



Saint Mary School

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Believing and Achieving Since 1873

**Accredited by the
New England Association of
Schools and Colleges and the
State of Connecticut**

**Member of
National Catholic Educational Association
Connecticut Association of Independent Schools
Connecticut Association of Schools**

PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK

MISSION STATEMENT

St. Mary School is a Catholic elementary school in Northeastern Connecticut, offering a quality education by meeting the needs of the whole child within a caring environment. Our students, rooted in faith, recognize and value their God-given talents and self-worth and are empowered to go forth and make a difference in the world.

August 2008

Dear Parents, Guardians and Students,

Another academic year has arrived and I offer my welcome and best wishes to all our returning students, transfer students, and especially to our newest members of the Saint Mary School. Saint Mary School is a community that we hope will offer you tremendous opportunities for growth in your academic, social and spiritual life. Forming young people of mature, Christian character who will someday serve God's people is vitally important in a world which is, at times, hostile to our way of living humbly and in service to one another.

At Saint Mary School we offer our students the tools they will need to grow in mind, body, and spirit. Ultimately, it is the students' challenge to listen carefully to where God is calling them and to discern how they might put their talents to work in a world which desperately needs compassion, understanding, and Christian leadership.

I encourage each student to reach out to others, to stretch beyond their perceived limitations, to be open and understanding about others' points of view, and always to have faith that our loving God knows our needs and is always near. You will take away from Saint Mary Catholic School exactly what you invest in it and then some, but you must be invested in this process. You must seek out and connect to new friends, new experiences and all that Saint Mary's offers. The administrative team, the staff, and faculty are all here to support and guide you through this most exciting time in your academic life. Please call on us if we can be of any help or assistance.

This handbook will provide you with a summary of our school's philosophy, our mission, our traditions and our procedures and policies. This handbook is our contract between the school and the student and his or her family. Please read it carefully, sign the acknowledgement page and return it to the student's teacher. Your signatures are an indication that you agree to abide by all the policies and procedures outlined here, and your failure to return it in a timely fashion may cause us to forfeit a student's seat at SMS. Saint Mary School is much more than a Pre K through 8 Elementary school. It is a Catholic, Christian community of teachers, students, staff, faculty and families who consent to a way of life and learning rooted in the Gospels and grounded in our faith.

Please consider carefully the importance of your commitment to the Saint Mary School family before signing this handbook. I am filled with hope and energy for the year ahead at Saint Mary School. May God be with you in all that you do at Saint Mary School!

The Peace of Our Lord Be With You,

Mr. Michael Ryba
Principal

FACULTY AND STAFF OF SAINT MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL 2008-09

Pastor	Rev. Roland C. Cloutier
Principal	Mr. Michael Ryba
Administrative Assistant	Mrs. Patricia Bergeron
Financial Secretary	Mrs. Patricia Labonte
School Nurse	Mrs. Susan Gatineau
Pre Kindergarten	Mrs. Nancy Kenyon
Pre K Assistant	Mrs. Diane DiVincenzo
Pre K Assistant	Mrs. Josephine Fontaine
Kindergarten	Mrs. Deborah Andstrom
Grade 1	Mrs. Sheryl Higgins
Grade 2	Mrs. Regina Pragana
Grade 3	Mrs. Susan Larkin-Bessette
Grade 4	Miss Antaya Radding
Grade 5	Mrs. Elizabeth Becker
Grade 6	Miss Cassandra Nelson
Grade 7	Mrs. Kathleen DiVeglia
Grade 8	Mrs. Marie Desautels
Art/ Kindergarten Aide	Mrs. Amy Bellerose
Computer/Media Specialist	Mr. Richard Lepore
Library	Mrs. Geraldine Gazzola
Math 6-8	Mrs. Erica Krick
Music/Physical Education	Mrs. Kate Anderson
Spanish	Miss Halley Welz
Food Service Director	Mrs. Cathy Rathbun
Cafeteria Staff	Mrs. Kristen Robinson
Maintenance Director	Mr. Gary Donais
Maintenance Staff	Mr. Frank Babcock

PHILOSOPHY

St. Mary School is a Catholic elementary school educating students in grades Pre-K through eighth. It serves the St. Mary of the Visitation Roman Catholic parish and reaches out to the surrounding communities.

Open to children of all creeds, races, and ethnic groups, St. Mary affirms the worth of each child and seeks to foster a mature faith, which will lead to a firm faith commitment in each individual.

The goal of St. Mary School is to educate the whole child, spiritually, academically, emotionally, socially, and physically. As a result, students grow in self-discipline and in their commitment to academic achievement. The school facilitates this growth with a strong core curriculum that challenges students and encourages each of them to reach her/his maximum potential. This leads students to see the importance of being life long learners.

The administration, teachers, staff, parents, and students together create a community built upon Gospel values, distinguished by a climate of respect, trust, and integrity. Deeply rooted in faith, our students are prepared to model and live this spirit of community and to make a difference.

COMMUNITY FAITH LIFE

All that we endeavor to do at Saint Mary School is grounded in the Gospels and the person of Jesus. Catholic schools are Christian communities focused on the core spiritual values of teaching, serving and building community. Saint Mary School is no exception. Our rich spiritual life is due in large part to the commitment of the spiritual giants who have preceded us at SMS. Since its founding, Saint Mary School has treasured its relationship with the Daughters of the Holy Spirit, the religious sister who first taught at the school. Their commitment to service and Catholic education has inspired generations of Saint Mary School graduates to reach beyond themselves and serve. So many people in the greater Putnam area and surrounding communities have been graduates from Saint Mary School that it is almost impossible to conduct business, exercise government, and utilize professional services without connecting with a former student of Saint Mary School.

In addition, Saint Mary School offers numerous opportunities for spiritual growth, service and participation in the sacramental life. Prayer is central to our life as a community. We pause each morning before starting the school day with student-lead prayer and the personal intentions of our community and conclude each day in the same way. School wide liturgies, prayer services and the sacrament of reconciliation are offered periodically throughout the school year. We observe sacred space in the adjacent chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved for quiet prayer and adoration on a regular basis. We celebrate Mass at least once each month as well as Holy Days of Obligation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered on a regular basis as well. Students are encouraged to engage in their own spiritual quest and the communal spiritual life of the school through many opportunities both during and after school.

BRIEF HISTORY

The history of St. Mary School actually begins in 1873 when the Sisters of Mercy operated on this site a day and boarding school, the Notre Dame Academy, for children of Irish, Italian, and Polish descent. In 1913, the Rev. Charles F. Bedard became the first

Franco-American pastor of St. Mary of the Visitation Parish in Putnam, Connecticut. The boarding school was closed and the Daughters of the Holy Spirit, several of whom had been professionally prepared by the Sisters of Mercy, opened St. Mary School. In 1922, a new building was erected and provided 12 classrooms in addition to those already being used in the convent. The enrollment quickly rose to 817 students, and by 1949 it reached its peak as 826 students were on the rosters in grades K-8.

On March 24, 1963 an addition to the school and new convent were dedicated by Bishop Hines. However, by 1971, enrollment had begun to decrease appreciably. This decline was attributed to two things: the opening of a new Putnam Elementary and Middle School, and the fact that in 1969 tuition fees had been established. Previously, children had attended free of charge.

In 1981, a Pre-K program, St. Mary Outreach, was begun. It was housed in the building but operated independently from the school itself. As of July 1, 1985, the Pre-K program was incorporated into St. Mary School under the direct supervision of the principal, adding another dimension to the St. Mary School community.

Enrollment started to grow slowly. In 1986 there were 170 students in grades K-8 and 57 students enrolled in the Pre-K program.

With financial concerns increasing, a development committee was formed in 1987 and the first annual campaign launched in October of that year. It was very successful and continues to be a vital part of our financial picture to this day.

In an effort to boost enrollment, the school board decided to establish a Marketing Committee. One of the marketing ideas that is still used today is called "pulpit talks." Members of the St. Mary community attend Mass at neighboring parishes that do not have schools, and they present information extolling the benefits of attending St. Mary School.

With the expected increase in enrollment for the 94-95 school year, the art room was moved during the summer to the former convent, now the Rose Bove LaRose Community Center, in order to free up an additional classroom. The Pre-K program was moved to the parish center for the 95-96 school year to accommodate a second kindergarten. The Library was moved to the second floor of the community center and plans were made for the computer center to occupy a renovated storage area in the basement near the cafeteria. This opened two additional classrooms. It was that same school year that the first lay person, Ms. Phyllis Hickey, became principal of St. Mary School.

Enrollment continued to increase, reaching 300 students by 2003, much of it due to the hard work of the Marketing Committee. In 2001, a new state-of-the-art computer lab was developed and moved to the community center under the able direction of our computer teacher, Jane Engle. The lab was dedicated to her memory in June 2006 after she passed away.

Following a national trend, enrollment began to fall once again. In June of 2004, a new lay principal, Mrs. Patricia Wester, was hired. The enrollment was now at 180, resulting in single grade levels. Unfortunately, due to ill health, our new principal had to retire in January of 2006. Dr. Françoise Gauthier was hired as interim principal. She had been principal at St. Mary 1983-1995. In June of 2006, she consented to come on board full time once again with the stipulation that Mrs. Patricia Podurgiel remain as full-time assistant principal and coordinator of the accreditation until June of 2008. Mrs. Podurgiel accepted the position. In 2006-2007, St. Mary School had a total enrollment of 172 Pre-

K through eighth grade. After the accreditation process was complete in the fall of 2007, both Dr. Gauthier and Mrs. Podurgiel resigned.

Shortly thereafter, in January of 2008, Mr. Michael Ryba became St. Mary School's first full-time male principal. With enrollment down to below 150 students, the focus became to do everything possible to get the good news out about Saint Mary School. Students were still testing far above the national average and 8th grade graduates were destined to prestigious secondary schools and winning scholarships. Mr. Ryba's focus was to reenergize the school community and step-up marketing of the school as well as take some bold steps toward the future.

We have been marketing ourselves consistently with newspaper coverage of our activities, radio talk show time to publicize the great things going on in our school, and placing brochures in community Pre-K facilities, doctors' offices and the local hospital. A new television ad was also put on cable TV in August. A revamped development campaign was put into place and the results have been very positive thus far. An exciting new project to build a state-of-the-art library media center was initiated and is scheduled to be completed this fall. Some new and enthusiastic faculty members have come aboard to add to the momentum that the school is experiencing. The results: this year we have seen an increase in enrollment back above the 2006-07 level.

With new families coming to Saint Mary School, we have begun to realize the hope that our efforts to enhance our image and grow are bearing fruit. The future promises even more growth and many positive changes as Saint Mary School is on a track to be ranked among the best Catholic Pre K–8 elementary schools in the nation.

ATTENDANCE

By state law, students are required to attend school 180 days per year or each day that school is in session. In order for a student to be eligible for promotion, it is required that the student be in attendance no fewer than 160 days.

Early Dismissal: A written request from parents is required for a student to leave school before the end of the regular school day. The request must state clearly the reason for the early dismissal. Students will be released only to parents or a person authorized by the parents. If a child is to walk to the destination that, too, must be clearly stated, including the address and telephone number of where the child is going. After morning prayer, the student must bring the note to the secretary and receive an early dismissal slip, which he/she must present to the teacher from whose class he/she will be dismissed.

Please note: Four hours of attendance are needed to constitute a legal day, otherwise the student is considered absent for that day.

If a child must be absent on a given day, the parents **MUST** notify the school by the beginning of that school day (8:25), unless the absence had been anticipated, and you had notified us accordingly. You may call us or e-mail us with this information to secretary@smsputnam.com. If we have not heard from you by 9:00 a.m., we will need to call you to confirm the whereabouts of your child in order to assure her/his safety.

The day the child returns to school after an absence, the child **MUST** go to the secretary's office after morning prayer to obtain an admission slip to class. Based on the communication from the home and the reason for the absence, that slip will be marked "excused" or "unexcused."

If an absence is determined to be "**unexcused**", make up work will **NOT** be assigned, accepted or graded, and a zero will be earned for all work missed.

When a child returns to school after an “**excused**” absence, it is the child and the parent’s responsibility to request make-up work and to see to the completion of any missing assignments within the allowable number of days: for example, 2 days out = 2 days to complete the work. Special attention must be given to absences near the end of a trimester or marking period, since **ALL** work must be completed before the deadline. In such cases, the number of days allowable to make up work may not be available, and incompletes will not be given for such reasons.

Teachers are not required to prepare detailed assignments ahead of time for extended absences such as vacations and activities that could be scheduled to coincide with the school year calendar. Teachers should not be expected to re-teach individually the lessons that were presented during such absences.

Tardiness: It is obvious that tardiness is a disruption for the students themselves, for their teachers, and for school personnel. It is also obvious and a well-known fact that tardiness is a negative habit that often leads to dismissal in the job place. In order to develop in our students a sense of how important it is to arrive on time, parents are reminded that it is **their** responsibility to assure that their children come to school on time regularly.

Students are tardy if they are not in their homeroom when the **8:25** bell rings. Students arriving late must stop in the secretary’s office accompanied by the adult who drove them to school or have a **written note** explaining the reason for the tardiness. Parents also have the option of calling to explain the tardiness. Students not following the above procedure will be issued an **unexcused tardy** admission to class. Being tardy **three** unexcused times will earn the student a detention.

Arrival and dismissal: Supervision is provided in the schoolyard from **7:30 a.m. to 8:15 a.m.** every morning. Upon arriving, all students are to proceed to the schoolyard. Kindergarteners will go directly to their classroom for the month of **September**. On rainy mornings all students will enter the building through the front door and go immediately to the cafeteria. The first bell will ring at **8:15 a.m.** and students will line up and file into the building or to their classrooms with their respective homeroom teacher. All students must be in their homeroom before **8:25 a.m.** when the school day officially opens with prayer.

Bus Regulations: For personal safety and general orderliness, students who ride the bus should remain seated and obey the bus driver at all times while under his/her supervision. If a student does not behave in a responsible manner, he/she may be suspended from riding the bus. Should this happen, it will be the responsibility of the parents to provide transportation for the student.

For safety reasons, Kindergarteners will be dropped off **only** if there is an adult at the stop at the end of the school day. If there is no adult there, the child will be brought back to the school, placed in the Extended Day Program and the parent/caregiver will be called.

Please note: Parent will be responsible for the Extended Day fee.

Vehicular Traffic: Parents who drive their children to school are asked to drop them off directly in front of the school’s main entrance, in front of the Parish Center

sidewalk, or at the driveway between the church and school. Please do not block traffic as you allow your child to leave your vehicle. The Green Street driveway entrance is **not** to be used as a drop off area for students. Cars for “**parent pick up**” at the end of the school day are to go to the schoolyard, entering from Green Street. For safety reasons, **NO EXCEPTIONS, PLEASE**. Only walkers and bus students will dismiss through the front door.

Parents are asked to clearly display the family name card in the front windshield. When your name is called your child/children will be escorted to your car. Parents are asked **NOT** to get out of the car to get the children.

Dismissal will be at 2:35 p.m. daily unless otherwise specified on the school calendar.

EXTENDED DAY and AFTER THE BELL PROGRAMS

The primary purpose of the Extended Day (3-8) and the After the Bell (PreK-2) Programs is to accommodate the schedules of working parents and to provide a safe environment for students at the end of the school day. The programs are in session each regularly scheduled school day. Parents may choose to have their children participate on any of those days and for any amount of time necessary between **7:00 a.m. and 7:30 a.m., 2:35 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.** The **fees** are \$4.50 per hour or any part of an hour in the afternoon, and \$3.00 in the morning (only a half hour is available), per child and are payable on a daily basis or at the end of each week. Fees that become **one week overdue** will incur a child’s dismissal from the program until the account is settled. A family plan is available.

SCHOOL CANCELLATIONS, DELAYS and EARLY DISSMISSALS

In case of a school cancellation, delays or early dismissals, parents will receive a phone call and email from *One Call Now*, a notice will be put on the School’s web site, and the radio station **WINY** will announce the closing or delayed opening. The same information will also appear on **Channel 30 and Channel 3**.

CHILD ABUSE

School personnel are mandated to report any **suspected** cases of child abuse to the Department of Children and Families. Child abuse is defined by CT law as any physical injury on any child under the age of 18 by other than accidental means or as a condition of maltreatment, such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual molestation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment.

COMMUNICATION

At St. Mary School we firmly believe in and support the value of ongoing communication among all segments of our school community. We must all strive to establish and maintain open communication throughout the school year. We must work closely with one another and make an ongoing effort to understand and appreciate one another if we are to continue to provide the best education possible for our students.

It is **vital** that parents notify the school **immediately** when the family changes address, telephone number, e-mail address, or when there is a change in a parent’s place of employment.

Names and phone numbers for after school caretakers and/or individuals to be contacted in case of emergency must also be kept up to date.

Parents are asked to read **carefully** and **immediately ALL** correspondence that comes home from school. Since children sometimes forget to give their parents papers, letters, etc., it is **crucial** to get into the habit of asking your child **DAILY** if there is any correspondence from school. Your timely response to such correspondence will enable our entire educational community to function more smoothly.

If a concern or issue should arise regarding an individual teacher, the issue should be discussed first directly with the teacher concerned. If this does not bring about a satisfactory resolution, that matter may be referred to the school principal for study and a possible resolution.

If a student has a concern or issue regarding an individual teacher, that student should first speak with the teacher concerned and attempt to clarify and resolve the difficulty. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the meeting, he/she may bring the concern to the principal.

Health issues: Parents are asked to notify the school at the beginning of the year if a child has a particular health problem, especially seizures or allergies to insect bites or certain foods. Also, if there is any change in a child's health during the course of the year, please contact us as soon as possible.

For the administration of **ALL** medication by school personnel, **BOTH** the **doctor's order and the parent's written authorization** are necessary.

Field Trips: In the course of the year, all classes have the opportunity to go on one or more field trips. These trips are meant to be learning situations for the students and are not designed to be merely "fun" outings. **Written** parental request/permission is required each time a child is to participate in a field trip, whether the child walks to the destination, rides in a parent car, or in a school-provided vehicle.

These forms are sent home at least one day prior to the trip. Parents are asked to read each form carefully, to sign it and have the student return it immediately to the homeroom teacher. **NO CALLS will be made from the office to the parent on the day of the trip since VERBAL CONSENT is not acceptable.** If the request/permission form has not been returned, the child will not be allowed to take part in the outing.

The school has the right to stipulate that the parent of a student (for disciplinary, health, or other serious reason) must accompany the child on the trip. A field trip is considered a school day, and all students are expected to participate or they will be marked absent for that day. The procedure for absences must be followed when the student returns to school.

Those parents who may be asked to chaperone will be given a copy of chaperone guidelines, which must be signed and returned to the teacher in charge. It is very important that all chaperones adhere to the guidelines and any special directives from the teacher to assure a safe and pleasant trip. If you have any questions concerning the guidelines, please speak to the teacher **before** signing. Chaperones who do not adhere to the guidelines may not be invited to chaperone a field trip in the future.

DRESS CODE

Because school is a special place and the “workplace or office” of our students, it is appropriate that all students be neat and well-dressed at **ALL** times in a manner that befits the character of our Catholic Educational Community.

In order to assist the students in doing this, the following dress code is in effect for all students in K-8.

Parents are reminded that all clothing items must be in good condition, clean, properly sized and tailored. The dress code is **NOT OPTIONAL**, and not following it will be regarded as a flagrant act of disobedience on the part of the student. Common sense, foresight, co-operation, and a morning inspection every now and then on the part of the parents, will allow the dress code to be the user-friendly system it is designed to be.

While all dress code items are available from Donnelly’s, parents may purchase non-logo items from a retailer of their choice as long as the items are **IDENTICAL** to those from Donnelly’s.

Dress Code items are:

Girls:

- white oxford buttoned down collar blouse, long or short sleeved
- tie: (K-4) cross tie; (5-8) cross tie or long tie, red or plaid (**required for formal wear**)
- red polo, **with/without logo**, (tucked in except for gym and recess)
- red sleeveless vest, long sleeved V-neck pullover or cardigan **with/without school logo**
- plaid jumper (K-4)
- plaid or solid navy blue skirt (5-8)
- navy blue slacks or shorts (K-8)

Boys:

- white oxford buttoned down collar shirt, long or short sleeved
- tie: red or plaid (**required for formal wear**)
- red polo, **with/without logo** (tucked in except for gym and recess)
- red sleeveless vest, long sleeved V-neck pullover or cardigan **with/without school logo**
- navy blue slacks or shorts

All:

- shoes: must be in a color that matches the uniform, have rubber soles, low rubber heels, and be closed. Sneakers are ideal and are **required** for gym.
- socks: crew socks, knee socks or tights in a color that matches the uniform: socks **must** be at least ankle length
- belts: in a solid color that matches the uniform. Belts **must** be worn at **all** times unless pants have an elasticized waistband without any loops.
- jewelry, makeup and hairstyles: must be kept simple, safe and in character with the dress code. Visible body piercings (other than for **one** pair of earrings) and tattoos of any kind are not permitted.

Colognes, lotions, deodorants, etc. – Due to allergy concerns, please use all unscented products. Hairsprays, colognes, scented lotions, must be left at home.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES Cell Phones/Pagers/ Cameras / Palm-Pilots/I-Pods

Students may not use electronic devices during the instructional part of the school day, from 8:15 AM to 2:35 PM. Devices such as cell phones and/or pagers, cameras, camera phones, video and/or audio equipment are never to be used during the school day and should not be brought to school. Such equipment is also forbidden after school,

unless proper permission has been granted. Parents and students must be aware that electronic devices will be confiscated immediately. Such devices must be surrendered without protest and may also be inspected to determine the circumstances under which the item was being used.

Confiscated devices will be turned in to the Office and returned only to the parent or guardian during regular office hours. This infraction is considered a tabulated offense. **Arguing or failing to immediately surrender the device will be considered defiance/disrespect and will be subject to additional disciplinary action.**

Bullying, threatening, teasing, communicating academic information, or harassing with any function of an electronic device (on or off campus) will not be tolerated.

Email (Teacher/Staff- use of)

Individual teachers and staff members decide if email will be an acceptable mode of communication. Parents and students should check with teachers/staff before corresponding by email. In most cases, teachers will provide directives in their introductory materials.

LUNCH and BREAKFAST

Hot lunch and Breakfast, following government guidelines, is served in the school cafeteria on a daily basis. For the 2008-2009 school year **MEALS** are \$3.25 per day. When a meal is purchased, milk is included in the price. **MILK** purchased separately is \$.75. Ice cream is \$1.00 only on Tuesdays and Thursdays. A balanced breakfast is also available for \$2.00 per day and a la carte breakfast items are sold for \$.50. Breakfast is served from 7:00-7:20 AM

Free and reduced (\$.40) lunch is available to students who qualify under state and federal guidelines. Application forms are sent home at the beginning of the year and may be requested at any time during the school year.

HOMEWORK

Homework, by its very definition, is work that is completed at home. It is not limited to written work. Homework affords the student the opportunity to practice what had been learned in class and the time to reflect and produce work that is considered his/her "personal best."

Parents are asked to check regularly that their child does his/her homework assignments (written or otherwise) and that she/he completes long range projects.

The suggested amount of time spent on homework for each grade level is as follows:

Kindergarten	20 minutes
Grade 1	25 minutes
Grade 2	35 minutes
Grade 3	40 minutes
Grades 4,5	60 minutes
Grades 6,7,8	90 minutes

These times should not be viewed as inflexible in one direction or the other. They are guidelines which teachers use in assigning work to be done in the home on a daily

basis. All written assignments are to be done and presented neatly and legibly on clean, smooth-edged paper with the appropriate heading. Carelessly done assignments **will not be accepted**.

All late assignments, except those delayed because of an absence, will, as a result, automatically drop a grade before corrections take place, i.e. the highest possible grade would be a "B" or a "G". Parents will be notified whenever a pattern of late assignments develops.

HONOR ROLL

St. Mary School has an honor roll to mark the academic achievement of students in grades 6-8. The honor roll is published **three** times a year to coincide with the issuance of report cards. Eligibility for the honor roll is determined as follows:

Principal's List: Earned by students maintaining an overall average of 95 or better with no individual grade of U or below 65.

High Honors: Earned by students maintaining an overall average of 90-94 with no individual grade of U or below 65.

Honors: Earned by students maintaining an overall average of 85-89 with no individual grade of U or below 65.

DISCIPLINE

The discipline code at St. Mary School is based on the premise that to live in society and to be part of a community means that one must be willing to abide by rules and regulations that make living in that society or community a pleasant experience for everyone. Jesus' words "**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**" (**Mark 12:31**) are meant to be the guide for all members of this school community. Teachers, students and parents are urged to respect one another and to treat one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. However, human nature being what it is, members of the Christian community often need to be reminded what it means to "**love your neighbor.**"

Parents play a significant role in guiding their children to act responsibly and need to take ownership of this role. As they assist teachers and administrators, parents will be helping in the positive development of their children.

On a daily basis teachers encourage and motivate students to act in word and deed in a manner fitting a young Catholic-Christian. Teachers foster the self-discipline and self-respect necessary for success and happiness in the students' lives. However, when a student refuses to accept his/her responsibilities, a discipline policy is enforced.

Disciplinary Action: Students are subject to disciplinary action including verbal warnings, detentions (in or after school), suspension, and expulsion for misconduct. A **detention form** will be sent home with the student to **INFORM** the parent of the date and time at which the detention will take place. A total of 5 detentions will earn the student a **one-day in-school suspension**. In such cases, the principal and assistant principal may require a meeting with the student's parents.

An **out of school suspension** is within the jurisdiction of the principal. The parents will always be notified in writing. To ensure that the student does not miss out entirely on his/her schoolwork, assignments will be given during the suspension period. Assignments not completed will earn a grade of zero.

Expulsion: Prior to the permanent termination of a student's attendance at St. Mary School, the student and his/her parents will be granted a hearing by the principal. If expulsion is determined, the notification and the reasons for the expulsion will be given to the parents in writing.

CONTROLLED OR ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES

Any student found in possession of or using controlled or illegal substance in school, on school property, or at a school sponsored activity, shall be reported to the school principal who, in turn, will notify law enforcement officials and the student's parents or legal guardians. In such cases the student may be ultimately suspended, expelled and/or prosecuted. If it becomes evident that the student is a distributor, that is, one selling or giving drugs or recruiting for drug use, the student shall be reported to the principal and law officials, and the expulsion procedure will be initiated **IMMEDIATELY.**

WEAPONS AND DANGEROUS INSTRUMENTS

The Diocese of Norwich Schools strictly prohibit the possession, conveyance and use, or storage of weapons or look-alikes on school property, at school sponsored events, or in or around a school vehicle. The ban applies to students, employees and visitors.

WHAT IS A WEAPON? The administration retains the final authority in determining what constitutes a weapon, especially when evaluating potential danger. However, all the following are considered weapons: knife blades, mace, pepper spray, cutting instruments, nunchaku sticks, lasers, BB guns, shockers, razor blades, brass knuckles, acid, metal pipes, sharpened sticks, stun guns, firearms, ammunition, explosive devices, fireworks, pyrotechnics, slingshots, or any other instrument capable of inflicting serious injury. Weapon look-alikes, such as toy guns, as well as written or verbal threats, are also considered under this policy.

ARE THERE EXCEPTIONS TO THIS POLICY? Law enforcement officials may carry weapons on school property. Principals may issue exceptions for items such as cutting instruments used for food preparation, in art or tech ed., weapons or look-alikes used for instructional programs (e.g. drama classes). These exceptions would be for classroom use only. There are no other exceptions. Employees will be granted exceptions only with specific approval of the building principal, i.e. pepper spray, pocketknives, etc.

WHAT HAPPENS IF POLICY IS VIOLATED? All discoveries of any prohibited weapons in the above mentioned areas will be reported to local law enforcement officials.

Students: Possessing, displaying, using or storing a weapon on school property is a serious violation of the Code of Conduct and will result in immediate suspension, a hearing, and a one-calendar year expulsion from school. The superintendent may recommend a modification of the one-year expulsion on a case by case basis.

Employees: Violation will result in suspension without pay, pending a disciplinary hearing. Penalties may include dismissal.

Visitors: The district will vigorously pursue prosecution through law enforcement agencies.

WHAT IF YOU SEE SOMEONE WITH A WEAPON? Any student, teacher or visitor who has reasonable grounds to suspect a violation of this weapons policy is required to report such suspicion immediately to the principal.

SECURITY SYSTEM

All school doors remain locked during the school day. An automated security system is in place at the front and rear doors in order to provide a safe and secure environment for our students and staff. **ALL** parents and visitors must use the front entrance during school hours. Please push the button on the keypad to the left of the main doors and the secretary will unlock the door. Go directly to the secretary's office to sign in and explain the reason for your visit. She will direct you from there.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteering to help around the school, on field trips, with Home and School activities, etc., is a concrete way of living out your commitment to the ideals of our Catholic Community. We appreciate offers to share time and talents. We urge you to assess your talents and interests and consider regular involvement with our school community. You are invited to speak with your child's teacher or with an administrator to discuss your possible involvement. A diocesan mandated "Safe Environments" Policy may require special screening and fingerprinting.

REPORT CARDS/PROGRESS REPORTS

Formal report cards will be issued **three** times a year. Progress reports will be sent to parents half way through each **trimester**. All parents are encouraged to heed the information in the reports and to take the steps necessary to insure quality schoolwork on the part of their child. Parents are urged to contact the school regularly in order to keep abreast of their child's progress or lack thereof. It is imperative to keep in mind that a student's grades reflect his/her performance on tests, quizzes, homework assignments, special projects, book reports and daily work in class. Parents are asked to take the time to review any papers that go home with their child. A teacher may send home individual papers to be signed at any given time if she/he believes it is important to do so for the welfare of the student.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION OF STUDENTS

Decisions regarding promotion and retention shall be based on the total evaluation of the student's growth in all areas of development. The principal, in consultation with the teacher(s), will make such decisions. Any possibility of special promotion or non-promotion shall be communicated to the parents well in advance of a final decision so that sufficient and appropriate dialogue and exchange may take place.

Students in grades 4-8 must have at least a 65 or S- **in all subjects** in order to **participate in the sports program. The overall average in each subject must be at least 65 or S- in order to be promoted and/ or to graduate.** Students who do not meet this requirement will not be allowed to attend or participate in **graduation** or **any** activities related to graduation. Students will not be in the class picture or yearbook

individual page. In addition, tuition must be paid in full for all family members in order for any eighth grader to participate in graduation ceremonies.

TRANSFERS OR WITHDRAWALS

If a parent chooses to withdraw a child from St. Mary School the procedure to be followed is:

1. Inform the principal in writing or verbally of the decision, explaining the reasons for the change.
2. Enroll the child in the school of the parents' choice.
3. Ascertain that any outstanding bills, including a Transcript Fee of \$10, at St. Mary School have been paid in full to assure a smooth transfer.

Please note: When a student withdraws in the course of the school year, pre-paid tuition will **NOT** be refunded.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent/teacher conferences are encouraged as a means to greater understanding and cooperation between the home and school. Conferences may be set up at the request of the parent or the teacher. Parents are asked to make an appointment by phoning the teacher **at the school** or by writing a note or emailing the teacher stating the day and time the conference is desired. **It should not be expected that any teacher confer with a parent without an appointment.** Please do not make an unscheduled visit to the class before or after school to discuss your child's progress or to ask a question. Many times the teachers have duties, meetings or other responsibilities that make it difficult for them to adequately meet your needs at that time. Teachers **MUST NOT** be called at home.

SCHOOL SPIRIT AND PRIDE

As members of a Catholic Educational Community that encourages and expects each and every parent, student, teacher, administrator and staff member to do and be his/her best at all times, we have an obligation of taking pride in our school and the quality and excellence it represents. We must all make an effort to speak positively about our school amongst ourselves, our families, friends, and acquaintances. We must also zealously encourage others to enroll at our school and to become part of what is good and right in elementary education in our country in the 21st century.

PROPERTY DAMAGE

Each student is responsible for the proper care and maintenance of school property. This includes respect for school grounds, buildings, equipment and materials as well as property belonging to teachers, staff and students. Students will pay for willful damages as well as damage incurred due to careless or inappropriate behavior. This includes loss of or damage to textbooks and library books.

LOCKERS

When it is the privilege of our students to have the use of lockers at their disposal, it is their responsibility to keep lockers clean and orderly at all times. Students may provide a combination lock but, as a safeguard, a copy of the combination **must** be given to the homeroom teacher. The combination will be returned at the end of the school year.

Although students have the use of the lockers, they are the property of the school and school personnel reserve the right to inspect and search these lockers to assure proper maintenance and care or for other reasonable cause.

SCHOOLYARD

Schoolyard use is restricted to the students of St. Mary School during regular school hours only when supervision is provided by school personnel. Use of the schoolyard and/or play equipment (swings, slides, basketball hoops, etc.) at other times is prohibited by all students and non-students and such will be considered unauthorized trespassing. Neither the school nor the parish may be held responsible for injuries incurred by trespassers.

LIBRARY/MEDIA CENTER and INTERNET ACCESS CONTRACT

Library/Media Center

An essential aspect of primary education is acquiring the skill of independent study in preparation for a lifetime of learning. An important function of the school library/media center is to provide opportunities for developing skills in research and in independent learning. A level of quiet that is conducive to study is required for all students. Effort will be made to give help and guidance to each student.

The library/media center provides computers for Internet use and for word processing.

Library hours are 8:30 AM -3:30 PM.

Internet Access Contract for Students at Saint Mary School

I agree to take personal responsibility for following the rules of the acceptable use policy stated in this contract. I will not access personal home accounts or use the computer/on-line resources that are not school sanctioned, such as chat rooms, email, games, etc.

I will use the computer/on-line resources in my school ONLY with permission of a teacher or library media specialist.

I will use language on-line which is consistent with school policy. I will not tamper with equipment or software; nor alter the network interface; nor attempt to gain access to the data or files of others; nor attempt to access information on the Internet or other on-line services not consistent with the educational goals of the school; nor violate any copyright laws.

I will report any problems or breaches of this contract to a teacher or library media specialist.

I will not attempt to bypass any security systems, blocking restrictions, or settings. I will use the Internet appropriately and understand that, if I do not, my behavior may result in:

- losing all computer/on-line privileges within the school setting
- being subjected to disciplinary measures under school policy and/or
- being referred to the appropriate legal authorities, if warranted.

This contract will be in effect while the student is at Saint Mary School, unless it is amended, in writing, by the school. In addition to acknowledging this

handbook document, at the beginning of the school year, all students will be required to sign “An Acceptable Use Agreement” with regard to Internet and computer use.

Disciplinary action will be taken if a student allows another student to use their login access code. In such a case, both students will be held accountable a student cannot logon knowing they are using another student’s access code.

Throughout the year students may be informed that their computer files are exceeding the 500MB storage quota. When a student receives notification of an overage, they will be granted five school days to rectify the situation. To disobey this warning, is considered defiance. Disciplinary action may be taken; computer privileges may denied; or the student’s files may be deleted by the school. If for some reason, a student requires more than the allotted storage space, the student must provide his/her own USB storage.

If a parent does not wish his/her child to use the Internet provided by the school, the parent should write a letter to the school librarian stating this choice

The school library functions under the same principle as all public libraries. Students must sign out books and return them on or before the designated dates. A fee of \$.25 per day is charged for overdue books. Books that are lost must be paid for **in full**. Repeat offenders will lose library privileges.

FUND RAISING

Since tuition income accounts for only a fraction of the monies needed to operate our school efficiently, the entire school community depends on regular and successful fund raising activities to function within our annual budget. The cooperation of each and every family is vital to this effort. All parents and students are asked, therefore, to realize the importance of any and all fund raising activities and to do their utmost in assisting us to provide these indispensable funds for our educational programs.

TELEPHONE USE BY STUDENTS

Students must have permission from a teacher or administrator to use the phone during the school day. The phone designated for student use is in the secretary’s office and is reserved for urgent calls only.

TUITION

A tuition contract must be agreed upon and signed each year. It is vital that parents make every effort to honor the payment plan you chose upon signing your tuition contract.

We rely on your prompt payment to meet our fiscal obligations. We do accept VISA or MASTER Card for your convenience. Please note: It is very important to make tuition payments on time to avoid the possibility of having your account transferred to a lawyer and of putting your child’s continuation at St. Mary School at risk. Limited financial assistance is available (TAP). Contact the principal for details and/or availability before signing your annual contract.

YEARLY THEME

As part of our goal to raise the awareness to a lifestyle consistent with that of Jesus in the Gospels, each year Saint Mary School will celebrate a theme based on a verse from the Gospels.

For the 2008-2009 school year our theme will be based on Matthew 5:16, which is:

SHINE

“Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

As administration, faculty and staff of St. Mary School we are encouraged to bring this theme out in many diverse ways throughout the school year.