



# St. Mel's Catholic Academy Early Childhood Center

154-24 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Flushing, NY 11354

917-287-9729

Website: [www.stmelsacademy.org](http://www.stmelsacademy.org)

## Student / Parent Handbook

### 2020-2021

## **Section 1 - Letter from the Principal**

Dear St. Mel's Families,

Our shared Catholic faith is based on resurrection and new life. Jesus suffered and died on the cross, yet was resurrected and ascended into heaven so that we may have eternal life. During the 2019-2020 school year, the St. Mel's community suffered. The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to close our doors in March and switch to remote learning. Although quality learning continued, we missed being together and celebrating the milestones of our students. Then came the devastating news of the closure of St. Mel's Catholic Academy. Although I, along with the whole St. Mel's community, mourned the loss of our beloved school, we too, have been given the opportunity for new life. We are excited to reopen our doors and welcome back new and returning students to St. Mel's Early Childhood Center.

Our name may have changed and our school may have a new look and new health protocols in place, but our commitment to quality Catholic education remains the same. We are dedicated to providing a warm, nurturing environment to foster the academic, emotional and spiritual growth of our students. This year we are proud to announce the opening of the Raffaella Fonti music room, a state of the art piano lab where our children have the opportunity to develop their minds through music. Studies have shown that playing piano has many intellectual and emotion benefits for children (and adults), including improved creativity, dexterity, self-esteem, language and math skills, problem solving and memory. We can't wait for the halls of St. Mel's to be filled with the sound of music. We are equally excited to have the opportunity to partner with Unsung Siblings Foundation to fund and build the Dorothea Ryan and Caterina Cassandro Children's Playground. Now, more than ever, our children need a safe place where they can develop their social and gross motor skills through play. We are grateful to Unsung Siblings Foundation for their fundraising efforts on our behalf and we look forward to the official groundbreaking.

On behalf of Father Fonti and myself, we would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and your children to the St. Mel's family. We thank you for trusting us and our dedicated faculty and staff with the education of your precious children. The halls, classrooms and playground at St. Mel's have been quiet for too long. It is so nice to have them filled once again with the joyous sounds of children learning and laughing. Welcome back Wildcats!! We have missed you so much and are so happy that you are back!

With God's love,

Amy Barron  
Principal

## Section 2- Faculty and Staff Directory

Reverend Joseph Fonti, Pastor  
Mr. Richie Diaz, Special Advisor  
Mrs. Amy Barron, Principal  
Mrs. Lucy Lugones, UPK director

Office Manager: Ms. Pat Viscovich  
Financial Secretary: Mrs. Lucille Alessandro

Nursery: Mrs. Krista Laurenzano  
Para: Mrs. Phyllis Frey

Pre-K: Mrs. Laurie Drazevic  
Para: Ms. Jeanine Brady

Pre-K: Mrs. Fiona Diago  
Para: Mrs. Anita Garcia

Kindergarten: Ms. Lisa Sheehan  
Para: Mrs. Kerry Garry

1<sup>st</sup> Grade: Ms. Samantha Murphy

Grade 2/3: Ms. Jacqueline Loiacono

IT: Mrs. Julie Mansour

Music and Piano: Mr. Rudy Albert

Physical Education: Mrs. Cathy Quinn

## **Section 3- School Overview**

### **3.1 Brief History of the School**

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 50<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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 is a trying time for all as we are 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 serve 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. This year, we are excited for two new additions. A state of the art piano lab was graciously donated by the family of pastor, Rev. Joseph Fonti, in honor of the Fonti family matriarch, Raffaella Fonti and groundbreaking is expected in Fall 2020 on the Dorothea Ryan and Caterina Cassandro children's playground, graciously funded by Unsung Siblings Foundation. We look forward to a bright future.

### **3.2 Mission statement**

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

### **3.3 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, 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.*

### **3.4 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.

## **Section 4- 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

## **Section 5- Student Behavior**

### **5.1 Conduct**

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.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in the following consequences depending on the severity and number of times the offense has occurred. This is at the discretion of the principal.

- Parent being notified and asked to come to the office to discuss a plan of action to improve behavior.
- Loss of privileges including but not limited to recess, computer/internet use, class trips, school events, etc.
- Suspension (either at school or in home)
- Expulsion from St. Mel's Early Childhood Program

### **5.2 School rules**

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.

#### **5.4 Diocesan 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.

## **5.5 Diocesan Cyber Bullying Policy**

In accordance with New York State Law on Cyber-Bullying, inappropriate, defamatory, or content found to be injurious to an academy or parish school community member may result in disciplinary action, even if done outside of academy/parish school premises or using devices not owned or controlled by the academy/ parish school. 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 or parish school 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

## **5.5 Diocesan 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 St. Mel's Early Childhood Center 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 Parish School and Catholic Academy communities must remember that when telecommunicating 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 Parish School or 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, 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.

## Section 6- General Procedural Information

### 6.1 Dress Code

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn 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 or hair style which is considered by the Administrations to be contrary to good hygiene or which is distracting 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.

Students are to be in complete uniform at all times. Otherwise, the student will be required to call home for the proper attire to be brought to the academy. On the first offense, a warning will be issued. After that, detention may be served at the discretion of the teacher and principal. While jewelry is not part of the uniform, girls may wear **small** hoop or post earrings, one pair of earrings at a time. They are not permitted to wear make-up. Both boys and girls are required to have moderate hairstyles. Flip-flops, mules, sandals, etc. may not be worn on dress down or dress up days. Shoes must always have a back and either tie, buckle or have Velcro straps. This is for safety reasons.

**UNIFORM SHOES:** May be purchased at: Da-Bar Too 70-05 Grand Avenue Maspeth, New York 11378.

- BOYS - Grades 1-3: Black regulation laced shoe (optional black Velcro uniform shoe)
- GIRLS -Grades 1-8: Black regulation laced shoe (optional black Velcro uniform shoe)

**UNIFORM Purchasing:** We purchase the academy uniform from: Flynn & O'Hara, The Shops at Atlas Park, 8000 Cooper Avenue (lower level) Glendale, New York 11385 (718) 326-2704 [www.flynnohara.com](http://www.flynnohara.com)

**GYM UNIFORM - BOYS AND GIRLS** Regulation sweat pants, sweatshirt, tee shirt, gym shorts (mesh or sweat shorts) **WHITE SNEAKERS- plain white with white laces only**  
OPTIONAL -From September 1st to October 15<sup>th</sup> and May 1 to the end of June, **all students** may wear uniform gym shorts (maroon) in place of the sweat pants.

**UPK AND KINDERGARTEN UNIFORM- BOYS AND GIRLS** UPK and Kindergarten students will wear the regulation gym uniform every day. They may wear the regulation gym pants, sweatshirt, and tee shirt. From September 1st to October 15<sup>th</sup> and May 1 to the end of June, students may wear uniform gym shorts (maroon) in place of the sweat pants.

#### **BOYS' UNIFORM – GRADES 1 TO 3**

- White shirt, short or long sleeve with sweater
- Uniform pants with black belt
- Plaid regulation tie
- Black uniform shoe

- Summer uniform – September through October 15 and May to the end of June
  - Uniform knit polo shirt, khaki walking shorts, white socks, white sneakers
  - Exception – class photos will be taken with regular uniform

**OPTIONAL – for ALL BOYS – grades 1 to 3 ALL YEAR – SCHOOL SWEATER** (cardigan or v-neck). Sweatshirts may be worn on dress down days or with the use of nut cards ONLY.

### **GIRLS' UNIFORM – GRADES 1 TO 3**

- Plaid jumper with white short or long sleeve button down collared blouse, uniform tie, maroon tights or knee socks and black uniform shoes.
- Summer uniform – September through October 15 and May to the end of June
  - Uniform knit polo shirt, khaki walking shorts, white socks, white sneakers
  - Exception – class photos will be taken with regular uniform

**OPTIONAL for ALL GIRLS - grades 1 to 8 ALL YEAR – SCHOOL SWEATER** (cardigan or v-neck). Sweatshirts may be worn on dress down days and with the use of a nut card ONLY.

- Gray slacks may be worn in place of the jumper or kilt in December, January, and February.

**Final judgment on what is appropriate and modest will be made by the administration. Parents are expected to give guidance before child comes to school.**

### **6.1a Dress Down Days**

There may be occasions in which students are allowed to wear non-uniform attire, such as an announced spirit day or NUT card day. 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

### **6.1b Grooming Code**

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

- 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 jewelry is allowed. Two bracelets may be worn at a time. 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.

### **6.2 Attendance Policy**

St. Mel's Catholic Academy Early Childhood Center has developed our attendance policy in accordance with New York State Education Law Section 3205 to be implemented on July 1, 2020. This comprehensive attendance policy will help to uphold the philosophy and mission statement of our school/academy, as stated in our handbook.

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 and/or medical doctor.
  - If the reason for the absence is NOT medically related, a note from a parent/guardian is sufficient. Please use the form on the school website (it was also sent through Option C)
  - If the reason for the absence **IS** medically related, the child **MUST** have a note from a medical physician. Please see section 15.4 for more details.
  - No child will be admitted back to school without proper documentation of absence.
  - 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.

## 6.2a Lateness

A student who arrives after the time set by the academy or the parish school for the beginning of the day will be marked late.

- Nursery and Kindergarten – after 8:10 am
- PreK and grades 1-3 – after 8:25 am

## 6.3 School Calendar

New York State Law currently requires a school calendar to provide 176 days of instruction with 4 professional days and cites the following holidays when schools may not be in session:

|                                 |                              |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| New Year's Day                  | First Day in January         |
| Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day | Third Monday in January      |
| Memorial Day                    | Last Monday in May           |
| 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 |

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

## 6.3a School Hours

Currently, school hours are on a staggered schedule to allow for safe social distancing at drop off and pick up. This will be evaluated on an ongoing basis throughout the school year and is subject to change.

- Nursery ½ day – 8:15 am to 11:30 am (27<sup>th</sup> Ave. entrance)
- Nursery full day – 8:15 am to 2:00 pm (27<sup>th</sup> Ave. entrance)
- Pre-K for All – 8:00 am to 2:20 pm (27<sup>th</sup> Ave. entrance)
- Kindergarten – 8:00 am to 2:00 pm (26<sup>th</sup> Ave. entrance)
- Grades 1-3 – 8:15 am to 2:15 pm (26<sup>th</sup> Ave. entrance)

For safety purposes, no child is to be left unattended on school or church property. During drop off and pick up, please be respectful of our neighbors and do not double park or block driveways. The church parking lot is available to you at these times for your convenience. For your child's safety, please cross in the crosswalk and follow all directions from the school crossing guards at drop off and dismissal.

### **6.3b Before Care & After Care**

Before and after care are offered for the convenience of our families at an additional fee. You must complete the registration form and monthly calendar so we know when to expect your child, however, we will accommodate emergency situations. All academy regulations regarding behavior and student conduct apply to these programs. For before care drop-off and after care pick-up, use the 26<sup>th</sup> Ave. main entrance.

- Before Care - \$ 5 a day, beginning at 7am
- After Care - \$ 20 a day from dismissal until 5:30 pm, includes a snack and drink. An additional charge of \$ 5 per 15 minute interval will be applied if a child is picked up after 5:30 pm.

### **6.3c School Office Hours**

The school office is open from 7:00 am until 3:00 pm on all school days.

### **6.3d Early Release Schedule**

Traditionally the first Friday of the month is an early release day for teacher professional development purposes. There may be other days that are early release as well. Unless specified, there will be after care offered on early release days for no additional cost. The early release pick-up times are as follows:

- Nursery: 11:30 am
- Pre-K: 1pm
- K: 11:30 am
- Grades 1-3: 11:45 am

## **6.4 Releasing of Students**

Students are expected to be in attendance for the complete session each school day. If for any reason a student must leave the academy or parish school before the regular dismissal hour, a parent/legal guardian or a person authorized by the parent/legal guardian must come to the academy or parish school 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.

#### **6.4a Custody, Guardianship Orders**

Parents must provide accurate custodial information to be kept on file at the academy or parish school. 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 Diocese of Brooklyn abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, a school or parish 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.*

#### **6.5 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 9.4 for further information about this process.

#### **6.6 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, class parties must take place outside of school. Invitations to class parties may only be given out in school if the whole class is invited.

Due to COVID-19, students may not bring food into the classroom to be shared with other students. To promote health and safety, students should consume only the foods that they have brought to school or have been provided by the school.

#### **6.7 Lost and Found**

All children are responsible for their own belongings. Please label everything that you send to school with your child's name to prevent it from getting lost. If an item is found without a child's name it will be held in the main office. If your child is missing an item, please inform the teacher first. If it cannot be located in the classroom, please contact the main office and we will look through the items that were brought to lost and found. The school is not responsible for lost items.

#### **6.8 Responsibility for Valuables**

The academies and parish schools within the Diocese of Brooklyn are 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.

#### **6.9 Textbooks and Bookbags**

Textbooks belong to the academy or are on loan from New York State. These books must be clean and covered at all times (no contact paper on textbooks). Any book that is damaged or lost must

be replaced at the expense of the student responsible for the damage or loss. Textbooks on CD's are also on loan and must be returned in June. Books must be carried in some type of school bag in order to protect them. Wheeled schoolbags are not safe on the steps and through the hallways, therefore they are not permitted in school.

## **Section 7 - Transportation**

### **7.1 Bus procedures**

While students are being transported to and from St. Mel's Early Childhood Center, it is expected that they will uphold the behavior expectations St. Mel's Early Childhood Center 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.

While on a bus for any school sponsored event, the following additional regulations (in addition to other school policies apply):

- All students must remain seated with seatbelt on at all times.
- Students must follow directions from teachers and bus operator
- No gum chewing
- Students may talk but must do so using indoor voices so as not to distract the operator
- Students must act safely and respectfully

### **7.2 Use of Other Vehicles**

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

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.

## **Section 8 - Student Records**

### **8.1 Change of Address/Phone Number**

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

### **8.2 Educational Records Requests**

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.

### **8.3 Authorization to Release Records**

Academies and parish schools 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.

### **8.4 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 and parish schools 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 or parish school administrator, or qualified delegate, will be present.

## **Section 9 - Health and Nutrition**

### **9.1 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 or parish school. Any exemptions to the immunization requirements must be approved by the Academy or parish school 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.

### **9.2 Administering Medications at School**

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.

### **9.2a 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 or parish school 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 or parish school 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.

### **9.2b 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.

### **9.3 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

### **9.4 Limitations of Physical Activities**

If a child cannot participate in physical education classes or cannot participate in physical activities a note from a doctor is required. The note must specify what activities the child can or cannot participate in and the duration of the limitation of physical activities.

### **9.5 Breakfast/Lunch Program**

Breakfast and lunch are provided to UPK students daily. A monthly menu will be sent home to parents. Due to COVID-19 health concerns, all meals are prepared and packaged individually and will NOT be served family style as was done in the past.

Grades N and K-3 must bring their own lunch from home. Our hot vendor lunch program has been temporarily suspended as a result of COVID-19. To ensure appropriate social distancing, all classes will eat lunch in their classrooms. 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, as there is no sharing of food due to COVID-19 health concerns.
- Students are responsible to clean up their desk 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.

## **Section 10 Parental Obligations**

### **10.1 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 and parish school'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 or parish school community. Failure of parents to act in a manner compatible with the values of the academy or parish school may result in student dismissal.

### **10.2 Fundraising**

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.

### **10.3 Parent Academy Association (PAA)**

Every academy or parish school is encouraged to establish a Parent Academy Association. Its purpose is the educational enrichment of parents/legal guardians and teachers. The goal of the Parent 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 Parent Academy Association will be to assist in the fundraising efforts of the academy or parish school. 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 or parish school. All financial transactions must be approved by the pastor/academy board of directors.

### **10.4 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 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

## **Section 11 - Safety**

### **11.1 Emergency Drills**

Per New York State laws, academies and parish schools 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.

## **11.2 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 and parish schools 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. All announcements regarding school closing will be sent via text/email alert through Option C and posted on the school website.

## **11.3 Procedures for 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 or parish school only when necessary as well as to keep any visits as brief as possible.

## **11.4 Video Surveillance Cameras**

Academies and parish schools within the Diocese of Brooklyn are authorized to use video camera surveillance on academy/ parish school 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.

## **Section 12 Instruction**

### **12.1 Grading Policy**

Teachers use a variety of methods to assess student achievement on a formative and summative basis. A students' overall grade will be calculated based on a variety of factors including but not limited to:

- class exams
- homework
- class participation
- projects
- portfolios (work sampling)

## **12.2 Homework Policy**

Homework provides students with the practice necessary to master skills and concepts taught in school. It is an integral extension of the educational experiences of the classroom and therefore should be completed with care and effort. In grades kindergarten and up, students should expect reading and math homework nightly as well as other subjects or special projects as required by the teacher.

Homework is expected to be completed on a daily basis. If there are extenuating circumstances as to why a student cannot complete his/her homework on a particular day, please contact the teacher, who may grant an extension at his/her discretion. Accepting make up homework assignments is also at the discretion of the teacher. Assignments that are not completed on time may receive a reduction in credit and assignments not completed at all will receive a score of zero. Homework is considered in the determination of a student's final grade.

If a child is absent, he or she is expected to make up and is responsible for any homework assignments. Assignments are posted on Google classroom or Class Dojo. Parents may make arrangements for a sibling or another student to bring home books. In addition, parents may email the teacher to ask for any assignments that are not posted.

## **12.3 Protecting Instructional Time**

Maintaining school schedule and structure is of the utmost importance during the school year. As academies and parish schools 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.

Regular attendance is necessary for students to have continuity in their instructional areas. Children must report to the academy on time.

## **12.4 Reporting Student Progress**

### **12.4a 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.

#### **12.4b 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.

#### **12.4c NYS Testing**

Students in grades 4, 6, 7, and 8 will participate in New York State Testing. 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.

#### **12.4d TerraNova Testing**

Students in grade 3 will participate in TerraNova Testing in the fall. TerraNova testing is a nationally- normed, standardized testing program. This series of tests is issued to diagnose student performance and develop student learning goals.

#### **12.5 – Honors and Awards**

- **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.*

## **Section 13-Internet Use**

### **13.1 Option C**

The Option C Parent Portal allows parents to be involved in their child’s academic life on their schedule and more efficiently. Rather than writing a note to a teacher to see how their child is doing on assignments, they can access the portal and see it in real time. They can communicate with teachers directly through Option C removing the issues of lost or blocked email messages. It allows teachers to contact parents directly and keeps a record of the interaction should it be necessary. As grades are recorded for student work, they can be shared with parents, giving any time up-to-date progress reports.

Option C's Parent Alert System is a flexible notification system that lets its audiences - parents, principals, and school staff - communicate quickly and reliably. Academies and parish schools may also create alerts to send to parents regarding fund raisers, events, drills, community affairs, school closings and any information they would like to communicate quickly. Users can decide how they want to be reached, either by voice, text or email, or any combination. Parents should check their settings on Option C to ensure that all contact information is up to date and all options are set correctly.

### **13.2 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 Option C, 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.

- Teachers are **not** to be approached at dismissal, as the teachers are responsible for the safe dismissal of all students at this time. Please schedule an appointment if you need to see the teacher or contact them via email.
- The academy also encourages the use of email, the daily checking of teacher and academy web sites, and OptionC. Please save the academy and your child’s teacher web sites, so you can access them frequently and often.
- Please inform the academy of any change in home, cell or work phone numbers, email address, as well as a change in home address. It is essential that we be able to contact you in case of an emergency.
- It is strongly advised that parents and teachers do not use personal social media accounts or personal cell phones (texting) as a means of communication in regards to school related concerns

Every effort is made to keep parents well-informed of both academy events and your child’s

progress. Please read all communications carefully. We urge you to take advantage of the following methods used for communication by St. Mel's Catholic Academy:

- Option C: test grades, assignments and Progress reports, parent alerts
- Weekly parish bulletin and quarterly *Herald*
- Parent Academy Association Meetings
- Google Classroom/Class Dojo
- Report cards
- E-mail communication via principal and/or teacher
- School web page at [www.stmelsacademy.org](http://www.stmelsacademy.org)
- School calendar – will be distributed monthly in electronic and hard copy format
- Student/Parent Handbook

## **Section 14-Finances**

### **14.1 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 school/academy

### **14.2 Tuition and other fee schedules**

The academy or parish school 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.

**St. Mel's Catholic Academy  
2019 – 2020 Tuition**

| <b>K-8</b>    | <b>Catholic</b>     | <b>Non-Catholic</b> |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| One Child     | \$5,000             | \$6,000             |
| Two Children  | \$4,150 per student | \$5,125 per student |
| Three or more | \$3,500 per student | \$4,033 per student |

**Pre-K - NO Tuition for PreK for All**

| <b>Nursery</b>  | <b>Annual Tuition</b> |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Five Full Days  | \$5,000 per student   |
| Three Full Days | \$4,400 per student   |
| Five Days (AM)  | \$4,400 per student   |
| Three Days (AM) | \$4,000 per student   |

**Additional Fees** (Excluding Pre-K)

- \$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 and parish schools 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.

**14.3 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](http://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.

#### **14.4 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 parish school, the letter should be addressed to the pastor of the parish. In the case of a Catholic academy, the letter should be addressed to the chairperson of the Board of Directors. The response from the pastor or chairperson would be final.

#### **14.5 FACTS**

FACTS is a tuition management company designed to make tuition collection simpler for families as well as academies and parish schools. 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.

#### **14.6 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.
- 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.

## **Section 15-Safe Environment**

### **15.1 Reporting Inappropriate Behavior with Children to Principal**

It is our priority to provide a safe, nurturing, learning environment for your children. If a child engages in inappropriate behavior in the classroom, the teacher who witnessed the behavior will complete an incident report. A copy of the report will be sent home with the parent, another copy will be kept by the teacher and a copy will be sent to the principal. Principal will investigate and speak with all parties involved to determine the appropriate course of action.

Any staff member that witnesses or is made aware of any inappropriate behavior is required to prepare a written statement of the incident and report such incident to the principal. The principal will then, in consultation with the Diocese of Brooklyn School Superintendent's office, determine and follow the appropriate course of action, including notifying appropriate authorities.

### **15.2 Children reporting to their parents**

If a child reports an incident of inappropriate behavior at school to his/her parents, they must notify the principal and submit a written statement of the incident. The principal will then, in consultation with the Diocese of Brooklyn School Superintendent's office, determine and follow the appropriate course of action, including notifying appropriate authorities.

### **15.3 Child Lures Prevention Program**

The Child Lures/Teen Lures Prevention programs are presented to the children and youth who attend each academy or parish school. 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.

#### **15.4 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.

### **Section 16- COVID-19**

*\*All health related policies and procedures have been adopted from the regulations published by the NYC Department of Education in partnership with the NYC Board of Health.*

#### **16.1 Hygiene and Health Requirements**

##### **16.1a Face Coverings**

Students are required to wear face coverings when in the school building and maintain appropriate social/physical distancing. Students should bring an appropriate face covering from home. The school will have surgical masks available for students as needed. Students’ cloth face coverings should be clearly identified with their names or initials, to avoid confusion or swapping. Students’ face coverings may also be labeled to indicate top/bottom and front/back. Non-disposable mask should be washed daily.

All visitors to the school for any reason will always be required to wear a face covering while on school grounds or in the school building. Faculty and Staff are also required to wear masks

All masks for faculty, staff, and students are subject to approval by the principal and Office of the Superintendent of Schools. Masks should be plain and free of any objectionable statements or support for any group, product, political view, and so on, other than the name of their Parish School or Catholic Academy.

Students will be provided opportunities for short breaks to remove masks throughout the day, while social distancing, in addition to removing them during outdoor times and while eating.

## **16.1b Social Distancing**

Classrooms and other school areas will be set up to ensure social distancing between students. Students will also be required to maintain social distance when they are not at their desk. This is particularly important when students are not wearing face coverings such as while eating or during mask breaks.

## **16.2 Health Policies**

If a student or staff members displays symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day, the following procedures will be followed:

- Each building will have a designated Isolation Room for students or staff who display symptoms
- A student showing symptoms of COVID-19 will be escorted to the Isolation Room by a staff member wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- The area where the student was showing symptoms will be immediately cleaned and disinfected.
- The student will be evaluated by the nurse/health professional in the Isolation Room.
- A family member or guardian will be contacted by a staff member and asked to pick up the student.
- Upon pick up, the nurse/health professional and school staff will strongly advise the family to visit a doctor and get the student tested for COVID-19
- Any student placed in the Isolation Room will be adequately supervised by a staff member during this time until the ill student can be picked up.

### **16.2a Health Screenings**

Parents/ legal guardians will be asked to check student temperatures and screen students for symptoms prior to their arrival to school grounds. In the event that parents/ legal guardians are unable to do so, school staff members will be designated to complete health screenings. It is asked that all parents/ legal guardians are vigilant in temperature and symptom screenings for their children for the safety of other students as well as staff members. School staff will also perform random temperature screenings for both students and staff members using no-touch thermometers.

*Symptoms of COVID-19 are:*

- Fever of 100.0°F or higher or chills
- Cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing,
- Fatigue,
- Muscle or body aches,
- Headache,
- Loss of taste or smell,
- Sore throat, congestion or runny nose,
- Nausea or vomiting,
- Diarrhea.

### **16.3b Students Excluded from In-Person Learning**

School-based staff and students cannot report to school if they have:

- Been knowingly in close or proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19.
- Tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 in the past 14 days.
- Experienced any symptoms of COVID-19, including a temperature of greater than 100.0°F, in the past 14 days.
- Traveled internationally or from a state with widespread community transmission of COVID-19 per the New York State Travel Advisory in the past 14 days.

#### **16.4 Returning to School after Showing Symptoms**

Any individual (student or staff member) showing signs of COVID-19 can only return to school when the following conditions are met:

- Received a positive COVID-19 test AND
- Isolated for 10 days AND
- Presents clearance from a healthcare provider AND
- The individual has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

OR

- Received a negative COVID-19 test AND
- Presents clearance from a healthcare provider AND
- The individual has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

OR

- Never got a COVID-19 test AND
- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms started AND
- Presents clearance from a healthcare provider AND
- The individual has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

If DOHMH or NYC Test & Trace Corps determine the individual is considered a close contact of a positive case, the individual can only return to school when all the following are met:

- The individual has completed a 14-day quarantine regardless of symptoms or COVID-19 test results since their last exposure to that case AND
- Presents clearance from a health care provider evaluation AND
- The student has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.
- Students in quarantine should participate in remote learning if feeling well enough.

#### **16.3 School Closures**

Academies and parish schools within the Diocese of Brooklyn will continue to work to provide in-person learning as long as it is safe to do so. Academies and parish schools will follow guidance from local Board of Health officials as well as directives from the City of New York to ensure student safety.

*Per the New York City Department of Education "In order for schools to reopen and stay open, the percentage of positive tests in New York City must be less than 3% using a 7-day rolling average. Schools will need to close if the percentages of positive tests in New York City are equal to or more than 3% using a 7-day rolling average. It is important to note that the above threshold is just one trigger for closing schools but may not be the only trigger. For example, a decision to close schools*

*would be made where there were recurrent, uncontrolled outbreaks of COVID-19 in schools, even if the overall case rates across New York City were to remain low.”*

In the event of positive cases reported within the school community, the following procedures will be followed per NYC Test & Trace Corps and DOHMH Investigations:

| Number of Cases  | During Investigation (at least 24 hrs)                             | After Investigation  |
|--|--|--|
| One confirmed case in a classroom  | Close classroom with positive case, transition to remote learning  | Classroom remains closed for 14 days; Students and staff in close contact with positive case quarantine for 14 days  |
| At least two cases linked together in school, same classroom   | Close classroom with positive cases, transition to remote learning | Classroom remains closed for 14 days; Students and staff in close contact with positive cases quarantine for 14 days   |
| At least two cases linked together in school, different classrooms   | Close school building, transition to remote learning               | Classroom or each case remains closed for 14 days; Students and staff in close contact with positive cases quarantine for 14 days. Additional school members are quarantined based on where the exposure was in the school (e.g., the locker room) |
| At least two cases linked together by circumstances outside of school (e.g., acquired infection by different setting and source) | Close school building, transition to remote learning               | School opens after investigation; Classrooms remain closed for 14 days   |
| At least two cases, not linked but exposure confirmed for each outside of school setting   | Close school building, transition to remote learning               | School opens after investigation; Classrooms remain closed for 14 days   |
| Link unable to be determined   | Close school building, transition to remote learning               | Close school for 14 days   |

## 16.4 Distance Learning

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.