



# OUR LADY *of* MERCY

## **2023-2024 Student Handbook**

**400 Marquette Ave. Baton Rouge, LA 70806**

**School Office: 225-924-1054**

**School Fax: 225-923-2201 School Cafeteria: 225-924-1059**

Allyson LaBorde, Principal  
**[alaborde@olomschool.org](mailto:alaborde@olomschool.org)**

Kathy Lopiparo, Assistant Principal (Grades 4th-8th)  
**[klopiparo@olomschool.org](mailto:klopiparo@olomschool.org)**

Belinda Baker, Director of Lower School (Grades 3Y-3rd)  
**[bbaker@olomschool.org](mailto:bbaker@olomschool.org)**

- Accredited by National Catholic Education Association (NCEA)  
State of Louisiana
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) (As part of the  
Diocese of Baton Rouge District Accreditation)
- Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School is an Equal Opportunity Employer
- Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at its schools. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

# Handbook Objectives

## Handbook Objectives

- Serves as an official source of school policies and procedures.
- Provides parents of current students with information to assist and support the efforts and activities of their children.
- Provides parents of prospective students with information to guide them in the process of selecting a school for their children.

## Disclaimers

- Although we have attempted to cover every phase of school life, we know there are some areas that may not be covered by this handbook. Therefore, any decisions regarding matters not specifically written in this handbook will be left to the discretion of the school administration.
- The Principal is the final recourse in all school matters and reserves the right to revise this handbook with the approval of the Pastor.
- As a parochial school in the diocese of Baton Rouge, Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School adheres to all policies contained in the Administrative Manual of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.
- After reading the digital handbook and reviewing it with your student, the parent/guardian must sign the **“Parent/Student Handbook Acknowledgement Form 2023-2024.”** The student will not be allowed to attend Our Lady of Mercy School without this signed form. All forms must be submitted to the homeroom teacher on the first day of school.
- Revisions made to the handbook will be posted on the school website.

# Mission

## Philosophy

At Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School, we affirm that parents are the first educators of their children. Faculty, staff, and administration partner with parents to provide an authentic Catholic environment where each student is given the opportunity to reach his or her fullest potential by discovering and developing their God-given gifts. Our Lady of Mercy is an extension of the home and seeks to form the whole child, providing strong foundations of prayer, knowledge, and service to equip each child for Christian life in the 21st century.

In *Gravissimum Educationis*, the Church teaches that “the specific purpose of a Catholic education is the formation of boys and girls who will be good citizens of this world, loving God and neighbor and enriching society with the leaven of the gospel, and who will also be citizens of the world to come, thus fulfilling their destiny to become saints.” We believe that the ultimate goal of a Catholic school is to help each of its students get to heaven. In a nurturing community of faith, students at Our Lady of Mercy cultivate Christian virtues and are inspired to become the men and women God calls them to be. The Catholic faith is the fabric of our school and is integrated into all aspects of student life. Through prayer, liturgy and the Sacraments, and Church teachings, students encounter Christ and develop a personal relationship with Him.

We believe that a solid intellectual foundation enables children to reach their potential and prepare for a lifetime of learning. Our Lady of Mercy challenges each child to strive for academic excellence beyond basic skills. Using differentiated instruction and educational technology, teachers engage each unique learner in the acquisition of knowledge and the cultivation of natural curiosity. As students become active participants in their learning, they develop skills of research and discovery and are equipped to successfully meet the challenges of further education.

We believe that faith is manifested in a life of service. At Our Lady of Mercy, students become aware of their place as citizens of the world, learning that their unique gifts are meant to be shared to build the Kingdom of God. Through service projects, extracurricular activities, athletics, and leadership opportunities, students learn to imitate Christ by serving others and contributing to the good of the community. Our faculty, staff and students strive to follow the example of Christ who washed the feet of His disciples, demonstrating that He came “not to be served, but to serve.”

### **Mission Statement**

Our Lady of Mercy School provides Catholic foundations for a life of prayer, knowledge, and service.

### **Motto**

Prayer-Knowledge-Service

# History

Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School has a long and rich history of partnership between the parish and school. The founding pastor of Our Lady of Mercy Church Fr. Louis E. Marionneux envisioned a school where the children of the parish could learn the values of the Church and family while getting an exceptional academic foundation for their further education. Decades later, the school's mission statement sets out the simple yet profound vision that still inspires the Our Lady of Mercy community: "Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School provides foundations for a life of prayer, knowledge, and service."

Under the guidance of Fr. Marionneux, the parishioners of Our Lady of Mercy Church proposed the building of a parochial elementary school. By early 1953, Our Lady of Mercy was ready to break ground for the construction of the school, which would be the first permanent building of the parish.

While the first school building was under construction, temporary space was found for classrooms. Mrs. Hazel Blanchard was named principal, and the school opened in September 1953 with 174 students in first through fourth grades. Our Lady of Mercy School attracted national attention as the only Catholic school to have an all-lay faculty.

The next spring the permanent school was available, and the formal dedication of the school was held on May 2, 1954. Groundbreaking for a new church/classroom building took place on November 21, 1955. The 15,500 square foot structure included a church/classroom with capacity for 1,100 worshippers and three classrooms on each side of the central church building. Long-range plans for the building called for it to be converted to a gym-auditorium when a permanent church was constructed. Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel dedicated the church/school on September 24, 1956.

As the Mercy parish family grew, the church/classroom could no longer accommodate Sunday Mass and the school's classes. Classrooms along each side of the church were joined to the church by windows which opened during Mass, allowing parishioners to sit in the classrooms rather than stand in the back of the church. The school held classes in temporary buildings and any space available on the church/school campus. However, these challenges did not dampen the enthusiasm of parents or enrollment in the school. Our Lady of Mercy parish and school continued to grow and thrive.

In late 1961, Our Lady of Mercy welcomed four Salesian Sisters from Cuba, known as the Daughters of Mercy, Help of Christians. Sister Theresa, Sister Elba, Sister Gloria and Sister

Raphael resided in a house across the street from the main school building and assisted with religion classes and various duties in the school. These four sisters would be the forerunners of other Salesians who would serve Our Lady of Mercy School for the next 30 years.

After a decade of significant and lasting contributions to Catholic education, the principal Mrs. Blanchard resigned her position, and Sr. Philomena led the school as principal. On March 1, 1964, Fr. Andrew Frey was assigned to Our Lady of Mercy Church as its second pastor. Fr. Frey directed a series of improvements to the church and school to expand and upgrade all facilities, meeting the growth of the parish community. Updates to the school began with the transformation of Marquette Avenue, formerly a dirt road, to a blacktopped road with sidewalks and gutters.

Again in 1982 a major school improvement plan was begun to increase the capacity of the school. The newest building, the Early Childhood Center, held the lower grades beginning in fall of 1983.

Msgr. Frey retired after 25 years of dedicated service. He was followed by Fr. Michael Moroney, who began his time as pastor in June of 1987. Fr. Mike was a gifted administrator and an ambitious builder who helped initiate another master plan to address the growing needs of the school in 1992. Also, at this time, the Salesian Sisters decided to concentrate their efforts in other areas of education after thirty years of faithful service to Our Lady of Mercy School. Ms. Donna Melancon was hired as the school's new principal and helped lead the school family through the transition. Mrs. Carolyn Guidry became the next principal in 1995 and built on the strong foundation laid by her predecessors. A parish-wide fundraising campaign began in 1994 to accomplish the plans proposed by Fr. Mike and the Building Committee. Improvements to the school included renovations to classrooms and administrative offices, new eighth grade classrooms, a library, computer lab, a science lab, and cafeteria. Groundbreaking ceremonies for the new construction were held on October 23, 1995. The doors of the school were opened with the new construction by the fall of 1996. The new buildings were officially dedicated on October 19, 1996. With the completion of this project, Our Lady of Mercy School was now prepared to face the challenges of the New Millennium.

In 2001, Fr. Miles Walsh became Mercy's fourth pastor and continued to faithfully support the early vision for the school. Mrs. Guidry retired as principal in May 2009, and Ms. Tina Villa served as principal for the following three years. Mr. Brian Moscona began his role as principal of Our Lady of Mercy in July of 2012. He has worked closely with the church and school community to plan several stages of renovations to school facilities, enhancing many aspects of the campus and uniting its aesthetic even more closely with that of the church.

With Fr. Walsh's new assignment in July 2013, Fr. Cleo Milano became the fifth pastor at Our Lady of Mercy. Fr. Milano and Mr. Moscona remained committed to the strong partnership built between the parish church and school. The One Mercy project, the development of a new parish logo uniting the church and school, was launched in December of 2013. In the spring of 2016, the parish launched the Traditions for Tomorrow capital campaign to build a new gym and additional classrooms for the ECC. Fr. Milano appointed Mr. Chris Porche principal in January 2017. Under his leadership, the new Lower School was completed and opened its doors in August of 2018, welcoming 430 students to our Little Saints through second grade classrooms. This lower school houses 21 classrooms in addition to an art room, music room, library and media center, conference room, cafeteria and 6 additional offices. Designed with the school's youngest learners in mind, this state-of-the-art facility will beautifully mark the beginning of educational journeys for future generations of Blue Jays.

The long-awaited dream of building a premiere athletic facility became reality in the Fall of 2019, when the new gymnasium was completed. Physical education classes and athletic events began taking place in a facility created equally as beautiful in form as function. The completion of the new gym paved the path towards transforming the existing gym into an Arts Center to serve band, choir and art students.

The school's history must include its outstanding operation during a world-wide pandemic in the Spring of 2020. The unprecedented challenges presented by Covid-19 were faced boldly by administrators, faculty and staff to ensure learning would continue for the students of Our Lady of Mercy. The incredible technology plan was surpassed only by its implementation when the educational world was transformed into a teacher assisted online learning platform. Students transitioned to this platform within a week and the 2019-20 school year ended quite successfully. Classes resumed in August of 2020 with students on campus, during a time that schools across the world remained closed and unprepared for such challenges.

Mr. Porche and his strong team of administrators and faculty members remain dedicated to the school's mission of providing foundations for a lifetime of prayer, knowledge and service. Under their guidance, students are led to greatness spiritually, academically and socially. In May of 2022 Mr. Porsche retired as principal and Ms. Allyson LaBorde was named principal beginning in June 2022.

Under the loving protection of our patroness Our Lady of Mercy, we share the school's history with pride and anticipate many years of spiritual and academic excellence.

# Covenant

All parents enter into the following covenant when enrolling their children at Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School. We encourage parents to renew these pledges yearly.

“Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School calls us to acknowledge that spiritual formation of our children is the primary responsibility of the parent. We understand that it is the stated mission of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School to provide the foundation for a life of prayer, knowledge and service. In order to achieve the ultimate harmony of these beliefs and embrace our role as the primary educators of our children, we make a conscious commitment to the following practices:

We pledge to instill in our children Christian values in imitation of Jesus. We will live out our faith through regular attendance in religious rites and practices and development of a substantive family prayer life.

We pledge support for our place of worship and its ministries through contributions of time, talent, and treasure. We pledge, through prayers and lifestyle, to uphold the philosophy and principles which govern Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School.”

## Admissions

### Requirements

The following documents are required for admission to Our Lady of Mercy:

- Official State Birth Certificate
- Copy of Student Social Security Card
- Certificate of Baptism
- Immunization Records
- Developmental screening (completed by Our Lady of Mercy).

### Age requirements

- Little Saints: must be three years old by August 15th.
- Pre-Kdg: must be four years old on or before September 30 of the year entering school.
- Kindergarten: must be five years old on or before September 30 of the year entering school.
- First Grade: must be six years old on or before September 30 of the year entering school.

*Note:* a child must be fully potty trained prior to the start of school.

## **Immunization Policy**

A parent or guardian must provide Our Lady of Mercy School with a current State of Louisiana Universal Certificate of Immunizations that is complete and signed or stamped by a physician's office. The immunization record must be complete and not expired for a student to attend classes. It is the parent's responsibility to send updated records to the school as new immunizations are administered. Medical exemptions for immunizations must be documented by a physician. Personal exemptions will be considered on a case by case basis. In the event of an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease, a school may exclude any unimmunized student from attendance until the appropriate disease incubation period has expired or until the parent presents records attesting to immunization of the student. A statement from the student's doctor clearing the un-immunized student for re-entry back into the school population is necessary upon his/her return.

## **Criteria for Admission**

The following criteria will be considered when reviewing applications for admission into Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School:

- Children currently attending Our Lady of Mercy promoted to a higher grade
- Children who are Catholic and are currently registered parishioners at Our Lady of Mercy Church Parish
- Children who have brothers or sisters currently attending Our Lady of Mercy
- Children of alumni
- Out-of-Parish Catholic children
- Children of other faith traditions

In determining admission, the administration will review the academic, discipline and attendance records of students transferring from another school. The administration must have a reasonable expectation of student success prior to an offer of admission. The pastor and school administration reserve the right to make final decisions on admissions.

Prior to admission, new students entering Grades 1 - 8 must provide an official report card from the previous school system in which they were enrolled. Report cards must provide evidence of promotion to the next grade level within that system. All new students will be screened in math, reading, and English.

## **Registration**

Re-registration for currently enrolled students is held during the third quarter of the current school year. Registration for new applicants will begin after the designated re-registration period. All registration information will be available on the school website. Students may not be registered for the following school year if they have any past due balances.



***Statement of Diocesan Policy:***

*The schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, admit students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and other activities generally made available to students at its schools. They do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of its admissions policies, educational policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.*

## **Faith Formation**

The Our Lady of Mercy School mission statement asserts: Our Lady of Mercy School provides Catholic foundations for a life of prayer, knowledge, and service.

As a parochial school in the Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge, Our Lady of Mercy School works closely with the pastor and the parish community to provide the spiritual, academic and social formation essential for an authentically Catholic education. The Holy See's documents insist that, in order to be worthy of its name, a Catholic school must be founded on Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. Christ is the Teacher in Catholic schools.

We seek to partner with parents, the primary educators of children, in fostering a school community whose mission is centered on the students "fulfilling their destiny to become saints." At Our Lady of Mercy, our primary objective is getting the students to heaven. We aim to provide an environment that helps each student become the woman or man God is calling them to be.

Prayer is the foundation of a life in Christ. Our teachers aim to model a life of prayer for fellow educators, our students, parents, and the larger community. We are committed to integrating prayer into the rhythm and life of the school on a daily basis.

The Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life, and we regularly celebrate this great Sacrament together as a school community.

Our school calendar and programs follow the liturgical year of the Church, with ample opportunities to deepen one's spiritual life through annual grade-level retreats, First Friday Adoration/Divine Mercy Chaplet, Way of the Cross, Living Rosary, Service Opportunities, school-wide mass, Stations of the Cross, etc.

Through the school's life of prayer and commitment to the search for truth, we are keenly aware of our call to imitate Christ who came "not to be served, but to serve." Students participate in service opportunities to develop a disposition of being others-centered.

# Academic Formation

## Homework

Assignments are given as reinforcement and practice of material covered in the classroom. A moderate amount of meaningful homework and/or research projects will be given depending on students' grade level. Time spent on study or projects will vary by individual student.

## Assignments During Absence

Students are responsible for all class assignments, homework, and tests covered during an absence. In the event of an absence, students will have the number of days equal to the number of days absent to turn in all missed work and/or complete tests. Make-up work will not be sent home for a one-day absence. In grades 1st - 5th, a request for work must be sent to the appropriate office when a student will be out more than one day. A request for work should be sent by 8:30am. Student work will be sent home with a sibling or may be picked up in the office between 2:15pm - 2:45pm. Absences due to planned family trips or other reasons known in advance must be indicated to the office and the teacher(s) with at least three school days advance notice. Students will be provided with missed assignments upon return. No assignments, tests, or exams will be given prior to absence. Please refer to page 23 for information on extracurricular activities and athletics regarding attendance requirements to participate in these activities.

## Conferences

A Parent-Teacher conference day is scheduled at the end of the 1st quarter for students in 3Y - 8th grade. An individual conference may be requested by a parent or a teacher to discuss a student's progress at any point during the school year for all grades.

## Grades

Teachers are responsible for updating gradebooks weekly. These grades are based on class work (oral and written), homework, tests, quizzes, reports and other projects. 1st - 8th grade course grades are weighted according to the following distribution:

- **65%** Major Grades (Tests, large projects, research reports, etc.)
- **25%** minor grades (Quizzes, small assessments, group activities, etc.)
- **10%** "other" grades (homework, participation grades, etc.)

## **Grading Scale**

### Grade Percent

- A 93 – 100
- B 85 – 92
- C 75 – 84
- D 67 – 74
- F 66 and below

## **Mid-Term and Final Exams**

Grade 5: Reading, Math and Science

Grades 6-8: ELA, Math, Religion, Science and Social Studies

## **Exemptions**

No students will be exempt from mid-term exams. For final exams, any **7th - 8th** grade student who has received an “A” on his/her report card throughout the year (including midterm exam) is exempt from the final exam in that subject.

## **Progress Reports**

At the midpoint of each nine-week period, official progress reports are available on Blackbaud for Grades 1-8.

## **Final Grades**

1. Classes administering midterm and final exams:
  - Each nine weeks grade comprises 20% of the final average, and each exam grade earns 10% of the final average.
2. Classes **without** midterm and final exams:
  - Every nine weeks comprises 25% of the final average.

## **Report Cards**

Report cards are issued four times a year, once each nine weeks. It is the parents’ responsibility to access the report card through Blackbaud. Only final report cards are mailed home. Grades are based on class assignments (oral and written), homework, tests, quizzes, reports, and other projects. Report cards are posted in Blackbaud at the end of each nine week grading period for Kindergarten - 8th grade. Students in Little Saints and Pre-K will receive a report card at the end of the second quarter and fourth quarter.

## **Awards of Academic Excellence and Achievement**

Awards for academic excellence and academic achievement will be given in grades 3-8 for each nine weeks period using the following criteria:

**Academic Excellence:** All "A's" on report cards for that grading period.

**Academic Achievement:** All grades of either "A" or "B" on report cards for that grading period.

\*\*Conduct grades do not affect a student's ability to earn these awards.

## **Retention**

At the end of each academic year, teachers may recommend a student to the administration for retention.

### **Little Saints - Kindergarten**

Students may be retained at the recommendation of the administration due to deficiency in overall academic achievement or social/emotional development.

### **First - Third Grades**

Students who earn a failing grade in any two subjects (English, Reading/Literature, Math, Religion) may be retained. To pass a subject for the year, students must earn an average of at least "D" for the year. Students may be retained if he or she earns an "F" for the fourth nine weeks.

### **Fourth - Eighth Grades**

Students who earn a failing grade in any two subjects (English, Reading/Literature, Math, Religion, Social Studies, Science) may be retained. To pass a subject for the year, students must earn an average of at least "D" for the year. Students may be retained if he or she earns an "F" for the fourth nine weeks and an "F" on the final exam for those subjects that require final exams.

In the event that a student fails one subject for the first time, the student must attend summer remediation for a minimum of 40 hours. Arrangements for summer remediation may be made through administration. Any outside program must be approved by the administration prior to a student's enrollment. Any student who has failed one or more subjects will be placed on academic probation for the following year, and student performance will be assessed throughout the fall semester to determine continued enrollment. Students who fail Reading, English, or Math for two consecutive years may be retained.

## **Student Success Meetings**

Student Success meetings are held to address issues related to health, academics, behavior, or any other element of a student's experience at Our Lady of Mercy. Student Success meetings may be requested by teachers or parents. Student Success meetings are scheduled by an administrator or the school counselor. The objective of these meetings is to develop plans for student success at school.

## **Student Accommodations**

A student with a current (less than three years old) comprehensive educational or psychological educational evaluation, conducted by a Psychiatrist, Clinical Psychologist, or Medical Doctor indicating a learning struggle may be eligible for classroom or testing accommodations. An evaluation must contain: Intelligence Tests, Educational/Achievement Tests, Measures of Adaptive Behavior, and Educational Recommendations. The full evaluation report must be submitted to the School Counselor. The Student Success Team, consisting of the Assistant Principal, the School Counselor, the parent, and any other relevant parties invited by the parent, will meet to determine what accommodations can be provided by the school. The school may determine at any point to implement modifications or accommodations to facilitate student success. Any student receiving oral testing must be actively enrolled in a language therapy.

# **Character Development and Formation**

Church documents consistently support the dual goals of academic and faith formation for Catholic schools. Central to the Catholic school is its mission of holiness, of saint-making. In order to establish the foundation necessary for success in academic and faith formation, Our Lady of Mercy School aims to form in its students those particular virtues that will enable them to live a new life in Christ and help them to play their part in serving society and the Church.

Although many Catholic values are involved in character development, the Our Lady of Mercy School community emphasizes five guiding principles known to us as *The Way We Act at Mercy*. These guiding principles are intended to provide clear expectations of behavior while at the same time helping our students in the development of good decision-making skills.

You will find these five guiding principles located throughout our campus as a reminder to our students.

## **The Way We Act at Mercy:**

1. Listen attentively
2. Follow directions
3. Be courteous and polite
4. Respect each other and ourselves
5. Dress responsibly

\*When someone reminds us to follow these, we only respond with, "Yes, Ma'am" or "Yes, Sir."

Parents, as the primary educators of their children, and students themselves work in an active and positive partnership with faculty and staff members in this vital part of students' overall growth and development.

When efforts at the individual classroom level require additional support, a school counselor, assistant principal(s) and/or principal may become involved to support a student's character development.

Faculty, staff, and administration will determine appropriate consequences for student actions deemed inconsistent with positive character development. Open communication with parents is an essential component of helping students to modify any inappropriate behavior.

## **The Teacher's Role in Maintaining Discipline**

Under Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School's philosophy of maintaining discipline, every faculty member and staff member is responsible for contributing to an orderly atmosphere conducive to learning throughout the school. Every employee is given the right and is expected to handle behavior problems not consistent with our guiding principles when and where they occur through a system of rewards and consequences.

Students will be referred to an administrator for the following behaviors. This will result in consequences (detention, suspension, or expulsion).

- Plagiarism
- Fighting
- Bullying
- Harassment
- Hazing
- Weapons
- Threats
- Alcohol
- Tobacco (Vape)
- Theft
- Vandalism/Destruction of Property
- Violation of Digital Citizenship
- Academic Dishonesty

## **Items Prohibited on Campus\***

Students are prohibited from bringing the following items to school or any school-related events:

- Toys and games (unless directed by teacher or administrator for educational purpose)
- Gum
- Laser devices
- Electronic games
- Smart Watches
- Audio or video playing/recording devices
- Immoral literature
- Medication of any kind (Parents may bring necessary medications to the front office to be administered by the school nurse as needed; please see Medications section on p. 31)
- Tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs
- Cigarette lighters, matches or pepper spray
- Vape Devices
- Weapons, ammunition or illegal objects
- Items resembling weapons or illegal objects
- Drawings depicting weapons or violence

**\*This list is not intended to be exhaustive; good judgment should be exercised.**

## **Rewards**

Students who demonstrate consistent observance of our five guiding principles in 1st through 8th grades may earn Blue Jay Bucks. Blue Jay Bucks are awarded by teachers, staff, and administration and may be redeemed on Blue Jay Buck Incentive Days. It is the responsibility of the student to keep track of his/her Blue Jay Bucks. Lost or stolen Blue Jay Bucks will not be replaced.

## **Conduct**

### **Grades 3Y - Kindergarten**

Students in 3Y, Pre-K and Kindergarten are not given grades for conduct. Parents will be notified about behavior through Grow Notes and Parent/Teacher communication. The teacher and parent should work together to correct the reported behavior.

### **Grades 1 - 4**

Parents of students in grades 1-4 will be made aware of student conduct through a weekly conduct sheet. The conduct grade will be 80% behavior and 20% work ethic. The conduct sheet must be signed weekly and returned to school. The quarterly conduct grade will be an average of the weekly conduct grades.

## **Grades 5 - 8**

Students in grades 5-8 may receive an infraction for behavior not meeting our five guiding principles. Infractions result in a deduction of 3-points from a student's conduct grade and are viewable via Blackbaud. Students in grades 5-8 will begin each quarter with a 100 point conduct grade. Points will be deducted as follows:

Dress Code - 1pt

Infractions - 3pts

Detentions - 6 pts

Suspensions - 9 pts

Students that earn a grade of 80 points or below in conduct will be placed on probation from participating in school events. Terms of the probation will be determined by the school administration.

Probation activities will include, but are not limited to:

- ★ Participation in Mass (readers, altar server, etc.) - Athletics - Clubs - Representing Mercy as ambassadors or public entities - School trips. In the event of extracurricular sign-ups during probation due to conduct, students will be allowed to register and try-out for the program, but will not be able to participate until the prescribed period is over.

## **Detentions**

Parents will receive notification of a detention for students in grade **3-8** by the teacher and/or administrator who assigned the consequence. The administration will then contact a parent or guardian to notify them of the specific date. All detentions will be held on Tuesday afternoons from 3:30 - 4:30. Students who miss a detention may not participate in any school functions until that detention has been served. Excessive detentions may result in suspension and/or probation. Detentions will result in a deduction of 6-points from a student's conduct grade (5th-8th) and are viewable on Blackbaud. Disrespect toward a classmate or teacher will warrant an automatic detention.

## **Suspensions**

Matters of severe misconduct or excessive instances of less serious misconduct as determined by the school administration may warrant a suspension. Suspensions place a student in jeopardy of dismissal from Our Lady of Mercy. Suspensions for students in grades 5-8 will result in a deduction of 9-points from a student's conduct grade.



If a student receives a suspension, it will result in the student not being allowed to participate in upcoming extra-curricular or special events (i.e. athletic competition, field trips, etc.) as determined by the school administration. **This includes on and off campus activities.** It is the responsibility of the student to obtain and make up any missed assignments. Students who do not submit assignments upon their return will receive a grade of zero.

## **Probation**

A student may be placed on probation if deemed necessary by the school administration due to an individual incident of serious behavioral concern, as a result of an accumulation of behavioral concerns, or conduct score of 80 or below. At the end of the probationary period, the student may either be removed from probation, have the probationary period extended, or be asked to leave Our Lady of Mercy.

## **24/7/365**

All students at Our Lady of Mercy School are students 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. A student who engages in conduct, whether inside or outside of school, that is detrimental to the reputation of the school or inconsistent with the values of the school, may receive consequences by the school administration.

## **Uniform Guidelines**

The Our Lady of Mercy dress code presents an opportunity for faculty, staff and administration to educate students regarding the importance of presenting themselves well. Through the school dress code, students are taught lessons about being well groomed as well as dressing modestly and appropriately. When at school, students are going about the important business of learning and should dress accordingly.

Any part of a student's physical appearance that draws attention to the student (making the student stand out from the others) indicates that he or she is out of uniform. In order to communicate unity and oneness, students should be in uniform at all times when on campus, except on those occasions when alternate dress is permitted and authorized by the school administration.

**Teachers conduct daily uniform checks in all grade levels daily. Parents will be notified of any student not dressed according to the school's dress code.**

## Approved Mercy Logos:



**Our Lady of Mercy school uniforms are available at the following school approved vendors:**

- Inka's
- Lands' End
- School Time
- Young Fashions

## **Boys' Daily Uniform:**

**Shirts:** Light Blue Polo shirts with Mercy logo. Short or long sleeves may be worn. Shirts must be tucked in at all times for boys in grades 1st – 8th.

**Pants/shorts:** Solid navy pants or shorts. No cargo style shorts. No emblems or logos allowed on shorts. 3y – Kindergarten students may wear pull up twill pants or shorts. Pants must be worn on Fridays or specifically designated dress uniform days beginning the Friday after Labor Day for students in Kindergarten – 8th grade.

**Belts:** Boys in 1st – 8th grade must wear a navy, brown, or black belt. Shirts must be tucked into the pants so that the waistline is visible all around the waist and the belt is visible. Emblems or logos are not allowed on belts. Personalized monogram and embroidery is not authorized

**Undershirts:** A solid white tee shirt may be worn under the uniform shirt. The tee shirt and/or sleeves may not be longer than the uniform shirt and/or sleeves. Printing on the undershirt is not allowed.

**Shoes:** Traditional athletic shoes of white, black, blue or gray or a combination of these colors may be worn. No other colors may be visible. Shoes must have shoe laces or Velcro. No slip-on shoes are allowed. No mid-tops, high tops, light-up shoes, glittered, character, heelies (wheels) or toe shoes are permitted. Students in grades 3Y & Pre-K must wear shoes with Velcro or auto elastic fit. Shoes should not cause any distraction to student learning and will be at the discretion of administration.

**Socks:** Solid white, navy-blue or black crew or ankle socks. Socks must be visible at all times. No logos, emblems, or writing except the Mercy logo are permitted.

**Hair/Grooming:** Hair must be of a conservative length and thickness in front, top, and sides. Hair must not touch the collar of the uniform shirt, cover any part of the ear, and must not be longer than the top of the eyebrows. Shaven heads, weight lines, shaving, or carving into the natural hairline is not acceptable. Cosmetic colorings (dyed, bleached, tinted, or highlighted) are not

allowed. No exaggerated hairstyles as determined by school administration. Face must be clean shaven. When a hair notification is given, students will have the remaining weekdays and weekend to correct the infraction, or the student may face disciplinary consequences.

**Jewelry:** The only acceptable jewelry is a watch and one necklace, religious in nature, may be worn. Boys are not allowed to wear earrings. Bracelets and/or rings are not permitted. Hi-tech phone type watches and fitness bands may not be worn (this includes smartwatches of any brand). Watches may not have the capability of connecting to data or WIFI. Expensive jewelry is to be kept at home.

**Sweatpants:** Sweatpants purchased at approved Our Lady of Mercy vendors only may be worn from November 1st to February 28th, with the exception of Dress Uniform Days and special days as deemed by the school administration.

**Outerwear:** Students may wear sweatshirts, fleeces, or sweaters with the approved Mercy logo. The approved logo for fleeces and sweaters is the Blessed Mary with Our Lady of Mercy below. For sweatshirts the approved Mercy logo is the word Mercy in white lettering across the chest. Hooded sweatshirts are not allowed. **School fleece must be 3-quarter zip as full zip fleeces are not allowed.** Rain jackets purchased from the school spirit shop are allowed to be worn. Only outerwear purchased via school uniform vendors is allowed. Athletic and extracurricular outerwear is not allowed.

**Coats for Cold Days:** A coat is considered a heavy outerwear jacket that is heavily lined or padded. Coats of this sort may only be worn to school on days of extreme cold. Coats worn to and from school and at recess may be of any SOLID color. No blue jean, denim, camouflage, sports, or sparkled jackets of any type are allowed.

**Dress Uniform for Middle School:** Boys in 6th – 8th grade must wear a light blue button-down oxford with Mercy logo. Shirts may be long or short sleeves. Dress shirts must be worn with a striped navy and light blue necktie or bow tie purchased from an approved uniform vendor. On dress uniform days, boys in 6th-7th grade must wear navy blue dress pants – no cargo styles. Boys in 8th grade must wear tan or khaki pants – no cargo styles. The dress uniform includes a solid navy, brown, or black belt. 8th grade boys only are required to wear tan or brown Sperry-style “boat shoes”. 8th grade boys must wear a navy blazer with Mercy logo that will be supplied by OLOM.

**PE Uniforms:** Students taking PE as an elective in grades 6-8 wear the gray “Mercy” PE T-shirt and the navy-blue mesh “Mercy” PE shorts. Both items can be purchased through our uniform vendors. School approved socks and shoes should be worn during PE. Students in grades 3Y-5 do not wear PE uniforms.

## **Girls' Daily Uniform:**

**Jumpers:** Navy and white checked jumpers with the Mercy logo should be worn by girls in grades 3Y – 2nd grade. An oxford blouse or a Peter Pan collar blouse may be worn underneath if desired. A shirt is not required with the jumper. Shorts must be worn under the jumper and must not exceed the length of the jumper. 3Y & Pre-K girls may also wear the smock dress in the Mercy plaid. Shorts must be worn under the dress and must not exceed the length of the jumper. Personalized monograms and embroidery are not authorized.

**Skorts:** Navy and white checked skort should be worn by girls in 3rd-8th grade. Skorts must be no shorter than 3 inches above the knee. Skorts must not be rolled at the waist.

Shirts: White-banded polo with Mercy logo should be worn with skorts for girls in 3rd-8th grade.

**Undershirts:** A solid white tee shirt may be worn under the uniform shirt. The tee shirt and/or sleeves may not be longer than the uniform shirt and/or sleeves. Printing on the undershirt is not allowed. Undergarments for girls should not be visible through the uniform blouses.

**Shoes:** Traditional athletic shoes of white, black, blue or gray or a combination of these colors may be worn. No other colors may be visible. Shoes must have shoe laces or Velcro. No slip-on shoes are allowed. **No mid-tops**, high tops, light-up shoes, glittered, character, heeled (wheels) or toe shoes are permitted. Students in grades 3Y& Pre-K must wear shoes with Velcro or auto elastic fit. Shoes should not cause any distraction to student learning and will be at the discretion of administration.

**Socks:** Solid white, navy-blue or black crew or ankle socks. Socks must be visible at all times. No logos, emblems, or writing except the Mercy logo are permitted.

**Leggings/Tights:** Solid black, white, or navy tights or leggings may be worn under the skort or jumper in the winter. If leggings are worn, they should be ankle length. Capri length leggings and leggings with logos are not acceptable.

**Sweatpants:** Sweatpants purchased at approved Our Lady of Mercy vendors only may be worn from November 1st to February 28th, with the exception of Dress Uniform Days and special days as deemed by the school administration.

**Outerwear:** Students may wear sweatshirts, fleeces, or sweaters with the approved Mercy logo. The approved logo for fleeces and sweaters is the Blessed Mary with Our Lady of Mercy below. For sweatshirts the approved Mercy logo is the word Mercy in white lettering across the chest. Hooded sweatshirts are not allowed. **School fleece must be 3-quarter zip as full zip fleeces are not allowed.** Rain jackets purchased from the school spirit shop are allowed to be worn. Only outerwear purchased via school uniform vendors is allowed. Athletic and extracurricular outerwear is not allowed.

- **Girls in Lower School may wear a solid navy button sweater with the jumper. This sweater does not have to include the logo. Buttons on the sweater must be navy.**

**Coats for Cold Days:** A coat is considered a heavy outerwear jacket that is heavily lined or padded. Coats of this sort may only be worn to school on days of extreme cold. Coats worn to and from school and at recess may be of any SOLID color. No blue jean, denim, camouflage, sports, or sparkled jackets of any type are allowed.

**Accessories:** Headbands, ribbons, and bows may be blue, black, white, or a combination of these colors. Other hair accessories should be used sparingly and be the same color as previously listed. Students will be required to remove hair accessories considered a distraction by school officials

**Hair/Make-Up:** Make-up is not allowed, including artificial eye lashes. Artificial fingernails, tips or colored nail polish is not acceptable. Only clear polish is permitted. Hair must be worn away from the eyes and must be neat and tidy at all times. Cosmetic colorings (dyed, bleached, tinted, or highlighted) are not allowed. No exaggerated hairstyles as determined by the school administration. When a hair notification is given, students will have the remaining weekdays and weekend to correct the infraction, or the student may face disciplinary consequences.

**Jewelry:** The only acceptable jewelry is one pair of small post earrings, one necklace of religious nature, and a watch. Bracelets and/or rings are not permitted. Hi-tech phone type watches and fitness bands may not be worn (this includes smartwatches of any brand). Watches may not have the capability of connecting to data or WIFI. Expensive jewelry is to be kept at home.

**Dress Uniform for Middle School:** Girls in 6th – 8th grade must wear a white button-down oxford with Mercy logo. Shirts may be long or short sleeved. All girls must wear a navy white checked skirt. Girls in 8th grade must wear the Navy blazer with Mercy logo supplied by OLOM. 8th grade girls must wear tan or brown Sperry-style “boat shoes” on dress uniform days.

**PE Uniforms:** Students taking PE as an elective in grades 6-8 wear the gray “Mercy” PE T-shirt and the navy-blue mesh “Mercy” PE shorts. Both items can be purchased through our uniform vendors. School approved socks and shoes should be worn during PE. Students in grades 3Y-5 do not wear PE uniforms.

## **Accessory Days**

On designated accessory days, students may wear t-shirts with their uniform bottoms or jumpers. The shirt can replace the uniform shirt. Students may wear theme related socks, shoes, hair accessories, hats, etc. Accessories that are a distraction in the classroom will need to be removed as recommended by the teacher.

## **Free Dress Guidelines**

**Lower School:** Long pants, jeans or appropriate length shorts may be worn. Leggings may be worn by girls with a shirt to cover the bottom. Dresses with shorts or leggings underneath are also allowed. Any socks or athletic shoes may be worn. No open toe shoes may be worn.

**Upper School:** Long pants or jeans may be worn that are neat in appearance and are not torn or ripped. Pajama pants and leggings are not allowed. No shorts are allowed for boys or girls. Students have the option to wear uniform bottoms. Shirts must have sleeves and appropriate writing. Dresses or skirts are not allowed for Upper School students. Any socks or athletic shoes. Open toe shoes and toe shoes are not allowed. **Girls may not wear athletic style tops on Free Dress days.** Students should not wear boots if attending PE on Free Dress days.

## School Procedures

### Attendance

Regular attendance at school is extremely important in ensuring a child's academic success. The school day begins at 7:50 a.m. and concludes at 2:58 p.m. Experience has proven that students find it difficult to make-up work which they have missed due to being absent from school.

Parents should contact the school via telephone or email ([lowerschoolreception@olomschool.org](mailto:lowerschoolreception@olomschool.org) or [upperschoolreception@olomschool.org](mailto:upperschoolreception@olomschool.org)) if a child will be absent. When a child is absent and the school has not been contacted, the school will call the parents to check on the student's status.

Of the 178 school days, students must be present a minimum of 160 days to be eligible to receive credit for courses taken. Exceptions can be made only with the approval of the principal. Exceptions can be made only in the event of extended personal illness as verified by a physician and/or other extenuating circumstances as approved by the East Baton Rouge Parish Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance. (State Department Bulletin #741) Absences that are not medical still count toward minimum days. Absences or excessive tardiness or early check-outs resulting in attendance of fewer than the required days will result in student retention.

An excused absence is any absence where an official doctor appointment excuse form is presented upon return. Written excuses verifying illness must be received within three school days following the student's return to school. A death in a child's family will also be considered excused. The school needs notification prior to the absence if possible.

For attendance purposes **11:30 a.m.** is the time for 1/2 days. If a student checks out prior to **11:30 a.m.** and does not return to school the student will be marked absent for the entire day. If the student checks out after **11:30 a.m.** they will receive a 1/2 day absence.

## **Tardiness**

Students will be considered tardy at 7:50 a.m. if they are not in assembly or homeroom. Students who arrive at or after 7:50 a.m. must be signed in by an adult. Every seventh tardy will be counted as a day absent. School administration will contact parents if the child is excessively tardy to discuss remedial action. Any student receiving 21 or more days tardy may result in the student being dismissed from Our Lady of Mercy School.

## **Extracurricular Activities**

All students participating in extracurricular activities represent Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School on and off campus, and the school's expectations for appropriate behavior apply. A student must be present at least one-half of the school day in order to participate in an extracurricular activity on that day.

Students participating in extracurricular activities must maintain an overall "C" average in subjects to participate. Students that earn a conduct grade of 80 or below will be placed on probation from participating in school events. Terms of the probation will be determined by the school administration.

In consultation with parents and teachers, the administrator may determine that continued participation in an extracurricular activity may not be in the best interest of the student.

*Please note:* Students must meet eligibility requirements to participate in extracurriculars on the date tryouts begin in order to be eligible for that sport.

## **Bathroom Guidelines**

Students in 3Y - Kindergarten must be fully potty-trained and out of diapers and pull-ups prior to the first day of school. For the purpose of clarity and setting expectations accidents will be handled as follows:

- Parents will be notified by the teacher when an accident has occurred. If this continues on a regular basis, the child will be required to stay home for at least one week or until potty training is complete.
- If an accident requires adult supervision, a parent or family member will be called and must come to school to assist with cleanup.
- If multiple accidents occur in one day, the parent will be notified by a teacher or administrator to pick up the child.

Tuition will not be prorated. A child who continues to have these problems may be asked to leave Our Lady of Mercy School until the child is developmentally ready for the program.

## **Cafeteria**

Students in grades Pre-K–8 are given the opportunity to participate in the cafeteria breakfast and lunch program provided by the Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge Office of Child Nutrition. Menus are posted on the website. Little Saints students must bring their lunch daily and follow all of the lunch rules listed below.

Parents of students with past due cafeteria balances will be contacted with sufficient time to provide payment. If payment is not provided in the allotted timeline, students may not be served lunch in the cafeteria.

The Diocese of Baton Rouge Child Nutrition Program is a part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Items listed below are not allowed in any participating school's cafeteria, whether brought in by student or parent:

- Fast Food
- Peanut butter or products containing peanuts
- Carbonated drinks
- Chips in a bag larger than one serving
- Candy

*Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School is a peanut-free zone.*

## **Arrival and Dismissal**

***Changes in your child's afternoon transportation must be communicated to the appropriate school office by 2:15 pm each day.***

### **Walkers**

Students that live within walking distance of the school may utilize the walker option. Parents who allow students to walk to and/or from school do so at their own risk. Students must use designated crosswalks and follow the direction of crossing guards and duty teachers. Parents of walkers may not park and meet their child on campus. It is the responsibility of parents to monitor weather. In the event of bad weather, a notification will be sent to families and walkers will be dismissed from the Upper School Office.



## **Carpool**

There are three morning and two afternoon carpools. Parents may not park and walk their child(ren) to campus. State law forbids use of electronic devices in a school zone.

**Procedures & Maps** - [Click Here](#)

### **Morning Carpool**

Morning carpool begins at 7:25. Students arriving **on or** after 7:50 are considered tardy and must be signed in by a parent or guardian.

- Lower School Carpool - 3Y-2nd (only)
- Upper School Office Carpool - 3Y-8th (***families with students in both Upper and Lower School & REACH students***)
- Church Carpool - 3rd - 8th (only)

### **Afternoon Carpool**

- Lower School Carpool - 3Y - 2nd (only)
- Church Carpool - 3rd - 8th in addition to Lower School siblings
- REACH Carpool - Students in REACH and siblings

## **Bus Riders**

Bus loading and unloading will happen in front of the Lower School building. Students who disobey the directions of the adult supervisors will receive consequences. Students who receive multiple bus related notifications may have their bus riding privileges suspended or expelled by the school administration.

Only students who are assigned to a bus by EBR Transportation may ride the bus. Students who are not assigned to a bus and would like to go home with a bus rider would need to utilize our carpool or extended day options.

## **Cell Phones**

Cell phones should be powered off and stowed while on campus. Devices may not be connected to school WiFi. Cell phone use is prohibited as outlined in the technology section of this handbook. Violation of this rule may result in the student receiving a detention and will result in confiscation of the device. The school reserves the right to examine the content of the confiscated device. When a student's cell phone is confiscated, a parent must pick the phone up from the upper school office or from a member of school administration.

## **Checking Out**

If a child must leave campus during the school day, a written notification must be sent to the teacher, and the parent must come to the school office to check out the child from class. Once at school, students can only be checked out through the appropriate school office. There are no checkouts after 2:30 pm, except for emergencies.

## **Communication**

Student learning flourishes when communication is clear and concise. It is important for communication to begin at the relevant level first before moving up the chain of command. Parents/guardians with concerns should first attempt to address the concern with the teacher. If the problem has not been resolved in this manner, then the person should feel free to contact the next level of support. E-mail serves as a great medium for initiating contact. However, face-to-face or telephone conversations are the best way to address issues that need resolution. When scheduling a meeting with an administrator, it is requested that a subject of conversation or meeting objective be provided.

For general information and communication, parents should refer to the school website. Blackbaud is the primary communication tool for academics and emergency information. It is important for parents to keep their contact information current so that they receive all communications from the school.

## **Confidentiality**

Teachers, administration and school staff will keep confidential information entrusted to them so long as no one's life, health or safety is at stake. Parents will be promptly notified of concerns.

## **Counseling Services**

The School Counseling Program at Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School supports the total development of the student. The counseling program promotes a positive atmosphere throughout the school and is based on trust and respect for self and others. The school counselor collaborates with parents, teachers, and administrators to support student academic, social-emotional, and career-readiness for all students.

School counselors at Our Lady of Mercy provide classroom counseling lessons, small group counseling, short-term individual counseling, and parent/teacher support. Counselors are available to address daily issues and to support families through a transitional or situational crisis. The school counselor may recommend and provide referrals for outside counseling if long-term counseling is necessary or if the presenting concern is rooted outside of the school context.

Parents/guardians can submit a counseling referral by emailing or calling their child's designated school counselor. Teachers may also submit counseling referrals for their students. With permission from their teacher, upper school students are allowed to visit Counseling Services to seek support and to schedule a session with the counselor. Sessions with lower school students are coordinated with the child's teacher.

The counseling relationship is built on confidentiality with students, parents, and teachers. All students entering a counseling relationship are informed of the limits of confidentiality, including disclosing information to parents/guardians. Counselors may see a student for up to three times without parental/guardian notification or consent unless serious concern exists at which time the parent will be promptly notified. If a child is working with a mental health professional outside of the school, the school counselor will request permission from parents/guardians to communicate with outside agencies as needed to benefit the well-being of the student.

The counselor will consult with parents/guardians to determine what confidential information will be disclosed to teachers in order to promote the academic and social-emotional growth of their child.

The school counselor collaborates with administration and teachers to implement effective and appropriate classroom accommodations that promote academic growth. To learn if your child is eligible to receive classroom or testing accommodations, please refer to the Academic Formation section in this handbook to review the accommodations policy.

When a comprehensive evaluation is conducted to assess special needs, the school counselor coordinates communication between the school and outside agencies. Parents should forward all teacher-intake forms to the school counselor who will distribute them to the teachers. After these forms have been completed, the school counselor will forward them directly to the outside agency. The school requests that a copy of the final evaluation be sent to Counseling Services, where confidential records are kept by the school counselor. Parents may choose to provide a copy of the evaluation to teachers as well.

### **Custodial/Non-Custodial Information**

Parents have the right to view information included in student records. The school abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment (Family Educational and Privacy Act). Therefore, the non-custodial parent or legal guardians, upon written request, will be given access to information regarding the academic progress of their child(ren) unless there is a court order specifically stating that the non-custodial parent or legal guardian is denied access to such information. If there is a court order specifying that no information be provided, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the school with an official copy of the court order. Upon receipt of a written request, copies will be provided within one week.

## **Deliveries for Students**

Only items such as textbooks or other instructional items may be brought to school by parents. These items should be labeled with the child's name and homeroom and given to the receptionist. Students will be called to the office during non-instructional times. No athletic equipment or apparel will be accepted. **Students will not be allowed to call home for schoolwork; however, students may call home for lunches and glasses to be delivered.**

## **Emergency Drills and Plans**

The school maintains crisis management plans for emergency situations that could arise during the school year. Faculty, staff, and students are trained and practice regularly for such emergency situations.

## **Emergency School Closing**

Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School may follow the same directive in regard to emergency school closings as East Baton Rouge Parish Public Schools. A final decision regarding emergency school closure will be communicated via email or phone call from a school administrator.

## **State or City Ordered School Closures**

If school is closed due to weather or a public health concern, parents/guardians will still be responsible for payment of tuition. **If necessary, classwork for students will be coordinated through school administration and teachers will communicate to parents expectations for assignments.**

## **Field Trips**

Field trips are an important component of the educational experience at Our Lady of Mercy School. These off-campus trips are a privilege given to students, and students may lose the privilege if they fail to meet academic and/or behavioral requirements.

Permission slips are utilized on all field trips. Students who fail to submit a completed and signed permission form will not be allowed to participate in the field trip. Telephone calls will not be accepted in lieu of written permission. Parents may choose for a child to remain at school rather than attend a field trip.

All parents who seek to serve as chaperones for school field trips must obtain a background check and child protection certification from the Diocese of Baton Rouge Office of Child Protection. This process can take up to three weeks for approval, therefore parents wishing to attend their children's field trips should start the certification process at the beginning of the school year. Parents may not accompany students on a field trip unless they have gone through

this process. The use of tobacco products and the consumption of alcohol while serving as a chaperone on a school trip are violations of school and diocesan policy (please reference diocesan policy at the end of this handbook). We ask that parents not bring other children to field trips if attending or chaperoning. The expectation of parents participating in field trips is to give full attention to the students of OLOM.

## **Food**

Due to the number of severe food allergies among the student population, outside treats for large groups (classes or grade levels) are not permitted on campus. The school will provide “peanut free” cupcakes one day a month for all students in order to celebrate birthdays. Any other specialty food items must get prior approval from administration and/or the school nurse.

## **Fundraising**

Our Lady of Mercy embraces a stewardship model for fundraising. The school invites parents, grandparents, parishioners, and other stakeholders to consider supporting our mission each year through our fundraising activities: the Annual Fund, the Auction, and the Mercy Fair as well as other fundraising programs. These programs provide significant resources essential to the maintenance and growth of the school. Parents are encouraged to participate in and support the school through these avenues of giving.

## **Health and Safety**

The Health Center is staffed by a full-time Registered Nurse. Important information about student’s allergies, chronic or serious medical conditions on ongoing medications should be reported to the School Nurse at the start of the school year. Changes in the student’s health status (such as: broken bones, concussion, newly diagnosed conditions, etc.) should be shared with the School Nurse.

An updated list of students, their allergies and emergency medications are sent to all faculty. At the start of each school year, all faculty and staff attend in-service on Recognizing and Treating Allergic Emergencies, including the use of EpiPens.

Children with communicable diseases should remain at home for the period of time that those diseases are contagious. Children diagnosed with contagious illnesses or exhibiting symptoms such as, but not limited to, fever (100.4 or greater), vomiting and diarrhea must be symptom-free for 24 hours prior to returning to school.

Students diagnosed by a physician with contagious illnesses (e.g., strep, staph, pink eye or flu) must present a physician's note releasing the student to return to the classroom upon returning to school. If required by the physician, the student must have taken appropriate prescription medications for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school.

If a student becomes ill at school, he/she should report to the Health Center. The School Nurse will contact the parent and they will collaborate on an appropriate course of action. If deemed necessary parents are to arrange pick-up of the child within an hour of the notification.

### **Lice**

Parents are encouraged to check for lice and nits on a regular basis. The school has a nit-free policy concerning head lice. Parents are obligated to contact the school nurse and follow school protocol in the event their child contracts head lice. Children who have contracted head lice must be treated and be free of lice and nits and cleared by the school nurse before returning to the classroom. Upon returning a child to school, the parent must certify: 1) that the child has been successfully treated; 2) that the child is nit free, and 3) their agreement to repeat the treatment in 7 to 10 days, if the product warrants retreatment (due to the life cycle for nits to hatch).

### **Medications at School**

In order for the necessary medication to be administered at school by the school nurse, the following forms must be completed by the parent and physician: "School Medication Form" and "State of Louisiana Medication Order". The forms can be downloaded from the school website or picked up from the school nurse. Medications, in their original containers, must be brought to school by an adult. Students should never have any medication in their possession (prescription or over the counter) while on campus.

### **Messages**

Except in emergencies, the office will not deliver messages to students nor are students allowed to use the telephone. If a student is ill or injured, a school official will notify the parent immediately. Parents are not to send text messages to students during the school day as a means of communication. During school hours communication with students must go through the school office.

### **Lockers**

Lockers are the property of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School and may be entered at any time by school officials. Students are responsible for the contents of their lockers and combinations must be kept private.

## **Lost and Found**

All items brought to school should be marked with the child's first and last name along with the current year's homeroom number. Properly marked items that are found will be returned to the student. Unmarked items that are found will be placed in the school lost and found locker located in the Upper School Office hallway and Lower School Common Area. The locker will be periodically cleaned out with items being donated to either the used uniform sale or St. Vincent de Paul.

## **Our Lady of Mercy Name and Logo Use**

The use of Our Lady of Mercy School's logo and name requires the written permission of the Our Lady of Mercy School Administration.

## **Student Information**

Student contact cards should be updated regularly through Blackbaud. Please update Blackbaud promptly regarding changes in phone numbers and/or addresses. Serious health issues and any restrictions regarding who is allowed to pick up or check out child(ren) must be noted.

A copy of the custodial section of a divorce decree must be provided if the child is not to be released to the non-custodial parent. Persons listed on Blackbaud are the only ones allowed to check the student out of school. Any deviation from what is originally listed must be submitted in writing to the office. A copy of any formal consent judgment must be provided to the school.

## **Parent Organizations**

**1. The Mercy Home and School Volunteer Association (HSVA)** serves as the primary means of volunteerism for the parents and grandparents in our school community. All parents are members of the HSVA and will be presented with opportunities to volunteer in service to the school.

**2. The Men of Mercy** serves as an opportunity for building community among the dads in the school family. All current Mercy fathers are invited to join this organization. The organization provides monthly events that serve as opportunities for fellowship and service.

**3. The Mercy School Board** serves as an advisory council to the pastor and school administration. This group meets regularly to provide guidance and parent input. Information about the Mercy School Board, such as members' contact information can be found on the school website under the "Parents" tab.

## **Parent Partnership**

Parents are entrusted by God with the responsibility to educate their children. It is a privilege for our school to partner with parents in the educational process. We are fully committed to working together to form a strong relationship to meet the needs of our students and their families. If parent behavior seriously interferes with the teaching/learning process, negatively impacts the operations of the school, or has a detrimental effect on the community, Our Lady of Mercy School may require parents to withdraw their children from the school.

## **Parent Service Hours**

Our Lady of Mercy invites parents to partner with the school through volunteerism. We rely heavily on the support of our parents to provide students with the best experience possible. Each school family is required to work five hours, three must be involving the Mercy Fair. The Mercy Fair is an extremely important event in building community and generating resources for our school. This service is essential in making the annual parish fair a success, and it provides parents with an opportunity to model Christian service to their children.

## **Parking**

Visitor Parking spaces are available on Marquette Avenue in front of the school. Other visitors are asked to park in either the church or lower school parking lots. Please refrain from parking in the street, in any of the red marked zones on campus, or in the drive-thru in front of the school.

## **Lunch**

Parents are welcome to come to lunch with their children any time after the Labor Day Holiday. **Lunch visitors will end on the last day of April. Due to limited space, students may not have more than 2 guests for a lunch visit.** Please check in at the office to obtain a visitor's pass. Please say your goodbyes in the cafeteria before the students exit the cafeteria. Parents may not join the students at recess. Parents may not bring fast food for their children to the cafeteria. Any food brought into the cafeteria must follow the guidelines of Diocesan Food Services.

## **Parties**

Teachers and room parents plan class Christmas parties and end-of-year parties and will ask for assistance from parents. Principal's permission must be obtained for any other parties. Deliveries to students, including flowers and/or balloons, are not permitted. Birthday parties in the classroom are not permitted. The school will provide cupcakes once a month in the cafeteria to celebrate all the birthdays that month. **Treat bags or favors may not be brought for holidays or birthdays.**



## **Pictures**

Our Lady of Mercy reserves the right to use students' pictures in school publications and on the school website. Enrollment of a student at Our Lady of Mercy and signing the handbook form constitutes the consent of the student's parents or guardians for the use of the student's picture in school publications, on the school's website and in school advertisements in print and broadcast outlets.

## **Security Cameras**

Please be aware that security cameras have been installed throughout the Our Lady of Mercy campus to help ensure student and staff safety.

## **Textbooks**

Students are responsible for the proper care of school books. Textbooks must be covered at all times. Textbooks should be free of pencil, ink or crayon marks. If a book is lost or damaged, it will be replaced at the parent's expense. Requests for replacement of textbooks should be made to the classroom teacher who will contact administration.

## **Visits to campus**

No one is allowed to visit classrooms or the campus during the school day without special permission from the administration. Parents and visitors are to check in at the school office when visiting campus. **Parents and visitors will obtain a visitor's badge. The badge must be visible at all times and worn for the duration of the school visit. Upon leaving, all visitors must sign out.**

# **Extended Day Program**

## **Hours**

6:45 am – 7:25 am

3:25 pm – 4:30 pm

3:25 pm – 5:30 pm

## **Registration**

All information, including registration forms, are available through Blackbaud. Students must be registered at least 24 hours prior to beginning this program.

## **Pick Up**

Students may be picked up from extended care beginning at 3:25 pm. Parents who wish to pick up their child prior to 3:25 pm should utilize the procedures outlined under the school dismissal section of this handbook.

## **Fees**

Fees for Extended Day programs will be billed monthly or annually via Blackbaud Tuition Management.

## **Food**

Breakfast is served in the cafeteria for an additional fee. Snacks served in the afternoon are part of Extended Day fees.

## **Discipline**

Students are expected to maintain appropriate behavior while at Extended Day. Expectations and consequences will be consistent with those followed during the school day. Students may be suspended or expelled from the extended day program due to behavioral concerns.

# **School Board's Finance Policies**

It is the desire of the Our Lady of Mercy School Board to create an environment which nurtures families' appreciation of the value of our Catholic faith, of attending Mass on a regular basis and of supporting the parish with their time, talent, prayer, and offering. Toward that end, the School Board has defined the standard for granting an in-parish tuition rate to families who prioritize faithful participation in parish life.

Those families who are registered, active and contributing parishioners will receive the in-parish tuition rate for their Catholic children. These three criteria are defined as follows:

1. **Registered:** A family must be formally registered with Our Lady of Mercy Church and meet the guidelines for parish membership set forth by the Diocese of Baton Rouge.
2. **Active:** The standard for this criterion is regular Sunday Mass attendance and active participation in the life of the parish. Families are encouraged to become involved in one or more of the many ministries offered through the school and the church. The parish holds an annual "Stewardship of Ministries" campaign where each ministry is explained and an opportunity to enroll is provided. It is also recommended that each family develop a daily prayer life which incorporates prayers for the Mercy community.

**3. Contributing:** The parish provides a substantial amount of financial support to the school on an annual basis. Without this support, the tuition rates would be considerably higher and the programs offered would be greatly limited. Families who contribute regularly to the church are therefore contributing to the operation of Our Lady of Mercy School. A family who makes a financial commitment to the church, giving in a regular and consistent manner, weekly or monthly, with a minimum of \$5.00 a week, will be considered a contributing family. The offertory envelopes provided by the church or other identifiable means should be used in order for the family to receive proper recognition for their gifts.

The family's tuition status will be based on their record of giving for the previous calendar year (January 1 - December 31). At the end of each calendar year, the pastor will receive a full offertory financial report on all registered school families. This report will detail how frequently and what amount each family has contributed to the church. After the pastor has reviewed this report and applied the criteria of this policy, the principal will be notified of those families who qualify for the in-parish tuition rate. In cases of extreme financial hardship, the pastor may provide a dispensation.

### **Re-enrollment/application fee**

The re-enrollment fee for students currently enrolled is paid at the time of re-enrollment and is non-refundable. The application fee for new students is paid at the time of application and is non-refundable. **If Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School is unable to accept the student, \$150 of application fee will be refunded.**

### **Payments**

A due date will be published with the fee scale. There is a program through Blackbaud where tuition can be paid over a ten month period. Late payments and NSF payments will incur a fee. Tuition rate, in-parish or out-of-parish, is determined based on the Tuition policy. Tuition for non-Catholic students is a separate category.

### **Annual Grade-Level Fee**

A due date will be published with the fee scale. This fee may be included in the tuition financing through Blackbaud.

## **Tuition Assistance**

Requests for tuition assistance for Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School families will be made on an application form which may be obtained from the school or church business office. Applications for tuition assistance are accepted year-round as hardships can occur at any time. Since tuition assistance is provided from parish income, applications will be considered by a sub-committee appointed by the Pastor. Decisions on tuition assistance will be communicated by letter to each applicant. Out-of-parish families requiring assistance should contact their pastors for information on this matter.

## **Board Resolution on Finances**

In recognition of the fact that Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School must operate on a sound fiscal basis in addition to fulfilling its religious and educational functions and that all responsible parties should have full information on policies regarding the collection of tuition and fees, be it resolved and published as policy:

1. Diocesan policy allows Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School to withhold the administration of exams and participation in graduation and/or graduation activities until all accounts are current.
2. That any accounts consistently late shall be reviewed on a quarterly basis and referred to the Administration for possible termination of school services.
3. Those families whose Blackbaud payments have not been received may forfeit re enrollment into Our Lady of Mercy School for the following school year.
4. That the Administration shall establish administrative procedures and take all such action necessary for the implementation of these policies with proper notification presented to all persons concerned.
5. That a fee of an amount to be set annually shall be charged for any check returned for reason of nonpayment. This fee shall be \$30.00. Following the third NSF check, payment must be made by cash or cashier's check only.
6. Those families with delinquent accounts at the time of re-enrollment for the next year will not be allowed to re-enroll until the account has been paid in full.
7. That any fees, tuition, fines, late charges, NSF charges or penalties due to Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School may be pursued to the maximum extent allowed by law.

8. Students will not be withdrawn from Our Lady of Mercy until all fees are paid and school-owned property is returned.

9. That, when transferring out of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School tuition paid in advance will be refunded according to the following schedule:

When transferring out of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School, tuition will be refunded according to a graduated scale as follows:

- May 1 to May 31 - 100%
- June 1 to August 31 - 75%
- September 1 to December 31 - 50%
- January 1 to March 31 - 25%
- April 1 May 31 - 0%

No fees (to include, but not limited to, books, class, maintenance, and supply) are refundable as of May 1st. Families of students who are asked to leave the school for disciplinary reasons forfeit remaining tuition and fees.

The application fee of \$275 per student is non-refundable. \$150 of the application fee will be refunded in the event Our Lady of Mercy is unable to offer admissions.

Re-enrollment fees are non-refundable.

Families agree to be personally liable for and pay for/reimburse the school for any damage caused by the student to school or church property or the personal property of a staff member, student, employee, or volunteer of the school. That the parents agree to pay the reasonable attorney's fees of the Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School, and/or its agents or assignees, if any fees, tuition, fines, late charges, NSF charges, and/or penalties due to Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School are sued upon or placed in the hands of an attorney for collection, adjustment, settlement, compromising, or other action.

# Our Lady of Mercy Digital Policies

The technological landscape is ever evolving, and it is Our Lady of Mercy's goal to prepare our students to thrive and utilize devices appropriately inside and outside of school.

Students and parents are also subject to the Diocese of Baton Rouge Catholic Schools Office's Technology Acceptable Use Policy ([linked HERE](#)) (the "AUP"). By using any technology, equipment, or resources of the School as contemplated herein, the individual user is deemed to agree to be bound by the requirements herein and in the AUP and to strictly comply with all standards contained herein and therein. The technology standards set forth in this handbook are intended to supplement, rather than modify the AUP. In the event of a conflict between any term, condition or provision of this handbook and any term, condition or provision of any AUP, the more restrictive user term, condition or provision shall apply.

In addition to the Diocesan policies, students and parents agree to the additional school-specific policies listed below.

By signing the handbook acknowledgement form, the parents and students acknowledge that they understand Our Lady of Mercy's digital policies and agree completely to the terms and conditions therein.

## Technology Policies for All Students

### Google for Education and Other Online Educational Platforms

Our Lady of Mercy School utilizes Google for Education along with other online platforms such as Seesaw. Student privacy is a priority and the school only uses software that complies with the Family Educational Rights Act (FERPA) and Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). By signing the Handbook Acknowledgment Form, you are granting permission to Our Lady of Mercy to provide and manage accounts for your child on Google for Education and similar educational platforms. The privacy policies for these programs are located on their websites if you would like additional information.

### Personal Electronic Devices

Students are not permitted to use recreational electronic equipment during school hours (including Extended Day and on the bus) unless explicit permission has been given by a member of the faculty, staff or administration. This includes, but is not limited to, cell phones, cameras, smart watches, fitness bands, iPods, and electronic games.

## **Cell Phones**

Cell phones should be powered off and stowed while on campus. Devices may not be connected to school WiFi. Violation of this rule may result in the student receiving a detention and will result in confiscation of the device. The school reserves the right to examine the content of the confiscated device. When a student's cell phone is confiscated, a parent must pick the phone up from the upper school office or from a member of school administration.

## **Electronic Readers:**

- e-Readers that are brought to school are to be used only for the reading of school approved material (books and not for other purposes such as communication, entertainment, music, gaming, etc.)
- All e-Readers that have cellular and network capabilities must be disabled (turned off) while the device is at school.
- e-Readers must be used at appropriate times in accordance with teacher instructions. It must not be a distraction to the student or other students nor should it be a source of any classroom disruption.
- The student is responsible for knowing how to properly and effectively use the e-Reader. Our Lady of Mercy School is not responsible for any damage or loss associated with a student's e-Reader.
- Violation of the e-Reader policy may result in loss of e-Reader privileges or any other form of disciplinary action determined by the administration.
- Materials on and the use of the e-Reader must be in full compliance with the Our Lady of Mercy School Digital Policy.
- The school reserves the right to review the contents of the reader if needed.
- The school reserves the right to deny use of certain devices that have e-Reading capabilities on a case-to-case basis.
- The school reserves the right to amend or rescind the e-Reader policy at any time.

## **Technology Policies for Middle School Students**

### **Expectations**

All devices issued by Our Lady of Mercy School are intended to be used for educational purposes in alignment with our mission and philosophy. All students and parents are required to read and sign the handbook acknowledgement form prior to a student being issued a device.

### **Device Distribution**

At the beginning of each school year, all 6th-8th grade students will be issued an Apple iPad, Logitech Case with attached keyboard, Apple Pencil and Apple Charger.

## General Device Responsibilities & Care

Students are responsible for maintaining and caring for all components of their school-issued devices both on and off campus. Students are also responsible for the content on their school-issued device.

- Devices should be kept in a safe and protected place at all times. Keep food and drink away from the device.
- Heavy objects should never be placed on top of the devices.
- Devices should not be thrown or tossed, even if they are secured in a backpack.
- Students are responsible for keeping their iPad and pencil charged. Uncharged devices do not excuse a student from any classwork or assessments.
- For warranty purposes, only school issued chargers can be used to charge the devices.
- Middle School students are to bring their devices home daily. Devices should not be left in lockers overnight.
- Devices should not be left in a car where it could be stolen or damaged due to heat.
- All devices and accessories are labeled with the student and school's information. *These labels should remain on devices and accessories at all times.* Students are not allowed to remove any labels. Should a label become worn or peel off, a new label must be obtained from the Help Desk as soon as possible.
- Students may not color, draw, or add any additional labels or stickers to their devices or accessories.

## Content

Our Lady of Mercy formats the settings of every device for tracking, monitoring, and managing devices. Any attempt to bypass or change these settings is prohibited.

Every student will be issued a Google Classroom account as well as a school issued Apple ID. It is the student's responsibility to back up their data. Our Lady of Mercy is not responsible for any work or data lost.

- All apps for student iPads are distributed remotely by the Our Lady of Mercy Technology Department. Students will not have the ability to add or delete apps from the iPad. Any attempts to bypass this protocol are prohibited.
- All content housed on school issued student iPads is expected to be educational in nature and supportive of our school mission and values.
- All content housed on school issued devices is the property of Our Lady of Mercy School and subject to inspection at any time.



## Content filtering

- Internet content filters are in place on all school issued devices on and off campus to ensure students are accessing educational and age appropriate content. Any attempts to bypass the filter or access inappropriate content are prohibited.
- While the content filter is active on the device at all times, no content filter is 100% accurate. The expectations outlined in this Digital Citizenship Agreement should be followed on and off campus.
- Content filtering alerts received by School personnel outside of normal school hours will be addressed the following school day. Parents or guardians, rather than the School, shall be responsible for monitoring and addressing inappropriate content or content that causes alarm while the student is off campus.
- In addition to a content filtering for web browsing, software also actively monitors all communication and tools within Google for Education apps for inappropriate language, content, cyberbullying and suicidal ideation. Any activity that is cause for alarm or in violation of the Our Lady of Mercy Digital Policies will be addressed with the student and parent.
- Students are responsible for all digital data, activity, and products on their School-owned/issued devices/accounts.

## Tech Support and Help Desk

Tech Support is provided by the Our Lady of Mercy Technology Department. If a student needs assistance, they should report to the Help Desk located next to the Upper School Office.

## Loaner Devices

Students are expected to have their iPad and accessories fully charged and brought to school every day. In the event that a student forgets a device or forgets to charge it, a loaner item will be issued for the day. Students must come to the help desk BEFORE assembly to check the item(s) out and return the item(s) BEFORE dismissal. Students who forget items more than three times in a school year may be subject to disciplinary action.

In the event of an incident (see below), a spare device will be issued from the Help Desk. Students may bring the spare item home and keep it until the issue is resolved.

An email will be sent to the parent/guardian each time a student checks out a spare device. Failure to return the spare item or damage to the item will result in parents/guardians being responsible for full replacement costs up to \$500.

## Incidents

All incidents including loss, theft, or accidental damage should be reported to the Help Desk as soon as possible. All student devices are leased from Apple Education and therefore are the property of Apple Inc. All repairs and replacements must be facilitated through the Our Lady of Mercy Technology Department per the terms of our lease agreement. Attempting to make a repair or replacement of an iPad or accessory outside of the Our Lady of Mercy Technology Department may result in the parent(s)/guardian(s) responsible for the full replacement cost up to \$500.

## Lost Device Procedures

- If a device is lost, the student should contact the Our Lady of Mercy Technology Department as soon as possible to assess the situation and check out a spare device.
- If the original device is not recovered, the parent/guardians are responsible for the full replacement cost of the device up to \$500. *In accordance with our AppleCare+ warranty, lost items are not eligible for free or reduced replacement so parents/guardians will be responsible for full replacement costs.*

## Stolen Device Procedures

- If a device is stolen, the student should contact the Our Lady of Mercy Technology Department as soon as possible to assess the situation and check out a spare device.
- A police report must be filed and a copy submitted to the Our Lady of Mercy Technology Department within two weeks of the device being stolen. Parents/guardians should send a copy of the police report via email. Our Lady of Mercy will make every effort to work with you to provide information for homeowners or car insurance claims.
- *In accordance with our AppleCare+ warranty, stolen items are not eligible for free or reduced replacement so parents/guardians will be responsible for full replacement costs.*

## Damaged Device Procedures

- Damaged or malfunctioning devices should be brought to the Help Desk as soon as possible to assess the situation and check out a spare device if needed.
- The first incident of accidental damage to an iPad or accessory will be covered at no charge under our warranty. This policy applies only once throughout a student's entire 6th-8th grade years. However, this "first free repair" policy does not apply to replacement tips or caps for Apple Pencils.
- The second incident of accidental damage will be covered at a reduced cost, based on our warranty. This policy also applies only once throughout a student's entire 6th-8th grade years.

- Any accidental damage after the second repair will result in parents/guardians having to pay full replacement costs.
- If damage is deemed deliberate or negligent, the parent/guardian is responsible for the full cost of any repairs or replacement and disciplinary action may be taken.

| <b>Replacement Costs</b>    |                     |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| iPad \$300                  | Logitech Case \$100 |
| Apple Pencil \$90           | Apple Charger \$40  |
| Apple Pencil Cap or Tip \$6 |                     |

### **Device Collection**

All student devices will be turned in to the Our Lady of Mercy Technology Department to be stored and maintained over the summer. Students are expected to return the iPad, case, Apple Pencil and Apple charger that were originally issued with school labels intact. Failure to return all items will result in parents/guardians being charged for replacement pieces.

In the event of a student withdrawing from Our Lady of Mercy for the year, the student will turn in their device and accessories on the last day of attendance. The student will not be withdrawn until all technology items have been returned.

## **School and Diocesan Policies**

### **Diocesan Bullying/Harassment/Hazing Policy**

“To reflect Gospel values and to ensure a positive and safe learning climate, the schools of the Diocese of Baton Rouge do not condone harassment, hazing, or bullying of any kind. All school community members are to treat everyone with dignity and respect. In that spirit, the prohibition against acts of harassment, hazing, and bullying applies to all Catholic school students, both on and off campus. It is recognized that harassment, hazing, or bullying can involve verbal, physical, written, or electronic communication whether by means currently in use or by any new electronic devices that may be developed in the future.

Each school shall establish a policy regarding the identification, reporting, investigation and disciplinary action taken for reported allegations of harassment, hazing, or bullying involving members of the school community. The school’s policy must be included in each school’s parent/student handbook.” (4.9.2.7)

## **Bullying**

Bullying behavior is purposeful with the intent to cause harm through means of physical, verbal, relational, social, emotional, and/or electronic communication. This behavior is patterned and pervasive, averaging two or more incidents per week over the course of two or more weeks. There is a power imbalance which may be either physical or social in nature.

## **Harassment**

Harassment is unwelcome offensive conduct, whether physical or verbal, that is directed toward another person or group of persons when the person exhibiting the behavior knew or should have known that it would cause the person or persons to whom it was directed to be fearful, anxious, or emotionally upset as a result of the behavior. Offensive conduct may include, but is not limited to, offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name calling, physical assaults or threats, intimidation, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or pictures, and interference with school performance whether the interference is direct or indirect, unwarranted physical touching, contact, assault, deliberate impeding or blocking movements, or any intimidating interference with normal school work or movement. Sexual harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Any of the above-stated forms of harassment that are of a sexual nature are considered sexual harassment when they are unwelcome and create an environment or causes an atmosphere that affects a student's ability to take advantage of the school's programs.

## **Hazing**

Hazing is a form of harassment that involves intentional, knowing, or reckless acts that induce pain, embarrassment, humiliation, deprivation of rights, physical pain, or mental discomfort. It is directed against a student for the purposes of being initiated into, affiliated with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in any organization, club, athletic team, or another group. Culpability includes hazing practices mandated or voluntarily entered into by any party.

## **Reporting**

Anyone wishing to report concerns of harassment, hazing, or bullying should contact a school counselor or administrator immediately.

## **Violence – Threatened and Acted**

All threats of violence will be taken seriously. The administration will address this in an age-appropriate manner working to ensure the safety of students, faculty, and staff. Students may receive consequences for threats or actions of a violent nature.

## **Diocesan Child Protection Program**

The Diocese of Baton Rouge Child Protection Program is designed to comply with canon, criminal, and civil law. All Diocesan schools must instruct the youth in their care and train personnel in programs of awareness and safety.

All school and Church employees and volunteers must be screened prior to being hired and/or working with students. They must also provide documentation of participation in an online training program that covers awareness and appropriate behaviors with minors.

The Diocesan Child Protection Program is a three-step process which includes: fingerprinting, background check and online tutorial. Any fee associated with this process is the responsibility of the volunteer/employee.

## **Diocesan Substance Abuse Policy**

Aware of the ever-present danger of the illegal use of chemicals/alcohol by students, the school strives to provide preventative education and a drug-free climate on campus, and at all school-related functions. The use of all chemicals, including alcohol, tobacco and tobacco products is prohibited. If a drug/alcohol treatment program and or drug testing is mandated, for reasonable cause, it is to be financed by the parent/guardian. This Diocesan Substance Abuse Policy must be included in each school's handbook of policies and must be adhered to.

# Handbook Acknowledgement Form

## 2023-24

My signature below indicates that I have read the 2023 - 2024 Student Handbook, and that I agree to abide by the spirit and letter of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School's policies and procedures.

This signed form must be given to the student's homeroom teacher the first day of school. If the signed form is not returned by Friday, August 11, 2023, the student will not be allowed to return to school until the form has been signed and returned.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent or guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Homeroom

It is the responsibility of the custodial parent(s) or step-parent(s) to inform the other parents of the school policies and procedures.

Please return one form per child.