



ST. MEL'S
CATHOLIC ACADEMY

Parent-Student Handbook
2023-2024

St. Mel's Catholic Academy

154-24 26th Avenue

Flushing, NY 11354



ST. MEL'S

CATHOLIC ACADEMY

WELCOME LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Parents, Guardians and Students,

Welcome to St. Mel's Catholic Academy and the 2023-2024 school year! We are pleased to provide you and your children with a team of professionals dedicated to the highest standard of Catholic education and care of your child(ren).

As parents/guardians of children enrolled in the Academy, you also serve as a **partner** in education. As partners, parents, faculty and staff will work together to ensure the academic, social, spiritual, and emotional growth of your children while they attend the Academy. I trust that you are up to the task, and I welcome working with you to ensure the success of your child and all the students at the Academy!

In order to provide the best quality of education and safety, we ask that all parents/guardians and students adhere to the Academy's policies. This Parent-Student Handbook contains the Academy's policies and is intended to provide you with a guide. Please take the time to review this Handbook in its entirety. I hope the Handbook will answer questions you may have regarding the policies of the Academy, although you may always reach out to me or the Board of Trustees if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

This Handbook will be distributed as a hard copy upon request. It will remain accessible to you on the school website.

At the end of this Handbook are various documents for you to review and sign, as well as an Acknowledgement of Receipt of this Handbook. Please sign and return all these documents by 9/29/23.

Thank you for your support and I look forward to working with you as we provide the upmost quality Catholic education to your children in a secure, safe and nurturing environment.

Sincerely,

Amy Barron, Principal

DIRECTORY

Administrators

Principal – Amy Barron abarron@stmelsacademy.org

Pastor – Rev. Joseph Fonti jfonti@stmels-queens.org

Teachers

3KA – Tara Bivona tbivona@stmelsacademy.org

Phyllis Frey pfrey@stmelsacademy.org

3KB – Emily McNamee emcnamee@stmelsacademy.org

Anita Garcia agarcia@stmelsacademy.org

3KC – Jess Megerian jmegerian@stmelsacademy.org

Toni Colletta tcolletta@stmelsacademy.org

PKA – Fiona Diago fdiago@stmelsacademy.org

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PKB – Marisa Day mday@stmelsacademy.org

Kerry Garry kgarry@stmelsacademy.org

PKC – Michelle Flavin mflavin@stmelsacademy.org

Gigi Kish gkish@stmelsacademy.org

Kindergarten 1 – Lisa Sheehan lisasheehan@stmelsacademy.org

Kindergarten 2 – Nicole Oralis noralis@stmelsacademy.org

Grade 1 – Samantha Murphy smurphy@stmelsacademy.org

Grade 2 – Sabrina Cangemi scangemi@stmelsacademy.org

Grade 3 - Nicole Tiseo ntiseo@stmelsacademy.org

Grade 4/Science/STEM - Gianna Napolitano gnapolitano@stmelsacademy.org

Grade 5/Math/SS - Amy Turturro aturturro@stmelsacademy.org

Grade 6/ELA/Religion – Sandra Slowinski sslowinski@stmelsacademy.org

Music – TBA

Art – Krista Laurenzano klaurenzano@stmelsacademy.org

Gym – Antoinette Quatela aquatela@stmelsacademy.org

Staff

Office Manager – Danielle VanArsdale dvanarsdale@stmelsacademy.org

Financial Secretary – Alexis Nittolo anittolo@stmelsacademy.org

UPK director – MaryJo Ligurgo mligurgo@stmelsacademy.org

Nurse – Marie Driscoll

Custodian – Fanio Guzzardi

Crossing Guard – Rosa Colon

Board of Trustees

Dominick Yezzo, chairman

Bill Driscoll

Frank Quatela

Antoinette Quatela

Ann Aquaviva

ACADEMY OVERVIEW

A. Mission Statement

St. Mel's Catholic Academy fosters the spiritual, social, emotional, and academic growth of our students in a nurturing Christ-centered environment. Collectively our community works towards meeting today's challenges through creative thinking and technology so that our students develop a strong foundation of academic excellence. We aspire to graduate spiritually alert, morally aware and ethically-empowered individuals.

B. Our Philosophy

At St. Mel's Early Childhood Center we promote and enhance each individual's wholeness in an academic environment with Christ as our primary model. Catholic teachings and values, initiated in the home, are reinforced by our examples of kindness, respect and religious beliefs as a faculty and staff and are made an integral part of the students' everyday life in diverse communities.

We hope to foster in each child a sense of self-esteem by providing a quality Catholic education. This is accomplished by assisting the student to discover and use the tools to develop his/her full potential spiritually, intellectually, physically, emotionally and socially.

This entails monitoring individual and group progress and communications with faculty, administration and parents to assure continued progress. Working together, academy administration, parents and children will be mutually supportive and responsible for the growth of all.

St. Mel's Catholic Academy does not discriminate by sex, race, color or national origin.

C. History of the Academy

St. Mel's Parish was founded in February, 1941 from humble beginnings, with the first masses being celebrated in a storefront and later, a tent, until a church structure could be build. Father Terence C. Sharkey was appointed first pastor. As the parish continued to grow, the need for a school to foster the academic and spiritual growth of children of the parish became evident. While Father Vincent J. O'Malley served as pastor, St. Mel's School and a new convent was opened in 1960. The school building was formally dedicated by Archbishop Bryan J. McEntegart on November 13, 1960. In 1964, St. Mel's School celebrated its first graduating class and a two-story extension was added to the building.

The school continued to grow as more programs were added, including Girl Scouts in 1998. 2010 saw the beginning of the Universal Pre-K program at St. Mel's school and the school's 50th anniversary celebration. In 2014, along with many schools in the Diocese of Brooklyn, the school underwent a governance change, instead of being governed by the parish, the school was now governed by a board of directors, and reopened as St. Mel's Catholic Academy. On September 9th 2016, the school along with the rest of the parish celebrated the rededication of St. Mel's Church. This is the church that we know and worship in today.

2020 saw another great change in the history of St. Mel's Catholic Academy. This was a trying time for all as we were living through the global pandemic of COVID-19 and we all needed to get used to a new "normal". Many businesses fell victim to the pandemic and unfortunately St. Mel's Catholic Academy was also a casualty, as the Diocese of Brooklyn made the painful decision to close the school in June 2020. However, St. Mel's was given the opportunity to re-envision itself once again, and in September 2020, the St. Mel's Early Childhood Center opened its doors. With a renewed energy and

spirit, we served the youngest members (nursery through grade 3) of St. Mel's parish and beyond, offering them a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment to grow academically, emotionally and spiritually. Over the past three years, we have continued to expand with the addition of a state of the art piano lab, graciously donated by the family of pastor, Rev. Joseph Fonti, in honor of the Fonti family matriarch, Raffaella Fonti, the Dorothea Ryan and Caterina Cassandro children's playground, graciously funded by Unsung Siblings Foundation, a new indoor gross motor play space and indoor rec room, and a newly renovated entrance/main hallway through a generous donation from St. Mel's alum Steve Somers. Our school population has grown as well with the addition of three 3K classes, a second kindergarten class and we have expanded to sixth grade. We look forward to a bright future.

D. Parental Expectation of Adherence to School Policy

Discipline in the schools should reflect the spirit of *Vatican Council II*, as expressed in *the documents on Christian Education and Religious Liberty*. Therefore, discipline should be geared to assist a child develop in the understanding of self as being made in the image of God.

...Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth (cf. *Spe Salve*, 4). This relationship elicits a desire to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ and his teaching. In this way those who meet him are drawn by the very power of God to lead a new life characterized by all that is beautiful, good, and true; a life of Christian witness nurtured and strengthened within the community of our Lord's disciples, the Church....Dear friends, I wish to conclude by focusing our attention specifically on the paramount importance of your own professionalism and witness within our Catholic universities and schools. First, let me thank you for your dedication and generosity. I know from my own days as a professor, and have heard from your Bishops and officials of the Congregation for Catholic Education, that the reputation of Catholic institutes of learning in this country is largely due to yourselves and your predecessors. Your selfless contributions – from outstanding research to the dedication of those working in inner-city schools – serve your country and the Church. For this I express my profound gratitude. Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Catholic educators at the Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, April 17, 2008

Evidence of discipline exists in a school community when the students, teachers, administration, and parents/legal guardians work cooperatively to educate the whole child: spiritually, academically, socially, emotionally, and physically.

I. PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

This Parent-Student Handbook ("Handbook") is designed to provide important information regarding rules, policies and procedures relating to the operation and safety at our Academy. The Handbook summarizes policies and contains general guidelines and information. To the extent that anything in this Handbook conflicts with applicable law, the applicable law governs. Further, this Handbook may be changed from time to time during the academic year. An up-to-date version can be found on our website, www.stmelsacademu.org, and parents/guardians are expected to regularly check that version to be aware of any changes. If you have any questions on this Handbook or otherwise, please contact the Principal.

Parents/guardians are required to sign a form stating that they have read the rules and regulations outlined in this Handbook and that they agree to abide by those rules, and to ensure that their children abide by the rules. Students in grades 6-8 must also sign this form. Failure to sign the form will not prevent the Academy from enforcing its policies, but could result in disciplinary action being taken and/or the prevention of the student from enrolling in the school. This form can be found at the end of this Handbook.

In this Handbook, the term “parent” refers not only to a child’s natural or adopted parent, but to a student’s non-parent legal guardian or to any person or agency authorized to act in place of a parent.

Finally, in light of the unique situations which may arise in the educational process, and because it is impossible to foresee all school issues, the Academy reserves the right to address and take appropriate action for any such situations not specifically referenced in this Handbook. And, in light of the unique and essential religious mission of the Academy, the Academy may take actions in cases where moral offenses occur which reflect adversely on the Academy, the Diocese of Brooklyn, or the Roman Catholic Church, or which interfere with the ability of the Academy to perform its religious mission or to effectively maintain the intimate working relationship of the Academy and the community of Faith.

II. CATHOLIC IDENTITY

A. Catholic Identity

The mission of Catholic Education is to form children in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ as celebrated in the Catholic Church, while providing a comprehensive academic education that will help them reach their full human potential and contribute to the common good of our nation and the world. Ultimately, the mission of all Catholic education is to lead those entrusted to its care to find salvation in Jesus Christ.

In *Catholic Schools on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (#11) Saint John Paul II wrote that Catholic schools are “...the privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out. Catholic schools are at once places of evangelization, of complete formation, of enculturation, of apprenticeship in a lively dialogue between young people of different religions and social backgrounds.”

Diocesan academies and schools strive to emulate the words of Saint John Paul II by:

- creating an evangelizing community, where people come to have a better and deeper understanding of Christ and His Church
- recognizing the importance of multi-cultural, multi-faceted, academically sound educational programs that meet the needs of the poor and the rich, the Catholic and the non-Catholic, the wise and the not so learned
- welcoming members to the school community regardless of culture, race, or religion and celebrating the diversity that exists within our communities, churches, and schools
- creating an environment that encourages young people to grow, not separated from others, but as part of a larger community, as part of the family of God
- not only promoting and encouraging academically sound individuals, but rejoicing with children who are spiritually, theologically, and liturgically enlivened and fulfilled

B. Adherence to Catholic Doctrine

The Academy is a Roman Catholic school located in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn (“Diocese of Brooklyn”), and is committed to providing quality Catholic education for both Catholic children and those of other faiths who share our commitment to Gospel values and academic excellence. Our goals includes teaching Christ’s truth and fostering the formation of the Academy’s students by conveying the values rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As a religious organization of the Roman Catholic faith, the Academy, at all times, adheres to the doctrines, customs, tenets and teachings of the Roman Catholic church, and the curriculum guidelines in religion from the Diocese of Brooklyn. All students and parents, including those who are Non-Catholic, must accept and adhere to the standards, values, and religious tenets of the Roman Catholic faith. All parents/guardians are expected to support the Academy’s mission and commitment to Christian principles.

C. Inclusion of All Other Faiths

The presence of students from other faiths provides a wonderful diversity, and the Academy welcomes students and parents/guardians of other faiths. However, as a Catholic school located within the Diocese of Brooklyn, the Academy is focused on the formation of children in the Catholic faith. Parents/guardians must accept the intentional Catholic values and tenets that are the underpinning of our Academy. All students, including Non-Catholic students, are expected to participate in the religious formation and education programs of the Academy, including, but not limited to, liturgies, religious functions, and religious classes. It is also expected that Non-Catholic students and parents/guardians participate as fully as they can in the liturgical and prayer life of the Academy. The teachers and administration at the Academy are also committed to teaching the fullness of revelation as it is taught by the Roman Catholic Church and the Diocese of Brooklyn. While our teachers, administration, and staff value the presence of students from other faiths and respect other faiths, they always teach and model within the context of the doctrines and tenets of the Roman Catholic Church.

III. ACADEMICS

A. Academic Expectations

The Academy expects its students to perform to the best of their ability. Teachers evaluate students’ progress on a regular basis with quizzes, tests, homework, presentations, participation, behavior in the classroom, and class presentation. After a test is graded, it will be sent home for a parent/guardian to review and sign. A parent/guardian’s signature indicates that the parent/guardian is aware of the student’s progress.

B. Curriculum & Assessments

NYS Testing

Students in grades 4, 6, 7, and 8 will participate in New York State ELA and Math Testing while grades 5 and 8 will participate in the NYS Science Assessment. Parents receive an Individual Student Report (ISR) which includes a breakdown of a student’s performance in different skill areas within ELA, Math and Science. This helps parents understand where their child is doing well and in what areas he or she may need additional practice. Parents can use these results to guide a discussion with their child’s teacher about additional supports or challenges that may be needed in the classroom, as well as ways to support learning at home.

There are no negative consequences when taking state tests as the tests are considered diagnostic. The ELA and math test results are not recorded on student permanent record cards or report cards. New York State law forbids the use of state test results as the determining factor in promotion.

C. iReady Testing

iReady is an online program for reading and/or mathematics that helps teacher(s) determine student's needs, personalize their learning, and monitor progress throughout the school year. iReady allows teachers to meet your student exactly where they are and provides data to increase students' learning gains. iReady consists of two parts: Diagnostic and Personalized Instruction. The Diagnostic provides a score reflecting students' grade level and potential.

iReady scores are the standardized test results that will be entered onto student permanent record cards and the TACH record and for future 8th grade students applying to Catholic High Schools.

D. Religious Education

Religion is part of all that we see, teach and do at the Academy, and is a crucial component of students' academic learning. The Academy adheres to the current Diocese of Brooklyn curriculum guidelines in religion. Non-Catholic students are expected to fully participate in all religious education and formation programs, including, but not limited to, religion class, liturgies, and religious functions.

E. Homework

Homework is an essential part of the Academy's instructional program, as it reinforces learning and provides students with opportunities to practice what they were taught in class. Homework can come in many forms, including, but not limited to, projects, reports, and independent reading. Students are required to complete all homework, including when a student is absent. **Parent, guardian, or other adult assistance with homework is key to a student's academic success!**

ALL students are expected to read independently for 20 minutes per evening (or, in the case of lower grades, to be read to).

Additionally, the time allotments for other homework, not including reading, are *approximately* as follows:

- Grades K & 1: 20-30 minutes
- Grades 2 & 3: 30-40 minutes
- Grades 4/5/6: 30-60 minutes

Please keep in mind that each child works at a different pace and the time frame for completing homework for one student may be different than that for another.

Homework must be done at home and may not be done at school, with the exception of students who attend the After School program.

F. Grades

The determination of grades is the responsibility of each individual teacher. Parents/guardians and students must know and understand how grades are determined, and are encouraged to reach out to each student's teacher or teachers.

The following is an overview of grades at the Academy:

Nursery, Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten will utilize the following grading system to identify progress for each area

- 4: Meeting grade level expectations with distinction
- 3: Meeting grade level expectations
- 2: Progressing toward meeting grade level expectations
- 1: Not meeting grade level expectations
- X: Student is receiving this service

Grades 1 through 8 will utilize the levels included above and alpha/numeric grades as indicated below:

A+	= 97 – 100
A	= 93 – 96
B+	= 89 – 92
B	= 85 – 88
C+	= 81 – 84
C	= 77 – 80
D+	= 74 – 76
D	= 70 – 73
F	= Below 70

For social emotional learning/ personal progress and religion report card evaluations.

G: Area of Growth
A: Area of Strength

Awards and Honors – Students have the opportunity to earn honor roll status each semester as well as other awards. The criteria for honor roll and awards is as follows:

- **PRINCIPAL'S LIST** Grades 1 to 4 – ALL A+ Grades 5 to 8 – 97% average with no grade less than 95%
- **FIRST HONORS** Grades 1 to 4 – ALL A+ and A Grades 5 to 8 – 93% average with no grade less than 90%
- **SECOND HONORS** Grades 1 to 4 – B+ to A+ Grades 5 to 8 – 89% average with no grade less than 85%
- **PERSERVERANCE AWARD** This award is given to those students who exhibit persistent effort in and out of the classroom and is given at the discretion of the teacher.
- **STUDENT OF THE MONTH** This award is given to the student who best exemplifies the value/virtue of the month and is given at the discretion of the teacher.
- **PERFECT ATTENDANCE** This award is given to those students who have perfect

attendance for the trimester, (never absent or late). Excused lateness is not taken into account.

ALL AWARDS REQUIRE "3" OR "4" IN HOMEWORK, CONDUCT, EFFORT, SPECIAL SUBJECTS AND PERSONAL PROGRESS or AS DETERMINED BY THE ADMINISTRATION

G. Make-Up Work

Students may make up missed tests, homework and other assignments at the discretion of the teacher. Please contact your child's teacher if he/she is absent or cannot complete an assignment prior to the assignment's due date to work out an alternative arrangement. Assignments that are submitted late may result in a grade reduction, and tests/assignments that are not made up, will result in a grade of zero.

H. Protecting Instructional Time

Maintaining school schedule and structure is of the utmost importance during the school year. As academies make their calendar and schedules, their goal is to protect instructional time as much as possible. In protecting instructional time, parents are asked to refrain from removing their child during the school day for unnecessary activities. Appointments should be scheduled, when possible, before or after the school day in order to avoid disrupting student learning. Vacations and family trips should also be planned, when possible, for existing school vacation weeks. In the event of a necessary absence, parents should alert the school and classroom teacher as soon as possible. If an extended absence is known, parents should communicate with their child's teacher to create a plan for making up missed work.

I. Progress Reports & Report Card Schedule

Parents/ legal guardians will receive report cards three times a year, at the end of each trimester. Parents/ legal guardians will also receive progress reports during each trimester prior to receiving the report cards. It is vital to a student's progress that an open communication exists between parents/ legal guardians and their child's teacher. Any concerns regarding a child's progress should be addressed first to the child's teacher.

J. Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parents/ legal guardians will have the opportunity to attend parent teacher conferences at the end of the first and second trimester following receipt of student report cards. While these are formally scheduled conferences, parents are also encouraged to schedule meetings with teachers or other staff, when necessary, to discuss their child's progress and learning goals.

K. Admission Policies

Roman Catholic schools in the Diocese of Brooklyn base their educational purpose and all their activities on the Christian teaching of the essential quality of all persons as rooted in God's love.

The process for admission to the Academy is as follows: parents/guardians must complete the Academy application form and provide all required documents. The following documents are required:

- Copy of child's birth certificate
- Copy of child's baptismal certificate (if Catholic)
- Copy of child's most recent report card if applicable
- Copy of child's IEP if applicable

If necessary, an interview will be held. Following an interview (if held) and evaluation of the materials, the parent/guardian will be notified in writing about whether the Academy is offering the child a position.

While admission is on a first-come, first served basis, the school endeavors to give preference in admission following these guidelines: first, to siblings of currently enrolled students; second, to Catholic students whose parents/guardians are active members of the parish; third, to Catholic students whose parents/guardians are active in another Catholic parish; and fourth, to non-Catholic students.

Once a child is accepted into St. Mel's Catholic Academy, parents must submit the following:

- Registration contract and applicable registration/enrollment fees
- Copy of most recent physical dated within the last calendar year.
- Copy of complete immunization record.

L. Transfers and Withdrawals

If a parent/guardian wishes to transfer his or her child(ren) out of the Academy, a transfer request form must be obtained from St. Mel's Catholic Academy. Before records are transferred to another school, all bills must be paid in full and all books must be returned.

When a student transfers from one school to another, or enters high school, the new school may request a copy of the permanent record and health card from the former school. The Academy may disclose a student's cumulative record (*i.e.* permanent record, attendance record, test results) to another school with a legitimate educational interest if a written request is made and when a parent/guardian has given written permission for the release of the child's records. Parent/guardian signature is required for release of a student's confidential file, which includes special education records, psychological reports, disciplinary records, and reports by a school counsellor.

At the discretion of the Principal, and in accordance with applicable law, the Academy has the right not to certify a student's graduation or provide transcripts of the student's academic record to third parties such as other schools, colleges, or employers, or to issue a diploma to the student, if there has been a breach of a material condition of the educational contract, such as failure to meet financial obligations, infractions against the school's code of conduct, anti-bullying policy or violations of the policies of the Academy and those set forth in this Handbook.

The Academy reserves the right to request that a parent/guardian withdraw his or her child from the school.

M. Recommendation for Next Grade Level

The Academy takes the decision whether to promote or retain a student extremely seriously. Sometimes, however, testing, diagnosis and actual performance may indicate that a student cannot follow the school's complete course of study. In accordance with NYS Education Law, Assessment

and Performance a student is being considered for retention at the same grade level, teachers will discuss the possibility with the Principal. Although the teacher consults with the Principal, the final decision for retaining a student rests with the Principal. Certain criteria the Principal and teachers may take into account as they consider a recommendation for retention includes that the student has failed to pass major subjects on each grade level and/or has not demonstrated acceptable progress toward mastery of standards, including failure to complete assignments, or repeated low scores in several areas on a report card.

A student who receives a final failing grade in religion will NOT be promoted.

If a student completes all requirements for promotion or graduation, and there has been no recommendation or approval to retain the student, a parent/guardian or family cannot self-select that the student be retained.

N. Graduation

If and when the Academy returns to the traditional N-8 model, at the discretion of the Principal, the Academy has the right not to certify a student's graduation or to issue a diploma to the student, if there has been a breach of a material condition of the educational contract, such as failure to meet financial obligations, infractions against the school's code of conduct, anti-bullying policy or violations of the policies of the Academy and those set forth in this Handbook

O. Distance Learning

In the event that a class or the school cannot engage in in-person learning, due to required Covid-19 quarantine, inclement weather, or any other emergency situation, distance learning will commence. Distance learning that is facilitated by a Catholic Academy or Parish School within the Diocese of Brooklyn is bound by all parts of the Acceptable Use Policy. As distance learning requires the use of other mediums such as teleconferencing platforms, virtual classrooms, digital file transfer and online work, there are other factors that need to be addressed.

- **Device Usage** – The use of school/academy or personal devices for distance learning is allowed. It is recommended that all school/academy issued accounts only be used for schoolwork purposes and that those accounts are signed out of after work is completed. All usage is governed by this policy.
- **Video/Audio Conferencing** – Video or audio-conferencing platforms may be used to facilitate class meetings and communication between teachers and students for teaching and group work. When using these platforms, participants must remember to conduct themselves in a professional manner commensurate with behavior expected in a physical classroom. Entering meetings other than those you are explicitly invited to by the coordinator (teacher, principal, etc.) is strictly prohibited. Trying to circumvent the security of a meeting, “hijacking” a presentation or displaying any objectionable content during a meeting is a direct violation of this policy and subject to the disciplinary actions contained within. Recording of video/audio conferences is also prohibited.
- **File Transfer/Submission** – The transmittal of files may be required at times for teachers to provide and students to submit work. The willful transfer of objectionable material, malicious content or any other such transmissions is a violation of this policy.
- **Learning Platforms** – The use of learning platforms such as ThinkCentral, Learn360, Mathletics, Microsoft 365, Google Classroom and others is for the sole purpose of

supporting and furthering the education of students. Any use of these platforms for any other reason may be considered a violation of this policy.

Any use or misuse of the technology provided for distance learning that interferes with the education of students or the operations of the school/academy is a violation of this policy.

P. Extracurricular Activities

The Academy offers various extracurricular activities. Students are expected to follow school policy while engaged in any extracurricular activity. Participation in these activities is a privilege, and students are expected to fulfill their obligations in the classroom as a priority to any extracurricular activity.

In order to participate, the following criteria must be met:

- Parent consent form must be signed and returned
- The child must be in good academic standing (passing all classes)
- All behavioral guidelines that are in place during the school day will apply to any extracurricular activities.

Failure or difficulty meeting academic or behavioral requirements will result in a student's suspension or dismissal from the activity. The Principal makes the final determination as to participation in an extra-curricular activity.

When participating in extracurricular activities, including sports or otherwise, students must at all times demonstrate Catholic values. It is expected that students, coaches and fans display respect, civility and responsibility during all events, contests, and/or practices.

Students who do not abide by the Academy's policies will lose the opportunity to participate in any extracurricular activity.

Q. Recess

With the exception of school-wide events, which may include Mass, daily recess will be provided. 30 minutes of recess will be provided daily for grades K-5. Pre-K and 3K students will receive 45 minutes of supervised gross motor activity daily. If weather permits, the students will attend recess in the school yard. If not, the cafeteria, indoor gross motor room, newly renovated rec room and/or classrooms will be used. If a student has any physical limitation which may affect his or her ability to engage in all recess activities, the Academy must be notified in accordance with the Limitations of Physical Activity policy below.

R. Summer School

In accordance with NYS Education Guidelines a student who has received a failing grade in reading, mathematics, and language arts in three marking periods of the report card will be required to attend mandatory summer school in the low performing content areas. Summer school may also be recommended due to poor performance on standardized tests or in the classroom. Excessive absences during the school year may result in the child being required to attend summer school. The final determination as to whether a student must attend summer school rests with the Principal.

St. Mel's Catholic Academy does hold a summer enrichment program, but this program does NOT fulfill summer school requirements. If summer school is required, a list of schools in the area that do provided summer school will be provided.

The summer school report card must be submitted to the Principal before September 1. Failure to attend summer school when required will result in retention at the same grade level or discharge of the student. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to provide documentation that summer school has been successfully completed. In cases in which tutoring is allowed for the remediation, it must be undertaken by a qualified teacher and approved in advance by the Principal.

IV. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Academy Calendar and Hours

New York State Law currently requires a school calendar to provide 177 days of instruction with 3 professional days and cites the following holidays when schools may not be in session:

Columbus Day	Second Monday in October
Veterans Day	Eleventh Day in November
Thanksgiving Day	Fourth Thursday in November
Christmas Day	Twenty-fifth day in December
New Year's Day	First Day in January
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Third Monday in January
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May
Juneteenth	Nineteenth day in June

On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the feast of the patroness of the Diocese of Brooklyn, the Academy will be closed. Academies may also choose to observe other Holy Days. All advanced school closings will be indicated in the school calendar.

The Academic calendar can be found on the Academy's website. To the extent any changes are made, the website will be updated.

B. School Hours

With the exception of early dismissal days, school hours are as follows:

- 3K: 8am-2:20pm (27th Avenue Entrance)
- PK: 8:10am-2:30pm (27th Avenue Entrance)
- Grades K-6: 8am-3pm (26th Avenue Entrance)

C. School Office Hours

During the academic year, the school office is open from 7:30am-3:30 pm on all days that school is in session. During the summer months (July and August) the school office is open Tues. through Thurs. from 9am-1pm.

D. Early Release Schedule –(Half Day)

On early dismissal days, school hours are as follows, unless you are notified of any changes:

- 3K: 8am-12:50
- PK: 8:10am-1pm
- Grades K-6: 8am-12noon

E. Early Morning/After School Program

Early Morning care is available for a fee of \$5 per child per day on every day that school is in session. Parents who wish to utilize the early morning program should ring the bell at the 26th Avenue entrance. A staff member will meet the parent at the door to escort the child to the teacher on duty.

The Academy also offers an After School program for a fee of \$25 per child per day. The program runs from school dismissal until 5:30pm on all days school is in session, including half days with the exception of days preceding a school vacation (Christmas, Winter Break, Easter). The After School and Early Morning programs are an extension of the school day, and students are expected to follow all Academy policies and procedures during After School. Directors of individual activities during After School may also issue rules of behavior, which recognize the special nature of non-classroom activities. In instances where students are picked up, parents/guardians are expected to make arrangements to pick up their children at the end of the program or activity. Students will be released only to a parent/guardian or a person previously specified **in writing** by the parent/guardian. After school and early morning program fees are expected to be paid in full upon being invoiced. Past due balances will result in a student not being allowed to participate in the program until the account is brought up to date.

F. Attendance

The Academy has developed our attendance policy in accordance with New York State Education Law. This comprehensive attendance policy will help us uphold the philosophy and mission statement of our Academy.

Education Law of the State of New York mandates school attendance for all children between the ages of 6 and 16, but the responsibility for compliance rests with the parents/legal guardians. The school is required to keep an accurate record of daily attendance, absence and tardiness in the register of attendance in a manner approved by the Commissioner of Education.

- When a child has been absent, a written excuse is required from his or her parents/legal guardians. If a student is absent without an excuse, or if the school has reason to suspect the validity of the excuse, the principal will investigate the situation.
- When a student has been absent for five days without a satisfactory explanation, a report will be made to the attendance officer of the local public school district.
- Continuing illegal absences, totaling five or more days, will also be reported to the attendance officer at the local public school district office.
- Although each case is different, it should be noted that at 40 truancy days, retention is a strong possibility and principals will contact the local district office to alert the truancy officer.

Doctor or dental appointments should be scheduled for after regular school hours. Family vacations should not be planned for days when school is in session. Rather, students receive vacation time throughout the year. Teachers are not required to give assignments in anticipation of family vacations, and are not required to give make-up tests for absences due to vacation trips.

G. Lateness

A student who arrives after the time set by the Academy for the beginning of the day will be marked late. A student who arrives after the time set by the Academy for the beginning of the day will be marked late. Students will be considered late if they arrive after the following times:

- 3K – after 8:10am
- Pre-K – after 8:20am
- Grade K-6 – after 8:10am

H. Arrival and Dismissal Policy

Arrival times are staggered to allow in the interest of student safety, beginning at 7:50 am. Parents/guardians of 3K/PK students are to drop their children off at 27th Avenue entrance with a teacher or staff member present, while parents/guardians of children in grades K-6 are to drop children off in the schoolyard with a teacher or staff member present. On days of inclement weather, students in grades K-6 are to be dropped off at the 26th Ave. entrance with a teacher or staff member present. These are the safest places for children—with their peers and with an adult from the Academy present. We strongly encourage parents/guardians to drop their children off at early arrival time, as the additional time gives students more time to prepare for the day and socialize with their peers. For safety reasons parents/guardians and visitors are required to sign in at the Main Office.

At the end of the school day, students in 3K/PreK will be dismissed at the 27th Avenue entrance, while students in grades K-4 will be dismissed at the 26th Avenue entrance.

The Academy will not release a student to any adult that is not known to it as a parent, guardian, or custodian. If a parent/guardian sends another individual to pick up his or her child, the parent/guardian must notify the Academy **in writing** at least 24 hours in advance.

Students who proceed home on their own, either by walking, bicycle, or otherwise, must do so as safely and directly as possible and submit written authorization signed by the parent/guardian to the Academy. They must obey all traffic and trespassing laws, and cross at designated crosswalks. Students will not be permitted to travel home from the Academy without a parent, guardian or other authorized adult or another pre-arranged travel accommodation (such as a school bus). In the case of a younger student traveling home with an older student, such as an older sibling, the Academy must receive written authorization from a parent/guardian. The Academy reserves the right to not release the student(s) to travel home on their own, either by walking or otherwise, if it deems that is not in the best interest of the students

I. Early Release

Students are expected to be in attendance for the complete session each school day. If for any reason a student must leave the Academy before the regular dismissal hour, a parent/legal guardian or a person authorized by the parent/legal guardian must come to the Academy office to pick the student up and escort the student out of the building. Parents/ legal guardians must provide authorization for their child to be released to an individual other than a parent/ legal guardian.

J. Use of School Grounds

Unless students are formally registered for before or after school programs, including Academy extracurricular activities, the school does not have staff available to supervise students present on the school grounds outside the general school hours.

K. Dress Code

The Academy believes that clothes do not define a person. The wearing of a uniform allows everyone to be seen for who they are, not by what they have. The purpose of a uniform is a means of consistency in student dress, while keeping costs to a minimum. It also reduces the problem of competitive dressing. Students, unless otherwise notified by Administration, will wear the school uniform.

All students are expected to keep themselves well-groomed and neatly dressed at all times. A clean and healthy appearance is important. Any form of dress which is considered by the Administration to be contrary to good hygiene or which is distractive or disruptive in appearance and detrimental to the purpose or conduct of the school will not be permitted. All clothing must be clean, neatly pressed, and in good repair. No ripped, torn, or defaced item may be worn.

The Academy's school uniform provider is Land's End. Uniform items can be purchased at any Land's End retail location or online at Land's End's website (www.landsend.com) The school code is 900194804.

Gym Uniform (Boys and Girls) – Regulation gray or maroon sweatpants, sweatshirt or tee shirt with school logo. White sneakers with white laces. **OPTIONAL** – From September 1st to October 15th and May 1 to the end of June, all students may wear uniform gym shorts (maroon) in place of the sweat pants.

3K/PreK and Kindergarten (Boys and Girls) – Students will wear the gym uniform on a daily basis. Although the uniform is not required for students in in our 3K/PreK programs, it is highly recommended.

Boys Uniform – Grades 1-6

- Gray uniform pants with black belt
- White polo shirt with school logo
- Black uniform shoe
- **Summer uniform** – Sept. through Oct. 15 and May to the end of June
 - Uniform white polo shirt with logo, khaki walking shorts, white socks, white sneakers

Girls Uniform – Grades 1-5

- Uniform plaid jumper
- White short or long sleeve button down collared blouse
- Maroon or white tights or knee socks
- Black Uniform shoes
- **Summer uniform** – Sept. through Oct. 15 and May to the end of June
 - Uniform white polo shirt with logo, khaki walking shorts, white socks, white sneakers

Girls Uniform – Grade 6

- Uniform plaid skirt
- White short or long sleeve polo with school logo
- Maroon or white tights or knee socks
- Black uniform shoes
- **Summer uniform** – Sept. through Oct. 15 and May to the end of June

- Uniform white polo shirt with logo, khaki walking shorts, white socks, white sneakers

Optional – School cardigan, fleece or hoodie sweatshirt with school logo may be worn over school uniform. Other sweatshirts, outerwear, etc. may not be worn over the school uniform unless specific permission has been given.

Hats – baseball caps or other types of hats are not permitted in the classroom, however, they can be worn at lunch and/or recess.

Uniform Shoes: May be purchased at: Da-Bar Too 70-05 Grand Avenue Maspeth, New York 11378.

- BOYS Grades 1-5: Black regulation laced shoe (optional black Velcro uniform shoe)
- GIRLS -Grades 1-5: Black regulation laced shoe (optional black Velcro uniform shoe)

L. Grooming Code

Hair must be its natural color, clean, neatly combed, not totally covering the ears or eyes.

- Facial hair is not permitted
- **Hair must be a natural color. Streaking, highlighting, lowlights, glints, etc. are not permitted.**

Students are not allowed to wear make-up at any time. This includes eye make-up, nail polish, and acrylic nails. Only appropriate modest and safe jewelry is allowed. One pair of small earrings may be worn by girls only. Necklaces must be tucked into the shirt. Tattoos and body piercings are not allowed.

Nothing in this policy is meant to prevent a student from attending school with an ethnic hairstyle in connection with his or her race, heritage, or national origin, including, but not limited to, braids, locs, or twists.

Parents/guardians will be notified if a child comes to school consistently in an unkempt manner. If no improvement is noticed within a reasonable amount of time, an appointment with the parents/guardians and the Principal will be made.

M. Dress Down Days

There may be occasions in which students are allowed to wear non-uniform attire (such as NUT card dress down days). Students are reminded to dress with modesty. Students should adhere to the following attire:

- Appropriate length skirt, shorts or dress – no shorter than 3” above the knees
- No torn or tight jeans or pants
- No spaghetti strap tanks, midriffs, tube tops, etc.
- No logo type T-shirts
- No hats (unless specifically designated)

- No loose/baggy pants or shorts
- No make-up or nail polish (including gels/French manicures)
- No hoop earrings or excessive jewelry
- No jeggings, leggings or skinny jeans

N. Field Trips

Written permission must be obtained from parents/legal guardians of students who wish to go on scheduled trips. Information to the parents/legal guardians will include the date, purpose and destination of the trip, the expense, the means of transportation, and probable time of return.

Adults who wish to chaperone must complete Virtus training and background checks prior to accompanying students. Please see section on Volunteering, Chaperoning & VIRTUS training for further information about this process.

Field trips are considered an extension of the school day and the code of conduct and anti-bullying policy will apply. All disciplinary rules pertaining to students equally apply to students during school field trips. Students who engage in poor behavior on field trips may be required to be escorted by a parent/guardian for future field trips or may lose the privilege of attending field trips. Individual teachers in consultation with the Principal reserve the right to restrict or deny student participation on any field trip due to, but not limited to, poor academic performance, violation of the code of conduct or poor behavior, or violation of school policy.

All medications given on field trips must comply with the Administering Medication policy. For a student with prescription medication and/or medical necessary related treatments, a trained individual needs to be present on a field trip. This can include a parent/guardian, a designated family member to ensure care in the case of an emergency, or the school nurse *if* the nurse is attending the field trip. Given the needs of the Academy, the Academy cannot guarantee that the nurse will attend the trip. If a trained individual of the Academy cannot attend the field trip, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide a trained individual to accompany the student on the field trip. Any adult accompanying the student must complete Virtus training and background checks prior to accompanying the student.

The Academy reserves the right to cancel school-sponsored field trips at any time and for any reason, including inclement weather and safety risks.

O. Care of School Property

Students will be held responsible for the proper care of all books, supplies, devices, accessories or equipment furnished to them by the Academy. Students who damage, lose, or deface Academy property shall be required to pay for the damage or loss.

Desks, lockers, and any other area on Academy property where students store items are Academy property and subject to searches by school authorities to protect the safety of all.

P. Books and Supplies

All assigned books must be properly covered. Contact paper is NOT to be used to cover any books obtained under the New York State textbook loan. Books that are not part of this loan and are soft-covered should be covered in contact paper. Each child is responsible for keeping his or her books in good condition. Books that are lost or defaced become the liability of the student and his or her

parents. Students are responsible for providing supplemental materials listed on the yearly supply list for use in the classroom.

Q. Telephone Use to Call Parent/Guardian/Custodian

If a parent/guardian needs to reach a student, he or she must call the Main Office at 718-529-8211. Similarly, if a student seeks to call his or her parent, the student must make the request to the Main Office and the call will be placed from there. **Under no circumstances should a parent/guardian or child call or text each other during school hours from a cell phone.**

R. Personal Property

The Academy is not responsible for valuables that are lost or damaged. It is strongly advised that students do not bring valuables into the school building including electronic devices such as tablets, phones, etc.

S. Announcements

Informational announcements are handled through the Academy's P.A. system. Students must courteously listen when a message is presented over the P.A. system, especially when prayers are recited.

T. Fliers and Informational Brochures

Students may, upon approval by the Principal, distribute, at reasonable times and places, unofficial material, including petitions, buttons, or other insignia. However, all such material must be in accordance with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Failure to comply will result in confiscation of the material and possibly disciplinary action. Further, any such material may not be obscene, libelous, contain indecent or vulgar language or content, advertise a product not permitted to minors by law, constitute insulting or fighting words the purpose of which is to injure or harass other people, or present a high likelihood of causing a disruption at the Academy. Further, parents/guardians may not distribute, either through their child or otherwise, any unofficial material.

U. Birthday Policy

We understand that birthdays are a reason to celebrate. A child's birthday will be acknowledged over the PA and the class will have a small celebration. However, parties must take place outside of school. Parents may supply a snack for the class (preferably individually wrapped) as well as goody bags to be distributed at dismissal. Catered lunches, balloons, etc. are not permitted. Students are permitted to wear a small tiara or birthday pin on their birthday. NUT cards are also permitted to be used on a child's birthday (or half birthday if their birthday is in the summer). Invitations to class parties may only be given out in school if the whole class is invited.

V. STUDENT EXPECTATIONS AND BEHAVIOR

A. Student Behavior and Code of Conduct

The Academy Student Code of Conduct is as follows:

If we expect our children to be reliable members of our society, we must help them today to balance

their sense of responsibility with freedom. We support our students to conduct themselves respectfully by fostering a warm, supportive environment. Appropriate behavior is praised while inappropriate behavior must be acknowledged and corrected immediately, in an effort to foster self-regulation of conduct.

Self-discipline is the Christian ideal, which our students ought to be encouraged to achieve. In order to form proper habits and attitudes, rules of conduct must be emphasized. Obedience to all authority, courtesy at all times, respect for all people and property, unselfishness towards others, and a sense of honesty, fair play and trustworthiness are among the values which must be imparted to our students. Students are taught to show the utmost respect to one another, in word and in deed. No student may push, hit or fight with another student. Gum chewing is not permitted at any time during school or at any school sponsored event

Students are taught in an atmosphere of cooperation, honesty, and respect for classroom rules. The rules are determined by the teacher and communicated to students at the beginning of each year. It is in an atmosphere of mutual respect that students learn in a caring and respectful environment.

Students learn to be responsible, make good choices, and participate in St. Mel's Early Childhood Center community life in a mature manner, which is reflective of their deepening faith and religious development, together with the guidance from their parents.

Some of the expectations that demonstrate this progression are:

- Being considerate and respectful of other students.
- Respecting class and academy policies.
- Looking neat and clean at all times.
- Wearing the uniform with pride and dignity.
- Speaking to one another with respect and care.
- Controlling anger at all times.
- Respecting academy and parish property
- Keeping academy and parish grounds free of litter and graffiti.
- Showing responsibility by doing homework neatly each night and preparing for class and tests.
- Only submitting one's own original ideas and work.
- Speaking and acting respectfully to teachers and other parents.
- Arriving to school on time and ready to learn.

All students are expected to thrive toward excellent behavior at all times. Behavior problems includes disrespecting authority, including teachers and staff, and other students, teasing, bullying, socially unacceptable behavior, or behavior contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church or the mission of the Academy. If behavioral issues persist, the Academy may request a conference with the parent. Failure on behalf of a parent/guardian to attend a conference may result in the child staying home until the parent/guardian and student attend the conference with the Academy.

B. Anti-Bullying Policy

The school communities within the Brooklyn Diocese believe in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person. We believe that all students, school employees and volunteers

have a right to a safe and healthy school environment. All members of the school community, in turn, have an obligation to promote mutual respect, tolerance and acceptance. Research shows that students who learn in a safe and supportive environment succeed academically. Students have a right to learn in an environment free of any harassment that substantially interferes with their education.

Bullying, bias-based harassment/intimidation are intentional, repeated, hurtful acts (physical, verbal, written) committed by one or more persons towards another person or persons. It usually involves an actual or perceived imbalance of power which can be physical, emotional or verbal. If not addressed, bullying can lead to the creation of a hostile, offensive or intimidating school environment and can affect a student's educational opportunities. The behaviors include but are not limited to:

- *Physical:* physical violence, stalking, threats, aggressive or menacing gestures, exclusion from peer groups which is intended to humiliate or isolate the target (relational bullying).
- *Verbal:* taunts, teasing, derogatory language, derogatory jokes, name calling, slurs, spreading rumors
- *Written:* written or graphic material including graffiti containing comments or stereotypes that are electronically written and transmitted via internet, social messaging sites, blogs, instant messaging, text messages, cell phone, webcams. This would also include forwarding such messages if received. This generally constitutes cyber-bullying.

Reporting Procedures:

- The targeted student, parent/guardian of a student or other students in the school (bystanders), or any school staff who believe that bullying has occurred should report the incident to the principal.
- The principal needs to conduct an investigation by interviewing all parties separately.
- The parents of all involved students should be notified.
- If it is determined that bullying has occurred the child who bullied is to be subject to consequences per the school's disciplinary code.
- Parents should be advised to contact the appropriate law enforcement agency if the situation warrants such a report.
- Referral to counseling should be made for all parties if deemed necessary.
- The principal must follow up to see that the offending conduct has stopped.
- All students should be notified that retaliation against anyone who makes a report will not be tolerated and those that retaliate will be subject to disciplinary actions.

C. Anti-Cyber Bullying Policy

In accordance with New York State Law on Cyber-Bullying, inappropriate, defamatory, or content found to be injurious to an academy community member may result in disciplinary action, even if done outside of Academy premises or using devices not owned or controlled by the Academy. All instances of such behavior must be reported immediately to the administration, who will investigate the matter and enforce the consequences deemed appropriate.

Violation of this policy in whole or in part may result in any or all of the following and will be issued at the discretion of the Academy principal:

- Loss of use/privileges of school/academy technology.

- Disciplinary action including, but not limited to, detention, suspension, expulsion, and /or legal action by the school/academy, civil authorities, and/or other involved parties.
- Compensation for damages, both physical and punitive, incurred due to actions in violation of this policy

D. Alcohol and Drug Free Zone Policy

The New York City Tobacco Products Regulations Act of 1994 curtails exposure to tobacco use on school grounds. For the purpose of this legislation “school grounds” means the “buildings, grounds or facilities, or any part thereof, owned or occupied by public or private institutions for the primary purpose of providing educational instructions to students at or below the twelfth grade level.” Tobacco use is not permitted on school grounds at any time. A “tobacco product” is any substance which contains tobacco including but not limited to cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, and chewing tobacco. New York City regulations are far more stringent than the regulations promulgated by New York State. However, schools subject to the rules of this municipality, as are the schools of the Diocese of Brooklyn, must follow the local laws. Thus, smoking is prohibited on ALL SCHOOL PREMISES AT ANY TIME.

For the safety of our students, alcohol is also prohibited from being consumed on school premises at any time. At no time is the use of marijuana permitted.

E. Impermissible Items

Students must conduct themselves, at all times, in a courteous manner in accord with Catholic principles. To that end, and also in the interest of safety of the students and protection of the Academy’s property, the following items are NOT allowed at any time but not limited to the following:

1. White-out or any type of permanent marker
2. Spray cans, smoke bombs, stink bombs, powders/choking agents or chemicals or any kind.
3. Gum
4. Alcohol or drugs of any kind, and matches or lighters, and drug paraphernalia
5. Laser pointers, knives/box cutters, scissors, or any type of weapon
6. Any type of toy weapon
7. Nail files
8. Energy drinks and caffeine
9. Extreme jewelry, more than two wristbands or bracelets, dangling earrings, or hoop earrings larger than the size of a dime
10. Makeup of any kind, including lipstick and nail polish
11. Any other items, determined by the school administration, to be dangerous to the person with such item, other students or to school property.

The presence of any of these items can lead to disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion. The presence of alcohol, drugs, or weapons is a criminal offense and the police will be notified.

F. Discipline Policy

The Academy may need to involve disciplinary measures from time to time. The purpose of disciplinary measures are to provide structure to students and for them to learn self-discipline, which strengthens and promotes the values incorporated in our Catholic faith. Disciplinary measures should

have as an end the development of the human person who respect's one self, other persons, and those in authority.

At no time will corporal punishment be used against a child. Any perceived acts of corporal punishment or reports from a child of corporal punishment should be reported to the Principal immediately by the student and/or the parent/guardian.

By enrolling your child in the Academy, the parent/guardian agrees to be supportive of the rules and regulations that the Academy deems as critical in the spiritual, academic and behavioral growth of the child.

Teachers are the primary disciplinarians within the classroom and among students. Teachers will discipline students for minor classroom disruptions, such as not completing homework, minor verbal disputes with other students, or not being in the complete uniform. To the extent a teacher finds it necessary, parents/guardians will be notified of classroom problems. As partners in education, parents/guardians should work with the teacher to ensure that inappropriate behavior is changed.

At times, however, teachers will refer classroom discipline issues to the administration of the Academy. This is likely to include chronic minor problems listed above, or major problems, including chronic lateness, verbal abuse of a teacher, signs of disrespect to a teacher or another adult on the staff, fighting, vandalism, stealing, physical, sexual, or verbal harassment or bullying of a fellow student, violent behavior, smoking, or the possession of drugs, drug paraphernalia, cigarettes, lighters, matches, stink or smoke bombs, chemicals/irritants, alcohol, dangerous items or a weapon. The administration will handle such matters in a variety of ways depending on the severity of the incident, up to and including suspension, police notification, and expulsion.

For serious acts of misbehavior, such as, but not limited to, fighting, stealing, vandalism and harassment, the student may immediately be suspended for a period of one to five days. In cases of vandalism, the parent/guardian must pay the full cost of the repair or replacement of the item before the child may return to school. In cases of theft, the item is either returned in good condition or the cost of replacement is borne by the parent/guardian before the child can return to school.

In cases where a child engages in a fight which causes injury to another child or adult, the police may be summoned and, then, the parents/guardians will be notified. Likewise, the possession of drugs or alcohol by a child may be reported to the police. The Academy reserves the right to expel the child due to such an offense.

In cases in which a child brings a weapon to school, the police are summoned, and then the parents/guardians are called. The Academy reserves the right to expel the child due to such an offense.

Police will always be called in the case of a weapon.

Individual-directed threats of violence or harm communicated directly or indirectly by any means, as well as building-directed threats of violence or harm communicated directly or indirectly by any means (e.g., shooting, bomb threats), or to harm students, employees, or visitors are taken seriously. Upon knowledge of the threats, the Principal will notify the Office of the Superintendent and call the parents. The administration will determine the course of action to be taken up to and including calling law enforcement, requiring a mental health referral, and/or expulsion.

It is the expectation of the Academy that student behavior is exemplary both on and off school grounds. A student always represents the entire school community. Therefore, the Academy reserves the right to discipline students for acts such as, but not limited to: stealing, fighting, vandalism, bullying or any other type of threatening or inappropriate misconduct (personally, via telephone, or the internet). Such misconduct could result in punishments including suspension and/or expulsion.

Lastly, a child's arrest for a crime on or off of school grounds, within or beyond the vicinity of the Academy, at any time could result in the child's suspension or expulsion. A child's conviction of a crime on or off of school grounds, within or beyond the vicinity of the Academy, will likely result in a child's expulsion.

In any matter of discipline or academics, including a decision to expel a student, the school's decision is final.

G. Respect for Life

A fundamental belief and tenet of the Roman Catholic faith is that human life must be respected and protected from the moment of conception. All students and parents are expected to live and follow gospel teachings and the Catholic faith in this area.

VI. EXPECTATIONS AND OBLIGATIONS OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS

A. Parental Involvement

Home is the first place where a child learns love and respect for God and neighbor. Parents/legal guardians, in choosing a Catholic school to continue the education begun at home; have responsibilities as well as opportunities to share in the continuance of their children's education.

Parental involvement consists of parents/legal guardians and staff meeting together because of common interest in the child. It is expressed in many ways such as sharing in student supervision in the lunchroom or playground or serving as library or teacher aide. In some instances, parents/legal guardians may be asked to assist in advocacy in all areas that would benefit the schools, including programs that request government assistance, in consultation with the Office of the Superintendent. The involvement of the total family is also a means of communicating the academy's performance to the total parish community.

Parental support for the education of their children is of the utmost importance. Parents and legal guardians are also expected to uphold the behavioral expectations set forth for students and staff within the Academy community. Failure of parents to act in a manner compatible with the values of the Academy may result in student dismissal.

B. Proximate Preparation for the Reception of Sacraments

Diocese of Brooklyn

Secretariat for Evangelization and Catechesis

Proximate Preparation for Reception of Sacraments Program

Proximate preparation takes place during the Faith Formation year immediately preceding the reception of the Sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, and Confirmation. The Five (5) proximate preparation sessions offer the candidates and their families the opportunity to “deepen the life of faith, especially regarding knowledge of the sacraments of the Church.”

“The ‘Year of Renewal’ begins with the core of the mission of Catholic education — to form children in the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ as celebrated in the Catholic Church. By investing in our children, we are investing in the future of the Church. Education isn’t just in the classroom or the religious education room. It begins and is nourished in the family. ‘Year of Renewal’ provides an opportunity to highlight parents’ roles as primary witnesses of the faith and educators in everyday life... This is just the beginning, and it’s meant to be a spark of awareness that will grow, year after year.”

These words describe the “Year of Renewal for Catholic Education.” This Renewal is a combined effort to enhance Catholic Academies/Schools, Faith Formation Programs, and Parishes. It reflects the missionary call to all God’s people to evangelize and renew the face of the earth. In this Year of Renewal, it is most important that we, as parents and educators, once again familiarize ourselves with the Diocesan guidelines for the reception of sacraments.

“As a family of families, the parish remains the ideal home for Catholic families to join together”, to ensure the integrity of parish life, all constituents should review these guidelines and discuss the pastoral implications. Parents and children should be catechized as to the importance of returning to their home parishes for the reception of sacraments. It is the parish that confers a sacrament, not a Catholic academy or parish school.

Can. 913 §1 For holy communion to be administered to children, it is required that they have sufficient knowledge and be accurately prepared, so that according to their capacity they understand what the mystery of Christ means, and are able to receive the Body of the Lord with faith and devotion.

Can. 914 It is primarily the duty of parents and of those who take their place, as it is the duty of the parish priest, to ensure that children who have reached the use of reason are properly prepared and, having made their sacramental confession, are nourished by this divine food as soon as possible. It is also the duty of the parish priest to see that children who have not reached the use of reason, or whom he has judged to be insufficiently disposed, do not come to holy communion.

THOSE TO BE CONFIRMED

Can. 889 §1. Every baptized person not yet confirmed and only such a person is capable of receiving confirmation.

§2. To receive confirmation licitly outside the danger of death requires that a person who has the use of reason be suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew the baptismal promises.

Can. 890 The faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the proper time. Parents and pastors of souls, especially pastors of parishes, are to take care that the faithful are properly instructed to receive the sacrament and come to it at the appropriate time.

Can. 891 The sacrament of confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful at about the age of discretion unless the conference of bishops has determined another age, or there is the danger of death, or in the judgment of the minister, a grave cause suggests otherwise.

SPONSORS

Can. 892 Insofar as possible, there is to be a sponsor for the person to be confirmed; the sponsor is to take care that the confirmed person behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations inherent in this sacrament.

Can. 893 §1. To perform the function of sponsor, a person must fulfill the conditions mentioned in **can. 874. (Can. 874 §1.** To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must: 1/ be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the person who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function; 2/ have completed the sixteenth year of age unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause; 3/ be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on; 4/ not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared; 5/ not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized. **§2.** A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of the baptism.)

§2. It is desirable to choose as a sponsor the one who undertook the same function in baptism.

What this means:

- All proximate prep must be done through the home parish of each student
- Families must participate in Proximate Prep
- Sponsors must be practicing Catholics

Session One (3 hrs)

Preparation of the Candidates

This first Session should be held at the beginning of the Faith formation Year (September, October). It should follow a Sunday Celebration of the Eucharist. The intention of the Session is to introduce the families to the importance of Faith formation, the Domestic Church, and parish life. The important personnel is the Pastor, Pastoral Staff, Catechetical Leadership, families, and candidates for Sacraments.

Catechetical Formation: It is the personal responsibility of the Parents, Pastor, and Catechetical Leadership to ensure the adequate catechetical formation of the candidates and to vouch for such preparation in the presentation of the candidates to the Bishop (in the Sacrament of Confirmation) and to the parish. Because of this presentation, it is not necessary or required to have a public presentation of the candidates during a Sunday Mass prior to the conferral of the Sacraments.

Sacrament of Penance: It is important for the Reception of First Penance, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation that the candidates be “properly disposed” (**Canon 889**). *The Catechism of the*

Catholic Church explains that “to receive Confirmation one must be in a state of grace. One should receive the Sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit...” (no. 1310). For the Sacrament of First Penance and First Holy Communion the Catechism states: According to the Church’s command, “after having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year.”¹ Anyone who is aware of having committed a mortal sin must not receive Holy Communion, even if he experiences deep contrition, without having first received sacramental absolution unless he has a grave reason for receiving Communion and there is no possibility of going to confession.² Children must go to the sacrament of Penance before receiving Holy Communion for the first time. Candidates should therefore be expected to receive the Sacrament of Penance in proximate preparation for their Confirmation and be given the opportunity to do so. (no. 1457)

Reception of Holy Communion: Candidates and sponsors should prepare to receive Holy Communion at Mass, including the Confirmation Mass. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that it “is in keeping with the very meaning of the Eucharist that the faithful if they have the required dispositions, *receive communion when* they participate in the Mass” (no. 1388). By receiving Holy Communion both the newly confirmed and their sponsors give witness that Christian Initiation is directed toward the Eucharist.

- “A person who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain for at least one hour before Holy Communion from any food and drink, except for only water and medicine.” (Canon 919 §1).
- “The elderly, the infirm, and those who care for them can receive the Most Holy Eucharist even if they have eaten something within the preceding hour” (Canon 919, §3).
- Family members and invited guests for First Communion should likewise understand the importance of the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist and be spiritually prepared to receive Eucharist.

Universal Prayer: The Pastor should encourage the parish community to pray for the candidates for First Penance, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation, especially with a petition in the *Universal Prayer* on the Sundays leading up to the date of the sacrament.

What this means:

- Weekly Sunday celebration in the home parish is expected
- Parents participate in the preparation of children for sacraments
- Families are known in the parish
- Children are prepared for specific sacraments: First Penance, Eucharist, and Confirmation

Session Two (3 hrs)

The Liturgical Calendar and Advent Season

This second Session should be held on the first or Second Sunday of Advent. It involves a presentation on the Liturgical calendar and highlights the importance of Advent as a season of preparation for Christmas. The intention of the Session is to (re) introduce the families to the liturgical year, how the Domestic Church celebrates this season with Catholic cultural elements, and

how the parish prepares for the coming of the Messiah. The important personnel is the Pastor, Pastoral Staff, Catechetical Leadership, families, and candidates for Sacraments.

Celebrating Christmas

Advent is the period of preparation and waiting for the coming of the Lord. It begins the fourth Sunday before Christmas and it lasts until the 24th of December. As in many other Christian churches, Advent is observed in Catholicism too and is related to a range of preparatory Christmas practices.

Some of them are to make an Advent wreath, to keep an Advent calendar and pray a daily devotional, as well as to set up Christmas decorations and erect a Christmas tree.

Christmas is an extraordinary event for the Catholic Church. It signifies the birth of the savior who is coming (in flesh) to meet people in the world. The Catholic Church designates the four weeks preceding Christmas as Advent. It is a preparatory period of a major event where the Lord is coming as a King and Savior.

According to the Catholic tradition, Christmas is not a one-day celebration, but it is a longer festive period that can last up to 22 days. It is also connected to other holidays that are celebrated in the winter period of the year.

What this means:

- Families will have a deepened understanding of the meaning of Advent/Christmas Season
- Families will participate in a parish-wide celebration
- A family Advent/Christmas project will be presented

Session Three (3 hrs)
The Liturgical Seasons of Lent/Easter/Pentecost

This third Session should be held on the first Sunday of Lent. It stresses the importance of the Lenten practices of prayer, self-sacrifice, and charity as a means of preparing for the renewal of **Baptismal promises** at Easter. The intention of the Session is to present a liturgical/spiritual understanding of Lent, provide examples of how the Domestic Church may pray and sacrifice together, present cultural elements of the Easter celebration, and illustrate how the spirit of Pentecost is found in each sacrament's candidates will receive. The important personnel is the Pastor, Pastoral Staff, Catechetical Leadership, families, and candidates for Sacraments.

Lenten Devotions

Lent in the Liturgical Year is a time when families examine the Catholic customs of our heritage. The Catholic cultural traditions, especially in the types of **Easter foods**, can become a special treat and religious experience for the family, which can be handed down to the next generation, and to the next.

Fasting conveys a sense of self-sacrifice which is an important theme to teach our children. While Mother and Father may restrict their diet considerably, children should be encouraged to “fast” from desserts or sweets, using their mobile phones, and other electronic devices. References to the fasts in the Bible might be explained several times at dinner during Lent. All family members can also be encouraged to fast from gossip, unkind remarks, or any hurtful behavior. This has been a season of “giving up” things for Lent. Each family member might also be asked to choose one thing to give for every day of Lent. This may be helping someone, donating clothing or food, or some other act of charity.

Holy Week

Holy Week is a serious, deeply religious experience. The week is filled with prayer—formal prayer and private prayer. Families should be encouraged to attend the special Masses and rituals of the week in their home parishes.

From noon till three on Good Friday, many families keep silent. Children should be encouraged to meditate or to say private prayers. Watching a video of the Sorrowful Mysteries of the rosary while saying the **rosary** or watching a video of the Stations would be appropriate while saying the Stations.

As His apostles today, we want to spread the message. Families may write “He is Risen” on different colored sheets of construction paper, and tape them all over the doors of the domestic church. Greet each other with “He is Risen!” In all these ways, make your family life mirror the life of the church. In that way, it will indeed become the domestic church.

What this means:

- Families will have a deepened understanding of the meaning of Lent/Easter Season
- Families will participate in a parish-wide celebration
- A family Lent/Easter project will be presented

Session Four (1 1/2hrs)
Sacraments and Family Life

This fourth Session should take place on a **weeknight** well before the ritual celebration of the sacraments. The presentation highlights the nature of sacraments, the role of sacraments in family life, and the role of the sacraments in the life growth plan of students. The intention of the Session is to present a liturgical/spiritual understanding of sacramental life in general, provide examples of how the Domestic Church may experience sacraments and present cultural elements of Eucharistic celebration. The important personnel is the Pastor, Pastoral Staff, Catechetical Leadership, families, and candidates for Sacraments.

Many Catholic families live their Faith only one hour a week by attending Sunday Mass. The rest of the week, the cares of the world impinge on the family, and the Faith is practically forgotten. We are called to lead lives worthy of our baptismal calling. We are to live with God as a constant part of our lives, especially by including Him in our family life. This proximate prep affords the opportunity to reflect on discipleship in light of the sacraments.

To be an authentic Catholic family, we must live a sacramental life. The sacramental life means not only the regular reception of the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist but also the daily practice of using sacramentals, to help us to live the life of prayer and to celebrate the feasts of the liturgical year.

Receiving the Sacraments

Next to the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is our biggest help in living the Catholic lifestyle. If we are really aiming to be the best possible Catholic family, it is important to stress the frequent reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Receiving the Sacrament of Penance frequently will make us concentrate on strengthening our virtues and ultimately improve our Catholic family life.

Parents must be encouraged to raise children to love all the sacraments. The sacramental life involves taking the children to observe the reception of the other sacraments, especially Baptism and Confirmation, and explaining their meaning. When possible, children may opportunities to experience a wedding ceremony, have instruction concerning the deeper meanings of the sacrament of Matrimony according to their age level. When appropriate Children need to witness the Sacrament of the Sick.

Sacramentals

While the Sacramental Life means frequent reception of Penance and Holy Eucharist, it also means the daily use of sacramentals. Sacramentals are a part of our Catholic cultural heritage. They can supplement the daily reception of the Holy Eucharist, and, in some cases, maybe the only way to maintain the sacramental life for some families during the week between Sunday Masses.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines **Sacramentals** as “sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the **sacraments**. They signify effects, particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the intercession of the **Church**. Sacramentals are signs reminding us of God, of the saints, and Catholic truths. While sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ as a direct means of obtaining sanctifying and sacramental graces, sacramentals were instituted by the Church to obtain graces for us.

Sacramentals embody and make alive Catholic traditions which have existed for centuries. The rosary, the scapular, the Advent Wreath, Miraculous Medal—these are not merely objects, but truly represent the Catholic way of life.

Living the Faith

The sacramentals with appropriate prayers are best used in conjunction with the liturgical year. The liturgical year, starting with Advent takes us through the history of mankind awaiting Jesus our Redeemer, and then through the life of Jesus Christ. (cf. Proximate Prep 2)

This is a wonderful way for us to grow spiritually, but best of all, a joyful way to teach our children how to live and practice the authentic Catholic family life.

To be more specific, certain traditional Catholic practices can be started (or maintained) to help us better understand and love our Catholic beliefs. During Advent, the making of the Advent wreath is a very special event.

What this means:

- Families will have a better understanding of the sacramental life of the Church
- Children will be given additional information about sacraments and their meaning
- Parents/Guardians will have the opportunity to address important issues in their adult faith formation

Session 5 (1 1/2hrs)

The Celebration of the Sacraments

This fifth (final) Session should take place on a **weeknight** before the ritual celebration of the sacraments. The presentation highlights the nature of the particular sacrament to be celebrated. The intention of the Session is to present a liturgical/spiritual understanding of the particular ritual, explain the flow of the ceremony, and present cultural elements of Eucharistic celebration that may be particular to the Diocese or parish, **i.e.**, presentation of candidates, style of clothing acceptable for participants, and specific elements of conduct that are allowed.

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery:

Jesus Christ has made it possible for us to share in the divine nature by conforming to Him through the grace of the Holy Spirit imparted to us through the Sacraments.

The sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. In Confirmation, the baptized is anointed with oil (a sign of abundance, joy, cleansing, healing, and strength) and is thereby consecrated, or imprinted, with the seal of the Holy Spirit. As Christ was marked with his father's seal, Christians are marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit of divine protection in the great Eschatological (end times trial). The primary effect of the sacrament is the (full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.” Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace; it unites us more firmly to Christ; increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit and renders more perfect our bond with the church, And gives us a “special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ...”

The sacrament of the Eucharist (from the Greek meaning “thanksgiving”) completes Christian initiation. The Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life.” The other sacraments, along with all the work of the Church in her ministries, are bound up with and oriented toward the Eucharist. “The Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being.” In short, the Eucharist is the “sum and summary of our faith.”

Jesus Christ is present to the church in many ways: in his word, in the church's prayer, in the poor, the sick, the imprisoned, in the sacraments, in the mass, and the person of the minister. At the same time, he is most especially present in the Eucharist, in the body and blood of Christ under the forms of bread and wine. The whole of Christ, his body and blood together with his soul and divinity, is truly, really, and substantially contained in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. This means that Christ is present in the fullest sense when the bread and wine are converted into his body and blood through the power of the Holy Spirit.

What this means:

- Families will have a better understanding of the liturgical aspects of the sacraments
- Parents/guardians will receive specific information about the ritual as it is celebrated in the home parish
- Children will have the opportunity to receive final instructions about the reception of a sacrament

C. Parental Communication

Regular communication between the Academy and parents/guardians is a crucial component of your child's school experience. Scheduled parent teacher conferences allow teachers and parents/guardians to discuss student achievement as well as to develop means to assist students in areas of difficulty.

A parent/guardian may request a meeting with a teacher at any time by simply sending a note to the teacher in question and the teacher will arrange for this meeting outside class time at a mutually convenient time. The meeting should take place in the classroom or someplace that ensures privacy, and never in a hallway, on the street, or another public place. A parent/guardian who is refused such a meeting should notify the Principal. If a parent/guardian seeks to meet with the Principal, he or she must contact the Main Office at 718-539-8211 to set up an appointment.

Additionally, the Academy may communicate with the parent/guardian in many ways, including:

- **Email, SMS, phone messages and posts through the FACTS Family Portal**
- **School Website and Social Media** The Academy website can be found here: <http://www.stmelsacademy.org> This website does not require a login and is accessible to the public. Various announcements may be made on the school website, such as emergency school closing, snow days, and other important information. The website will also contain various resources, such as the academic calendar.
- **Information Sent Home With the Children:** Occasionally, teachers or administration at the Academy will send hard copy information home with your children. Please check your child's backpack *daily* to check for any information sent home by the Academy.

D. Parent Academy Association (PAA)

Every Academy is encouraged to establish a Home Academy Association. Its purpose is the educational enrichment of parents/legal guardians and teachers. The goal of the Home Academy Association is to foster a clearer understanding of the mutual responsibilities of parents/legal guardians and teachers regarding the education of the students.

An added responsibility of the Home Academy Association will be to assist in the fundraising efforts of the Academy. In the school, this is done in coordination with the administration. In an academy, it is done in coordination with the board of directors of the academy. No organization may hold title to accounts nor have access to funds raised for the Academy. All financial transactions must be approved by the pastor/academy board of directors.

E. Homework

As a partner in education, parents' role in homework is vital. Parents/guardians or another caretaker should remain available to assist students with homework and ensure that all homework is completed.

F. Fundraising

Fundraising activities are beneficial to the Academy and are often a quality way to involve students in furthering their school community. Any fundraising program should have the approval of the Principal, and should be organized and executed so that the Academy program is not interrupted.

During the course of the academic year three (3) major fundraisers will be held. The three for this year are:

- Catalogue Sale – September (\$65 minimum required each child)
- Candy Bar – February (\$50 minimum required each child)
- Walk-a-thon – May (\$65 minimum required each child)

We continue to collect General Mills Box Tops for Education (now scanned electronically from grocery receipts and we receive a percentage of the purchase when you use your Stop & Shop Card, Amazon Smiles and shop online via School Store, as well as participation in other non-mandatory fundraisers planned throughout the school year.

G. Volunteering, Chaperoning & VIRTUS Training

Parent volunteers and chaperones are an integral part of the school community. All parents/ legal guardians/ other adults, must complete VIRTUS training, sign a Code of Conduct, and complete a background check.

- The VIRTUS program for adults is a three-hour live awareness session that instructs adults of the Church that to protect children you must have continuous awareness and vigilance. This awareness session helps trainees understand signs of child sexual abuse, the methods and means by which offenders commit abuse, and five empowerment steps to prevent child sexual abuse.
- The Code of Conduct is a document that acknowledges the importance of legal, professional and responsible conduct of all who work with children and young people. All clergy, employees and volunteers are required to read the Code of Conduct and to sign a Statement of Acknowledgement Form. The Code of Conduct is distributed at all VIRTUS sessions.

- All employees and volunteers are also required to have a criminal background screening completed before they start their employment or service. These forms are also distributed at all VIRTUS sessions. As of May 2010, all background screenings (employees and volunteers) will be done through the Safe Environment Office. The searches are done through LexisNexis (volunteers) or HireRight (employees). All information is kept confidential and if a positive result is returned, the pastor/administrator will be notified and appropriate steps will be taken. Background searches will be rerun every 3 years for employees and 5 years for volunteers

H. Custody and Guardianship Orders

Parents must provide accurate custodial information to be kept on file at the Academy. Non-custodial parents do have rights. The law protects non-custodial parents and maintains that parents do not cease to be parents when they no longer have custody of their children. The Academy abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, the Academy will provide the non-custodial parents with access to academic records and other school information regarding his or her child. **If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the custodial parent's responsibility to provide the school with a court certified copy of the court order.**

I. Contacts with Media

Throughout the academic year, the Academy may take pictures or videos and release personal information about students for promotional purposes. This might include:

- where a special event or program at the Academy is covered by a newspaper or television station, resulting in student interviews and pictures;
- award-winning students who may have their names and photos published in a local newspaper; or
- if the Academy posts pictures of school activities on webpages and social media.

Parents/guardians have the right to exclude their children from videotaping, audio recording, school pictures, other photography or participation involving printed materials or on the internet. If a parent/guardian chooses to exclude their child, the parent/guardian must provide written notification to the Main Office.

Parents/guardians who do not object must fill out the media authorization release form, attached at the end of this Handbook. Please be advised that, if a parent/guardian does not fill out this form, the child may be excluded from certain group photographs or otherwise taken in connection with the school day or other Academy functions.

VII. HEALTH AND WELLNESS

A. Medical Requirements

The New York City Department of Health requires that all new students entering nursery through grade 12 show proof of having received a complete medical evaluation. Children who transfer from one school to another in New York City are not considered new students. These requirements may change from year to year.

New York State Law states that all students in Grades Nursery through 12 must be immunized as directed by the New York State and New York City Departments of Health. New students may enter school provisionally with documentation of **an initial series of immunizations**. Once admitted provisionally, a student has a certain amount of time to continue and complete the medical requirements. Students who fail to complete the necessary requirements within the appropriate time frame **must be excluded from school**. Parents must provide records of immunization to be kept on file at the Academy. Any exemptions to the immunization requirements must be approved by the Academy with documentation being kept in the student's health records. Only medical exemptions are permitted per New York State Law. Religious exemptions are no longer permissible.

- For Nursery, Pre-k, and UPK Programs--Between July 1 and December 31 of each year, all children between the ages of 6 months and 59 months and attending a group child care or school-based child care program must receive one dose of influenza vaccine.

B. Health Services

The Academy has a full-time, NYC DOH employed nurse on duty at all times when the school is in session, to administer medication, to assist students with medical needs and to respond to medical emergencies. To reach the school nurse, please call the main office and ask to be transferred to the medical office

C. Illness and Medical Conditions

The following provides an overview of various medical conditions and illnesses, the Academy's policy on how it handles such illnesses and conditions, and parent/guardian requirements. This list is not meant to be exhaustive but rather explanatory. In the case of any other illness or medical condition, or if there are any questions, please contact the Principal. **The policies in this section may be altered or superseded by policies in light of COVID-19.**

Parents are reminded of the NYC Department of Health Core Practices for reducing illness in school:

- **Keep your child home if they are sick**
- **Practice good Hand Hygiene (wash hands)**
- **Practice good Respiratory Hygiene (cover coughs and sneezes)**

Allergies: Parents/guardians must notify the Academy of any documented allergies that a student may have.

Policy on nuts and other allergens: In the event that a child is diagnosed with a nut or other severe allergy, we ask that whenever possible, the classmates of the allergic individual refrain from bringing foods that contain the allergen to class. If parents are sending any home-baked items, they must also send a list of ingredients so it can be determined if the item is safe for students with allergies.

Asthma: Parents/guardians are required to notify the Academy of the medical needs and protocols of any student who has asthma or a related condition.

Clearance to Return: In certain instances, the Academy may require medical clearance for the child to return to the Academy. If requested, the medical clearance note must specifically state that the child may return to the Academy and resume all activities including gym and playground. Clearance notes will likely be required for severe illness, including hospitalizations and ER visits, surgical

procedures, head injuries, cardiac/respiratory concerns, fractures, sprains, or significant changes in a child's health state which may impact physical activities.

Contagious Illness: To the extent a child has a contagious illness, please notify the Academy as soon as possible so that we may alert others who came in contact with your child. We also may be required to notify the Department of Health. A student with a contagious illness should not arrive for school. This applies even if the parent/guardian has not received confirmation that the child's illness is contagious, but the child is exhibiting signs of a possible communicable disease, such as a suspicious skin rash, suspicious open wounds, redness of the eyes with intense itching/burning and a thick drainage, painful, reddened sore throat, and a constant cough accompanied by other symptoms. Students with a contagious illness should remain home from school until a doctor advises that he or she is no longer contagious and can resume normal activities.

Diarrhea/Vomiting: Students who are exhibiting vomiting and/or diarrhea should not arrive for school. Rather, they should stay home until they are free from symptoms for at least 24 hours.

Epinephrine: Severe allergic reactions leading to anaphylaxis are a life-threatening and time sensitive medical emergency. Therefore, and in accordance with New York State and City Departments of Health recommendations, Academies will work with local health providers to receive training on the administration of epinephrine. For more information, see the administering epinephrine policy below.

If a child is at risk of anaphylaxis, the parent/guardian **MUST** notify the school and inform it of the risk. Additionally, the parent/guardian must 1) inform the Academy whether the student can self-administer epinephrine, 2) supply the Academy with two epinephrine devices in its original packaging; and 3) replace the devices when it expires, has been used, or shows any other signs of defect, such as discoloration.

Fever: If your child has a fever of 100 degrees or over, he or she must stay home. Your child may not return to school until they are fever free *without* Tylenol, Motrin or Advil for at least 24 hours.

Lice: To the extent a student contracts head lice, he or she must stay home from school until the parent/guardian has treated the condition in accordance with the New York City Department of Health Regulations. This is to protect the health and safety of all students and staff given the highly likelihood that others can also contract head lice. In any cases where a student is infected, a letter will be sent out to the entire class. The student's name will not be revealed. If a parent/guardian becomes aware of a lice infection at home, do not send your child to school. Please inform the school via telephone. The Academy does not pay for lice treatment regardless of where exposure may have occurred.

Mobility: As a matter of safety, and in accordance with all applicable laws, the Academy may not be able to accommodate in-person learning for a child who is immobile, such as a child who is utilizing crutches or in a cast. The Academy will endeavor to provide a reasonable accommodation whenever possible, but must ensure the safety of the student and all other students and be in accord with fire safety laws. Distance learning may be provided as an alternative solution.

D. Administering Medication

School nurses may administer over-the-counter-prescription drugs to students with written consent and medical authorization from a parent or legal guardian. School nurses may administer prescription medication that has been prescribed by a physician but must be provided with:

- Medical authorization from the parent or legal guardian consenting to administering the medication
- A medical plan developed by the child's parents and health care provider detailing the proper administration of the medication, details regarding the child's medical concerns, and other pertinent details.

The Academy reserves the right to call 911 in any case of a medical emergency.

E. Administering Epinephrine

Parents or guardians will supply their own epinephrine auto-injector and must provide written consent and medical authorization for its use. The Academy must have an up-to-date medical statement on file for each child in care. For a child with identified allergies or with special health care needs, the Academy must have a copy of an individual health care plan developed by the child's parents and health care provider. Parents must make program staff aware of the individual health care plan on their child's first day at the program.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian of the student who is at risk of anaphylaxis:

- to notify the school that the child/student is at risk of anaphylaxis and is in need of the presence of epinephrine on school premises
- to indicate to the school if the child/student is capable of self-administration of the epinephrine device
- to supply the school with the epinephrine device* in its original packaging as received from the pharmacist
- to replace the epinephrine device when it expires, discolors or has been used

*It is recommended that two epinephrine devices be supplied, the second functioning as a back-up in case of malfunction or if an extra dose is necessary in accordance with medical documentation.

F. Administering Epinephrine on Field Trips

In the event of a school trip or school event conducted outside of the school premises, it is the responsibility of the parent (or a designated person who appears on the child's emergency contact list) to attend with the child/student for the purpose of epinephrine administration, if necessary.

G. City & State Health Services

The Education Law of New York State mandates that students attending nonpublic schools receive the same health services provided to students attending public schools.

H. Accommodations

Students requiring medical accommodations throughout the school day (including physical education, dietary conditions, physical limitations and medical interventions) must submit a statement from his or her licensed medical provider stating the need for such accommodation each academic year. The Academy will attempt to provide the accommodation in accordance with all applicable laws, and will inform the parent/guardian if it is unable to do so. If the Academy is unable to do so, it may withdraw the child's enrollment in accordance with law.

I. Emergency Services in the Event of a Serious Injury

In the event of a serious injury, the Academy may call 911 and an ambulance may take the child to the hospital. The ambulance staff will determine the hospital based upon the severity of the emergency. A staff member will accompany the child in the ambulance and the parent/guardian will be notified to meet the child at the hospital. The Academy, its staff, and the Academy officials shall be held harmless from any liability, costs or expenses associated with any emergency services and such costs or expenses shall be the responsibility of the injured party or, if a student, the student's parents/guardians.

J. Limitations of Physical Activity

Students at the Academy will be enrolled in physical education classes. To the extent a student has a physical disability or issue which may impair his or her ability to engage in the class, or which may make the class unsafe, the parents/guardians must notify the Academy at the beginning of the school year or as soon as the issue arises. A written doctor's recommendation may be required. Further, a student will be required to attend the physical education class for the instructional component and observation, and to complete an alternative assignment or to complete missed activities when physically able to participate.

K. Counseling Services

The academy does not have a counselor or psychologist on staff. However, the Academy administration works closely with the diocesan PDHP program, which provides individual counseling as well as group instruction on social-emotional wellness. A referral will be made to PDHP if a parent requests counseling services for their child or if at the determination of the school administration, the student may benefit from such services or appears to be in crisis.

L. Wellness Policy

The Academy meets minimum federal and state standards for goals of physical education, nutrition and healthy environments in schools. Students participate in physical education classes for a 40 minute period once a week, as well as a 30 minute daily recess period where physical activity is facilitated and encouraged. Students in our 3K/PreK programs have a 45 minute gross motor period daily where student engage in active play. Health and social-emotional wellness are also part of regular classroom instruction.

M. Breakfast/Lunch Program

Students in our 3K/PreK program receive a free cold breakfast and a hot lunch daily. Meals for 3K/PreK are provided by Healthy Hearts. A monthly menu will be sent home to parents. Meals will be served family style, in the classroom, in accordance with DOE guidelines.

Student in grades K-6 will eat in the cafeteria. Parents of students in grades K-6 are responsible for providing lunch for their children. They have the option of purchasing hot lunch, through our vendor Bayside Milk Farm or to send in a cold lunch with their child. A monthly menu/order form will be sent home to order hot lunch. All lunch orders must be made by Wednesday of the preceding week. The following regulations apply for lunch:

- No glass bottles or containers can be brought into school.
- Students can only eat what they brought for lunch or snack or the hot lunch they purchased, as there is no sharing of food due to allergy and COVID-19 health concerns.

- Students are responsible to clean up their table and discard of all garbage.
- If a child forgets to bring lunch, a parent can call the office and arrange to drop it off.
- No “fast food” or other restaurant lunch can be brought in for a child, only pre-prepared food from home can be brought in.

A good day starts with a healthy breakfast. We encourage all students to eat a healthy breakfast before coming to school. With the exception of Pre-K, breakfast is NOT served in school. However, students in our Before Care program are welcome to bring breakfast from home.

All classes have a short snack time. Please send in a separate snack and/or drink for this time.

During lunch, whether in the classroom or, if the case may be, a lunchroom, each child is expected to remain in his or her seat until dismissed. Each child is also responsible for keeping his or her area clean. Respect and obedience are to be shown at all times to those who are supervising lunch.

N. Accident Policy

If a student is seriously injured, the parent/guardian will be notified by the Academy as soon as reasonably possible, taking into consideration such factors as the apparent severity of the accident/injury and the priority of providing assistance to the student.

If an accident results in a medical condition/injury, the Academy is authorized to render reasonable first aid if such direct medical assistance would, in the opinion and judgment of the Academy, minimize the severity of the student or injured person’s condition. The Academy may secure a professional diagnosis and/or treatment if such action, in the opinion and judgment of the Academy, appears to be reasonably warranted. The Academy, its staff, and the Academy officials shall be held harmless from any liability, costs or expenses associated with any treatment of first aid provided (including, but not limited to the cost of transportation), and such costs or expenses shall be the responsibility of the injured party or, if a student, the student’s parents.

VIII. TECHNOLOGY

A. Acceptable Use Policy

The use of technology is permitted on school premises under limited conditions as authorized by the Principal for the sole purpose of enhancing academic achievement while respecting the dignity and safety of all members of the Academy community.

In using the information and technology in safe, legal, and responsible ways, the following conditions of being a digital citizen within the Diocese of Brooklyn are expected:

Respect One’s Self

- Public names should be appropriate
- Be mindful of any and all content you post including photos, personal views, comments, personal information, etc.
- Avoid seeking out and/or viewing inappropriate content
- Do not engage in potentially harmful activities such as communicating with persons unknown to you or internet challenges

Respect Others

- Be mindful of comments, posts, photos or any content directed toward or including others

- Refrain from engaging in inflammatory, harassing, or any other such disrespectful behavior
- Do not perpetuate inappropriate content by sharing it with or sending it to others
- Warn others of potentially disturbing or harmful content that should be avoided

Protect One's Self and Others

- Report any and all cyber-abuse committed against you or others to parents, teachers and/or administrators
- Keep groups with friends private to avoid potentially inappropriate or dangerous content and communications from unknown sources

Respect Intellectual Property

- Cite sources when using any content not originally authored by you

Members of Catholic Academy communities must remember that when electronically communicating with individuals, groups, or institutions, you are doing so as an individual. You should not represent yourself, your views, ideas, questions, or actions as representing the Catholic Academy you are associated with without the expressed permission of the principal.

Security of Technology

The schools and academies of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn assume no responsibility for the theft, loss, repair or replacement of any technology devices that are brought onto school/academy property, whether it is lost, stolen, damaged, or confiscated.

Security on any computer system is a high priority. If you believe you can identify a security issue, you must notify a system administrator, principal, or teacher and not disclose the problem to others in any way. Although there are safeguards in place to protect all users from inappropriate content, we are not responsible for failures in filtering that result in a bypass of our program and/or access to objectionable content. If any inappropriate content bypasses these safeguards, any parties involved should turn off the monitor and report the security breach immediately to a system administrator, teacher or the principal. Additionally, member of the school/academy community shall not:

- Use another's credentials for any reason
- Gain or attempt to gain unauthorized access to Diocesan or school/academy computers or computer systems.
- Download or install any software application without prior authorization.

Administrative Rights (To monitor use of technology)

The school/academy reserves the right to monitor both student and employee use of technology and computer accessed content. Due to the evolving nature of technology, the Catholic Schools and Academies of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn reserve the right to amend or add to this policy at any time without notice.

Personal use of Social Media (Teachers, Students)

This section refers to the personal use of social media. This includes, but is not limited to Facebook, Twitter, X, YouTube, Tumblr, Instagram, Google+, LinkedIn, Snapchat or any other such medium. All references to school/academy personnel, students and/or any member of the school/academy community in technology related mediums such as web pages or email which is deemed to be conduct injurious to the moral tone of the school or academy are violations of this policy. Any communication with current students by faculty, staff or administration is strictly forbidden on any personal social

networking site. Personal posts must use appropriately respectful speech, and refrain from harassing, defamatory, abusive, discriminatory, threatening or other inappropriate communications.

Representation of the school/academy in whole or part on any personal posts and/or communication is prohibited. The Academy reserves the right to take disciplinary action for activity that occurs on social media or otherwise on the internet, if deemed, in the sole discretion of the Academy, in the best interest of the Academy.

B. FACTS Family Portal

The FACTS Family Portal will be your one-stop destination to view student academic information, school announcements, school calendar and your FACTS payment plan and incidental billing information. You will conveniently be able to access all this information in one centralized location, eliminating the need for multiple log-ins. Once the FACTS Family Portal is set up your child(rens) school will notify you with some simple instructions on creating log-in credentials. Once you create your user profile, you will be able to access the FACTS Family Portal from any device, including your smart phone whether it is an Apple or Android device.

C. Communications with Teachers

Students benefit tremendously when an open line of communication exists between families and teachers. It is recommended that parents/ legal guardians communicate any concerns regarding their child. Parents/ legal guardians as well as teachers should always use FACTS, school communication platforms (I.e. Google classroom), or a note sent directly to the teacher/ family. If needed, the parent/ legal guardian or teacher can schedule a follow-up meeting to address any further issue. It is also recommended that a parent communicate with a teacher regarding their concerns prior to involving the administration. Initiating an open communication with the teacher first continues a positive relationship between families and teachers.

Parents and teachers should not use personal social media accounts or personal cell phones (texting) as a means of communication in regards to school related concerns.

D. Electronic Devices

Electronic devices, although useful and helpful tools in many ways, must only be used appropriately by faculty, administration, staff and students. The use of electronic devices by faculty, administration, staff and students must be appropriate to the educational setting, and may not distract the student, other students, or the class as a whole during the course of the school day and after school. (i.e., cell phones, iPads, iPhones, Smart Watches and other personal electronic devices). The Academy is permitted to implement, at any time, any policy regarding electronic devices, such as cell phones, as it deems appropriate. In the event an electronic device, including a student cell phone, is believed to contain evidence of a violation of Academy policy and/or a threat to the school community, the individual possessing the electronic device is obliged to grant the administration of the Academy access to the device and the information on the device to ensure compliance with policy and the safety of the school, and parents/guardians further consent hereto.

Inappropriate use of any electronic device may result in serious consequences, up to and including, expulsion.

Schools are not responsible for the loss, theft or damage to electronic devices.

E. Parent/Guardian Monitoring of Child's Non-School Devices

Today more than ever young individuals need guidance from their parents to help navigate the technological world, create boundaries, and filter out inappropriate content. There are multiple consumer products, including some at no cost, which parents/guardians can secure for monitoring and controlling their child's access to technology. Specifically, products for mobile and cellular services include, but are not exclusive to, Apple Screen Time, Google Family Link, Qustodio and OpenDNS Family Shield. The Academy expects parents/guardians to equip their child's personal electronic devices, including cellular devices and tablets, with parental controls if not already in place. The Academy expresses no preference or recommendation for any specific product but expects that parent/guardians utilize such a product to monitor their child's electronic activity. Further, as Catholics, we all have an obligation to our fellow Academy-community members. Therefore, the Academy expects that parents/guardians will notify the school if activity on a child's personal electronic device threatens the health and/or safety of any member of the Academy community.

IX. SAFETY

A. Commitment to Safety

Safety of the students is the Academy's number one concern and we maintain a high standard of safety. This requires that the Academy complete periodic drills and exercises and that all members of the community are trained in our safety standards. In order to maintain a safe environment, the Academy requires cooperation across the board including the administration, teachers, staff, and, of course, parents. We must ensure safety is practiced in hallways, when passing during class, while on staircases, when using restrooms, during recess and physical education, during after school programs and extracurricular activities, when outside the school building, during arrival and departure, and in connection with parent parking.

B. Emergency Drills

Per New York State laws, academies are required to conduct twelve emergency drills over the course of the school year. Four of these drills must be lockdown drills. Students are expected to follow all directives provided to them by school teachers and staff. Failure to comply or act appropriately during emergency drills will result in disciplinary action.

C. School Closings

The Diocese of Brooklyn will base their closings on the New York City Public School System. If the New York City school system closes due to inclement weather, the schools within the Diocese of Brooklyn are closed. Local academies may also make decisions to close their individual schools based on inclement weather or other hazardous conditions (infrastructure issues, flooding, property damage, etc.). Parents will be notified as soon as possible. In the event of a closure during the school day, proper provisions will be made for students to return home or to be cared for in other premises until usual dismissal time.

D. Crisis/Emergency Information

Should a crisis require evacuation from the school building, the students will be brought to a safe place located at St. Luke's School and parents/guardians should meet them at that location. The Academy utilizes FACTS to notify parents/guardians directly about the crisis.

E. Reporting Concerns Regarding School Safety

Students, parents/guardians and staff must report all dangerous and potentially dangerous situations and/or events directly to an administrator at the Academy.

F. Visitors

All visitors must be admitted to the building by school staff. Visitors should proceed to the main office to sign in and receive a visitor designation (lanyard, sticker, etc.) if available. Visitors to the school are asked to remain in the office until they have confirmed their destination within the school. For the safety of staff and students, visitors should not walk about the school but should travel to their intended destination within the school. Prior to leaving the school, visitors should return to the main office, sign out, and leave through the main doors. Visitors should not exit through side doors to ensure that building security is maintained.

During COVID-19, we ask all parents and legal guardians to visit the Academy only when necessary as well as to keep any visits as brief as possible.

G. Video Surveillance/Photographs

Academies within the Diocese of Brooklyn are authorized to use video camera surveillance on Academy property to monitor the health, welfare, and safety of all staff, students, and visitors to the property, and to safeguard facilities and equipment. Video cameras may be placed in locations as deemed appropriate by the designated school administrators.

Violations of Diocesan policies, administrative regulations, building rules, or laws that images, video and audio capture through surveillance may be used as evidence that may subject students, staff, and visitors to appropriate disciplinary and legal action, including, but not limited to, disclosure to law enforcement.

Data from video surveillance is typically retained for a year. Data related to a known incident which involves injury to students, staff or members of the public or property, or which involves any potential violation of the law or Diocesan policies will be kept with reports of the incident until the incident has been appropriately resolved.

The Academy recognizes that parents/guardians will often want to document their student's life at the Academy, including by taking pictures or video recordings. The Academy asks parents/guardians to exercise caution, however, and be mindful of not taking pictures of other children without the express consent of those children's parents/guardians. Parents/guardians and students are not permitted to take pictures or make recordings of any type, including but not limited to audio and/or video recordings, on school grounds without express consent of the Principal.

Students are prohibited from making any and all recordings (including audio and video) on Academy grounds or at an Academy-sponsored event, regardless of whether such event is on Academy grounds. This prohibition applies to the recording of a class or Academy event through the use of a personal electronic device, including, but not limited to, cell phones, smart watches, iPads, tablets,

laptops, and/or iPhones. The Academy may, in its sole discretion, authorize the recording of a class or Academy event; however such recording may only be done with the prior consent of the Principal.

X. SAFE ENVIRONMENT

A. Safe Environment Protocol & VIRTUS training

All teachers, staff and volunteers must complete VIRTUS training and a background screening which is administered by the Diocese of Brooklyn.

There are additional steps parents/guardians can take to keep their children safe, which we recommend parents/guardians consistently and regularly review with their children. This includes:

- Students should never go home with strangers.
- Students should never talk to strangers.
- Students should never take things from strangers.
- If students are approached by strangers and are still near the Academy, they should be encouraged to return to the Academy and immediately inform a staff member.
- Young students should be escorted to and from school.
- Older children should be encouraged to walk/travel to school in groups whenever possible.

The teachers at the Academy will also remind students of the importance of not responding to strangers and actions each child should take if approached by a stranger, including reporting it to responsible adults.

B. Child Lures Prevention Program

The Child Lures/Teen Lures Prevention programs are presented to the children and youth who attend each Academy. This program is tailored to different age groups and covers topics such as staying healthy and safe, kindness and respect, trusted adults, my body belongs to me, child luring, choosing grown-ups to help, children are special, and abuse is never a child's fault (topics will vary based on age level appropriateness). For older students, topics include sexual assault, harassment, dating violence, bullying/cyberbullying, sexting, identity theft, online luring, suicide and human trafficking with the goal of facilitating authentic conversations to bring awareness to the topics.

Each program provides teachers with the resources to facilitate appropriate conversations. Parents/legal guardians will also be provided with a link to access parent guides digitally to continue the conversations within their homes.

C. Child Abuse Laws

Under NYS law, teachers are all **mandated reporters** and are legally required to report any suspected case of child abuse or neglect to the proper agency. The teacher will make a judgment that the child may be presenting signs of abuse or neglect. If the mandated reporter makes such a judgment and suspects abuse or neglect, in addition to reporting to the proper agency, the reporter must also notify the Principal.

D. Confidentiality

There is a professional, legal and moral ethic that requires all persons to safeguard all student information of a privileged nature. However, if a teacher learns of something that could impact the health or safety of a student or any person, the teacher has the responsibility to share the information with the Principal. Further, school officials are required to report when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child coming before them in their professional or official capacity is an abused or maltreated child.

E. Sexual Harassment

The Academy is committed to providing for its students an atmosphere and school zone free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome physical contact of a sexual nature, or unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment is a direct violation of the Catholic faith as it signifies a lack of respect for other persons.

Any student who believes that he or she is being sexually harassed, or a parent/guardian who was informed by their child that the child was sexually harassed shall immediately report this information to teacher and to the Principal. A student/parent who is uncomfortable reporting the alleged harassment to a teacher or Principal may report it directly to the Office of the Superintendent. Any information shall be treated as confidential, to the extent permitted by law. All claims of sexual harassment will be investigated in an appropriate manner under the supervision of the Office of the Superintendent. No student will be subject to any retaliation or disciplinary action on the part of the Academy for reports of sexual harassment made in good faith.

No student is to sexually harass another member of the school community. Any student who engages in sexual harassment shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion.

F. Child Reporting Abuse to Parents

If a student reports any form of abuse at the Academy to his or her parent/guardian, the parent/guardian must notify the Principal. Any information shall be treated as confidential, to the extent permitted by law. This will permit the Principal to investigate the situation and will ensure that the alleged abuse or harassment does not occur to other students. If a parent/guardian is uncomfortable going to the Principal, he or she may go directly to the Office of the Superintendent.

XI. SIGNS OF SUICIDE (SOS) PREVENTION PROGRAM

SOS Signs of Suicide (SOS) is a universal, school-based prevention program designed for middle school (ages 11-13) and high school (ages 13-17) students. The goals of this program are:

- Decrease suicide and suicide attempts by increasing student knowledge and adaptive attitudes about depression
- Encourage personal help-seeking and/or help-seeking on behalf of a friend
- Reduce the stigma of mental illness and acknowledge the importance of seeking help or treatment
- Engage parents and school staff as partners in prevention through “gatekeeper” education
- Encourage schools to develop community-based partnerships to support student mental health
- Raise of awareness of self-harm behaviors, such as cutting and burning

Through a video and guided discussion, students learn to identify warning signs of suicide and depression. At the end of the session, students complete a seven-question screening for depression (anonymous or signed – the school can decide) to further encourage help-seeking and connect students at risk with trusted adults. The curriculum raises awareness about behavioral health and encourages students to ACT (Acknowledge, Care, Tell) when worried about themselves or their peers.

XII. TUITION AND FINANCES

A. School Tuition Policies

The success of our Academy relies on the commitment of our families to make Catholic education a financial priority. The Academy has full-year contractual and financial obligations that must be met, such as teacher salaries, utility bills, building maintenance and improvements, and other expenses. Families that seek enrollment are required to satisfy the annual tuition by specified due dates.

These policies are not intended to deprive anyone of a Catholic education. It is our desire to maintain a fair approach to collection of tuition and to provide a sound financial policy for the overall welfare of our families. We encourage all responsible parties to maintain open communication with the business office to ensure a complete understanding of each family’s financial obligations. The goal of our academy is to provide a Catholic education to every student who desires one, but only by mutual cooperation can we make certain that this goal is met. Parental non-payment or delinquency in meeting financial obligations creates an additional burden for the Academy.

- Tuition contracts specifying a payment schedule will be published and shared with families. All families must sign an enrollment contract that guarantees the family will be responsible for the full payment of tuition for the academic year.
- Academies will arrange for all tuition and fees to be collected through FACTS Tuition Management.
- Tuition payment schedule will follow the most appropriate schedule for the academy and parents: monthly, one payment, or three installments.
- A Tuition Assistance Committee will be in place at every Academy

B. Tuition and Other Fee Schedules

The Academy will collect tuition and fees over a ten month period. This ten month period will typically extend from June to March. Tuition collection will begin prior to the start of the school year.

3K and Pre-K programs are tuition free

K and above	Catholic	Non-Catholic
One Child	\$5,800	\$6,800
Two Children	\$4,950 per student	\$5,925 per student
Three or more	\$4,400 per student	\$5,933 per student

Additional Fees (Excluding 3K/PreK)

- \$150 Registration Fee due upon registration for all new students
- \$250 Educational Fee due annually upon (re)registration for all students.

Refer A Family Incentive – Any family that refers a new family who registers one or more students at St. Mel’s Catholic Academy will receive a \$500 tuition credit per referral.

Academies reserve the right to place severely delinquent accounts in the hands of a collection agency or its attorneys for collection. It is not our desire that any family should incur unnecessary legal fees or suffer further embarrassment or inconvenience in this regard. Again, we encourage prompt communication with the academy in an effort to avoid litigation.

In order to withdraw a student, the parent must submit written notice to the principal in advance of the withdraw date. This enables the academy to prepare necessary information and settle accounts. No student records will be forwarded to another academy or school until all accounts have been settled.

Following the terms of the enrollment contract, refunds will be made only in accordance with the stated guidelines and/or at the discretion of the administration. The refund must be requested prior to the start of the period for which payment would be made.

C. Resources for Tuition Assistance

Catholic education is meant to be available to every Catholic family. Every family desiring a Catholic education for their child(ren) will participate to the extent capable in the cost of providing that education.

Each family in need of tuition assistance must complete a scholarship application through Futures in Education, which may currently be found at: www.futuresineducation.org/scholarships . The one exception is families returning to the Teddy Forstmann program coordinated by Children’s Scholarship Fund.

If the family requests additional assistance beyond the awarded amount, the request will be forwarded to the Tuition Assistance Committee. The review will be completed as early as possible.

D. Tuition Assistance Committee

The Tuition Assistance Committee is an essential advisory body to the pastor/board chair and principal. It has a two-fold purpose.

- The Committee will have the responsibility of direct involvement in the monitoring and collection of tuition arrears from the families of its respective school or academy.
- The Committee will be empowered to recommend when needed a partial deferment of tuition for families that have demonstrated true financial need or face unforeseen extraordinary circumstances. Such a deferment will establish a fair and just tuition rate that will allow students to remain enrolled when even scholarship assistance is not enough. This discernment must be guided by an approved process that is fair, transparent and reasonable. Any recommendation made by the Tuition Assistance Committee must be approved by the respective pastor of a parochial school and the Board of Directors for an academy.

Should there be a concern regarding the tuition assistance process or if an appeal for discernment is requested, parents/guardians should present their concerns in writing. In the case of a Catholic academy, the letter should be addressed to the chairperson of the Board of Trustees. The response from the pastor or chairperson would be final.

E. FACTS

FACTS is a tuition management company designed to make tuition collection simpler for families as well as academies. There will be one FACTS record per family, and each student must be listed separately. This provides valuable detail about the charges and discounts each student is receiving. In turn, this provides the academy better reporting. A major benefit of FACTS is the ability to process automatic drafts of the payer's bank account or credit card. There is a 2.85% convenience fee on credit card transactions. FACTS does offer an invoicing option as well. With this option, FACTS will send an invoice to the payer (via email or postal mail) 20 calendar days prior to the payment due date. The payer must then initiate payment either by using a credit card or bank account online, over the phone, or by mailing a check directly to FACTS. Families are encouraged to pay via automatic draft. FACTS also allows for flexible payment options. Common options are monthly payments, three trimester payments, and a payment in full.

F. Tuition Delinquency

By standard practice, FACTS will send payment reminders prior to any due date, returned payment notices in the case of a failed payment, and will make automated phone calls to delinquent payers. Payers who fail to communicate with the academy and resolve the delinquency through a payment schedule approved by the academy will result in suspension of services for the student.

Students will not be permitted to attend class at the start of the trimester should any balance be past due.

No student will be permitted to begin an academic year unless all registration and other required fees are current. Registration and other required fees are paid through FACTS Tuition Management at enrollment. Enrollment for students whose families are not current in the registration or other required fees by June 30 may be cancelled at the discretion of the academy. In no event will students be permitted to attend class at the commencement of the academic year unless the delinquency is paid in full.

In order to participate in graduation activities, all debts for eighth grade students must be cleared by the first Monday of May. Eighth grade transcripts will not be released to the high schools if the financial obligations have not been met.

For all grades, in order to participate in school activities and field trips, all financial accounts are to be current and up to date.

All fees must be paid in full before records or progress reports will be processed. It is the sole discretion of the academy to withhold trimester exams, report cards, transcripts, records, and diplomas until all financial obligations are satisfied in full.

XIII. TRANSPORTATION

A. Bus Procedure

While students are being transported to and from the Academy, it is expected that they will uphold the behavior expectations of the Academy as well as rules set forth by the bus driver or bus company. Students who continuously disregard bus procedures and rules are at risk of losing their access to bus transportation.

Each bus company must hold an evacuation drill at least once a year. Students are expected to follow all instructions as given by the bus driver or other adult facilitating the drill.

B. Use of Other Vehicles

Only a licensed public carrier that is fully insured should be used to transport students. Teachers or administrators are not permitted to transport students in their personal vehicles.

The Academy does not assume liability for transportation not operated by it, such as Ubers, car service, private buses or van services.

Parents/ legal guardians must provide authorization for their child to be transported by someone else. This includes transportation for dismissal as well as extracurricular activities.

XIV. RECORDS

A. Change of Information

For student safety, it is imperative that parents/ legal guardians alert the Academy to any changes in address or phone number. Parents/ legal guardians must also provide the Academy with an adequate number of emergency contacts (with up to date information).

B. Educational Records Request

In the event of a student transferring to a different academy, parish school, or public school, the school will provide student records to the school of transfer. Requests can be made in writing by the parent/ legal guardian or by the school that the student will be transferring to. The school office is responsible for sending student records directly to the school of transfer. If records are not provided in a timely fashion, parents or legal guardians may contact the Office of the Superintendent to receive further assistance in this matter.

C. Authorization to Release Records

Academies may not release the records of students without the written consent of the parents/legal guardians to any individual, agency or organization other than the following:

- Other academy or parish school officials who have legitimate educational interests.
- Officials of other academies or parish schools in which the student intends to enroll.
- Officials of the courts with lawfully issued judicial process, i.e., subpoena, court order, etc.
- Please note health records are the property of the Department of Health.

D. Review of a Child's Official Records

Parents/legal guardians have the right to inspect any and all material which is part of their child's permanent record. Academies require parents/legal guardians to provide a written request prior to when they wish to examine their child's permanent record. At the time of inspection, the academy administrator, or qualified delegate, will be present.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT

FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

I acknowledge that I have received and read the Parent-Student Handbook and all subsequent forms (“Handbook”).

I have read and understood the contents of this Handbook, and will act in accord with these policies and procedures. I have explained the contents of this Handbook to my child. I agree that I am responsible for my child’s adherence to the policies in this Handbook.

I understand that this Handbook supersedes any other previously issued handbook and personnel manual and that all previous versions are hereby revoked.

I understand that the Academy reserves the right to add, amend, modify, or discontinue any of the policies and procedures as set forth in the Handbook at any time, with or without notice.

Policies relating to the COVID-19 virus, where applicable, may be provided as part of a supplement to this Handbook.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of Child(ren) and Grades: _____

FOR STUDENTS GRADES 6-8

I have read the Parent-Student Handbook, have discussed its contents with my parent/guardian, and agree to abide by all its terms.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE AUTHORIZATION

If a parent/guardian chooses to sign any form electronically, the following MUST be submitted beforehand to the Academy with an original, and not electronic, signature.

I authorize the Academy to accept my electronic signature.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____



IMMUNIZATION INFORMATION

Please see the following link to review the 2022-2023 NYSDOH immunization requirements:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2370.pdf>



ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

Parent/Guardian

As the parent/guardian of a student at the Academy, I have read the Acceptable Use policy and agree to abide by its terms, and to ensure my child abides by its terms. I understand that computer and internet access at the Academy is designed for educational purposes. I am aware that it is impossible for the school to restrict access to all controversial materials and I will not hold the Academy responsible for materials acquired in use. Further, I accept full responsibility for supervision if and when my child's use of school's technology resources is not in a school setting. I hereby give permission for my child to use the school's technology resources and certify that I have reviewed this information with my child.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____
Parent/Guardian Signature: _____
Date: _____

Name of Student: _____
Grade: _____

Name of Student: _____
Grade: _____

For Students Grades 6-8

I have read the Acceptable Use Policy in this Handbook.

Student Name: _____ Student Signature: _____
Student's Grade: _____ Date: _____

Student Name: _____ Student Signature: _____
Student's Grade: _____ Date: _____



Photo Release Permission Slip 2023-2024

This document gives **St. Mel's Catholic Academy** along with the Diocese of Brooklyn and its communications arm, DeSales Media Group, permission to reproduce photographs and video taken of students associated with the promotion of Catholic education within the Diocese of Brooklyn.

_____ **Permission is granted for:** _____
Student's Full Name

_____ **Permission is NOT granted for:** _____
Student's Full Name

Grade of Student _____

1. The academy/parish school may photograph or videotape the student listed above while they are partaking in scholastic related activities e.g. classroom, clubs, fieldtrips, competitions, and school events.
2. I authorize the academy/parish to use photographs or video of the student listed above for:
 - a. Parish School/Academy website and social media pages
 - b. Parish School/Academy marketing materials e.g. brochures, flyers, billboards as well as television, digital and print advertisements
 - c. Futures in Education promotion (Diocesan Scholarship Organization)
 - d. Promotion of Catholic education within the Diocese of Brooklyn
3. I understand that by giving this authorization, **St. Mel's Catholic Academy** along with the Diocese of Brooklyn and DeSales Media Group can use the student's photograph or video for the purposes listed above.

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Date _____

