

SAINT MARY
STAR OF THE SEA SCHOOL



FOUNDED 1923

Student-Parent Handbook 2026-2027 School Year

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All schools in the Diocese of Richmond are subject to diocesan policies. Any contrary statement of policy, procedures, programs, or practices, including but not limited to, any such statement contained in any handbook or manual prepared may be superseded by the Diocese of Richmond.

This handbook contains policies and procedures applicable to the school. The school reserves the right to change any of its policies and procedures and apply them as circumstances as warranted.

Any issue not covered in this Parent/Student Handbook is addressed on an individual basis.

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PROFILE

Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School (SMSS) is a Catholic regional school, which operates under the auspices of the Diocese of Richmond and Office of Catholic Schools. The school is located in Hampton, Virginia, and serves families throughout the Hampton Roads community. Lay administration, religious sisters, and teachers provide quality religious and academic education for students ranging from Junior Kindergarten (4 years old) through grade eight.

MISSION

Saint Mary Star of the Sea School (SMSS) provides a Christ-centered Catholic education to PK4 through 8th grade students of all faiths in the tradition of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia. The spiritual, intellectual, and social development of all students is provided in a safe and disciplined environment. With a solid foundation in academic and moral excellence, students are prepared for success in high school and beyond.

VISION

Our shared vision is to provide a Christ-centered education environment where students grow in faith, truth, knowledge, and love through the study of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, while fostering lifelong learning and discipleship.

2026-2027 SCHOOL THEME

“Love one another as I have loved you.” John 15:12

ADMINISTRATION

Principal: John Fruner, Ed. D.

Vice Principal: Sister Immaculata Francis, O.P.

SCHOOL INFORMATION AND ABBREVIATION

Telephone Number: 757-723-6358

Fax Number: 757-723-6455

Website: www.smsscs.org

The ***Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School*** name may be abbreviated within this document to read as SMSS.

SCHOOL HOURS

Junior Kindergarten - 8th Grade 7:45 AM - 3:10 PM

Before the Bell (before-school care) program: 7:00 AM - 7:45 AM

Beyond the Bell (after-school care) program: 3:15 PM - 5:30 PM

Student safety is of paramount concern, no students shall be left unsupervised before 7:45 AM or after 3:10PM. Parents should plan to have their children at school in the gym or classroom as designated

and to have their children picked up from school by 3:25 p.m., after which time all students remaining will be sent to SMSS Beyond the Bell (BTB), and the parents will be billed for this service.

Students who remain after school to participate in athletics, activity, or a club should be picked up at the time stated on the permission slip to participate in the event. The facilitator will remain with students for 5 minutes past the stated end of the event, at which time any remaining students will be escorted to BTB, and the parents will be billed for the service. If the event ends after 5:30, and parents do not pick up their child(ren) within 5 minutes of the ending time repeatedly the facilitator in conjunction with administration may deny the student participation in that club, activity, or athletics.

PARENT/GUARDIAN/FAMILY CLAUSE

Parents, guardians, and family members of SMSS students are asked and expected to abide by all guidelines, policies, and procedures as described in the handbook. They are further expected to conduct themselves with language (tone/word choice) and behavior according to the highest standards of decorum, respect, love, and charity.

The Catholic Church and this Catholic school recognize parents as the primary educators of their children. The education of students at SMSS is a partnership between parents and the school. If, in the opinion of the administration, the partnership is irretrievably broken, the school reserves the right to require the parent to withdraw his or her child. This serious decision is determined with the best interest of the student and the school in mind.

STATEMENT ON PHILOSOPHY AND CURRICULUM

Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School exists to provide a Christ-centered education where students may grow in truth and love. Through the study of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, this school fosters lifelong learning in discipleship. The learning environment is directed toward the spiritual, intellectual, and social development as well as the physical well-being of each student and family.

Through an integrated curriculum that accommodates the diversity of learners in a global society, Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School prepares students for life. By incorporating a variety of learning activities, teachers address the varied intellectual needs of our students. With a focus on the whole child, every effort is made to provide a relevant education to prepare them for daily life and for the ultimate goal of eternal life in heaven. The families are an integral aspect of the educational program. Therefore, by forming a partnership with the school, families play an active role in the education of their children.

The faculty and staff live the faith and witness it to their students. They provide opportunities for their students to express the faith with the celebration of Mass, prayer (private and communal), and the integration of the faith within every subject taught. Virtues are studied and applied on a daily basis. The faculty and staff strive to reflect Christ and His teachings in their thought, words, and actions.

STATEMENT ON THE INSTRUCTION OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School (SMSS) welcomes all families and students desiring a Catholic education. As a Roman Catholic school in the Diocese of Richmond, we joyfully exercise our responsibility to teach Catholic faith and morals in all fullness and especially as expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). It is possible, though, that some parents, guardians, and non-Catholic persons whose religious practices and beliefs do not coincide fully with Church teaching,

may experience conflict as we promote and instruct the teachings on the human person, particularly as they relate to same-sex attraction and gender dysphoria.

SMSS seeks to partner with parents to assist the child, especially when matters of this nature arise. We, therefore, commit to guiding the family to pastoral care and support. While sincere questions of the practices of the Catholic faith to understand them more deeply are welcome, purposeful disruption to the school community, public defiance and challenge of Catholic truths or morality would indicate a student, parent, or guardian are no longer partners in our evangelical mission and thus, may be denied admission or may be asked to leave the school.

SMSS Faculty and Staff support Church teaching regarding human sexuality, dignity, and marriage in their actions and teachings. According to the Catholic Faith, a human person's sexual identity is rooted in one's biological identity as male or female. So a person's biological identity and gender identity are considered to be one and the same. All students and employees of schools are expected to live, act, and dress as their biological sex.

Teachers and Staff follow these Diocesan guidelines in catechesis and education of students in human sexuality:

1. Parents have the primary responsibility for education in the faith, a role they fulfill by helping their children to form proper attitudes from their earliest years. This is particularly true in areas of the human person and sexuality.
2. Catechesis calls particular attention to the role of self-control, self-discipline, prayer, and frequent reception of the sacraments as elements in developing a Christian approach to sexuality.
3. Catechesis should call attention simultaneously to the essential equality of man and woman and to the respect due the uniqueness and the complementary role of the two sexes, recognizing, "each of the two sexes is an image of the power of God, with equal dignity, though in a different way" (CCC 2335).

PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

Our aim for a Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School (SMSS) Graduate includes an integrated curriculum focused on Academics, Faith, and Citizenship that accommodates the diversity of learners in a global society and prepares students for life as:

Academics

- A diligent seeker of truth---Students have a love for truth and a thirst for knowledge in their classes.
- A creative problem-solver---Students develop and use analytical and critical thinking skills.
- A confident public-speaker and writer---Students cultivate their public speaking and writing skills through activities and competitions.
- A lover of the fine arts---Students are given opportunities to explore personal creativity and a love for the arts within classes and activities.

Faith

- A friend and follower of Jesus---Students develop their relationship with Jesus through daily prayer, religion classes, day-to-day interactions, and discussions.
- A participating member of a Faith community---Students are provided opportunities to deepen their prayer lives through communal and private prayer.

- A strong witness to the Faith in word and action---Students grow daily in their understanding of the Catholic faith so they will have the zeal to explain it in both words and actions fitting to their stage of development.
- A compassionate advocate to those in need---Students serve in their parish, school, and local communities through class activities, field trips, and school wide events to support those in need.

Citizenship

- A leader---Students reach an understanding of themselves and others, exercising leadership according to their own personality and temperament.
- A contributor to the common good---Students are taught and encouraged in a spirit of cooperation, service, and responsibility among their peers.
- A person of character---Students are prepared for the duties of good citizenship through development of character through leadership.
- A Faithful Steward of God's World---Students have an appreciation of natural resources and their role in protecting them.

ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES

Students are expected to be present for morning prayers and announcements at 8:00AM. Students who are not present at school by 8:00AM are tardy. The safety and well-being of our students is our top priority. Parents are asked to call or email the school office by 8:00am to report a child's absence. Homework requests should also be made at this time. Requested work will be available in the main office by 2:00pm or may be sent home with a sibling or friend.

When a student returns to school, a written excuse signed by a parent and stating the reason for absence is required. Please note that absence from school does not excuse a student from completing classwork or homework assignments.

To support the health of our entire school community:

- Students must be fever-free for 24 hours (without medication) before returning to school.
- Students sent home during the school day with a fever will not be permitted to return the following day, to ensure the full 24-hour protection period.

Consistent attendance helps children build confidence, develop positive routines, and stay engaged in learning. Establishing this habit early—beginning in preschool—sets the foundation for future success in high school, college, and the workplace. Regular attendance is essential for academic success and the development of responsible habits. The following may be employed to partner with parents to support student attendance: email notifications on number of absences to promote awareness, a conference to develop a plan for regular attendance and completion of academic work as needed, and students may be temporarily removed from Specials classes and/or recess until all missed assignments are completed.

Special Note for 7th and 8th Graders:

Attendance data is regularly requested on high school applications. Excessive absences or tardies may jeopardize a student's eligibility for high school credit-bearing courses.

Making Up Missed Work

- Students are expected to meet with teachers immediately upon returning to school to arrange for make-up work, including missed tests.
- As a general guideline, students have three days to complete classwork and homework after an absence (teachers may adjust at their discretion).
- Recess and/or Specials Class time may be used to complete make-up work in coordination with the teacher.

Vacations

Parents/guardians are asked to plan family vacations during school breaks to avoid disrupting learning. Absences for vacation are strongly discouraged. Parents/guardians are also asked not to extend the school's scheduled breaks by leaving early or returning late. If parents/guardians choose to schedule a trip outside of scheduled breaks, the student is responsible for any schoolwork, homework or test that is missed. Students will be informed of assignments when they return to school and assignments may be made up at that time.

Early Dismissal and Appointments

Parents/guardians are asked to avoid scheduling dental or medical appointments during school hours whenever possible, so as not to interrupt valuable instructional time.

If a student must leave school before normal dismissal:

- A note or email from the parent/guardian should be given to the homeroom teacher and the office that morning.
- The parent, guardian, or other responsible adult designated in writing must sign the student out at the main office.
- Only individuals listed on the emergency form will be permitted to pick up a student.
- Photo identification is required of *all adults* picking up a child early—this includes parents/guardians.

For the safety and smooth dismissal of all students, early dismissals will not be permitted between 2:45 PM and 3:10 PM.

Tardiness and Late Arrivals

Students are expected to arrive at school on time each day. If a student arrives after 8:00 AM, a parent or guardian must accompany the student into the building and sign them into school at the main office to receive a tardy pass before going to class.

Being on time is important for both learning and community:

- **For the student:** Arriving late can cause a child to miss important directions, announcements, and the smooth start of the school day.
- **For the class:** Tardiness disrupts the classroom routine and learning environment for all students.

Excessive tardies will be addressed by the administration in partnership with the student's parents/guardians. We ask all families to make every effort to arrive on time so that students can

begin their day confidently ready to learn.

ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION AND ASSOCIATIONS

SMSS is fully accredited by Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA), through the accreditation of the Diocese of Richmond. SMSS is also a member of the Virginia Council of Private Education (VCPE) and National Catholic Education Association (NCEA)

ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROBATION

All newly enrolled students are placed on Academic Probation for at least the first quarter.

Students are expected to take ownership of their learning by completing projects, classwork, homework, quizzes, and tests on time and to the best of their ability. Grades should reflect a student's true achievement and effort.

When a student experiences academic difficulty, our goal is to provide support while also holding the student accountable for improvement.

Academic Probation

If a student fails a core subject or does not meet academic expectations in a quarter, he/she will be placed on academic probation for the following quarter. Academic probation is designed to help students refocus, improve study habits, and strengthen academic performance.

Process and Expectations

- **Identification & Parent Contact:** Teachers will notify parents/guardians if a student is struggling with assignments or test performance and may be at risk for academic probation.
- **Notification:** If improvement is not seen, parents/guardians will receive written notice of probation.
- **Support Plan:** The student, parents/guardians, teacher, and administration will meet to outline a program for improvement.
- **Ongoing Monitoring:**
 - Regular teacher updates to parents/guardians
 - Periodic student-teacher check-ins
 - Review of quarterly report cards
 - Parents/guardians are expected to monitor grades consistently

Outcomes

- **Successful Improvement:** The student will be removed from probation, and parents/guardians will be notified in writing.
- **Continued Difficulty:** If the student does not demonstrate sufficient progress, the administration will review the student's continued enrollment at the school. Our approach reflects our belief that with partnership, accountability, and consistent effort, every student can grow and achieve success.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS FOR EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND SPORTS

Our extra-curricular programs are designed to complement the academic mission of the school by promoting teamwork, responsibility, good sportsmanship, and healthy competition. Participation in these activities is a privilege, not a right, and carries with it the expectation of serving as a role model for peers. Participation in extra-curricular activities is intended to encourage students to balance both their academic responsibilities and personal interests. By upholding high standards, we help students grow into leaders who reflect the values of our school community.

Eligibility Requirements

To participate in extra-curricular activities or school sports, students must:

- Maintain at least a 75% average in all core subject areas.
- Not receive more than one demerit in any given week.
- Remain in good disciplinary standing.

Suspension:

Students who are on suspension are not permitted to participate in, or attend, any school-sponsored events or activities.

Academic Accountability:

- Students who do not meet the academic criteria will not be allowed to practice or compete until improvement is demonstrated.
- While ineligible, students may still attend games/events as spectators but may not actively participate.

ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIORIAL STANDING

Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School welcomes families who desire a strong academic program rooted in faith and community.

All applicants must be in good academic and behavioral standing in order to be considered for acceptance. As part of the admissions process, families are required to submit:

- Copies of recent report cards
- Any relevant educational testing or evaluations

This information helps ensure that we can support each student's learning needs and set them on a path for success within our school community.

ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT, READINESS SCREENING, AND TESTING

Student learning is assessed in a variety of ways to ensure academic growth, readiness, and alignment with the Diocesan Consensus Curriculum. Assessments are used to monitor progress, guide instruction, and support student success.

Standardized Testing

- Students in Grades 2–8 take the NWEA MAP Growth standardized assessment each year to measure individual achievement and growth.
- Students in Grades 5 and 8 participate annually in the RISE (Assessment of Catechesis

Religious Education) during the second semester.

Classroom Assessment

- Teachers regularly use formative and summative assessments to evaluate student progress in alignment with the curriculum.

Semester & Final Examinations

- Students in Grades 6–8 may take semester cumulative tests at the conclusion of each semester.
- Students enrolled in high school credit-bearing course, Algebra I and Earth Science, are required to take a comprehensive final examination covering the full year's curriculum.

Junior Kindergarten Readiness

- Students in the Junior Kindergarten may be given a readiness screening assessment prior to entering Kindergarten.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, PLAGARISM, AND STUDENT USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Saint Mary Star of the Sea School (SMSS) promotes academic integrity by encouraging all members of the school community to demonstrate honesty in academic work, interpersonal relationships, and all school activities. Academic integrity lays a foundation where students protect their character, maintain credibility, and safeguard their future.

Any form of dishonesty, plagiarism, or cheating violates this standard and may result in a student receiving a zero (0) for the assignment or assessment. Repeated violations will result in additional consequences determined by school administration.

Policy on Student Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

To support learning while maintaining academic integrity, SMSS establishes the following guidelines for student use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools. Violations of this policy will be treated as breaches of academic integrity and addressed according to school disciplinary procedures.

Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled at SMSS who use AI tools (e.g., writing assistants, chatbots, machine learning applications, etc.) in academic work, extracurricular activities, or personal use connected to the school.

Guidelines for Responsible Use

1. Academic Integrity

- AI tools may be used for research, idea generation, or analysis.
- Plagiarism, including submission of AI-generated content without proper citation or attribution, is prohibited.
- AI should not replace individual effort, critical thinking, or independent learning.
- Students are responsible for following teacher directions for the use or non-use of AI in all assignments worked on at school or outside of school.

- AI may not be used to complete tests, quizzes, or assignments designed to measure individual knowledge and skills.

2. Privacy and Security

- Students must ensure that any AI tools they use comply with SMSS guidelines regarding data privacy and security.

ACCEPTABLE USE COMPUTER/TECHNOLOGY USE

All parents and students are expected to agree to the terms of the SMSS Technology and Internet Acceptable Use Policy as part of their enrollment agreement and will be kept on file with the Technology Department. **Saint Mary's is a student cell phone-free campus.** Technology use is meant for educational purposes. Access to network services is provided for students to conduct research and other educational goals. Students are expected to act in a considerate and responsible manner. **Access is a privilege – not a right**. Access entails responsibility and any misuse according to the policies outlined may result in suspension of privileges.

Technology/Chromebook At the beginning of each school year Chromebooks are issued to students.

Students must agree to the policies for proper use of Technology/Chromebook before Chromebooks will be made available for student use in the school library and classrooms.

Use of the Internet/school network comes with the understanding that assigned login credentials will be monitored using network filtering software such as Go Guardian. Everyone is responsible for accessing only appropriate websites and reporting any accidental access of inappropriate content as soon as it occurs. Damage to technology/Chromebook will result in the replacement of the device at the student's expense, and/or if necessary discontinued use of devices in school.

The following are unacceptable computer behaviors and will be referred to school administration for appropriate consequence/discipline:

- Harassing, insulting, or threatening others
- Derogatory comments
- Sending, displaying, or downloading offensive messages or pictures
- Using obscene language
- Damaging computer systems or computer networks
- Violating copyright laws
- Submitting documents from the Internet as a student's personal work
- Using another person's sign-on and/or password
- Trespassing in someone else's folder, work, or files
- Intentionally wasting limited resources
- Using the network for commercial purposes
- Revealing a personal phone number, name, or address of one's self or another

Strong communication between home and school is essential to student success. While email is a

convenient tool, it should be used thoughtfully and appropriately.

ADMISSIONS

Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School (SMSS) is a regional Catholic school; therefore it is the policy of SMSS that all children be considered for admission according to the following priorities:

1. Children whose families already have children enrolled in the school.
2. Children whose families are registered, practicing Catholics at one of the local Catholic parishes.
3. Children of non-Catholics.

The school upholds a nondiscriminatory policy and admits qualified students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to our students. The school endeavors to accommodate students with special needs, as the school's resources and capabilities reasonably permit. The school reserves the right to decline admission of students whose needs cannot be met. Any student's first year of attendance at SMSS is considered probationary.

In seeking admission for their child(ren) at SMSS, parents do so with the understanding that financial obligations will be reviewed as part of the admissions process and that parents are responsible for their payment of tuition and fees if they desire that their child(ren) remain at the school. Failure to meet financial obligations and responsibilities could result in a denial of admission to the school. The school reserves the right to require that payments be current in order for students to take exams, complete course work, receive report cards, and have records transferred.

Age Requirements

Age requirements are in accordance with the Code of Virginia. Students entering:

- Junior Kindergarten (4) must be 4 years of age on or before September 30.
- Kindergarten must be 5 years of age on or before September 30.

Registration/Continuous Enrollment

The School recognizes the value of a sustained long-term partnership with families in the education of their children. In order to provide a seamless transition from year to year, the School provides continuous enrollment, which automatically renews on February 1st of each year for the following school year to secure the Student's space in the upcoming school year. To withdraw the Student(s) from continuous enrollment for the upcoming school year without further payment obligations for the upcoming school year, the Responsible Parties must submit the Opt-Out/Withdrawal Form to the School during the period of January 1 - January 31 prior to the upcoming school year. More information on this process to come.

Parents who wish to enroll their child(ren) at SMSS must complete and submit an online application/registration form through the FACTS/SIS system. Additionally the following documents will be required and requested by SMSS from the previous school with parents completing a school records release request form:

- Current school year report card.
- Standardized testing completed in the previous two academic years.

- Any special educational evaluations from the diagnosing professional for academic accommodations review/determination of support resource availability.
- Behavior/School Infractions Report.
- Recommendation from current teacher/school principal.
- Request for Release of Records for the previous school attended
- Birth Certificate.
- Catholic parents only; parents provide a copy of baptismal certificate for their child.

Medical/Physical

A physical examination is required when a student enters school for the first time and all immunizations must be updated as required. Virginia Health Forms are available from the school's main office and available electronically through FACTS Family Portal, Resources tab. A student cannot be admitted to school without a completed Virginia Health Form.

All students must have completed the series of Hepatitis B vaccinations, and all 7th grade students must have a TDap booster before school begins, in accordance with state law. Virginia law requires the state Department of Health to provide parents of rising sixth grade girls with information on HPV and HPV vaccines. According to this law, schools (including nonpublic schools) are responsible for providing this information to those parents. The decision to vaccinate their child for HPV remains one of parental choice. Each year the school is required to report the immunization status of all Kindergarten, 7th and 12th grade students to the Virginia Department of Health by October 15th.

Parents or guardians who object to the administration of immunizing agents for their child on the grounds it conflicts with their religious tenants or practices must send the request to the Office of Catholic Schools for review/approval before being admitted to the school.

Admission of Non-Catholics Informed Consent Clause

Our school serves a variety of purposes including the academic, social, and physical development of students. However, the primary purpose of our school is religion. We exist for the purpose of evangelization and catechesis: that is, the proclamation of the Gospel and the formation of the entire school community in the Catholic faith. Our school offers a complete Catholic religious education program and makes every effort to develop the faith in all students so that they may live a full Christian life. Non-Catholics may be admitted to our school with the informed understanding and acceptance that parents/guardians agree through a signed application/registration form are permitting their child(ren) to attend religion classes, religious functions, and recognize that religious expectations/teachings are offered as part of the school program.

ADVANCEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

The **Advancement/Development Office** plays a vital role in supporting the mission of Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School. By organizing programs and events, the office helps ensure that tuition remains affordable for families seeking a Catholic education while supporting the operational needs of the school.

The actual cost of providing a high-quality education exceeds tuition revenue. The Advancement/Development Office is therefore essential in **bridging this gap** through fundraising and community engagement.

In addition to financial support, Advancement initiatives help communicate the **mission, vision, and values of the school** to families, alumni, and the wider community. Key events and programs provide opportunities for participation, stewardship, and celebration of our school community.

Advancement and Development Events

- Golf Tournament
- Alumni Weekend
- BBQ and Shrimp Boil
- Auction
- EISTC and FSTC
- iGive Catholic
- Saints and Scholars Annual Appeal

Tuition does not cover all school expenses; therefore, each family is expected to participate fundraising events during the school year.

Fundraising & Family Participation

- Fundraising is an expected family obligation including, but not limited to family responsibility for selling 1 booklet of ten \$5 raffle tickets in support of the Auction.
- Families are asked to participate in school fundraisers each year.
- Students may not engage in door-to-door solicitation for school fundraisers.
- Event details and volunteer service opportunities will be provided throughout the year.

AGENDAS/PLANNERS

Students are encouraged to use a **school-provided agenda or planner** as an organizational tool to support academic success.

The agenda serves as a **central place to record assignments, due dates, and important class information** for all academic subjects. Using the planner consistently helps students develop responsibility, time-management skills, and good study habits that will benefit them throughout their education.

AMENDMENTS AND HANDBOOK DISCLAIMER

The policies and procedures outlined in this handbook reflect the best judgment of the school staff at the time of publication. However, circumstances may change during the course of the school year.

The Principal reserves the right to add, modify, or remove policies and procedures as necessary to ensure the safe and effective operation of the school. Any changes to the handbook will be communicated in writing to parents/guardians/families through normal distribution channels.

Situations or concerns not specifically addressed in this handbook will be handled at the discretion of the school administration, always with the safety, well-being, and best interests of students in mind.

ATHLETICS

Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School (SMSS) offers an athletic program for middle school students, including 5th graders with parental and coach approval, through the Peninsula Independent

Athletic Association (PIAL) and through the Fox Hill Athletic Association Athletics are an important component of the total school experience, complementing academics to help students develop character, ethical decision-making, teamwork, and responsibility.

Participation in interscholastic athletics is a privilege that carries responsibilities to the school, the team, teammates, family, and the broader community. Students are assigned to teams according to their biological sex, unless a co-ed team is approved and fielded.

Offered Sports (subject to sufficient student interest and coaching availability:

- Fall: Cross Country (Co-ed), Soccer (Co-ed), Volleyball (girls)
- Winter: Basketball (boys and girls, separate teams)
- Spring: Baseball (boys; girls may participate if no softball team), Softball (girls), Volleyball (girls)

Eligibility Requirements: see Eligibility for extracurricular activities and athletics above.

Participation Expectations:

- Students must be able to fulfill their commitment to the team for the duration of the season.
- Once selected for a SMSS team, priority should be given to that team over community league sports or other extracurricular activities.
- Students are encouraged to participate in one sport per season to balance athletic involvement with academic responsibilities. Some exceptions may be made, such as participating in cross country and another sport, provided the student can maintain academic performance and manage personal commitments.

The SMSS athletic program is designed to provide students with meaningful opportunities to grow physically, socially, and morally, while reinforcing the values and mission of our school community.

Fees

An athletic fee is required for each student participating in a sport. Fees must be paid by the end of the first week of practice in order for the student to receive a team uniform and remain eligible to participate in team practices.

Fees are payable through FACTS. Timely payment ensures the school can provide necessary equipment, uniforms, and resources to support a safe and successful athletic program.

Addressing Athletic Concerns

If a concern arises regarding a student-athlete or the athletic program, the following steps should be followed:

1. **Coach:** The parent and/or student-athlete should first speak directly with the coach. Contact information for coaches can be obtained from the Athletic Director.
2. **Athletic Director:** If the issue is not resolved after speaking with the coach, the concern should be brought to the Athletic Director for review and assistance.
3. **Principal:** If the Athletic Director is unable to resolve the concern, a meeting with the Principal and the Athletic Director may be scheduled to reach a resolution.

This process ensures that concerns are addressed promptly, respectfully, and in a manner that supports the well-being of student-athletes and the integrity of the athletic program.

SMSS BEFORE/BEYOND THE BELL

Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School offers a before- and after-school childcare program called SMSS Before/Beyond the Bell to support families' needs for extended care.

Program Details:

- Available before and after school for enrolled students.
- Offered for an additional fee, billed monthly or on an as-needed (drop-in) basis.
- Students receive some homework assistance and supervised recreational time.
- The program operates under the Commonwealth of Virginia's Religious Exempt Daycare Program criteria, ensuring safety and compliance with state regulations.

This program provides a safe, structured, and supportive environment for students outside of regular school hours, helping families balance academic, extracurricular, and work commitments.

General Information

Students participating in the Before/Beyond the Bell program are expected to follow the same rules as in the classroom, demonstrating consideration and respect for all staff and fellow students.

Behavior Expectations:

- Students should be respectful, cooperative, and considerate at all times.
- Repeated behavior problems will be communicated to parents/guardians, and infractions may be issued if warranted.
- The school discipline policy, as outlined in this Student-Parent Handbook, applies to all participants in the program.

Program Guidelines:

- After completing assignments, students should have a book or quiet activity to engage in .
- Maintaining a respectful environment for all participants is expected.
- On noon dismissal days, students must bring a lunch and drink.
- Parents must supply snacks and beverages

These expectations ensure a safe, supportive, and productive environment for all students in the before- and after-school program.

Before the Bell Care

The **Before/Beyond the Bell (BTB)** program is available beginning at **7:00 AM** in the lower building for students who arrive at school early.

- **Students should not be dropped off before 7:00 AM.**
- Students arriving between **7:00 and 7:45 AM** will be supervised in BTB.

- At **7:45 AM**, students will be allowed to proceed to the gym for morning activities.

These hours ensure that students are **safely supervised** prior to the start of the school day.

PLAN*	HOURS	RATE
Monthly	7:00-7:45	\$120*
Weekly	7:00-7:45	\$30*
Drop-In	7:00-7:45	\$10*

* Family Rate

The Beyond the Bell (BTB) program provides supervised care for students in grades PK4–8 after the regular school day. Program hours are 3:30PM to 5:30 PM.

Automatic Enrollment:

- Any student not picked up by 3:25 PM nor in an afterschool club, activity, or athletics, will automatically be signed into the BTB program for that day.

Rates & Enrollment:

Parents may choose to sign up for BTB monthly or weekly to receive discounted rates. Otherwise, the drop-in rate will apply.

Signing up in advance ensures discounted rates and helps the school plan for adequate staffing and supervision.

PLAN	HOURS	RATE
Monthly	3:30-4:30	\$200*
Monthly	3:30-5:30	\$300*
Weekly	3:30-5:30	\$80*
Drop-In	3:30-5:30	\$20*

* Per- student rate

Billing Policy:

Students signed into Beyond the Bell (BTB) at any time between 3:30–5:30 PM will be charged the corresponding daily, weekly, or monthly rate.

Late Pick-Up Fee:

Parents will be charged a late fee of \$2.00 per minute for every minute after 5:30 PM that a student remains in the program.

Junior Kindergarten (PK): PK students are offered after care by 3:00 PM, which aligns with their

regular full-day dismissal.

Kindergarten – Grade 8: After care for K–8 students is available from 3:30–5:30 PM. Regular dismissal for K–8 begins at 3:10 PM and concludes at 3:25 PM. Any student not picked up by 3:25 PM will automatically be signed into Beyond the Bell.

Sign-Out Procedures

For the safety of each student and in compliance with legal guidelines, a parent or designated adult must sign out students from Beyond the Bell (BTB) and record the time of pick-up for billing purposes.

Students who participate in after-school activities will be signed into BTB once their activity concludes and they are dismissed to the program.

BULLYING

Saint Mary Star of the Sea School is committed to the safety and well-being of all students. Bullying behavior is taken very seriously, as it undermines the dignity of the individual and the unity of our school community.

Definition of Bullying

“Bullying” is defined as any aggressive and unwanted behavior that:

- Is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim;
- Involves a real or perceived imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim; and
- Is repeated over time **or** causes severe emotional trauma.

Bullying includes cyberbullying but does not include ordinary teasing, horseplay, arguments, peer conflict, or typical social “drama.”

Reporting Bullying

- Students may report bullying incidents to any staff member.
- Students may also report anonymously through the Stop-It program.
- Verbal or written threats — whether made seriously, in jest, or online — against the physical or emotional well-being of another student will be treated as bullying.

Response and Consequences

- All reports of bullying will be investigated promptly and thoroughly by the administration.
- If a student is found in violation of the bullying policy:
 1. **First Offense:** Parents will receive written documentation of the incident from the Principal.
 2. **Second Offense:** The student may be expelled from Saint Mary Star of the Sea School.

CAFETERIA AND LUNCH

For the 2026–2027 school year, the school cafeteria kitchen will not be available for lunch preparation. As a result, all students must bring lunch from home each day.

Cafeteria Expectations

- Students are expected to clean up after themselves and may be asked to assist with disposing

of trash and leftover food or drinks in the appropriate receptacles.

- Students should bring their own lunch accessories, including napkins, spoons, forks, and straws.
- Glass containers are not permitted in lunches.
- Students may not consume energy drinks, soda, or carbonated beverages.
- Proper dining etiquette is expected at all times.
- Students must follow the directions of adults monitoring the cafeteria to ensure a safe and orderly environment.

CALENDAR

A “Year at a Glance” is distributed to families via email. In conjunction with the Office of Catholic Schools, SMSS reserves the right to modify the academic calendar as warranted. Any changes to the school calendar will be communicated to parents/guardians in a timely manner.

CAR LINE PROCEDURES (DROPOFF AND PICKUP) & PARKING

PARKING

If you need to park and leave your car, please observe the posted limited-time parking signs on Willard Avenue (school side up to and including the lower building). Families may also use the parking spaces in front of the main office or in the parking lot off Water Street. When using the Water Street lot, park along the perimeter and avoid blocking lanes needed for drop-off and pick-up. Parking is not permitted on the residential side of Willard Avenue, opposite the upper school building and cafeteria.

CAR LINE PROCEDURES

Saint Mary Star of the Sea School (SMSS) is located on a campus with limited parking and public access roadways, which requires adult supervision for students to safely navigate these areas. Cooperation and patience from all drivers and pedestrians are essential to ensure the safety of students, families, and staff. Please follow all directions given by school personnel at drop-off and dismissal locations.

General Traffic Guidelines

- Parents/guardians are responsible for transporting their children safely and must observe posted speed limits, parking regulations, and school safety rules.
- The speed limit on campus, including access roadways and parking areas, is 5 mph during drop-off and pick-up.
- Drivers must refrain from using cell phones while driving on campus. Students, parents, and staff frequently walk in parking areas, and drivers must maintain full attention for safety.

Morning Arrival

- The parking spaces in front of the school) will be closed for general short-term parking from 7:45–8:00 AM to protect student and parent pedestrians.
- Students may not be dropped off before 7:45 AM unless enrolled in Before the Bell (BTB). Please see the BTB guidelines for specific drop-off locations.
- Vehicles should pull forward as far as possible in the designated line to allow multiple students

to unload safely. Children should only exit the car when fully stopped in the line. Do not pull out of line until directed to do so by the designated carline monitor.

Afternoon Dismissal

- Vehicles should pull up to the assigned pick-up location and the driver must remain in the car at all times.
- Families are assigned a carpool number which must be visible through the front or driver's window. An ID check and approved pick-up check will be conducted if the vehicle does not have the carpool number/tag distributed for 2026-2027 school year. The number will be communicated to teachers and students via walkie-talkie. Students will remain in their classrooms or designated hallways until their number is called.
- For safety, students must remain with their teachers until their numbers are called, and drivers should avoid using cell phones during dismissal. Do not instruct your child to leave the classroom before their number is called.
- After students are in their car, drivers must wait for the designated carline monitor to direct cars to exit.

Alternate Pick-Up

- If a student will leave with an adult other than a parent/guardian or a person the parent/guardian has placed on the approved emergency pick up list for their child in FACTS, the school must receive written permission from the parent/guardian the morning of the intended dismissal. The approved person must have the carpool number for that child in the car they are driving for pick up.

CARE OF SCHOOL PROPERTY

Students are expected to treat all school materials, textbooks, and property with care, remembering that they are gifts entrusted to us by Jesus.

1. **Textbooks and Workbooks:** Cover all hardcover books; writing in textbooks is prohibited. Damage or loss will result in a replacement fine.
2. **Lost Items:** Students are responsible for lost books or materials and must pay for replacements.
3. **Property Damage:** Writing on walls or damaging property requires cleanup and restitution.
4. **Technology Use:** Computers and equipment are for educational use only. Tampering with others' work or damaging technology may result in fines, detention, or suspension of privileges.

Note: Final report cards will not be released until all lost or damaged items are returned or paid for.

CELL PHONE AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES

- Students may not use electronic devices (cell phones, smart watches, toys, video games, headphones, etc.) during the school day (7:45 AM–3:15 PM).
- Devices must be turned off and stored in the student's backpack.
- First offense: Device taken to the office and returned at the end of the day.
- Second offense: Parent/guardian must pick up the device.
- Subsequent offense: Students may receive a day of suspension.

- Students may not use devices to take pictures, record, or post on social media.
- SMSS is not responsible for loss, theft, or damage of electronic devices.
- Students who need a device for safety reasons (e.g., walking to/from school or after-school pick-up) may bring a cell phone, but it must remain off during school hours.
- Students who need a device for health reasons (monitoring blood sugar levels) may keep a cell phone on their person; however, they may not use the cell phone for any other reason.

CODE OF CONDUCT AND HONOR CODE

Saint Mary Star of the Sea School strives to achieve an atmosphere conducive to learning and growth. The policies of the school are based on the gospel principle of respecting each individual as made in the image and likeness of God. In order to achieve that atmosphere the “Student Code of Conduct” is our guide.

Each child at Saint Mary is a Saint Mary student at all times. A student who engages in conduct, whether inside or outside the school, that is detrimental to the reputation of the school, may be disciplined by school officials.

- All students are expected to greet others, especially adults, when they pass them in the hallways or meet them around the school.
- All students are expected to answer adults respectfully with “Yes” or “No” when appropriate.
- All students are expected to stand and greet visitors when they enter their classroom.
- All students are expected to offer to help other students, teachers, staff, and parents.
- All students are expected to abide by the dress code. Neatness and cleanliness should be a priority.
- All students are expected to treat others with respect, dignity, and honesty manifesting this attitude in their speech and actions.
- All students are expected to pursue truth and knowledge to the best of their ability, accepting responsibility for their learning and seeking help from teachers when needed.

Students and parents are required to abide by and uphold the spirit and the letter of the law in regard to conduct and discipline at the school.

HONOR CODE

Students at SMSS are called to live the values and virtues upon which our school was founded. Each student pledges to act with honesty in all work, words, and actions, and to support the integrity of our school community. Students also accept the responsibility to report violations of the Honor Code to a faculty member, recognizing that by doing so, they strengthen the unity of the SMSS student body.

Student Pledge:

"I pledge to be honorable in all of my work. I understand that cheating harms everyone involved. Cheating includes giving or receiving answers on quizzes, tests, homework, or other assignments. I will also refrain from willfully taking the property of others, as stealing is a direct violation of our values at SMSS."

To affirm this pledge, students should place a **cross (⊕)** next to their name on all assignments, quizzes, and tests as acknowledgment of the Honor Code.

COMMUNICATION

- Email may be used for school-related communication only, including general information such as newsletters, class activities, and reminders.
- For confidential or sensitive student matters (such as grades, behavior, or personal concerns), parents/guardians are encouraged to schedule a phone call or an in-person conference, as email is not always a secure form of communication.
- Communication with school employees should occur through their official school email account or through the main school office.
- To maintain professional boundaries, the use of personal contact information or cellular phone numbers is discouraged.
- Emails should remain respectful and constructive. If a question or concern arises, parents/guardians are encouraged to email the teacher to request a time to talk or meet, rather than addressing the matter in writing.

Teacher Response Time

By working together with courtesy and professionalism, we ensure that communication between parents and school personnel remains effective, respectful, and always focused on the best interests of the students.

- Teachers' first responsibility during the school day is teaching and supervising students. They may not be able to respond immediately to phone calls or emails.
- A response should be expected within 48 business hours.
- Teachers may also choose to use a daily folder or other means of communication when appropriate.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Faculty, staff, and volunteers at SMSS must maintain confidentiality regarding information learned through their responsibilities. Any information indicating risk to life, health, or safety must be reported immediately to the Principal or designee. All personnel are required to sign a Confidentiality Statement provided by the school administration.

CRISIS PLAN AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

SMSS maintains a crisis plan to ensure the safety of all students and staff. The school is equipped with security cameras, safety devices, and emergency notification systems, and staff receive periodic training. Local emergency responders may participate in drills during the year.

In an actual emergency, students will not be released until:

- Regular dismissal,
- Early dismissal authorized by the Principal, or
- Signed out by a parent/guardian at the assembly area.

Visitors during drills must follow staff directions and may be asked to wait until the drill concludes. Parents/guardians will be notified as soon as it is safe to do so in the event of an emergency.

Emergency Drills and Safety

SMSS conducts regular safety/emergency drills—including, but not limited to: fire, lockdown,

earthquake, tornado, and evacuation. Students follow teacher directions, exit quietly and orderly when appropriate, and assemble at designated safe areas. Drills ensure preparedness and a safe learning environment for all.

Security cameras, safety devices, and emergency notifications support campus safety. Local responders may assist during drills.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

SMSS follows the Diocese of Richmond Consensus Curriculum (available online). All students take core subjects: Theology, Reading/Literature and Vocabulary, English Writing and Composition, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Co-curricular classes may include Technology/Library, Art, Music, PE/Health, and World/Foreign Language.

Exceptional Children

SMSS may provide curriculum modifications and adapted grading for students with mild special needs to fairly assess their progress while maintaining high expectations. Eligibility is determined annually. Parents, teachers, the principal, and the student (when applicable) will sign a written agreement outlining the modifications and accommodations.

SMSS has limited resources and cannot accommodate exceptional learning differences. If a student's needs exceed reasonable accommodations, separation from the school may be necessary, with tuition prorated.

Student Accommodations

Students may be eligible for accommodations to ensure fair access to the curriculum at their grade level. These do not compromise academic standards and can include adjustments in setting, presentation, response, timing, instruction, behavior, or testing.

Accommodations may be:

- Provided by teachers or learning specialists in small group or individual settings.
- Aligned with classroom content and instruction.
- Formalized through Student Accommodation Plans (SAPs).

DISCIPLINE POLICY

"God created man a rational being, conferring on him the dignity of a person who can initiate and control his own actions" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1730). Once children reach the age of reason, they are capable of understanding right from wrong and accepting responsibility for their choices. In keeping with this God-given dignity, students are encouraged to recognize that their actions have consequences and to learn from them as part of their moral and personal growth.

In grades Pre-K through 2, teachers implement classroom discipline plans that reflect age-appropriate expectations for behavior and corresponding consequences. These plans are developed by individual teachers and shared with students and parents at the beginning of the school year.

In grades 3 through 8, the discipline plan is structured according to a system of demerits assigned point values that correspond to specific behaviors and their resulting consequences.

Possible points for specific behaviors are listed below. These point values provide clear expectations and help students understand the impact of their choices. The goal of this system is not simply to assign consequences, but to guide students toward responsible decision-making, self-discipline, and reconciliation when behavior falls short of our school's Catholic values.

BEHAVIOR	DEMERIT(S)
Disruption of class	1
Talking out of turn or during instruction	1
Failure to follow classroom directions	1
Lack of preparedness for class	1
Tardy to class	1
Minor disrespect or unkindness toward peers	1
Horseplay or rough housing	1
Other infractions of a minor nature	1
Disruptive behavior after redirection	2
Disrespect toward staff, faculty, or other adults	2
Use of profanity	2
Unsafe behavior at a moderate level	2
Direct disobedience of staff, faculty, or other adults	2
Inappropriate use of technology (playing games)	2
Other infractions of a moderate nature	2
Harassment (verbal, physical, or digital)*	3
Dishonest (blatant lying)	3
Cheating *	3
Forgery*	3
Plagiarism*	3
Defiance or oppositional behavior	3
Property damage or theft*	3
Threatening, aggressive, or unsafe conduct	3
Bringing inappropriate or illegal material to school	3
Leaving area without permission	3
Inappropriate or unkind digital communication	3
Other infractions of a major nature	3

* See definitions below

Demerit System

If deemed necessary, faculty or staff members may issue demerits to students. A demerit serves as a formal means of communication with parents regarding student behavior. When a demerit is issued, usually through, it is emailed to parents and recorded by faculty for monitoring purposes.

When a student accumulates three (3) demerits, corrective action will be taken. The consequence for receiving three demerits is detention. Detention is served during lunch and recess. During this time, students will not eat lunch with their peers or participate in recess activities. The purpose of detention is to provide an opportunity for reflection and to encourage students to make more positive choices in the future.

Dress code violations are handled separately from the Discipline Policy. Please review the Dress Code Policy.

Continuum of Disciplinary Action

Disciplinary action is intended to guide students toward responsibility, self-discipline, and reconciliation. Repeated infractions may result in progressive consequences as outlined below:

- Three (3) demerits – may result in a lunch and recess detention
- Three (3) detentions – may result in an In-School Suspension (ISS)
- Three (3) In-School Suspensions (ISS) – may result in an Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)
- Three (3) Out-of-School Suspensions (OSS) – may result in disenrollment from the school

Each step in the continuum provides an opportunity for reflection, correction, and growth. The administration reserves the right to determine appropriate consequences based on the severity and frequency of behaviors.

All during the discipline process, teachers, parents, and students work together to form students who are growing in virtue, love of God and neighbor. Open and honest communication is necessary.

Immediate Administrative Referral for Severe Behaviors:

- Fighting or hitting
- Extreme disrespect or inappropriate/vulgar language
- Bullying or harassment
- Weapons or threats
- Drug/alcohol possession
- Theft, vandalism, or property destruction
- Technology violations
- Gang-related activity

Definitions

Cheating includes giving or receiving unauthorized assistance on homework, classwork, quizzes, or tests. Homework or classwork must be redone. Cheating on a test may result in a grade of zero.

- Cheating, copying, plagiarism, or giving work to be copied is a serious offense. Students must complete their own work unless explicitly instructed to work cooperatively.
- Unauthorized use of AI-generated assignments or exams is considered cheating.
- Parents/guardians will be notified of any cheating by their student.
- Student-athletes or students in extracurricular activities who cheat may be suspended from participation in those activities.
- Any work not completed by the student personally will not be accepted.

Forgery is the act of falsifying a parent's or guardian's signature, a teacher's initials, or any official document. Parent notification and disciplinary action, which may include a demerit or detention, depending on the severity.

Plagiarism is the act of using another person's words, ideas, or work without giving proper credit, or failing to summarize information in one's own words. The assignment must be redone in the student's own words and may receive up to a 40% point reduction.

Harassment is unwelcome behavior that is based on a person's race, color, sex, national origin, religion, disability, or other personal characteristic, and that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Harassment may be verbal, physical, visual, or written, and can occur in person or online.

Property damage or *theft* occurs when a student intentionally or recklessly damages, destroys, or takes property that belongs to the school, another student, faculty member, or any member of the school community. This includes physical items, school materials, technology, or personal belongings. The student will be required to repair, replace, or make restitution for the damaged or stolen property.

Search and Seizure

To maintain a safe and orderly learning environment, Saint Mary Star of the Sea School reserves the right to conduct searches when there is reasonable suspicion that a student may be concealing items in violation of school rules or possessing contraband materials.

If such reasonable suspicion exists, the administration or a designated school official may search student property, including, but not limited to, desks, cubbies, lockers, closets, backpacks, purses, cell phones, electronic devices, or other containers.

Searches will be conducted discreetly, respectfully, and in a manner that upholds the dignity of the student. Whenever possible, another staff member will be present during the search.

Any items found that violate school policy will be confiscated and may result in disciplinary action as outlined in the school's policies.

Prohibited Items: E-cigarettes, vaping products, weapons, Sharpies®, White-out®, inappropriate books or pictures, and any item that disrupts learning.

General Administrative Policy for Discipline

Because it is impossible to foresee all problems which arise, this clause empowers the faculty and administration to take disciplinary action for any behavior which violates the spirit and philosophy of Saint Mary Star of the Sea School, even though not specified in this handbook.

The principal is the final recourse in all disciplinary situations.

The school reserves the right to require the withdrawal of any student who violates the discipline code or the regulations of the school or who fails to maintain the academic standards of the school, or for the good of the school.

Parent Cooperation

The Catholic Church and this Catholic school recognize parents as the primary educators of their children. The education of students at our school is a partnership between parents and the school. If, in the opinion of the administration, the partnership is irretrievably broken, the school reserves the right to require the parent to withdraw his or her child. This serious decision is determined with the best interest of the student and the school in mind.

Merit and Redemption Policy

Saint Mary Star of the Sea School recognizes that students are capable of growth, self-reflection, and making positive choices. In alignment with our Demerit System, a Merit Point System allows students to earn points for positive behaviors that counterbalance demerits and encourage personal responsibility.

Earning Merit Points

Students may earn merit points through consistent outstanding daily behavior, special projects, or acts of service, as determined by the teacher or administration. Merit points may be awarded for behaviors such as:

- Demonstrating exemplary classroom behavior
- Demonstrating respect and kindness toward peers and staff
- Assisting others or contributing to the school community in a positive manner
- Acts of honesty, integrity, or leadership
- Showing consistent improvement after receiving corrective feedback

Redemption: Three (3) merits may be used to reduce one demerit.

DRESS CODE

- Students must wear the complete school uniform at all times on school property and at designated events.
- Uniforms should reflect cleanliness, modesty, and pride; all required logos must be visible.
- Dress Uniform:** All-School Mass days and any other announced day for a special event.
- P.E. Days:** 5-8 grade students may wear P.E. uniforms all day; lower grades may wear sneakers/gym shoes on P.E. days unless PE falls on a Mass day. In that circumstance, PE uniform and shoes are brought to school and changed into after Mass and before or at PE time.
- Exceptions:** Only allowed with prior administrative approval or for special dress-down days.
- Seasonal appropriateness:** Students should wear uniforms suitable for the season.
- Staff and administration will determine the appropriateness, cleanliness, and neatness of attire and accessories.
- The new SMSS uniform is required this school year, 2026-2027.
- Uniform Infraction: Parents will be notified via email if their child has a uniform infraction. Accumulating three uniform infractions may result in the loss of privileges such as wearing Spirit Wear on Fridays or participating in Dress Down days.

UNIFORM

Access the uniform with required clothing for each grade level in the Resource tab in the Family Portal.

Spirit Wear

Spirit wear may be worn Fridays only. At times students may be required to wear dress uniform (Mass day uniform)

Ordering New Uniforms

- View and order uniforms by grade, gender, and program (daily or PE) at:
www.globalschoolwear.com school code: SAIN10
- Sign up for Tommy Hilfiger email updates for sale dates throughout the year.

PE Uniforms

All students in grades 5–8 are required to wear PE uniforms from Tommy Hilfiger on PE days; both old and new PE uniforms are acceptable during this year.

General Guidelines

- Uniform dress code applies year-round.
- Shirts must be neatly tucked in for both regular and dress uniforms.
- Skinny-cut pants, jeggings, leggings, yoga-style pants are not allowed.
- Athletic shoes/sneakers are required for PE days; shoes must be closed-toe with no wheels or lights.
- Dark Blue Oxford Sneaker with White Sole and Dark Blue Laces
- Shorts/skort, skirt, and jumper length: no more than 2" above the knee.
- Rolled-up sleeves of white oxford shirts are not permitted.
- Uniform socks are required.
- Parents will be notified if a student is out of uniform; a change of clothing must be brought.
- All clothing must be clean, neat, unwrinkled, hemmed, and in good condition.

Girls' Personal Appearance

- Faded or worn uniforms must be replaced.
- Wearing the plaid jumper/skirt requires full-dress uniform compliance.
- Shorts must be worn under jumpers and skirts, but not to be seen below the skirt length.
- No makeup, tattoos, or nail enhancements (gel/acrylic). Clear/neutral nail polish only.
- Conservative hairstyle; natural hair color only; hair must be neat, clean, and clear of face/eyes.
- Hair scarves not allowed; simple hair accessories allowed in school colors only.
- Jewelry: modest post earrings (1 per ear), 1 ring, 1 bracelet, religious medals/crucifixes; dangling earrings and jewelry on PE days prohibited.

Boys' Personal Appearance

- Faded or worn uniforms must be replaced.
- Hair must be neat, trimmed above the collar, eyebrows, and around ears; natural color only; no tails, mohawks, buns, or eccentric styles.
- Clean-shaven as needed.
- Jewelry: earrings, tattoos, and bracelets forbidden; religious medals/crucifixes allowed. No jewelry on PE days.
- Hair scarves/do-rags are not allowed.

OUT OF UNIFORM GUIDELINES

Students May Wear:

- Jeans, slacks, shorts (during the time when uniform shorts are allowed), skirts, or skorts (no shorter than 2" above the knee)
- Dresses (no shorter than 2" above the knee)
- Sweatshirts, jogging suits
- Tennis shoes and short socks
- Nail polish and modest jewelry

Students May Not Wear:

- Flip-flops or open-back shoes
- Tank tops, low-cut tops, or T-shirts with inappropriate writing
- Tennis shoes with wheels/roller skates
- Biker shorts, pajama/flannel pants or shirts, yoga pants, or leggings worn as pants
- Make-up
- Very tight clothing or hats

FIELD TRIPS

- Field trips support curricular goals and are re-evaluated annually.
- Field trips are a privilege, not a right; participation may be denied for poor conduct or academic performance.
- Written parent/guardian permission is required; verbal permission, phone calls, or faxes are not accepted.
- Students not attending a field trip remain at home and are marked absent.
- Students must ride the bus with their class to and from the trip.
- All field trip fees are paid through FACTS and are non-refundable.
*No fees should be sent to the school with the student.
- Cell phones are not allowed unless directed by administration.
- Parents not listed as official chaperones may not drive or attend the trip.
- Chaperones may not bring siblings and must be 25+ years old.
- Chaperones must complete required VIRTUS training.
- Transportation and supervision arrangements are pre-determined; early arrival or separate dismissal is not allowed.
- Teachers and administration may limit student participation based on behavior, effort, or trip logistics.

GRADES AND PROGRESS MONITORING

Grading Access

- K–2: Check weekly folders for graded assignments and assessments with success criteria.
- Grades 3–8: Grades available anytime via FACTS/SIS.
- Quarter and interim dates are posted on the school calendar.
- Parents are encouraged to monitor academic progress regularly through FACTS/SIS.

Report Cards

Report cards will be distributed electronically at the end of each quarter. Final report cards are not distributed to students with any outstanding balance on tuition/school accounts.

Diocesan Grading Scale

Grades 1-2

1, 2, or 3

3 = Meeting grade level standard; applies skills consistently and independently

2 = Developing grade level standards; applies skills inconsistently with or without support

1 = Below grade level standard; unable to apply skills with support

^ = Skill requires improvement

Grades 3-8

A+ = 97-100	A = 93-96	A- = 90-92
B+ = 87-89	B = 83-86	B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79	C = 73-76	C- = 70-72
D+ = 67-69	D = 63-66	D- = 60-62
F = 59 & below	I = Incomplete	^ = Skill requires improvement

Grades 6–8 Reporting

- Report cards include quarterly and semester grades, with a final grade at year-end
- High school credit courses include midterm and final exams
- Self-discipline and work habits are monitored and supported, though conduct is not formally graded.

In core courses, a minimum of three grades per category are necessary to constitute an appropriate measure of progress and yield a quarterly mark. A sufficient number of grades, varying and in accord with the subject and grade level, shall constitute an appropriate quarterly mark in resource courses.

Missing Assignments / Make-Up Work

- All students are expected to complete assignments on time.
- Work may be made up for absences.
- Absences over 3 consecutive days: work sent home upon parent request (24-hour notice).
- Absences 1–3 days: work due within 5 school days after return.
- Absent on test/project day but present the day before: due upon return.
- Late work: 10% deduction per day.
- Teachers mark missing work as M in FACTS computes as zero until completed.

Assigning A Grade of Zero

Realizing the importance of students completing all assignments, a grade of zero should only be assigned in the following situations:

- If it is documented that a student has cheated on an assignment, a grade of zero should be given.
- In the case of an intentional absence (e.g., skipping class or school) students shall not be permitted to do make-up work for credit and should receive a zero for any work assigned on the day/class period of the absence.
- If after a reasonable amount of time (no more than ten school days unless an extenuating circumstance exists), a student fails to attempt an assignment, a grade of zero may be given.
- Consideration of assigning a minimum grade of 50 for extenuating circumstances may be warranted. The teacher will consult with the principal as necessary.

Academic Grades

- Based solely on individual achievement and timely completion of work
- Not reduced as punishment for poor conduct or attendance
- Will not be inflated; grades accurately reflect student performance

HARRASSMENT

- Conduct by students, parents/guardians, or others acting on their behalf that conflicts with the

school's educational and religious mission may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal and/or referral to legal authorities.

- The school strives to maintain an environment free of threats, intimidation, hostility, harassment, or other inappropriate behavior.
- Harassment of any kind, including sexual harassment, is strictly prohibited and must be reported immediately to administration. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual attention, advances, requests for favors, or any verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
- Bullying, harassment, violence, or cyberbullying will not be tolerated. All members of the school community are expected to report and help prevent such behavior.
- Threats of violence or harassment, in any form, may result in suspension, dismissal, and/or required psychological or psychiatric clearance before return.
- Disciplinary decisions rest with school administration. The principal or designee serves as the final recourse and may waive regulations for just cause.

HAZING

Hazing of any type will not be tolerated. Actions of hazing may result in suspension and/or expulsion.

Health Information

If your child is ill, please keep them home. If contacted to pick up a sick child, parents are expected to do so within one hour. The school nurse/administration reserves the right to dismiss any student deemed too ill to remain at school.

State Requirements

- Students must meet Virginia health laws for immunizations and physicals.
- Physical exam required within 12 months before first school entry (VA School Entrance Health Form).
- Immunization documentation required for: DTaP/Tdap, Meningococcal, Hepatitis A (K), Polio, MMR, HPV (opt-out allowed), Hepatitis B, Varicella.
- Conditional admission is possible if at least one dose given with proof of schedule.
- Exemptions allowed with:
 - Religious exemption form (with parish priest discussion for Catholic families).
 - Physician/nurse statement of contraindication.

Medication at School

- Prescription/OTC meds require *Request for Administration of Medication* form (FACTS).
- Daily meds must be checked in, counted, and logged with nurse (7:30–8:00am or 3:00–3:15pm).
- Parents or guardians must provide and transport all medication to and from the school. If tablets are to be divided, the parent or guardian is responsible for dividing the tablets.
- Students are prohibited from carrying all medication (including cough drops) on the school premises or while attending school-related events unless given permission by the principal or registered nurse.
- Medications must be in original containers, labeled clearly.
- Students will be allowed to use unscented sun screen lotion as needed for outdoor activities.

Screenings & Illness

- Annual vision/hearing screenings: grades 3, 7, 10 + new enrollees.
- Speech/motor screenings: new students in K–3.
- Students with fever (100°+), vomiting, or diarrhea must stay home 24 hours symptom-free (without medication).
- Students must report illness to the clinic; parents contacted if pick-up needed.
- Emergency transport by ambulance if necessary.

Concussion Protocol

- Notify the nurse immediately with MD concussion form (discharge papers not sufficient).
- The nurse distributes accommodations to staff.
- Parents provide updated MD forms after each follow-up.
- Medical clearance required to return.

Emergency Information

- Complete/update via FACTS Family Portal.
- Must list two local emergency contacts (in addition to parents).

Allergy & Asthma Policy

- Parents must submit a current *Emergency Action Plan*.
- Staff trained annually on allergy response.
- Inhalers/EpiPens must be labeled and unexpired; spares required at school.
- Food allergy management: parent-provided safe snacks, hand washing, clean tables.
- Field trips: school makes reasonable accommodations; parents may opt to keep the student home or attend as chaperone if needed.

HOMEWORK

Homework is an important part of the learning process. It reinforces daily lessons, builds study habits, and helps students develop personal responsibility. In the primary grades, parents should provide guidance and support; as students progress, they are expected to assume full responsibility for both written and study assignments.

- Incomplete homework may affect mastery of content and achievement.
- Homework is not intended to burden families; times may vary by student needs and study habits.
- General time guidelines (written + study work):
 - Kindergarten: ~15 minutes
 - Grades 1–2: ~20–30 minutes
 - Grades 3–4: ~30–45 minutes
 - Grades 5–6: ~45–60 minutes
 - Grades 7–8: ~60–90 minutes
- Projects, reading, and enrichment assignments may be assigned over weekends.
- Missed assignments due to absence:

- 1–2 days: work provided upon return.
- 3+ days: work available to parents upon request.
- Assignments are posted in FACTS/SIS; classroom directions are the official source.
- Homework is typically assigned Monday–Thursday.
- Students are expected to record assignments in their agenda/planner daily.
- Homework should be completed independently; if a child struggles or requires excessive help, parents should contact the teacher.

HONOR ROLL AND STUDENT RECOGNITION

There are three categories that make up the honor roll and student recognition at SMSS:

First Honors (Principal's List),
Second Honors (Honor Roll), and,
Sentinel to Watch Award for Effort & Citizenship.

Students in grades K-8 are eligible for recognition of their achievements in academic and/or citizenship/effort through the following criteria at each recognition level:

- **First Honors-Principal's List** – This academic award is for students in Grades 5-8. Students must earn a 93 or above average in all subjects and demonstrate commendable effort and citizenship; grade 5 students must earn a 3 in work habits and self-discipline and must have 2 or 3 in Specials courses.
- **Second Honors-Honor Roll** – This academic merit award is for students in Grades 5-8. Students must earn an 83 or above in all subjects; grade 5 students must earn a 2 or 3 in work habits and self-discipline and must have a 2 or 3 in Specials courses.
- **Sentinel to Watch Award** – This award is given to no more than two students in each grade in Grades K-8 per quarter who demonstrate the virtues of Gospel living through kindness, courtesy, respect, cooperation, truthfulness, and obedience. This award is recommended by the homeroom teacher to students who show tremendous effort in academics, behavior, etc., but who do not qualify for First or Second Honors due to grades. Students must have no negative comments on their report card or major disciplinary issues.

ILLNESS AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Students should not attend school when sick. The school may send home any student showing signs of a communicable disease, fever, or vomiting.

- Students returning after illness must provide a written note from a physician or proof they are no longer contagious.
- A parent/guardian note is required for all students returning to school after being absent due to illness.
- Students must be fever-free (below 100°F) and symptom-free from vomiting or diarrhea for at least 24 hours without medication before returning.

INCIDENTAL EXPENSES & FACTS PROCESSING *NEW*

All incidental expenses—including but not limited to field trip fees, athletic and club participation fees, extracurricular activity charges, Before/Beyond the Bell extended care fees, replacement item costs, and graduation fees—will be processed directly through the FACTS Management System. All fees will be added to the Family Profile by the Business Office and are due within 10 days.

No cash or checks should be sent to the school with students. All payments must be made online via FACTS unless explicitly authorized in advance by the school administration. Parents and guardians are required to maintain an active FACTS account with up-to-date billing credentials.

INCLEMENT WEATHER - SCHOOL CLOSING

Notifications of school closures, delayed openings, or early dismissals will be sent via email, FACTS/SIS, and/or text messages, and posted on SMSS social media and WAVY-10.

- SMSS may consider local public school announcements but makes independent decisions regarding closures based on road conditions and safety.
- School closures include cancellation of all after-school and evening activities, including sports, clubs, and meetings.
- **Delayed Opening:** Students should arrive only at the announced time; there is no Before the Bell care, and half-day Junior Kindergarten does not attend if a two-hour delay is in effect.
- **Early Dismissal:** Parents will be notified of dismissal times. Beyond the Bell and other after-school activities may be suspended as necessary.

Please note that there is a school in Virginia Beach, named “Star of the Sea School”. Our school is listed as **Saint Mary Star of the Sea School**. Please be sure your family’s emergency contact information is updated with the school office.

INSURANCE

Students enrolled in Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School are afforded *Special School Time Accident Policy* under the Diocese of Richmond Student Accident Insurance. School accident insurance information will be made available to all families at the beginning of the school year. This is typically completed through an online distribution/link to the insurance information website. Parents/guardians are asked to complete the process form and return it to school even if school insurance is not needed. If a student is injured, it should be reported to the main office as soon as possible so that the insurance process may begin.

LEGAL/CUSTODIAL ISSUES

St. Mary Star of the Sea School adheres to the Buckley Amendment (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act) in regard to privacy of student records and the rights of non-custodial parents. It is the responsibility of the parents to share any official custodial information decided through the courts. Official custodial agreements will be kept in a confidential file. In the absence of any court document, the school will view each parent as having full legal custody of his/her child. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, non-custodial parents have the right to receive records about their child’s

academic progress or lack thereof. The school reserves the right to charge a shipping and processing fee for extra records sent to more than one home address. Be advised that if a teacher, staff member, or administrator is subpoenaed to testify in a child custody case, the parent may need to pay the cost of a substitute teacher and any other costs associated with the testimony (mileage, parking, food, etc.).

- Parents must inform the school of legal custody arrangements and provide copies of custody decrees, court orders, or restraining orders as needed. These documents are kept confidential in the student's file.
- Legal custodial parents/guardians may attend school meetings, participate in educational decisions, and access student records.
- Non-custodial parents without legal custody do not have educational rights unless granted permission by the custodial parent. The school may require a signed agreement regarding non-custodial participation.
- In the absence of court documents, both parents are considered to have full legal custody. Non-custodial parents may receive academic records, with the school reserving the right to charge for extra copies sent to multiple addresses.
- The school encourages both parents' involvement for the benefit of the child.

LOGO

The Saint Mary Star of the Sea School (SMSS) logo may not be used on any items (t-shirts, letterhead, etc.) without the express written permission of the principal.

LOST AND FOUND

All items left in the school building or on school grounds should be turned into the Lost and Found at the main office or the Lost and Left basket.

- Lost and Found items are retained for a designated period and then donated to charity if unclaimed. Items in the Lost and Left remain for 10 days before donation.
- Parents are encouraged to check for their child's lost items. All personal belongings should be clearly labeled with the student's first and last name. Students may claim items during lunch or recess periods. Unclaimed items at the end of the month may be moved to the Used Uniform Closet or sent to the Thrift Shop.
- Students who lose a library book, textbook, or workbook must pay the replacement cost plus shipping to receive a new copy.

MANDATED REPORTERS/CHILD ABUSE

Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School (SMSS) complies with the Child Abuse Prevention, Adoption, and Family Services Act and the child abuse laws of the State of Virginia. All cases of suspected abuse or neglect must be reported to Child Protective Services. All SMSS administration, faculty, and staff are mandated reporters and are required to follow these laws.

NWEA MAP GROWTH TESTING

Per Diocesan Guidelines, NWEA Map Growth testing will be administered three times during the school year, and results will be shared with parents at the end of the school year.

NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE DIOCESE OF RICHMOND

"Catholic schools administered under the authority of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond comply with those constitutional and statutory provisions, as may be specifically applicable to the schools, which prohibit discrimination based upon race, color, sex, age, marital status, handicap or disability, national origin, or citizenship in the administration of their educational, personnel, admissions, financial aid, athletic and other school administered programs.

The Diocese reserves the right, however, to determine whether and under what circumstances priority should be given to Catholics for certain employment positions, in addition, for Catholic employees, conformance with religious tenets of the Catholic faith is a condition of employment, and all employees may be prohibited from performing, teaching, or advocating in the workplace any practices or doctrines which are inconsistent with the religious tenets of the Catholic faith. Consistent with the foregoing, it is the policy and practice of the Diocese of Richmond and the parish to provide equal employment opportunity in employment, promotions, wages, benefits, and all other privileges, terms, and conditions of employment.

This policy does not preclude the existence of single sex schools, nor does it conflict with the priority given to Catholics for admission as students. This policy also does not preclude the ability of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond to undertake and/or enforce appropriate actions with respect to applicants or students who teach or advocate on school property or at school functions any practices or doctrines which are inconsistent with the religious tenets of the Catholic faith."

PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION AND CONFERENCES

Student learning is a shared responsibility among students, teachers, and parents/guardians.

Formal Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences are scheduled in the fall and spring (as needed). Student attendance with parents is encouraged, and conference days count as school days. Dates are published on the school calendar. Additional conferences may be requested in writing to the teacher so a convenient time can be arranged.

Scheduling & Availability

- Teachers are typically available for conferences by appointment after 3:15 PM until 3:45 PM, as schedules permit.
- Administrative staff may be available during the school day with at least 48 hours' notice. All appointments with the principal must be scheduled through the main office.
- Spontaneous or unscheduled visits to the classroom are not permitted, and teachers may not leave students unattended for impromptu meetings.
- If a scheduled conference cannot be kept, parents should notify the school office at least 24 hours in advance.

Expectations for Conferences

- Parents/guardians and teachers should determine whether the student should attend all or part of the meeting.
- The administration may participate in a conference at the request of either party, after the parent and teacher have met.
- Courtesy, professionalism, and a focus on resolution are expected at all times. Conferences may be paused if these standards are not met.

- For students with multiple teachers, all relevant teachers are encouraged to participate for a complete overview of performance.
- Student progress and concerns are confidential and should not be discussed at school events or social gatherings.

Escalation

Process

If concerns remain unresolved after meeting with the teacher, parents may contact the principal. If the issue persists, the next step is to contact the superintendent.

PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)

The Parent and Teacher Organization (PTO) is a partnership between Saint Mary Star of the Sea School and its families to support the academic, physical, social, and spiritual growth of students. The PTO seeks to enhance the school's mission through community-building, parent education, and fundraising.

The PTO may be organized with a Board of Officers—President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer—who serve as volunteers from the school community. Governance, officer terms, and guidelines are outlined in PTO By-Laws, which are currently being drafted and will be published on the school website once approved.

All parents/guardians are encouraged to participate in PTO events and initiatives. A room parent may be assigned to each class or homeroom to assist with events and is considered an active PTO member by default. Room parents serve as an extension of the PTO and follow the guidelines set by both the PTO and school administration.

PTO events support the school by raising funds for field trips, instructional materials, and other needs designated by the administration. Family participation is strongly encouraged, but not mandatory. In keeping with school policy, students are not permitted to go door-to-door for any fundraising activity.

PARTIES AND CELEBRATIONS

Students in Junior Kindergarten through Grade 8 may participate in two classroom parties each year, typically one before Christmas break and one at the end of the school year in June. In addition, simple seasonal treats (e.g., Halloween, Valentine's Day, Mardi Gras) may be shared at the teacher's discretion. Room parent volunteers may assist with these events.

These celebrations are intended for students currently enrolled at Saint Mary Star of the Sea School. Due to limited space, siblings may not attend classroom parties. All treats must be pre-packaged into individual servings with ingredient labels clearly visible.

Deliveries: The school office will not accept deliveries of balloons, flowers, or similar items for student birthdays or other special events — no exceptions.

Students should not exchange individual gifts at school.

Birthday and Party Invitations should not be distributed at school unless the entire class is invited. Otherwise, invitations should be sent directly to students' homes. Valentines may be distributed at school if every member of the class receives a Valentine. This is intended to prevent hurt feelings among students.

BIRTHDAY OBSERVANCES

Birthdays are recognized daily during morning announcements. To preserve instructional time, classroom birthday parties will not be held.

- **Invitations:** Birthday invitations may not be distributed at school unless every child in the class is invited.
- **Treats:**
 - To support students with food allergies, only commercially prepared treats with a full ingredient list may be shared.
 - Acceptable treats are limited to cookies, cupcakes, or doughnuts and may only be shared at the end of the school day. Treats are distributed according to teacher discretion.
 - Parents are encouraged to provide an alternative safe treat for students with known allergies.
- **Non-Food Options:** Birthdays may also be celebrated with non-food items such as stickers, pencils, or small tokens, which eliminate food allergy concerns.

Parent/Guardian Responsibility: By law, parents/guardians are responsible for supervising minors attending any party at their home. Teachers may not chaperone non-school sponsored student parties.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS AND PROHIBITED ITEMS

Saint Mary Star of the Sea School is not responsible for loss, theft, or damage to any items brought to school by students. This includes, but is not limited to, electronic devices (cell phones, smartwatches, tablets), trading cards, and toys.

- **Search and Confiscation**
 - To maintain a safe school environment, the administration reserves the right to search a student's desk or personal property (e.g., backpack, bags, jacket, cell phone, or other electronic device) when there is reasonable cause to do so.
 - Parents/guardians will be notified if a search of their child's property is conducted.
 - A parent/guardian does not need to be present for a search to occur.
 - The school reserves the right to search any items brought onto school property.
 - Items brought for educational purposes should only be at the request of a teacher.
 - Any prohibited item may be confiscated and held until picked up by a parent/guardian.
- **Prohibited Items**

Students are not permitted to bring or use the following on school property or at school-sponsored activities:

 - Cell phones, smartwatches used as communication devices, radios, recording devices, cameras, CD/DVD, video games, etc.
 - Cigarette lighters, matches, vaping devices, e-cigarettes, or related paraphernalia
 - Laser pointers, skateboards, inline skates, Heelys, or similar items deemed unsafe or distracting by administration
 - Items displaying immoral, inappropriate, or un-Christian words, characters, or logos
- **Enforcement**
 - The administration reserves the right to determine what items, words, characters, or

- logos are inappropriate for a Catholic school environment.
- Students not in compliance may be excluded from class until a parent/guardian retrieves the item.
- Parents/guardians are expected to support school rules and guide students in respecting themselves, their peers, and school personnel.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION

At Saint Mary Star of the Sea School, student advancement is based on academic achievement, attendance, behavior, and overall developmental readiness. Social promotions are not permitted.

General Guidelines

- Promotion requires satisfactory completion of all subject areas, daily performance, test results, and teacher recommendations.
- Administration makes the final determination regarding promotion, retention, or placement, based on teacher input, student records, and parent conferences.
- No student may be retained in the same grade for more than two years.
- Parents will be informed in writing of potential retention by the end of the second quarter, and a conference will be required at that time.
- Conferences should involve teachers, parents/guardians, and administration. The final decision rests with the principal.

Primary Grades (Junior Kindergarten – Grade 2)

- Retention is considered primarily in the early grades to support growth.
- Promotion is based on academic, social, emotional, and developmental readiness.

Grades 3 – 8

- A failing final average in two major subjects results in non-promotion.
- A failing average in one major subject may require tutoring or summer school as a condition of promotion. Documentation of completion must be submitted before the next school year.
- Costs for summer school or tutoring are the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

Special Considerations

- Extenuating circumstances (e.g., prolonged illness) may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- Students with significant academic challenges may be encouraged to receive an evaluation through the local public school system or a private provider at parent expense.
- No accommodations may be made without evaluation results and a documented plan on file, provided that SMSS has the resources to implement the plan.
- The administration may recommend retention, summer school, tutoring, or grade transfer if necessary for the student's academic or emotional well-being.

Placed vs. Promotion

- A student may be placed to the next grade level if retention is not appropriate, but requirements for full promotion have not been met.
- Students who are transferred may not be permitted to continue enrollment at Saint Mary Star of the Sea School.

RECESS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical Education (P.E.) is a required part of the SMSS curriculum, teaching students the benefits of exercise, teamwork, sportsmanship, and developmentally appropriate physical skills.

- **Participation Requirements:**
 - All students must wear secure, tied athletic shoes for P.E.
 - Students unable to participate in P.E. due to health reasons may not participate in recess or school athletics until cleared.
- **Medical Excuses:**
 - Short-term illness (less than 2 days): written note from parent/guardian required.
 - Longer or ongoing medical conditions: written note from a doctor required.
- **Recess:**
 - Recess, typically up to 20-30 minutes, is part of the school day and held outdoors when weather permits.
 - Students excused from recess must provide a doctor's note if health reasons prevent participation.

RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

At Saint Mary Star of the Sea School, religion is a way of life, not just a subject. Parents/guardians are encouraged to support their child's spiritual growth by modeling the values taught at school and fostering a personal prayer life at home.

- **Catholic Students:**
 - Expected to participate in Sunday Mass and frequently receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.
 - Sacramental preparation is available through the student's home parish
- **Non-Catholic Students:**
 - Required to attend Theology classes and participate in all school liturgical services. Families are encouraged to follow the practices of their own faith.
- **Religious Instruction:**
 - Theology is taught JK4–8 to help students grow as Christians.
 - Instruction includes Catholic doctrine, Bible study, and Catholic Social Teaching.
- **Liturgical Services & Assessments:**
 - Weekly Liturgy on Tuesdays; parents/guardians are invited to attend.
 - Students participate in the NCEA RISE (Assessment of Catechesis of Religious Education) Test in Spring.

RESPECT FOR PROPERTY

Students are expected to respect school property and the belongings of others. They should take pride in the school building, classrooms, and equipment, handling all materials with care.

Families are financially responsible for any deliberate or careless damage caused by their child, including furniture, technology, or personal property. Textbooks rented by students must be properly covered, and no writing is allowed in rented texts. Fines or replacement costs must be paid before final reports, transcripts, or diplomas are issued.

RIGHT TO AMEND

Saint Mary Star of the Sea School reserves the right to amend this Handbook. Notice of amendments will be sent to parents via the Weekly Word or through e-mail communication.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents/Guardians

Parents and guardians play a vital role as primary educators. Their responsibilities include:

- Ensuring attendance requirements are met and promptly reporting absences or tardiness.
- Supporting proper uniform compliance.
- Taking an active interest in their child's academic, spiritual, and social development.
- Communicating regularly with teachers regarding conduct and progress.
- Discussing report cards and assignments with their child.
- Notifying the school of any condition affecting the child's well-being.
- Maintaining current contact and emergency information with the school.
- Cooperating with school staff to maintain a quality educational environment.

School Personnel

School staff are responsible for fostering a safe, supportive, and academically challenging environment:

- Maintain attendance, punctuality, and preparedness with necessary materials.
- Exhibit respect for individuals and property at all times.
- Plan flexible curricula to meet diverse student needs.
- Promote positive behavior and discipline practices.
- Encourage parental communication and participation.
- Model organizational, management, and Catholic values.
- Develop cooperative relationships among staff, students, and families.

Students

Students are expected to demonstrate self-discipline, responsibility, and active participation:

Self-Discipline:

- Cooperate with others, follow rules, respect authority, and practice self-control.
- Display respect for people and property.

Work Habits:

- Apply organizational skills, follow directions, manage time wisely, and complete work carefully and independently.

Class Participation:

- Respect teachers and peers, share and take turns, avoid distractions, and engage actively in lessons.

Partnership and Accountability

SMSS values a strong partnership between parents, students, and school staff. Parents are expected to model good Catholic/Christian values, support school policies, and respect school authority. Students must take responsibility for their learning, including grades, assignments, tests, and service projects. Logical consequences for actions, consistent discipline, and mutual respect among home and school foster moral, intellectual, social, and spiritual growth.

Together, parents, students, and staff commit to guiding each child toward becoming the person God created them to be.

SAFETY AND GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

To ensure the safety and well-being of all students, the following expectations apply:

General Safety

- Running is not permitted inside the school building or when moving between areas on school grounds.
- Exterior doors must remain closed and locked; no doors may be propped open. Entry is permitted only through the main office after ringing the doorbell.
- All visitors must report to the main office upon arrival.
- Students may not leave school premises without permission. Violations will result in appropriate consequences.
- Students must remain within designated outdoor boundaries during recess and other assigned outdoor activities.

Physical Education (P.E.) Safety

- Students must demonstrate self-control, good manners, and sportsmanship.
- Students may only participate within designated activity areas; leaving these areas without permission is prohibited.
- Unsafe behavior affecting the safety of others may result in removal from class and disciplinary consequences.
- The perimeter of the activity field must be observed; students may not enter ditches, neighboring yards, streets, or areas beyond fences.

Playground/Recess Safety

- No running or playing tag on playground equipment.
- Slides must be used properly; no jumping off equipment, no going up the slide

- Throwing mulch, sticks, rocks, or any other objects is prohibited.
- Tackle football, dodgeball, and other rough games are not allowed.
- Students must follow the instructions of all adults supervising playground activities.
- Rough or dangerous play may result in suspension of recess privileges.

SCHOOL COUNSELING SERVICES

Saint Mary Star of the Sea School provides a **part-time certified school counselor** to support students and parents at no additional fee.

The school counselor:

- Offers individual, group, and classroom guidance to support emotional, social, and academic development.
- Provides resources and consultation for parents and teachers regarding student concerns, including psycho-educational testing, academic challenges, and emotional well-being.
- Assists with conflict resolution and promotes strategies for student success.

Parents may contact the school counselor through the main office during normal school hours. Families may complete an **opt-out form** if they do not wish to utilize this service.

SCHOOL HOURS

Regular School Hours: 8:00 AM – 3:15 PM

- The main entrance opens at 7:45 AM. Students arriving before this must report to **Before the Bell** (fee applies).
- Students may **not** be in the schoolyard alone before 7:45 AM. The school is not responsible for children unsupervised on campus.
- Parents must accompany students to the school entrance.

Before the Bell:

- Begins at 7:00 AM. Hourly fees apply.

Dismissal:

- Regular days: Dismissal begins after end-of-day prayers (~3:10–3:15 PM).
- Students not picked up by 3:30 PM will be escorted to **Beyond the Bell** (hourly fee applies if not pre-enrolled).
- Professional half-days: Dismissal times announced in advance; students not picked up will be escorted to Beyond the Bell if available (fee applies).

After 3:30 PM:

- The school building is locked. Students and parents may **not** re-enter classrooms to retrieve forgotten items.

SCHOOL OFFICE HOURS

The school office is open on all school days from **7:30 AM – 3:30 PM**.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Parents are encouraged to review the Virginia State Police Sex Offender Registry to stay informed about registered offenders residing in the same or contiguous zip code areas as the school.

SMOKING AND VAPING

Smoking and vaping of any kind are strictly prohibited on Saint Mary Star of the Sea School property. This policy applies at all times and extends to all faculty, staff, students, parents, and visitors.

- Smoking, vaping, or the use of any tobacco, marijuana, or related substances is not allowed in the school building, parking lot, playgrounds, athletic fields, or any other school property.
- Prohibited items include, but are not limited to: cigarettes, cigars, pipes, tobacco in any form, marijuana, electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), vape pens, vaporizers, e-hookah, pod systems, mood systems, or any similar devices.
- The use of e-cigarettes and similar devices presents additional safety risks, as their batteries have been known to overheat, catch fire, or explode.

Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action for students and may result in removal from campus for adults.

SOCIAL MEDIA, SOCIAL NETWORKING, AND MEDIA

Media

- Student photos may be used for school public relations, including the SMSS website, publications, diocesan digital media, and *The Catholic Virginian*. First and last names may be used in publications. Media permission is implied unless a parent submits a written request opting out.
- Parents and students must not post negative or defamatory content about SMSS, its faculty, students, or parish on social media (e.g., Facebook®, Instagram®, Snapchat®, TikTok®, X®). Unauthorized class/grade social media pages require principal approval.
- Posting photos of students other than one's own on personal social media violates FERPA and the Child Protection Act. Students of parents who do so may face separation from the school without reimbursement of tuition or fees.
- SMSS reserves the right to take disciplinary action, including possible expulsion, for violations of this policy.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social networking has changed the way people communicate and share information. The term *Social Networking* includes, but is not limited to, the use of blogs, message boards, forums, Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Reddit, YouTube, WhatsApp, Threads, and other online posting technologies.

Student Use of Social Media

- Students are not permitted to use social networking sites while at school.
- The school's Discipline Policy applies to all online activity, including the use of social media. This includes issues such as cyberbullying, harassment, and defamation.
- Inappropriate comments or images posted online about the school, staff, or students—even outside of school—may result in disciplinary action if they disrupt the safe and orderly environment of the school.
- Students are reminded that online activity is often permanent. Words, photos, or videos may be

available for years, even if deleted, and can be seen by future employers, schools, and others.

SEXTING

Sexting is defined as the sending, receiving, or forwarding of sexually explicit messages, photos, or images via cell phone, computer, or other digital devices. This includes the use of text messaging, email, or social media applications (e.g., Snapchat, Instagram).

- The electronic transmission or receipt of any photograph or video depicting nudity between minors may constitute illegal activity.
- Students engaged in sexting will face serious disciplinary consequences, up to and including expulsion.
- Students found in possession or transmission of inappropriate photos or videos on their cell phones or other electronic devices face suspension and/or expulsion.
- In accordance with state law, school administration will notify Child Protective Services (CPS) and/or local law enforcement when incidents of sexting are reported or suspected.

Guidelines for Online Responsibility

1. Conduct online should reflect Catholic identity and respect for others.
2. Do not post personal information (full name, address, phone number, planned activities).
3. Do not post photos or images of other students without their permission.
4. Be cautious about friending or communicating with strangers online.
5. If threatened or made uncomfortable by online interactions, students should immediately tell a trusted adult.
6. Always abide by age restrictions set by social networking platforms.
7. Ask yourself: *"Would I be comfortable with my parents, grandparents, teachers, principal, or pastor seeing this?"* If the answer is no—don't post it.

Faculty and Staff Use of Social Media

- Faculty and staff may not "friend" or connect with students on social networking sites.
- Professional and appropriate boundaries in communication are expected with students, parents, and colleagues at all times.

Parent Use of Social Media

- Parents should not create social media accounts under the name of the school, a grade level, or a school organization.
- The only official social media accounts are those created and monitored by the Saint Mary Star of the Sea Digital Specialist Coordinator. The classroom teacher and the principal will be included in the "friend" list of each such group.
- A parent who chooses to create an unauthorized school-related account may subject his/her child(ren) to separation from the school.
- Concerns about school matters should be addressed through direct communication with administration, not through social media.

STUDENT RECORDS

- Parents/guardians must promptly notify the School Office in writing or via email of any changes to:
 - Home, business, or cell phone numbers

- Addresses
 - Emergency contact information
 - Custody agreements
 - Student transportation arrangements
- Parents should also update their FACTS/SIS profile to reflect these changes.
 - Emergency information for each student is maintained in the school office and in FACTS.
 - Parents/legal custodial guardians may review their child's school record with 24-hour written notice.
 - The school may withhold records until all financial obligations are fulfilled.

TECHNOLOGY AND ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

Catholic Diocese of Richmond – Saint Mary Star of the Sea School

Technology is an essential educational tool whose use must align with the values and mission of Catholic education. All users—faculty, staff, administrators, and students—are expected to exhibit high standards of behavior when using the Internet, email, and other technology.

The use of the School's network and Internet is a **privilege, not a right**, and must support the educational mission and objectives of the Diocese of Richmond and Saint Mary Star of the Sea School. Inappropriate use may result in cancellation of these privileges.

The Principal has the final authority to determine inappropriate use and may close accounts at any time. School authorities may also take additional disciplinary actions. Any costs for repairs due to misuse are the responsibility of the student and their family.

Before gaining access to school computers and the Internet, students and their parents/guardians (for students under 18) must return a signed Technology and Internet Acceptable Use Contract.

Privacy and Monitoring

- Users have no right to privacy for materials sent, received, or stored on school-owned computers or networks.
- All communications and information accessible via the network are School property.
- Messages supporting illegal activities may be reported to authorities.
- The Technology Coordinator/System Administrator supervises network use, has access to all files and email, and may authorize access as necessary.
- Any suspected security problem must be reported to an appropriate authority.

Acceptable Use

School technology is intended for educational purposes: classroom instruction, research, and approved projects. This includes accessing research databases, text, graphics, photographs, video, and sound, and interacting or collaborating with others.

Users are expected to follow network etiquette, including:

- Being polite and respectful in all communications
- Using appropriate language

- Properly citing and obtaining permission for all information used from research sources

Unacceptable Use

Unacceptable behaviors must be reported promptly to the Principal or designee and include, but are not limited to:

1. Violating network etiquette rules
2. Logging on with another user's ID/password, sharing passwords, or accessing others' files
3. Sending malicious comments or images targeting another person, including harassment or promotion of illegal/immoral behavior
4. Sending/receiving materials in violation of laws, including copyrighted, threatening, or obscene content
5. Using the School name or logo on personal websites
6. Publishing online content that discredits the School
7. Non-School related social contacts between faculty/staff and students
8. Accessing inappropriate material or installing unapproved software
9. Damaging or vandalizing computers, networks, or data; attempting to bypass security measures
10. Using the network in a way that disrupts others' access or alters School settings
11. Using technology for political or commercial purposes
12. Assisting others in violating these policies
13. Fraudulent or abusive use of School technology not specifically mentioned

Prohibited Without Authorization

- Access to personal email, chat, instant messaging, or discussion boards
- Bypassing, disabling, or circumventing security measures, filtering software, or network controls

The Administration may deny access to any user identified as a security risk or with a history of problems using other computer systems.

THREATS

Saint Mary Star of the Sea School takes all threats of violence seriously, regardless of the age of the student involved. Threats of any kind—including online, verbal, non-verbal, or written—will not be tolerated.

If the school becomes aware that a student has made a threat of violence toward the school, other students, or staff:

- The principal or designated school official will immediately notify law enforcement, the Office of Catholic Schools, and the parents/guardians of the student.
- The student will be immediately suspended pending an investigation.
- The student will not be permitted to return to school until:
 - Law enforcement has completed its assessment, and
 - The student has undergone a threat assessment by a licensed mental health professional, confirming that the student does not pose a threat to themselves or to school safety.

To maintain a safe environment, the principal or designated official has the right to inspect and search:

- A student's person
- The student's locker(s) or desk(s)
- The student's personal property on school grounds or at school activities

If dangerous items are suspected, law enforcement will be contacted to arrange for removal, unless immediate removal is required to protect student safety.

Action and Care Team

Saint Mary Star of the Sea School is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of every student. To help protect our school community and respond with care, we utilize an **Action and Care Team (ACT)**.

The purpose of the ACT is to:

- Identify and assess concerning behaviors that may pose a risk to the safety of students, staff, or the school environment.
- Provide appropriate interventions and support to help students.
- Collaborate with parents, teachers, counselors, and, when necessary, law enforcement or mental health professionals to ensure that concerns are addressed quickly, safely, and compassionately.

The team is made up of school administration, the school counselor, and designated faculty/staff members, who work together to review and respond to situations as they arise.

In keeping with our mission, the ACT seeks not only to protect the safety of the school community, but also to offer care, guidance, and restorative support for students so they can grow spiritually, academically, and emotionally.

STOPit

Saint Mary Star of the Sea School participates in the STOPit Program, an anonymous reporting tool that helps students speak up if they see or experience unsafe, harmful, or concerning behavior.

- **Who Can Use It:** Students in grades 5–12 may have access to STOPit through a secure web-based platform or mobile app.
- **How It Works:** STOPit allows students to anonymously report concerns such as bullying, threats, or unsafe behaviors. Reports are sent directly to the school's Organizational Administrator.
- **Parent Role:** Parents cannot submit reports through STOPit, but they may monitor their child's use of the program.
- **After-Hours Monitoring:** Reports made between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., on weekends, and during school breaks are monitored by STOPit Solutions staff. If a report indicates imminent danger, they will notify the school and, if necessary, local law enforcement.

This program is one more way our school works to maintain a safe, caring, and Christ-centered environment for every student.

TRANSFER OR WITHDRAWAL

- **Transfer:** Parents/guardians may transfer a student at any time for enrollment in another school. A release form must be signed, and all financial and material obligations (tuition, fees, books, etc.) must be satisfied before records are forwarded.
- **Withdrawal:** Written notice must be provided to the Principal. Records will be released only after accounts are settled. The school will notify the local education agency if a student is withdrawn without transfer.
- **Involuntary Withdrawal:** The school reserves the right to require withdrawal if the school–family partnership is irretrievably broken or as a result of disciplinary action.
- **Financial Responsibility:** Tuition contracts are binding for the full year, except in cases of family exceeding 50 miles from SMSS or dismissal by the school.

TUITION, ENROLLMENT, AND WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Tuition and Enrollment Policy

Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School (SMSS) is proud to offer a Catholic education rooted in faith and excellence, supported by a rigorous academic program at a tremendous value. While tuition provides the primary source of funding, it does not cover the full cost of operating the school. The remaining expenses are met through fundraising efforts and the generous support of families, parishioners, benefactors, and friends of SMSS.

Tuition Commitment

- Enrollment of a student at SMSS represents a binding financial agreement between the family and the school. The annual operating budget is based upon these commitments.
- The parent/guardian obligation to pay full tuition and fees is unconditional. No portion of tuition or fees, whether paid or outstanding, will be refunded, canceled, or waived due to withdrawal, dismissal, suspension, or absence of the student.
- In the event of withdrawal or dismissal, any unpaid balance becomes immediately due and payable.

Extenuating Circumstances

In cases of significant hardship — such as military relocation orders or serious family medical events — the decision to release liability under an active tuition agreement will rest solely with the Principal, who will review each situation with compassion and prudence.

Student Conduct and Enrollment

SMSS reserves the right, at the discretion of the Principal, to suspend or dismiss any student who:

- Fails to maintain the academic standards of SMSS;
- Violates school regulations; or
- Engages in conduct that is not in the best interest of the student, other students, or SMSS as a whole.

Tuition Payment & Collection Procedures

Families may choose one of the following tuition payment options:

- **Full Payment:** Tuition paid in full at the beginning of the school year.

- **FACTS Tuition Management:** Tuition paid through automated withdrawals in two (semi-annual) or ten (monthly) installments, beginning in August 2026.

Late Payments and Fees

- Any delinquent account, including tuition or Before/Beyond-the-Bell fees, is subject to a \$25 late fee for each overdue payment.
- A \$30 fee will be charged for each returned payment through FACTS.
- Families with past due balances may have student participation in extracurricular activities (including athletics, field trips, and extended care programs) suspended until accounts are current.

Account Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure that tuition and fees are paid on schedule. Failure to keep accounts current may result in further administrative action, up to and including suspension of enrollment.

Withdrawal & Refund Policy

The enrollment of a student at Saint Mary Star of the Sea School constitutes an **annual contract**. There is no rebate, credit, or refund for absence, withdrawal, suspension, or dismissal once the school year has begun.

- **Extenuating Circumstances:** Should a withdrawal become necessary due to extenuating circumstances, the decision to release financial liability under this agreement rests with the Principal. Extenuating circumstances include, but are not limited to, military orders or company transfers exceeding 50 miles from SMSS. Each case will be reviewed individually.
- **Withdrawal Without Notice:** If a parent/guardian withdraws a student without prior notification and consent of the school, any remaining payments due under the active tuition agreement will become immediately due and payable.

Curriculum and General Fee

The fees for K-8th is \$600 and for Pre-Kindergarten \$300 and paid by July 1.

Referral for Collection (Payment in Arrears)

- An account will be considered delinquent after two consecutive months of non-payment.
- Delinquent accounts may result in further action, up to and including the possibility that students will not be permitted to attend school until the account is brought current.
- If the account is referred to an attorney for collection, the parent/family will be responsible for paying all associated collection costs, including court costs and attorney fees.
- Per the tuition agreement, paragraph D, any account referred to an attorney for collection is subject to an additional charge equal to the greater of:
 1. 33 1/3% of the outstanding balance owed, for collection and attorney's fees, OR
 2. The actual attorney's fees, costs, and expenses incurred.

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VISITORS

Visitors are welcome at Saint Mary Star of the Sea, but must follow these procedures to ensure student safety and minimize classroom disruption:

- Report to the Main Office with a photo ID to sign in and receive a visitor badge.
- Drop off items or messages at the main office.
- Classroom visits require a prior appointment; unscheduled visits are not permitted.
- School-age children not enrolled in SMSS may not visit classrooms without principal approval.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE HOURS

- **Requirement:** Parents/guardians must contribute **25 hours/year**. Single-parent households or parents deployed for at least half the school year may email the Finance office to get approval to complete 2.5 hours. Families not fulfilling hours will be charged \$25/hour.
- **Opportunities:** chaperoning, special events (Golf Tournament, BBQ and Shrimp Boil, Alumni Weekend, Field Day, Faith Rally, Catholic Schools Week, Auction, etc.), maintenance projects, and at-home tasks. Certain roles (Coach, Room Parent, PTO Officer) may satisfy all volunteer hours; these must be logged on the Google form found in the Weekly Word or sent from the office or by the classroom teacher. Upon office approval, the hours logged by the parent are counted toward completion of the 25 required hours.
- Requirements for Volunteers working with or around students without a school employee present at all times:
 - Complete VIRTUS (Protecting God's Children) training and annual Screening One background check.
 - Sign acknowledgement of Diocesan Safe Environment Regulations.
 - Dress modestly and appropriately.
 - Pre-school siblings may **not** accompany volunteers during school activities.
- **Responsibility:** Parents are ultimately responsible for fulfilling their volunteer hour commitment.

WEEKLY WORD

The Weekly Word is issued weekly throughout the school year. It lists upcoming events, information updates, and changes in the calendar. A copy is emailed to the addresses listed in FACTS Family Portal, as long as you have selected to receive correspondence. It is the parent's responsibility to be aware of events, including early dismissals and holidays, that have been advertised in the Weekly Word and the online school calendar.