:00 AM to 7:40 AM. Afternoon childcare opens immediately after school until 5:30 PM. A non-refundable registration fee will be required for each family using the program. The cost of this program **is not** included in tuition.

Provided we maintain adequate staffing, DMCS also offers school age childcare during the summer months. Students in grades K-5 are eligible to take part in this program. This program combines summer fun and reliable care for our children. Separate registration is required to participate. Parents contract for the days that they wish to utilize these programs. Staffing is based on contracted usage, so accurate scheduling is important. Fees may be associated with unplanned changes in schedule. Please see the care program guidelines for more information. A sign-in and sign-out logbook assists in monitoring the actual time usage of the program.

Preschool and Kindergarten Readiness

Care for preschool aged children is provided from 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM. All registered students are eligible for this care. For planning purposes, drop-off and pick-up schedules are asked for at the beginning of each school year.

A summer session provides care and fun for these children throughout the summer months. Separate registration is required to participate in this program.

Volunteer Policies

Application Process

Divine Mercy Catholic School is grateful for the assistance of volunteers. To help continue the quality of programming and provide true community, **we expect that all families will log 10 hours of volunteer time through the school year.**

There are many opportunities throughout the year to help. We will publish a list of potential opportunities at the beginning of the school year and update that list often. Anyone wishing to volunteer at Divine Mercy Catholic School should contact the school office or their child's teacher.

Virtus Training, Background Checks, and Code of Conduct

In accordance with Archdiocesan policies, Virtus training, background checks, and code of conduct are required for all school volunteers who will be alone with students.

Sign-in Procedures

Volunteers must sign in and out each time they visit the school. For security reasons, and in case of an emergency, it is important for the school to have a record of who is in the building, for what reason, and for how long. ALL visitors are required to sign in.

Identification

Volunteers must wear a volunteer name tag while in the building. These name tags must be visible to staff and students and must be obtained when at sign in and returned at sign out.

Important Limits on Volunteer's Responsibilities

Volunteers are not permitted to provide curriculum, evaluate achievement, counsel, discipline students, discuss student progress with parents, or reveal any information obtained from student records. The professional staff is responsible for decisions regarding the instruction of students and school management.

Due to confidentiality issues, Divine Mercy reserves the right to ask volunteers to surrender cell phones, or any other internet enabled device upon entry.

Child Abuse Reporting

Child abuse is strictly prohibited and is against the law. Volunteers who suspect abuse or neglect are directed to report such abuse or neglect to law enforcement and to the school administration.

Fire Drills, Severe Weather and Emergency Procedures

From time to time, a volunteer might participate in fire drills, lock down drills, and tornado drills. Volunteers are required to follow the instructions of staff members during such drills and other emergency procedures.