

Divine Wisdom Catholic Academy

Family Handbook

2023- 2024





DIVINE WISDOM CATHOLIC ACADEMY

Miriam Bonici
Principal

Dear Parents, Guardians and Students,

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

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

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

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

At the end of this Handbook are various documents for you to review. Please sign in to your FACTS portal to sign the acknowledgement of the documents found at the end of the handbook by Friday, September 15, 2023.

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

Sincerely,

Miriam Bonici

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MEDIA AUTHORIZATION AND RELEASE

Contact Information

School Office: 718-631-3153
 School Fax: 718-631-3945
 Web site: dwcaonline.org
 E-mail address: dwisdom@dwcaonline.org

Office Hours: 8:00am – 3:30pm Monday through Friday

St. Anastasia Parish Religious Ed. Office: 718-225-5191

School Hours:

3K 8:10am - 2:30 pm

PKA: 8:00am – 2:20pm

Kindergarten: 8:00am – 2:30pm

Grades 1 – 8: 8:00am – 2:45pm

Academy Governance

Members

(Monitor Catholic identity/Ratify Board appointments)

As of January 1, 2022

Rev. Msgr. Steven Aguggia, Chancellor - Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens
 Rev. Msgr. David Cassato, Vicar for Education – Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens
 Fr. David Dettmer, Pastor St. Anastasia Parish, Douglaston
 Rev. Fr. Gabriel Lee – Pastor, St. Robert Bellarmine Parish, Bayside
 Thomas Chadzutko, Ed D – Superintendent of Schools, Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens

Board of Trustees

Responsible for all aspects of Academy/oversees Leadership Team
 Trustees serve three-year terms and may serve consecutive terms
 Parents of current students not eligible

As of January 1, 2022

Bob Schirling – Board Chair
 Pat Zacccone – Treasurer
 Sherise Elmore
 Carolyn Meenan

Peter Ermish – Vice Chair
 Kathy Furlong – Secretary
 Suzanne Karl
 Jim Peveraro

ACADEMY OVERVIEW

A) Mission Statement

Divine Wisdom Catholic Academy endeavors to provide a Christ-centered education that is academically rigorous and empowers students to reach their full potential – spiritually, intellectually, morally, physically, and socially. Our goal is to nurture each student’s ability in developing their gifts to be used in lifelong service, following Jesus’ example through prayer, service and love.

Based upon Jesus’ teachings, all members of the Academy are striving to live like Jesus lived, love like Jesus loved and believe like Jesus believed. Divine Wisdom’s students are asked:

- To develop a truly Christian attitude in all activities and relationships with adults and other students.
- To be courteous and considerate to others.
- To maintain a respectful and academic atmosphere in the classrooms, large gathering spaces, outside during lunchtime recess, and while changing classes in the hallways.
- To treat the entire Academy community with dignity and respect.
- To extend courtesy and respect to guests and visitors of the Academy.
- To carry this philosophy of discipleship into the community.

B) Our Philosophy

The Divine Wisdom Catholic Academy community continually seeks new ways for our students to develop their intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical gifts to their fullest potential. We want their educational experience at the Academy to provide them with all the tools they will need for the role they will play in carrying the message of Jesus into the world now and in the future. We want them to understand that they can make a difference in the world, and it is their Christian duty and responsibility to do so with compassion and respect for all.

C) History of the Academy

Divine Wisdom Catholic Academy is an independent Roman Catholic school formed under the guidance of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn and chartered by the New York State Board of Regents. The Academy was established in September 2009 in Douglaston in the building which formerly housed the St. Anastasia Parish School for over 80 years.

D) Education and Proclaiming the Good News

“....Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth (cf. *Spe Salve*, 4). This relationship elicits a desire to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ and his teaching. In this way those who meet him are drawn by the very power of God to lead a new life characterized by all that is beautiful, good, and true; a life of Christian witness nurtured and strengthened within the community of our Lord’s disciples, the Church....: Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Catholic educators at the Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, April 17, 2008

PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

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

Parents/guardians are required to sign a form stating that they have read the rules and regulations outlined in this Handbook and that they agree to abide by those rules, and to ensure that their children abide by the rules. Students in grades 5-8 must also sign this form. Failure to sign the form will not prevent the Academy from enforcing its policies, but could result in disciplinary action being taken and/or the prevention of the student from enrolling in the school. This form can be found at the end of this Handbook.

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

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

I. CATHOLIC IDENTITY

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

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

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

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

A. Adherence to Catholic Doctrine

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

B. Inclusion of All Other Faiths

The presence of students from other faiths provides a wonderful diversity, and the Academy welcomes students and parents/guardians of other faiths. However, as a Catholic school located within the Diocese of Brooklyn, the Academy is focused on the formation of children in the Catholic faith. Parents/guardians must accept the intentional Catholic values and tenets that are the underpinning of our Academy. All students, including Non-Catholic students, are expected to participate in the religious formation and education programs of the Academy, including, but not limited to, liturgies, religious functions, and religious classes. It is also expected that Non-Catholic students and parents/guardians participate as fully as they can in the

liturgical and prayer life of the Academy. The teachers and administration at the Academy are also committed to teaching the fullness of revelation as it is taught by the Roman Catholic Church and the Diocese of Brooklyn. While our teachers, administration, and staff value the presence of students from other faiths and respect other faiths, they always teach and model within the context of the doctrines and tenets of the Roman Catholic Church.

II. ACADEMICS

A. Academic Expectations

The Academy expects its students to perform to the best of their ability. Teachers evaluate students' progress on a regular basis with quizzes, tests, homework, presentations, participation, behavior in the classroom, and class presentation.

B. Academic Honesty

The Academy maintains and affirms a strong policy of academic honesty. Every member of the Academy community has a responsibility to produce and interpret information gathered from a variety of resources in a conscientious manner. Information researched from the internet should be used solely as a resource and should not be included in assignments as original student responses. It is at the discretion of the Academy to deduct points if a student submits an assignment with language or ideas not his or her own.

C. Curriculum & Assessments

NYS Testing

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

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

iReady

Students in grades K-8 will participate in iReady throughout the school year. Diagnostic assessments will be given three times a year- September, January and May. These assessments are used to track student progress in reading and math. Students are required to work on their individualized instructional path weekly at a minimum of 50 minutes per subject. Parents will receive results of the diagnostic assessments throughout the year.

D. Religious Education

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

E. Homework

Homework is an essential part of the Academy's instructional program, as it reinforces learning and provides students with opportunities to practice what they were taught in class. Homework can come in many forms, including, but not limited to, projects, reports, and independent reading. Students are required to complete

all homework, including when a student is absent. **Parent, guardian, or other adult assistance with homework is key to a student's academic success!**

ALL students are expected to read independently as indicated by the classroom teacher, as part of their nightly homework routine.

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

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

F. Grades

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

The following is an overview of grades at the Academy:

Kindergarten:

X	1	2	3	4
Not introduced or assessed	Not Demonstrated	Beginning	Developing	Secure

Grades 1-8 (Numeric)

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

Skills:

1	2	3	4	X
Does Not Meet Standard	Approaching Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard with Distinction	Not Assessed this Trimester

G. Make-Up Work

Students who are out sick or cannot complete assignments during class time must get permission from the teacher in order to receive credit for make-up work. All make-up work must be completed in a timely manner. Failing to turn in assignments or projects in on time may result in a reduction in grade for every day that it is late.

H. Protecting Instructional Time

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

I. Progress Reports & Report Card Schedule

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

J. Parent-Teacher Conferences

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

K. Admission Policies

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

The process for admission to the Academy is as follows: parents/guardians must complete the Academy application form and provide all required documents. If necessary, IEPs must be provided for review. Following an interview (if held) and evaluation of the materials, the parent/guardian will be notified in writing about whether the Academy is offering the child a position.

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

L. Transfers and Withdrawals

If a parent/guardian wishes to transfer his or her child(ren) out of the Academy, the office must be notified of the transfer request. Before records are transferred to another school, all bills must be paid in full and all books must be returned.

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

file, which includes special education records, psychological reports, disciplinary records, and reports by a school counsellor.

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

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

M. Recommendation for Next Grade Level

The Academy takes the decision whether to promote or retain a student extremely seriously. Sometimes, however, testing, diagnosis and actual performance may indicate that a student cannot follow the school's complete course of study. In accordance with NYS Education Law, Assessment and Performance if a student is being considered for retention at the same grade level, teachers will discuss the possibility with the Principal. Although the teacher consults with the Principal, the final decision for retaining a student rests with the Principal. Certain criteria the Principal and teachers may take into account as they consider a recommendation for retention includes that the student has failed to pass major subjects on each grade level and/or has not demonstrated acceptable progress toward mastery of standards, including failure to complete assignments, or repeated low scores in several areas on a report card.

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

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

N. Graduation

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

O. Distance Learning

The Academy provides devices to all students, K-2 students are provided with tablets and 3-8 students are provided with Chrome books. All devices are equipped with the GoGuardian software to keep all students safe online. In the event of a school closure, all students will participate in remote learning and will be provided secure links to attend classes. All work is posted on SeeSaw in grades K-2 and on Google Classroom in grades 3-8.

P. Extracurricular Activities

The Academy offers various extracurricular activities. Like the After School program, students are expected to follow school policy while engaged in any extracurricular activity. Participation in these activities is a privilege, and students are expected to fulfill their obligations in the classroom and complete homework as these are priorities to any extracurricular activity.

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

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

Q. Recess

With the exception of school-wide events, which may include Mass, daily recess will be provided. If weather permits, the students will attend recess in the schoolyard. If not, the classrooms will be used. If a student has any physical limitation which may affect his or her ability to engage in all recess activities, the Academy must be notified in accordance with the Limitations of Physical Activity policy: **Students may not attend school if using crutches.**

R. Summer School

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

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

III. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Academy Calendar

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

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

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

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

B. School Hours

School hours are from 8:00am to 2:50pm, with the exception of early dismissal days

C. School Office Hours

School office hours are from 7:30 am- 3:30 pm

D. Early Release Schedule – (Half Day)

Kindergarten -11:45 am and grades 1-8 - 12:00 pm

E. After School Program

The Academy offers an After School program. This occurs from 3:00 pm- 6:00 pm. The After School program is an extension of the school day, and students are expected to follow all Academy policies and procedures during After School. Directors of individual activities during After School may also issue rules of behavior, which recognize the special nature of non-classroom activities. In instances where students are picked up, parents/guardians are expected to make arrangements to pick up their children at the end of the program or activity. Students will be released only to a parent/guardian or a person previously specified in writing by the parent/guardian. After school program fees are expected to be paid in full upon being invoiced. Past due balances will result in a student not being allowed to participate in the program until the account is brought up to date.

F. Attendance

The Academy has developed our attendance policy in accordance with New York State Education Law. This comprehensive attendance policy will help us uphold the philosophy and mission statement of our Academy. Education Law of the State of New York mandates school attendance for all children between the ages of 6 and 16, but the responsibility for compliance rests with the parents/legal guardians.

The school is required to keep an accurate record of daily attendance, absence, and tardiness in the register of attendance in a manner approved by the Commissioner of Education:

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

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

G. Lateness

When a child is late it becomes a bad way to start the day for the child and a disruption to the teacher and other students in the class. Some of the consequences for chronic lateness will be: privileges being revoked, detention and mandatory parent conference.

A student who arrives after the time set by the Academy for the beginning of the day will be marked late.

H. Arrival and Dismissal Policy

Early arrival begins at **7:00 am**. Parents/guardians are to drop their children off at **Father Smith Hall** when a teacher or staff member is present. We strongly encourage parents/guardians to drop their children off at early arrival time, as the additional time gives students more time to prepare for the day and socialize with their peers.

For safety reasons parents/guardians and visitors are required to sign in at the Main Office.

At the end of the school day, the students will be dismissed at **the designated doors**.

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

Students who proceed home on their own, either by walking, bicycle, or otherwise, must do so as safely and directly as possible and submit written authorization signed by the parent/guardian to the Academy. They must obey all traffic and trespassing laws, and cross at designated crosswalks. Students in grades **K-5** will not be permitted to travel home from the Academy without a parent, guardian or other authorized adult or another pre-arranged travel accommodation (such as a school bus). In the case of a younger student traveling home with an older student, such as an older sibling, the Academy must receive written authorization from a parent/guardian. The Academy reserves the right to not release the student(s) to travel home on their own, either by walking or otherwise, if it deems that is not in the best interest of the students.

I. Early Release

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

J. Use of Academy Grounds

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

K. Dress Code

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

All school uniforms must be purchased from Flynn and O'Hara. Students who are not in compliance with the dress code will be notified and will have two weeks to rectify the situation.

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

L. Grooming Code

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

- Facial hair is not permitted
- Hair must be a natural color. Streaking, highlighting, lowlights, glints, etc. are not permitted.
- At no time should a student have a haircut where his or her head is shaved, eg. mohawks or inscribed design haircuts.

Students are not allowed to wear make-up at any time. This includes eye make-up and acrylic nails. Only clear, light colored nail polish, or French manicures are permitted. Only appropriate modest and safe jewelry is allowed. Small earrings may be worn by girls only. Tattoos and body piercings are not allowed.

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

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

M. Dress Down Days

There may be occasions in which students are allowed to wear non-uniform attire. Students are reminded to dress with modesty. Students should adhere to the following attire:

- Appropriate length skirt, shorts or dress – no shorter than 3” above the knees
- No torn or tight jeans or pants
- No spaghetti strap tanks, midriffs, tube tops, etc.
- No logo type T-shirts
- No hats (unless specifically designated)
- No loose/baggy pants or shorts
- No make-up
- No jeggings, leggings or skinny jeans are to be worn with short tops; tunic tops only.

N. Field Trips

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

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

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

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

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

O. Care of School Property

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

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

P. Telephone Use to Call Parent/Guardian

Parents/guardians seeking to contact their children must call the Main Office. Students seeking to contact their parents/guardians must contact them from the Main Office. Students must request permission from their teacher to go to the Main Office.

Under no circumstances should a parent/guardian or student call or text each other during school hours using any electronic devices.

Q. Personal Property

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

R. Announcements

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

S. Distribution of Unofficial Materials

Students may, upon approval by the Principal, distribute, at reasonable times and places, unofficial material, including petitions, buttons, or other insignia. However, all such material must be in accordance with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Failure to comply will result in confiscation of the material and possibly disciplinary action.

Such material may not be obscene, libelous, contain indecent or vulgar language or content, advertise a product not permitted to be marketed to minors by law, constitute insulting or fighting words designed to injure or harass others, or present a high likelihood of causing a disruption at the Academy.

Parents/guardians may not distribute, either through their child(ren) or otherwise, any unofficial material.

T. Use of Tobacco & Vaping Products, Alcohol, and Misuse of Drugs and other Substances

For the safety of the Academy Community, USE OF TOBACCO AND VAPING PRODUCTS, ALCOHOL, AND THE MISUSE OF DRUGS AND OTHER SUBSTANCES IS PROHIBITED ON SCHOOLS GOUNDS. School ground means the buildings, grounds or facilities, or any part thereof, providing educational instructions to students. Tobacco products includes any substance which contains tobacco including but not limited to cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, and chewing tobacco.

IV. STUDENT EXPECTATIONS AND BEHAVIOR

By enrolling their children in the Academy, parents/guardians agree to respect and support the Academy's policies regarding student expectations and behavior.

A. Student Code of Conduct

Divine Wisdom Catholic Academy is a Catholic education institution that provides supportive discipline. All students have the right to learn and interact in a safe and structured environment. All students have a responsibility to respect the rights of others at all times. Appropriate behavior should be praised, while inappropriate behavior must be acknowledged and corrected immediately.

Self-discipline is the Christian ideal, which our students ought to be encouraged to achieve. In order to form proper habits and attitudes, rules of conduct must be emphasized. Respect for all people and property, courtesy at all times, unselfishness towards others, and a sense of honesty, fair play and trustworthiness are among the values which must be imparted to our students.

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

Students learn to be responsible, make good choices, and participate in Divine Wisdom Catholic Academy community life which is reflective of their deepening faith and religious development, together with the guidance from their parents/guardians.

In the past, certain behavior was considered harmless child's play. However, in our world today, the same behavior can be seen as harassing. **Any behavior that can be interpreted as intimidating, humiliating, or disrespectful, whether in word or action is absolutely unacceptable.** This includes any behavior that causes undue trouble, worry or discomfort. The deciding factor is whether a particular phrase, gesture, or behavior is unwelcomed by the student or students receiving it or witnessing it.

Harassment of a sexual nature may include notes, letters, drawings and offensive words or comments, spoken privately to a person or in front of others. It also includes unwanted physical contact, as well as non-verbal and non-physical gestures, looks and displaying of suggestive objects, pictures, magazines, etc.

If a student(s) is/are thought to have acted in a harassing manner the following disciplinary steps will be taken:

- A thorough administrative investigation of all parties involved will take place.
- Students found to have engaged in harassing behavior will face the possibility of exclusion from school activities, suspension and/or expulsion.
- Any student who thinks he or she has been the victim of any type of harassment should report the conduct to an adult.

With rights come responsibilities; when a student does not follow a school policy, he/she must face the consequences of his/her behavior. The consequences differ depending upon the severity of the misbehavior, and/or the number of occurrences of the misbehavior.

A student who behaves in a manner that contradicts school policy may face one or more of the following consequences: a verbal warning; a disciplinary letter sent home; family conference; detention; or expulsion.

B. Prohibition on Bullying

The Academy believes in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person. We believe that all students, school employees and volunteers have a right to a safe and healthy school environment. All members of the school community, in turn, have an obligation to promote mutual respect, tolerance and acceptance. Research shows that students who learn in a safe and supportive environment succeed academically. Students have a right to learn in an environment free of any harassment that substantially interferes with their education.

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

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

Reporting Procedures:

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

C. Prohibition on Cyber Bullying

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

Violation of this policy in whole or in part may result in disciplinary actions. Disciplinary actions are determined by the Academy principal based on the specific facts and circumstances. Disciplinary actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Limitation or loss of access to Academy technology;
- Detention, suspension, or expulsion;
- Seeking compensation for damage incurred.

D. Impermissible Items

In the interest of safety of the students and protection of the Academy grounds, students are NOT permitted to be in possession the of following on Academy grounds at any time:

1. Spray cans, smoke bombs, stink bombs, powders/choking agents or chemicals or any kind.
2. Gum
3. Tobacco in any form, vaping devices and paraphernalia, alcohol or drugs of any kind, and drug paraphernalia
4. Matches or lighters
5. Laser pointers, knives/box cutters, or any type of weapon
6. Any type of toy weapon
7. Nail files
8. Energy drinks and caffeine
9. Extreme jewelry, dangling earrings, or hoop earrings larger than the size of a dime
10. Makeup of any kind, including lipstick

The presence of any of these items can lead to disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion. The presence of certain items (ie, illegal drugs or weapons) will result in the Academy immediately notifying the police.

D. Respect for Life

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

V. EXPECTATIONS AND OBLIGATIONS OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS

A. Parental Involvement and Support of Student Education

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

Parental involvement consists of parents/legal guardians and staff working together in the best interest of the child. It may be expressed in many ways, and parents must determine the most effective way of achieving the goals of effective parental involvement. At a minimum parents should discuss with their children what they learned that school day, monitor completion of homework and project assignments, and timely discuss important matters with teachers as they arise.

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

In some instances, parents/legal guardians may be asked to assist in advocacy in areas that would benefit the Academy, including programs that request government assistance, in consultation with the Office of the Superintendent. The involvement of the total family is also a means of communicating the Academy's performance to the total parish community.

B. Student Discipline Policy

The Academy may need to involve disciplinary measures from time to time. The purpose of disciplinary measures is to provide structure to students and for them to learn self-discipline, which strengthens and promotes the values incorporated in our Catholic faith. Disciplinary measures should have as an end the development of the human person who respects oneself, other persons, and those in authority.

Student behavior is expected to be exemplary both on and off Academy grounds, as student behavior, positive and negative, impacts the entire Academy community. Therefore, as discussed herein, the Academy reserves the right to discipline students for acts in violation of this policy, the consequences of which may include suspension and/or expulsion.

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

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

In certain circumstances, teachers may refer classroom discipline issues to the administration of the Academy. This is likely to include chronic minor problems listed above, or major problems, include, but are not limited to, chronic lateness, verbal abuse of a teacher, signs of disrespect to a teacher or another adult on the staff,

fighting, vandalism, stealing, physical, sexual, or verbal harassment or bullying (including cyber-bullying) of a fellow student, violent behavior, smoking, vaping, or the possession of drugs, drug paraphernalia, cigarettes, lighters, matches, vaping devices and/or paraphernalia, stink or smoke bombs, chemicals/irritants, alcohol, dangerous items or a weapon. The administration will handle such matters in a variety of ways depending on the severity of the incident, up to and including suspension, police notification, and expulsion.

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

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

Weapons of any kind anywhere on the Academy grounds are prohibited. If a student is found in possession of a weapon while on school grounds (which includes weapons stored in lockers, desks, etc.), the Academy will immediately summon the police, and the student's parents/guardians are immediately notified. The Academy reserves the right to expel student who violate this policy.

Individual-directed threats of violence or harm communicated directly or indirectly by any means, as well as building-directed threats of violence or harm communicated directly or indirectly by any means (e.g., shooting, bomb threats), or to harm students, employees, or visitors are taken seriously. If a student(s) is found to have engaged in such threats, the Office of the Superintendent and the parents/guardians will be notified. The administration will determine the course of action to be taken up to and including calling law enforcement, requiring a mental health referral, and/or expulsion.

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

C. Preparation for the Reception of Sacraments

Preparation for the reception of the Sacraments takes place during the Faith Formation year immediately preceding the reception of the Sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, and Confirmation. Preparation sessions offer the candidates and their families the opportunity to “deepen the life of faith, especially regarding knowledge of the sacraments of the Church.”

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

These words describe the “Year of Renewal for Catholic Education.” This Renewal is a combined effort to enhance Catholic Academies/Schools, Faith Formation Programs, and Parishes. It reflects the missionary

call to all God's people to evangelize and renew the face of the earth. In this Year of Renewal, it is most important that we, as parents and educators, once again familiarize ourselves with the Diocesan guidelines for the reception of sacraments.

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

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

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

THOSE TO BE CONFIRMED

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

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

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

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

SPONSORS

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

Can. 893 §1. To perform the function of sponsor, a person must fulfill the conditions mentioned in **can. 874. (Can. 874)**

§1. To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:

- 1) be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the person who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;
- 2) have completed the sixteenth year of age unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause;
- 3) be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on;
- 4) not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
- 5) not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.

§2. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of the baptism.)

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

What this means:

- All preparation must be done through the home parish of each student
- Families must participate in preparation
- Sponsors must be practicing Catholics

Session One (3 hrs.) Preparation of the Candidates

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

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

Sacrament of Penance

It is important for the Reception of First Penance, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation that the candidates be “properly disposed” (**Canon 889**). *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that “to receive Confirmation one must be in a state of grace. One should receive the Sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit...” (**no. 1310**). For the Sacrament of First Penance and First Holy Communion the Catechism states: According to the Church’s command, “after having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year.”¹

Anyone who is aware of having committed a mortal sin must not receive Holy Communion, even if he experiences deep contrition, without having first received sacramental absolution unless he has a grave reason for receiving Communion and there is no possibility of going to confession.²

Children must go to the sacrament of Penance before receiving Holy Communion for the first time. Candidates should therefore be expected to receive the Sacrament of Penance in proximate preparation for their Confirmation and be given the opportunity to do so (**no. 1457**).

Reception of Holy Communion

Candidates and sponsors should prepare to receive Holy Communion at Mass, including the Confirmation Mass. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that it “is in keeping with the very meaning of the Eucharist that the faithful if they have the required dispositions, *receive communion when* they participate in the Mass” (**no. 1388**).

By receiving Holy Communion both the newly confirmed and their sponsors give witness that Christian Initiation is directed toward the Eucharist.

- “A person who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain for at least one hour before Holy Communion from any food and drink, except for only water and medicine.” (**Canon 919 §1**).
- “The elderly, the infirm, and those who care for them can receive the Most Holy Eucharist even if they have eaten something within the preceding hour” (**Canon 919, §3**).

Family members and invited guests for First Communion should likewise understand the importance of the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist and be spiritually prepared to receive Eucharist.

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

What this means:

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

Session Two (3 hrs)
The Liturgical Calendar and Advent Season

This second Session should be held on the first or Second Sunday of Advent. It involves a presentation on the Liturgical calendar and highlights the importance of Advent as a season of preparation for Christmas. The intention of the Session is to (re) introduce the families to the liturgical year, how the Domestic Church celebrates this season with Catholic cultural elements, and how the parish prepares for the coming of the Messiah. The important personnel is the Pastor, Pastoral Staff, Catechetical Leadership, families, and candidates for Sacraments.

Celebrating Christmas

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

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

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

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

What this means:

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

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

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

Lenten Devotions

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

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

Holy Week

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

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

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

What this means:

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

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

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

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

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

Receiving the Sacraments

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

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

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

Sacramentals

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

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

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

Living the Faith

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

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

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

What this means:

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

Session 5 (1 1/2hrs)

The Celebration of the Sacraments

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

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery:

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

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

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

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

What this means:

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

D. Parental Communication

Effective communication between the Academy and parents/guardians is an important aspect of the Academy experience. Scheduled parent teacher conferences allow teachers and parents/guardians to discuss student achievement as well as to develop means to assist students in areas of difficulty.

A parent/guardian may request a meeting with a teacher at any time by simply sending an e-mail to the teacher in question at the teacher's dwcaonline.org e-mail address or via Google Classroom. The teacher will then contact the parent and arrange to meet outside of normal classroom hours at a mutually convenient time. Such meetings should only take place in private (whether meeting in person or meeting virtually). A parent/guardian who does not receive a timely response from the teacher, or where the teacher refuses to schedule such a meeting, should notify the Principal directly by sending an e-mail to the Principal's e-mail address mbonici@dwcaonline.org.

A parent/guardian seeking to meet with the Principal on other matters must contact Debbie Fasciana at dfasciana@dwcaonline.org to arrange a meeting date and time.

Use of personal social media accounts or personal cell phones (texting) as a means of communication for school related matters is not appropriate and may violate the Academy's technology use policies.

The Academy also communicates with parents/guardians in other ways. Parents are expected to stay current with these communications:

- **Email, SMS, phone messages and posts through the FACTS Family Portal, including weekly Academy Happenings**
- **Google Classroom**
- **Information Sent Home With Students:**

Occasionally, teachers or administration at the Academy will send hard copy information home with students. Please check your child's backpack ***daily*** for any such information.

The Academy's publicly available Website and Facebook pages are also good sources of information about the Academy.

Website: <https://dwcaonline.org>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/DWCADouglaston>

E. Academy Family Association

The Academy Family Association (AFA) assists in creating an Academy community that reflects its Christ centered mission.

Members of the AFA include at least one parent representative from each Grade in the Academy. AFA members behave in a manner consistent with the Academy's mission.

The AFA's goals include:

- Assisting new families in becoming familiar with the Academy community, its policies and procedures;
- Organizing, subject to Academy approval, activities and events that benefit individual grades or the Academy as a whole.

Members of the AFA meet with the Academy administration at the beginning of the academic to identify the AFA's goals each academic year. Such goals are updated throughout the year as circumstances warrant, subject to administration approval.

F. Homework

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

G. Fundraising

Fundraising activities directly assist in managing the overall cost of an Academy education. Certain fundraisers also provide an opportunity for student involvement and community building.

All Academy families with students in K-8 are to provide 15 service hours towards fundraising activities, or pay \$50.00/hour for hours not served, up to the maximum of \$750.00.

Parents/guardians may participate in any fundraising activities of their choice, subject to availability. Parents/guardians register to participate in specific fundraising activities on a first-come, first served basis through Sign Up Genius on the Academy website.

Parents/guardians and the Academy have a shared responsibility to track hours served. Keeping a personal record of hours is very important for when the School office completes the final tally in order to ensure there are no discrepancies.

H. Volunteering, Chaperoning & VIRTUS Training

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

- The VIRTUS program for adults is a three-hour live awareness session that instructs adults of the Church that to protect children you must have continuous awareness and vigilance. This awareness session helps trainees understand signs of child sexual abuse, the methods and means by which offenders commit abuse, and five empowerment steps to prevent child sexual abuse.
- The Code of Conduct is a document that acknowledges the importance of legal, professional and responsible conduct of all who work with children and young people. All clergy, employees and volunteers are required to read the Code of Conduct and to sign a Statement of Acknowledgement Form. The Code of Conduct is distributed at all VIRTUS sessions.
- All employees and volunteers are also required to have a criminal background screening completed before they start their employment or service. These forms are also distributed at all VIRTUS sessions. As of May 2010, all background screenings (employees and volunteers) will be done through the Safe Environment Office. The searches are done through LexisNexis (volunteers) or HireRight

(employees). All information is kept confidential and if a positive result is returned, the pastor/administrator will be notified and appropriate steps will be taken. Background searches will be rerun every 3 years for employees and 5 years for volunteers

I. Custody and Guardianship Orders

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

J. Use of Student Information, Photos and Videos

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

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

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

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

K. Health and Wellness

- Medical Requirements

The New York City Department of Health requires that all new students entering nursery through grade 12 show proof of having received a complete medical evaluation. Children who transfer from one school to another in New York City are not considered new students. These requirements may change from year to year. New York State Law states that all students in Grades Nursery through 12 must be immunized as directed by the New York State and New York City Departments of Health.

New students may enter school provisionally with documentation of **an initial series of immunizations**. Once admitted provisionally, a student has a certain amount of time to continue and complete the medical requirements. Students who fail to complete the necessary requirements within the appropriate time frame **must be excluded from school**. Parents must provide records of immunization to be kept on file at the Academy.

Any exemptions to the immunization requirements must be approved by the Academy with documentation being kept in the student's health records. Only medical exemptions are permitted per New York State Law. Religious exemptions are no longer permissible.

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

- **Health Services**

A full time DOH nurse is on staff to assist students with medical needs.

- **Illness and Medical Conditions**

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

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

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

- **Allergies:**

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

Policy on nuts and other allergens: Divine Wisdom would like to raise every parent's level of awareness about food allergies that a few of our children have at school. For these students, foods can represent a danger and must carefully be monitored. The welfare and safety of all of our students is Divine Wisdom's top priority.

- **Asthma:**

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

- **Clearance to Return:**

In certain instances, the Academy may require medical clearance for the child to return to the Academy. If requested, the medical clearance note must specifically state that the child may return to the Academy and resume all activities including gym and playground. Clearance notes will likely be required for severe illness, including hospitalizations and ER visits, surgical procedures, head injuries, cardiac/respiratory concerns, fractures, sprains, or significant changes in a child's health state which may impact physical activities. **Contagious Illness:** To the extent a child has a contagious illness, please notify the Academy as soon as possible so that we may alert others who came in contact with your child. We also may be required to notify the Department of Health. A student with a contagious illness should not arrive for school. This applies even if the parent/guardian has not received confirmation that the child's illness is contagious, but the child is exhibiting signs of a possible communicable disease, such as a suspicious skin rash, suspicious open wounds, redness of the eyes with intense itching/burning and a thick drainage, painful, reddened sore throat, and a

constant cough accompanied by other symptoms. Students with a contagious illness should remain home from school until a doctor advises that he or she is no longer contagious and can resume normal activities.

- **Diarrhea/Vomiting:**

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

- **Epinephrine:**

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

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

- **Fever:**

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

- **Lice:**

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

- **Mobility:**

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

- **Administering Medication**

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

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

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

- **Administering Epinephrine**

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

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

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

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

- **Administering Epinephrine on Field Trips**

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

- **City & State Health Services**

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

- **Accommodations**

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

- **Emergency Services in the Event of a Serious Injury**

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

- **Limitations of Physical Activity**

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

- **Counseling Services**

Divine Wisdom Catholic Academy participates in the PDHP, program for the Development of Human Potential which provides drug, alcohol, gambling, bullying, and violence prevention services to Catholic Academies within the Diocese of Brooklyn.

- **Wellness Policy**

The Academy meets minimum federal and state standards for goals of physical education, nutrition, and healthy environments in schools.

- **Accident Policy**

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

If an accident results in a medical condition/injury, the Academy is authorized to render reasonable first aid if such direct medical assistance would, in the opinion and judgment of the Academy, minimize the severity of the student or injured person's condition. The Academy may secure a professional diagnosis and/or treatment if such action, in the opinion and judgment of the Academy, appears to be reasonably warranted.

The Academy, its staff, and the Academy officials shall be held harmless from any liability, costs or expenses associated with any treatment of first aid provided (including, but not limited to the cost of transportation), and such costs or expenses shall be the responsibility of the injured party or, if a student, the student's parents.

L. Lunch Program

Parents/guardians may opt to have their child participate in the Academy's special lunch program (grades K-8) or bring in their own lunch.

In either case, the following policies apply:

- Glass bottles or containers are not permitted;
- Parents/guardians must provide their children eating utensils;
- Lunches brought from home CANNOT be warmed, so please consider this if your child brings lunch from home.;
- During lunch, regardless of location, each child is expected to remain in his or her seat until dismissed;
- Each child is responsible for keeping his or her lunch area clean;
- Students are to demonstrate respect to those supervising lunch, and comply with their instructions.

Special lunches are offered to students in grades K-8 for purchase in six-week lunch cycles. We cannot accommodate daily purchases.

Students in K-2 have a daily snack. Please provide a healthy snack for your child, separate from their lunch.

M. Technology Related Policies

Acceptable Use

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

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

Respect One's Self

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

Respect Others

- Be mindful of comments, posts, photos or any content directed toward or including others;
- Refrain from engaging in inflammatory, harassing, or any other such disrespectful behavior;
- Do not perpetuate inappropriate content by sharing it with or sending it to others;
- Warn others of potentially disturbing or harmful content that should be avoided.

Protect One's Self and Others

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

Respect Intellectual Property

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

When telecommunicating with individuals, groups, or institutions, you are doing so as an individual. You should not represent yourself, your views, ideas, questions, or actions as representing the Academy without the expressed permission of the Principal.

Security of Technology

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

Security on any computer system is a high priority. If parents, guardians, or students identify a probable or actual technology vulnerability, they are required to notify a system administrator, principal, or teacher and not disclose the problem to others in any way.

Although there are safeguards in place to protect all users from inappropriate content, the Academy and Diocese of Brooklyn are not responsible for failures in filtering that result in access to objectionable content. If any inappropriate content is identified, the parent, guardian or student should shut down the device impacted and report the matter immediately to a system administrator, teacher, or the principal.

Additionally, parents, guardians, and students shall not:

- Use another's Academy issued credentials for any reason;
- Attempt to gain unauthorized access to Diocesan Academy computers or computer systems;
- Download or install any software application without prior authorization.

Administrative Rights

The Academy reserves the right to monitor both student and employee use of technology and computer accessed content on Academy owned and/or maintained devices, networks and tools. Due to the evolving nature of technology, the Academy reserves the right to amend or add to this policy at any time without notice.

Communications Between Students and Academy Personnel

Any communication between current students, faculty, staff or administration through methods other than those authorized by the Academy are prohibited.

Personal Use of Social Media

Social media includes, but is not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, Instagram, Google+, LinkedIn, Snapchat or any other such medium. All references to Academy personnel, students and/or any member of the Academy community in social media, web pages, e-mail, text messages, etc. deemed to be conduct injurious to the moral tone of the Academy are violations of this policy.

Social media posts whether text, photos, videos, emoji's, GIF's etc. (or some combination thereof) must use appropriately respectful, and refrain from harassing, defamatory, abusive, discriminatory, threatening or other inappropriate communications.

Representation of the Academy in whole or part on any personal posts and/or communication is prohibited.

Use of Electronic Devices and Access to such Devices in Certain Circumstances

The use of electronic devices (i.e., cell phones, iPads, iPhones, Smart Watches and other personal electronic devices) for purposes of furthering any of the Academy's goals and activities must be appropriate for the related Academy activity. Possession and or/use of such devices may not interrupt or detract from Academy activities regardless of time or place.

In the event an electronic device, including a student smartphone, is believed to contain evidence of a violation of Academy policy and/or a threat to the Academy community, the individual possessing the electronic device is obliged to grant the administration of the Academy access to the device and the information therein.

Inappropriate use of any electronic device may result in serious consequences.

If a student brings an electronic device to the Academy other than an Academy provided device (ie Academy Chromebook), the device:

- Must be shut down at all times while on Academy grounds on school days;
- May not be used to take pictures or record audio or video files;
- May not be used to request a “forgotten” items (e.g. homework, permission slip, etc.);
- Must be stored in the student’s book bag so that it cannot be readily seen or accessed.

Wearing of FitBits, Smart watches and other devices is prohibited, and are subject to these policies as well.

Medically necessary devices may be used only in accordance with the related directives, and their use must be approved by the Principal

On school days, the Academy reserves the right to confiscate electronic devices while on Academy grounds. Parents/guardians will be required to come to school to retrieve such confiscated devices.

Repeated offenses of these policies may lead to additional disciplinary actions.

Acknowledgment by Parents/Guardians of Technology related Policies

Parents/guardians for all students must give permission for their child to use the internet and the Academy’s technology resources for educational purposes and understands and accepts the Academy’s technology related policies.

This permission is encompassed in the Acceptable Use Policy to be signed by parents/guardians and, where applicable, students, and is attached to the end of this Handbook.

N. FACTS Family Portal

The FACTS Family Portal provides access to student academic information, school announcements, school calendar and your FACTS payment plan and incidental billing information. Once the FACTS Family Portal has been set-up for a student, parents/guardians will receive instructions on creating log-in credentials and a user profile. FACTS Family Portal may be accessed from any device, including Apple or Android devices/smartphones.

VI. SAFETY

A. Commitment to Safety

Safety of the students is the Academy's highest priority and is committed to maintaining a high standard of safety. This requires that the Academy complete periodic drills and exercises and that all members of the community are trained in our safety protocols. Cooperation among the administration, teachers, staff, and parents is essential. The Academy focuses on safety through the Academy grounds, including hallways, classrooms, staircases, restrooms, offices, St. Anastasia Church, Father Smith Hall, the Stem Lab, Art Room, Music Room, gymnasium, the Peaceful Playground, and parking lot. The Academy also focuses on safety through the day school day, including drop off, recess and lunch periods, physical education classes, after school programs and extracurricular activities (inside and outside the Academy grounds), and dismissal.

Parents must adhere to established drop-off and pick-up protocols given the volume of cars and buses involved.

B. Emergency Drills

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

C. School Closings

The Academy generally determines school closings on the decisions of the New York City Public School System. If the New York City school system closes due to inclement weather, the Academy is expected to be closed. The Academy may choose to close due to other hazardous conditions (infrastructure issues, flooding, property damage, etc.). The closure will be communicated through e-mail, text message and posted on the **Academy** website (www.dwcaonline.org). In the event of a closure during the school day, proper provisions will be made for students to return home or to be cared for until usual dismissal time.

In the event it is necessary to close school due to an emergency, or inclement weather, it may be determined that the school day will be a remote learning day. The switch to remote learning will be communicated through email, text message and posted on the **Academy** website (www.dwcaonline.org).

D. Crisis/Emergency Information

Should a crisis require evacuation from the school building, students will be escorted to Zion Episcopal Church or MS 67 and parents/guardians should meet them at that location. The Academy will utilize **FACTS Student Information System** to notify parents/guardians directly about the crisis.

Emergency contact information is collected electronically at the start of the school year. It is essential that the electronic survey be completed promptly and accurately. Any changes that occur in this information over the course of the school year must be reported to the administrative staff immediately. **Inaccurate information impacts your child's safety and security.** Lastly, only adults listed on the emergency contact sheet are authorized to take a child from school.

E. Reporting Concerns Regarding School Safety

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

F. Visitors

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

G. Video Surveillance/Photographs

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

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

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

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

H. VIRTUS training

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

I. Teaching children to be safe

The Academy recommends parents/guardians regularly review with their children the following safety guidelines:

- Students should never leave the Academy grounds or any venue with strangers.
- Students should never talk to strangers.
- Students should never take things from strangers.
- If students are approached by strangers and are still near the Academy, encourage them to return to the Academy to report the incident.

- Young students should be escorted to and from school.
- Older children should be encouraged to walk/travel to school in groups whenever possible.

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

J. Child Lures Prevention Program

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

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

K. Child Abuse Laws

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

L. Confidentiality

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

M. Sexual Harassment

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

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

any retaliation or disciplinary action on the part of the Academy for reports of sexual harassment made in good faith.

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

N. Child Reporting Abuse to Parents

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

O. Signs of Suicide (SOS) Prevention Program

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

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

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

VII. TUITION AND FINANCES

A. School Tuition Policies

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

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

Tuition contracts specifying a payment schedule will be published and shared with families. All families must sign an enrollment contract that guarantees the family will be responsible for the full payment of tuition and fees.

B. Tuition and Other Fee Schedules

The Academy will generally collect tuition and fees over a ten-month period. This ten-month period will typically extend from June to March. Tuition collection will begin prior to the start of the school year. 8th Grade students will have an additional Graduation monthly from Sept- April (\$50 a month).

The Academy reserves the right to place severely delinquent accounts in the hands of a collection agency or its attorneys for collection. It is not our desire that any family should incur unnecessary legal fees or suffer further embarrassment or inconvenience in this regard. Again, we encourage prompt communication with the Academy in such situations.

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

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

C. Resources for Tuition Assistance

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

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

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

D. Tuition Assistance Committee

The Tuition Assistance Committee has a two-fold purpose:

- The Committee monitors the extent of tuition arrears and collection thereof;
- The Committee may recommend to the Board of Trustees deferment/reduction of tuition for families that have demonstrated true financial need or face unforeseen extraordinary circumstances. Such a deferment will establish a fair and just tuition rate that will allow students to remain enrolled when even scholarship assistance is not enough. Any recommendation made by the Tuition Assistance Committee must be approved by the Academy's Board of Trustees.

E. FACTS

FACTS is used for tuition processing, collection and reporting.

FACTS enables efficient tuition billing and collection. The Academy strongly encourages parents/guardians to take advantage to establishing a payment plan (different payment plans are available up to ten monthly payments) with direct withdrawals (ACH) from specified accounts at no charge. Credit cards may also be used, but there is a 2.85% convenience fee on credit card transactions. Monthly invoices paid by check are also permitted. **THE ACADEMY DOES NOT ACCEPT CASH FOR TUITION PAYMENTS.**

F. Tuition Delinquency

FACTS will send payment reminders prior to any due date, returned payment notices in the case of a failed payment, and will make automated phone calls to delinquent payers. Payers who fail to communicate with the Academy and resolve the delinquency through a payment schedule approved by the Academy may result in suspension of services. In no event will students be permitted to attend class at the commencement of the academic year unless any prior year balances are paid in full.

G. Registration and other required fees

Registration and other required fees are paid through FACTS Tuition Management at enrollment. It is expected that enrolled families have made the required tuition and fee payments prior to the first day of the school year.

H. 8th Grade Student Arrears

In order to participate in graduation activities, all payment obligations must be satisfied by the first Monday of May. Eighth grade transcripts will not be released to high schools if the financial obligations have not been met. In addition, all fees must be paid in full before records or progress reports will be processed. It is the sole discretion of the academy to withhold trimester exams, report cards, transcripts, records, and diplomas until all financial obligations are satisfied in full.

VIII. TRANSPORTATION

A. Bus Transportation

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

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

As **Divine Wisdom Catholic Academy** has grown, so has the number of students taking school, private and NYC buses. Below is a listing of bus behavior expectations and protocols:

- Please be cooperative and courteous to the bus driver.
- Observe the same conduct/behavior on the bus as in classroom; all **Academy** policies apply as well on the bus.
- Stay in your seat at all times, and keep your hands to yourself. People in the community are known to call the office to report dangerous behavior.
- Keep the bus clean. Make sure all papers and belongings leave with you at the end of the ride.
- Eating and drinking are allowed only with the direct permission of the bus driver.
- Nothing can be thrown out of the windows, including garbage.
- Keep head, hands and feet inside the bus.
- The bus driver has the authority over the conduct/behavior on the bus, and is authorized to assign seats.
- Illegal or dangerous items are not allowed on the bus.

B. Use of Other Vehicles

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

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

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

IX. RECORDS

A. Change of Information

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

B. Educational Records Request

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

C. Authorization to Release Records

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

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

D. Review of a Child's Official Records

Parents/legal guardians have the right to inspect any and all material which is part of their child's permanent record. Parents/guardians wishing to inspect such permanent records may make a written request to the Academy Main Office.

At the time of inspection, the Academy Principal, or the Principal's designee, will be present.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT

Please log into your FACTS Family Portal to acknowledge receipt for **EACH** of your children by Friday, September 15, 2023.

FOR STUDENTS GRADES 5-8

Teachers will be reviewing the handbook with their homeroom classes during the first week of school.

