

# ST. ALPHONSUS CATHOLIC SCHOOL FAMILY HANDBOOK 2019-2020



*Established 1883*

*Where Faith and Knowledge Meet  
The Tradition Continues*

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## **NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY**

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In compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1962, the Educational Amendments of 1972, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, St. Alphonsus School's policy assures that no one on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, or handicap be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination in any program or activity of the school.

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## **NOTICE TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES**

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This handbook is designed to be a synopsis of the policies and procedures of this school and it is not intended to be all-inclusive. General policies applicable to all schools within the Catholic Diocese of Biloxi also govern this school. The Diocesan Policy Manual is available for your review in the school office and forms an integral part of the agreement the school has entered with parents to educate their children. It is expected that this handbook, local policies, and general policies are consistent, however, at certain times due to human error and/or amendments to various parts, conflicts could arise. To the extent that a conflict exists, general policies shall take precedence, followed by local school advisory council policies, and finally, this handbook.

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## **DIOCESE OF BILOXI MISSION STATEMENT**

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The Catholic school community within the Diocese of Biloxi, a ministry of the Catholic Church, embracing the teachings and traditions of the past, accepting the challenges and opportunities of the present, and preparing for the demands of the future, provides an education based on Christ's teaching and Catholic values which focus on the formation of strong moral character, the furtherance of academic excellence, the inspiration to serve others, and the motivation to achieve God-given potential in the local and the world communities.

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## **ST. ALPHONSUS CATHOLIC SCHOOL VISION**

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St. Alphonsus Catholic School is a model Catholic elementary school which is centered on God and focused on developing children with strong moral character, outstanding academic performance, and the skills that are necessary for success in higher education and life.

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## **ST. ALPHONSUS CATHOLIC SCHOOL MISSION**

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St. Alphonsus Catholic School provides a living Christian community that is supported by teachers, parents, and clergy, who work together to provide a broad and competitive curriculum, that challenges students both academically and spiritually while encouraging self-discipline and service to God and community.

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## **ST. ALPHONSUS CATHOLIC SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION**

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St. Alphonsus Catholic School's administration and faculty recognize parents as the first and most important teachers of children. Therefore, in concomitance with parents, the school strives to provide a faith community that fosters spiritual development, intellectual growth, physical well-being, and social adjustment. To this end, promoting Christian values is of primary importance as the basis of moral discernment and the foundation of a meaningful life. We believe that educators have a responsibility to inspire standards of excellence and continuous intellectual curiosity, thus nurturing productive members of society. The goal of St. Alphonsus Catholic School is to assist and encourage the development of each student's unique potentials to be used in service to Our Lord. The staff recognizes each student as a child of God and therefore strives to teach and love as Jesus did.

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## **CATHOLIC IDENTITY**

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Catholic identity is compelling to the school culture. Catholic Christian beliefs are vibrant in the facility, curriculum, and manner. Blessed crucifixes and other religious articles are located throughout the school and in each classroom. Academics are grounded in a world view that is consistent with sound Catholic perspectives. The liturgical calendar steers seasonal celebrations, prayer and liturgy. Theological education is made relevant as members of the learning community allow Christian values to shepherd their daily behavior. All school members participate in school-wide prayer each morning and afternoon and in mass each week. Classes say blessings before and after meals. Students come to develop a longing for truth and goodness.

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## **ACCREDITATION**

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St. Alphonsus Catholic School is accredited by the MS Department of Education (MDE) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement, AdvancED.

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## **ADMINISTRATION**

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### **Catholic Diocese of Biloxi**

The Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Biloxi holds the ultimate authority over all functions of St. Alphonsus School. The Superintendent of Education and staff are available in an advisory, consultative, and administrative capacity.

### **Pastor**

The pastor of St. Alphonsus Catholic Church is head of the parish educational program. In his unique role as pastor, he has the obligation of setting the tone of Christian life in the parish. His pastoral leadership is a dynamic force in the creation and growth of the Christian educational community of the parish. He is responsible to the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Biloxi for the pastoral and financial stability of the school and therefore has the final word on all school operations.

## **Principal**

The principal has overall responsibility of the management of the educational institution as guided by the local school advisory council, Diocesan Office of Education, and by the Mississippi Department of Education. The principal answers directly to the pastor and implements school policies. The decisions of the principal are final. No appeals of the principal's decisions can be made to the local school advisory council.

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## **ADMISSION / WITHDRAWAL**

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### **Education Contract**

The education of students of St. Alphonsus Catholic School is based upon an agreement between the school and parents/guardians. The school agrees to provide superior educational services in exchange for payment of tuition/costs. Parents/guardians and students promise to abide by policies, procedures, and rules of the school. The information provided by the parents/guardians to the school for registration induces the school to enter into this agreement, and therefore, any misrepresentation, inaccuracy or untruth in the information provided, when discovered, may be grounds, in the sole discretion of the school, for subsequent removal of student(s) from the school and the termination of this agreement.

### **State Regulations**

According to the 1976 Supplement to the Mississippi School Code, page 15, Chapter 390, House Bill No. 458, Section I: "Section 37-15-9, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows: 37-15-9. No child shall be enrolled or admitted to any school, which is part of the free public school system during any school year unless such child will reach his sixth birthday on or before September 1 of said school year. No student shall be permanently enrolled in a school in the State of Mississippi who formally was enrolled in another school within the state until the cumulative record of said student should have been received from the school from which he transferred. Should such a record have become lost or destroyed then it shall be the duty of the superintendent or principal of the school where the student last attended school to initiate a new record. And Section 3: This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 1977." To be eligible to enter kindergarten, a child must reach his/her fifth birthday on or before September 1. To be eligible to enter first grade, a child must reach his/her sixth birthday on or before September 1.

### **Immunization Law**

Mississippi Law (Senate Bill 2650) states, "It shall be unlawful for any child to attend school, kindergarten, or similar type facility intended for the instruction of children either public or private unless they shall first have been vaccinated against those diseases specified by the State Health Officer." A Certificate of Compliance is required from a private physician or a Mississippi county health department prior to attending St. Alphonsus School.

### **St. Alphonsus Catholic School Registration Procedures**

Priority will be given to those children who meet the following requirements:

1. Children of registered parishioners of St. Alphonsus Catholic Church, or cooperative sister parishes, who are contributing according to their means through the envelope system (tithing)
2. Children who have siblings attending St. Alphonsus School
3. Children who are baptized Catholic

All students entering St. Alphonsus must present the following information:

- Completed registration form
- Certified birth certificate copy
- Immunization compliance - MS Form 121
- Social Security Card copy
- Latest report card
- Baptismal and/or First Communion certificate copy, if Catholic

### **Fees and Tuition**

Tuition and fees are established each year. Fees include: registration fee (non-refundable and payable at time of registration), classroom resource fee, and technology fee. Tuition may be paid in full or half payments to the school, or they may be paid monthly through FACTS™ Tuition Management Company. Payment method must be declared at registration.

### **Student Cumulative Records**

Student cumulative records are available to parents for review upon request to the administration. In compliance with state regulations, all records are handled in a manner to assure confidentiality.

Mississippi law requires that a cumulative record be kept for each student throughout the entire school enrollment period. The law requires that the cumulative folder be mailed to the head of the school to which a student transfers and a copy of the permanent record (insert sheet) be kept permanently by the school district from which the student transfers. No cumulative record may be hand-carried by the parent/guardian from one school to another within the United States.

### **Transfer-in**

Students who enter from schools that are not state or regionally accredited, including home-schooled students, are required to take placement tests for grade determination. Students from accredited schools will be accepted at grade level as submitted by the last school. After a short adjustment period and with assessment data available, the teacher and administration will meet with parents regarding placement if the student is found to be improperly placed.

### **Withdrawal**

Parents/guardians wishing to withdraw their child from St. Alphonsus Catholic School should notify the school office as soon as possible. All textbooks and library books must be returned. Tuition, fees, and fines must be brought current as part of the withdrawal process. A signed withdrawal form showing current grade averages will be completed and a copy given to the parent/guardian to carry to the new school. Cumulative records will be forwarded upon formal request from the receiving school, as per Mississippi Department of Education directives.

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## **ATTENDANCE**

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Prompt and regular attendance at school is essential for successful schoolwork and is required by MS 37-13-91 Compulsory School Attendance Law. Absences burden the student and teacher and may impact student progress. The parent/guardian must notify the school office between 7:40 and 9:00 AM on the day of an absence. Any written documentation pertaining to the absence should be sent to the teacher upon the student's return to school. Determination of excused/unexcused will be made in accordance of the law by administration.

Absences will be considered unexcused unless the following conditions apply:

1. Illness (doctor's excuse may be required) or isolation ordered by health official
2. Medical or dental appointment
3. Death or serious illness in the immediate family (notify the teacher/principal)
4. School closing
5. Required attendance at court proceedings
6. Valid educational travels preapproved by administration

A doctor's excuse is required if a student is out for three consecutive days. Absences not verified with a note will automatically be considered unexcused. Any assignment missed during absences must be made up within the time limits stipulated by the teacher.

### **Tardiness**

A student is considered tardy if he/she has not joined the class when the 7:50 AM school bell rings. Tardy students must be signed-in to school by the parent. A tardy student will receive a tardy slip before admission to the classroom. A medical appointment is considered an excused tardy, but these appointments should be made outside of school hours whenever possible. Excessive tardiness will be brought to the attention of the administration.

Protection of instructional time is a priority. Parents should exit the building in the morning after the tardy bell rings. Teachers begin classroom work immediately. They establish morning routines to help students become responsible for initiating their work on their own independently.

### **Early Checkout**

Students should remain in class for the entire day unless a checkout is unavoidable. Students leaving before the bell miss afternoon prayers and messages. Any student checking out before the end of the school day must report to the office and have the authorized adult sign them out of school. Teachers will not dismiss a student to the office without official notification from the office that the parent or approved adult has arrived to check the student out.

Checkouts are not honored after 2:45 except in the case of illness. After 2:45, students should remain with their class for bell dismissal.

### **Perfect Attendance**

Perfect attendance consists of being present from the first bell to the last bell of every school day – no absences, no tardiness, and no checkouts.

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## **BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT**

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St. Alphonsus Catholic School expects and enjoys a high standard of propriety from all students. Parents and teachers are called to guide students in developing a sense of personal and social responsibility through self-discipline. Students are called to be respectful and to demonstrate Christian character.

We embrace and utilize the Conscious Discipline methodology approach to behavior management, which utilizes brain research to inform decisions and strengthen relationships. A school family culture is built in each classroom through consistent modeling of routines, rituals and structures that flow naturally from the Christian love and bonding that is nurtured in the Catholic school.

Our educators teach and model desired behavioral traits regularly and lovingly encourage children to meet these goals and behavioral outcomes each day. Teachers communicate with parents regarding positive behavioral goals as the year progresses and invite parents to be a part of the relationship-building process through our open-door policy and culture.

### **Conduct Detrimental to the School**

St. Alphonsus Catholic School is considered a family. We work very hard to provide the highest level of academics and to form intentional disciples of Jesus Christ. The education of a child is a partnership between parents and the school. If, in the opinion of the school administration, that partnership is irreparably broken, parents may be required to withdraw their child(ren) from our Catholic school. This conduct includes, but is not limited to, physical behavior, social media activities, internet posts and interaction with local and national media. There are channels to discuss issues that may arise. Social media is not the appropriate forum and only serves to damage the school and the relationship between all parties.

### **Classroom Conduct**

Teachers and students establish age-appropriate procedures at the beginning of the year as part of the Conscious Discipline model. Goals and outcomes for each classroom are shared with parents as the year begins. Parents are invited to be a part of the relationship-building process throughout the year.

### **Harassment**

Harassment based upon gender, color, race, age, national origin, disability, or any other reason will not be tolerated, regardless of whether the perpetrator is a student, employee, or parent. Bullying is considered harassment. The principal should be notified of harassment situations for appropriate actions to be taken.

### **Extreme Behavior Infractions**

In cases of extreme behavior infractions, the principal may impose an out-of-school suspension or expulsion. Suspension will be used to impress upon the student the graveness of their action, to allow for a cooling-off period, to allow time for communication or actions to take place, or because it is deemed by the principal to be the best course of action. Expulsion will be considered only when all other means of discipline have failed and/or when the student is deemed to be a moral/physical threat to the spiritual and/or academic welfare and progress of other students. Immediate expulsion may be considered for the following infractions: leaving campus without

permission; use, sale, or possession of drugs or alcohol; possession of a weapon. No teacher may suspend or expel a student from school. Only the principal or pastor may dismiss a student. No notice of expulsion will be served upon a student until the pastor has been consulted.

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## **COMMUNICATION**

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The school keeps parents abreast of all activities and events through multiple portals (Shutterfly, website, Facebook, Instagram, email, newsletters, phone, text.). All publications or notices of public or school-wide distribution must be presented to the administration for approval before issuance.

### **Use of School Name, Logo, Emblem or Mascot**

The school name, logo, motto, or mascot may not be used without the permission of the school administration. Such permission is subject to the requirement that all policies of the school and the Catholic Diocese of Biloxi be followed, including background checks and safe environment training for all adults involved.

### **Chain of Communication**

Effective communication must take place. In this regard, parents/guardians should first communicate directly with the teacher or staff member involved with issues regarding their child. Should, at any time, either party feel uncomfortable or intimidated by meeting alone, they may request that an administrator join them in the meeting. Parents/guardians should never engage a staff member in conversation regarding any child other than their own child. This behavior is a serious breach of professional conduct for a staff member and unethical behavior for all parties involved.

### **Email**

The faculty and staff can be contacted directly through email. The address is the person's first initial and last name @stal.org (example: dallen@stal.org ). Teachers check their email each morning and afternoon before leaving for the day. Teachers will not interrupt instructional time to check email throughout the day.

### **Homeroom Parents**

Homeroom parents are asked to serve by each homeroom teacher after the application process. The homeroom parent will coordinate with the teacher to maintain open communication with parents to inform them of events and to assist in coordinating classroom activities that require parent support.

### **Announcements**

Announcements are made daily at 7:50 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. Students in grades 3-6 lead announcements and prayers over the intercom. Announcement/prayer time is critical in starting and ending the school day.

### **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Parent/teacher conferences should be held whenever the parent or the teacher deems it necessary. Conferences are scheduled outside of instructional time at the convenience of the teacher and the parent. Unscheduled conferences with a teacher during instructional time are not permitted since teachers are to be engaged in instructional activities and class supervision from bell to bell. Parents can request an appointment at an appropriate time in writing.

The first semester report card is distributed by means of a parent-teacher conference in January. The parent is required to attend and review the student's progress. The first semester report card will not be issued until such a conference takes place.

### **Teacher Communication**

Each teacher communicates directly through Shutterfly. All electronic notifications and postings originate here. Each teacher sends home a weekly newsletter to keep parents abreast of classroom news, assignments, reminders, and school activities. These newsletters are posted via Shutterfly by Monday morning and go home in print that afternoon.

## **Party Invitations**

Parents may send party invitations to the classroom to be distributed to the students only if all students are to be invited or all students of a certain gender are to be invited. Invitations should include all students within a classroom if both boys and girls are being invited. If the party is only for a single gender, then the invitations should include all boys or girls in the classroom.

## **Cellular Communication**

SchoolMessenger (automated phone call) and Remind (automated text messaging) will be used periodically to contact families/staff by telephone or text with schedule changes or school emergency communications. Appropriate phone numbers will be verified at final registration. You must agree to these communications to be contacted. Please update your phone numbers and email contact information with the office as needed.

## **Telephone Policy**

*Outgoing calls:* Students may use the phone at the discretion of their teachers, who will, in turn, notify the office. *Incoming calls:* Please do not ask that students be disturbed from class to speak on the phone, except in the case of an emergency. Please note that all transportation change requests should be sent directly to the teacher in writing. However, in the event of an emergency, the office will accept the change and notify the child directly. Students are not allowed to use cell phones at school.

Messages for teachers will be delivered to their mailboxes in the workroom during the day unless there is an emergency requiring that the message be delivered immediately. Teachers are not permitted to accept parent calls on their cell phones during school hours.

## **Visitors/Parents**

All outside doors, except the doors in front of the school (Jackson Avenue entrance), are locked throughout the school day. During instructional hours, visitors and parents entering the school are to sign in at the office and obtain a visitor's sticker to be worn throughout the stay.

## **Wednesday Folders**

Teachers send home papers in a folder each Wednesday for parents to review. Folders should be signed by the parent/guardian, and papers do not need to be returned to the teacher unless requested (papers needing to be signed and RETURNED are labeled by the teacher). Outgoing enclosures for the Wednesday folder must be delivered to the school secretary no later than 3:00 P.M. Tuesday afternoon each week.

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# **CURRICULUM**

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## **Religion/Liturgical Ministry/Mass**

Direct Catholic religious instruction occurs daily. Materials used are approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and focus on scripture, prayer, and faith community experiences. Students are expected to model Christian behavior, embrace Christ's message of infinite love, and participate in prayer. Students lead weekly liturgies and participate in prayer services, religious presentations, and works of mercy throughout the school year.

Students attend mass each Friday or Holy Days of Obligation at 8:15. Parents are welcome to attend. Classes in grades 2 through 6 prepare and lead the liturgy. Students in kindergarten and grade 1 may participate during the second semester. Religion teachers are responsible to prepare students for mass. This preparation includes, but is not limited to, greeting, mass readings, choir, offertory procession, and altar serving (for grades 3-6). Typically, the religion teacher and students bring up the gifts. Altar server training is handled by the priest or deacon and announced throughout the school year as needed for Catholic students in grades 3-6. Servers are scheduled for all school masses. The sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist are celebrated for the first time in second grade. Preparation for the sacraments is coordinated between the school and the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade child's home parish.

## **Academics**

Instructional strategies are developed by St. Alphonsus Catholic School teachers to address high expectations through the Mississippi Department of Education College and Career Readiness Standards (MSCCRS). Using these standards as benchmarks, teachers incorporate work that reflects higher-order thinking and reasoning skills.

### **Instructional Time**

The faculty, staff and administration maintain uninterrupted instructional time, with a focus on time-on-task, limited announcements and careful adherence to our daily schedule.

### **Homework**

Homework is considered an integral part of a student's academic life and is designed to review and practice skills covered in class, but should not be overwhelming. To determine approximately how long homework should take each day, add a "0" to your child's grade to determine the average range of time. For example, homework in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade should take about 20-30 minutes, in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 30-40, etc. Homework may involve short and/or long-term assignments. Although homework grades are not taken, homework should be completed as assigned. Homework is reviewed by the teacher, and instruction is adjusted as needed.

### **Special Services**

Evaluations for speech/language will be coordinated with St. Alphonsus Catholic School and the Student Services Department of the Ocean Springs School District.

When learning difficulties or lack of progress of any student are noted, a team is assembled to review the concern. The team will include the teacher, parents, administration, and anyone with special knowledge regarding the student's specific concerns. This team will assist the teacher in developing and monitoring interventions to improve student learning. If necessary, the team, through their documentation of efforts, will assist in obtaining assistance from the child's home public school district of residence.

### **Education of Children with Special Needs**

Consistent with the Gospel, Catholic schools are nondiscriminatory and believe that all children deserve an educational experience that includes the teaching of religious and moral values. However, due to limited financial resources, Catholic schools may not be able to effectively provide appropriate educational programs for some students. Federal law recognized this fact and therefore, while public schools must make all "reasonable accommodations" to educate all students; Catholic schools are called upon to make "minor adjustments" to the educational program. If a child has special needs, parents are free to request program modifications. Provided that the student is otherwise qualified for admission and if the required program modification constitutes "minor adjustments", the student may be admitted. Any time it becomes apparent that a child requires more resources than available; the school will make this known to the parents.

### **Textbooks**

Parents agree to assume full responsibility for textbooks issued to their children. All textbooks must be returned on withdrawal. Teachers make records of issuance to ensure proper accounting when texts are returned. A replacement cost will be assessed for lost, destroyed, or damaged books. Teachers are to inventory and account for all textbooks at the end of each year. Mississippi Department of Education offers limited funding for textbooks based on average daily attendance (ADA). Student absences reduce textbook funding allowances.

## **EXTRA CURRICULA**

### **Academic Competitions**

A school reading fair and science fair are held each year, and students are encouraged to participate. These opportunities can prove extremely beneficial to encourage students to work past their comfort zones and learn new skills. Fair information and regulations will be published in a timely manner.

### **Assemblies and Additional Programs**

School-wide assemblies are limited so as to protect instructional time. However, when warranted, they are typically held immediately after the Friday morning mass. Presentations include Grandparents' Day, preschool Thanksgiving program, kindergarten/preschool Christmas program, Jesse Tree program, the Living Stations of the Cross, and sixth-grade graduation.



## Field trips

Field trips are designed for academic value and alignment with grade-level curriculum. A chaperone must have a signed permission slip, a volunteer background check, an Acknowledgement of Diocese Child Protection Policy on file in the school office and be approved by the teacher. Siblings are not permitted to join the field trip even if they are members of the school. Other children of chaperones should not accompany the class on field trips. Students must be in attendance (not absent or checked out) to be eligible to participate in the outing. Individual student participation on a field trip is at the principal's discretion. Field trip details, including meal arrangements, will be communicated by the teacher in advance of the trip.

A permission form for field trips within walking distance is requested from parents at the beginning of the year for in-town excursions. Plans for walking field trips are communicated to parents in advance. All walking field trips require administrative approval.

## ASSESSMENT

### Grade Book

The PowerSchool electronic grade book is available online to check student progress. User access information is distributed at the beginning of the year. Grades will be posted to PowerSchool in a timely manner, and no later than one week after assignments/assessments have been graded.

### Progress Reports

Progress reports are sent home mid-quarter. The purpose of this report is to ensure that parents are aware of their children's progress or any potential concerns. All progress reports should be signed by parents and returned to their respective teachers within three (3) school days.

### Report Cards

Parents are issued report cards of students' academic performance each quarter. Report cards should be returned signed within three (3) school days. The second report card (end of first semester) is distributed by means of a parent-teacher conference in January. This date is set on the calendar and school will dismiss at noon that day for conferencing purposes. Parents are to schedule appointments with the homeroom teacher (an invitation to schedule will be sent by the teacher).

### Honors

St. Alphonsus School recognizes academic achievement each quarter (by certificate). At the end of the year, academic performance for the year is also recognized (by certificate and assembly).

- Principal's List- all A's for all subjects, excluding Religion, Library, Music, Physical Education, Spanish, and Conduct
- Honor Roll- A/B's for all subjects, excluding Religion, Library, Music, Physical Education, Spanish, and Conduct.

### Grading Scale

St. Alphonsus Catholic School follows the Grading Scale of the Catholic Diocese of Biloxi (see chart below).

Report cards are issued four (4) times a year with the following standards:

Grade	Percent
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B	85-89
B-	80-84
C	75-79
D	70-74
F	0-69

Religion for Grades 4-6 is calculated on the grading scale above.

In Grades K-3, Religion, Spanish, Library, Music, Physical Education, and Conduct in Grades K-6, are evaluated on the following scale:

E = Excellent	E = 90-100
G = Good	G = 80-89
S = Satisfactory	S = 75-79
N = Needs Improvement	N = 70-74
U = Unsatisfactory	U = 69 - below

### **Promotion Policy**

St. Alphonsus Catholic School has established minimum mastery requirements for each grade level.

Promotion and retention decisions for individual students will be based on:

1. Successful completion (average of 70 or above) of reading and math in grades 1-3 (mandatory)
2. Successful completion (average of 70 or above) of four of the five major subject areas in grades 4-6 (reading, math, social studies, science and language arts) (mandatory)
3. Attendance: Excessive absences (more than 20 days per year) are taken under advisement by the administration (discretionary)
4. Standardized testing results as an indicator of readiness for the upcoming grade (discretionary)
5. Maturity level, potential, and willingness to complete work. (discretionary)

Under discretionary circumstances, the final decision to retain (or promote) an individual student will be a joint decision of the teacher, parent, and administration, based on data available and in the best interest of the child. When a controversy exists, the administration will make the final decision.

### **Standardized Testing**

Each year students at St. Alphonsus Catholic School take a nationally normed achievement test. Presently, St. Alphonsus Catholic School is using the ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) for such purposes. Such testing evaluates a student's performance as comparable to students of the same grade level across the nation. The test results show a range of scores and may be used to gain a sense of a student's strengths and weaknesses.

No test can measure educational development as absolute. Several evaluative measures should be considered in decision-making. The faculty and administration use test data to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, to develop individualized student goals, and to develop faculty training to meet students' needs.

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## **DAILY SCHEDULE**

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Normal school hours for all grades are 7:50 A.M. to 3:10 P.M. Students arriving at school before 7:40 A.M. must proceed to the cafeteria to be supervised by morning care personnel. Upon the morning bell, students will be escorted from the cafeteria to their classrooms. Parents of students who are not being picked up in the regular car line are welcome to wait in the foyer or outside prior to the dismissal bell. No parent or student should enter a classroom before, during, or after school hours without the teacher's or administration's permission.

PK3 and PK4 students are escorted to their classrooms each morning and from their classrooms each afternoon by parents/guardians. They should enter and exit the school building by the front door.

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## **EARLY DISMISSAL - PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MEETINGS**

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Early dismissals are scheduled one Wednesday per month at 2:00 PM, as reflected on the school calendar. Noon dismissals are scheduled three times this year, also reflected on the calendar.

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## **EXTENDED CARE**

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Extended care is a non-profit service for parents. Morning care is offered in the cafeteria from 6:30 A.M. until 7:40 A.M. Students should not arrive before 6:30 A.M. as there is no supervision. Staff supervising extended care will release students to their teachers at the 7:40 bell. After care begins at 3:15 P.M. and closes at 6:00 P.M. Any

student not picked up from the dismissal line is escorted to after care. After care includes homework time, snack, and playtime. No student may leave after school care without being signed-out by a properly authorized adult. Discipline issues will be taken up with the extended care director. Repetitive misbehavior may result in loss of the privilege to participate in the extended care program. There is a \$3.00 per hour, per child fee for this service (billed every two weeks). After 6:00 P.M., the fee increases to \$1.00 per minute. No child is allowed on campus after hours unless attending a supervised after school program. Parents are not to allow their children to be on campus without close supervision, even if they are volunteering.

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## **FAMILY EDUCATION RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT**

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The Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Biloxi adhere to the Buckley Amendment (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act) regarding privacy of student records and the rights of noncustodial parents. It is the responsibility of the parents to share any official custodial information decided through the courts. Official custodial agreements will be kept in a confidential file in the office of the principal. In the absence of any court document, the school will view each parent as having full legal custody of his/her child. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, noncustodial parents have the right to receive records about their child's academic progress or lack thereof.

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## **FINANCIALS**

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### **Accounting**

Payments for lunch are paid in the school office, separately from other payments and in the name of St. Alphonsus Catholic School. No money is received in the cafeteria. Payments, if sent with a student, should be placed in an envelope with the child's name written on the envelope as well as the amount enclosed and the purpose of the payment. Neither the teacher nor the school can be responsible for lost or misplaced money.

### **Fees and Tuition**

Tuition and fees are established each year. Fees include: registration fee (non-refundable and payable at time of registration), classroom resource fee, and technology fee. Tuition may be paid in full or half payments to the school, or they may be paid monthly through FACTS™ Tuition Management Company. Payment method must be declared at registration.

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## **HEALTH AND SAFETY / CRISIS MANAGEMENT**

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### **Emergency Contacts Information**

Every student must have a complete and current emergency card on file. This card includes parent/guardian contact information, an exclusive list of all people who can check out/pick up the student, medical allergy notification, and doctor's information. Parents/guardians should immediately notify the school office with any change in this information. Persons not listed on the emergency card will not be allowed to pick up/check out students without written permission from the parent/guardian. Verbal requests cannot be honored.

### **Visitor Policy**

All outside doors, except the doors in front of the school (Jackson Avenue entrance), are locked throughout the school day. During instructional hours, visitors and parents entering the school are to sign in at the office and obtain a visitor's sticker to be worn throughout the stay. All recurring visitors and chaperones, who interact with the children, must have a current completed and verified background check on file in the school office. While some parents are more familiar to school staff than others, all should adhere to the visitor policy for safety and continuity. Please do not ask students or teachers to open locked doors for you, and help monitor this system by reporting strangers to the office.

### **Animals at school**

Animals are only allowed on school grounds for *Blessing of the Pets* or the teacher's prearranged animal studies unit. Teachers will consult with the administration before inviting animals to the school. Based on safety and health concerns, family pets should not be brought into the building.

### **Drills**

Evacuation, severe weather, lockdown and active-shooter drills are held regularly throughout the year to prepare students for emergency situations.

### **Evacuation Maps**

Evacuation maps are posted in all classrooms and other prominent locations. Administration, teachers, and staff are prepared to follow emergency procedures at all times.

### **Threatening Weather**

The school monitors threatening weather conditions and advisories issued by local civil defense. In the event of a severe weather warning, parents will be notified of the situation and/or precautionary measures through all appropriate communication portals. The Diocesan Department of Education is notified of any changes in schedule.

### **First Aid/Universal Precautions**

The office has a small supply of materials to attend minor injuries that cannot be addressed in the classroom. All major injuries are reported to the office immediately. The attending teacher or staff member will inform parents of minor injuries. The principal or his designee will inform parents when a serious injury occurs. Serious injuries will be documented by the completion of an accident report. Universal precautions will be taken to address any bodily fluids contact.

### **Safety Inspections**

Fire extinguishers and the school facility are inspected regularly by the local fire and health departments. All dangerous materials (including cleaning materials) are secured at all times. Deacon John Jennings, Diocesan Risk Manager, conducts routine inspection of all parish and school facilities on a regular basis to ensure adherence to all safety regulations.

### **Asbestos notice**

St. Alphonsus Catholic School may contain asbestos and/or materials suspected of containing asbestos. The School operates an asbestos management plan supervised by the state of Mississippi. All vendors, parent groups, workers, and other organizations are thus notified of the asbestos and must see the administration prior to any repair work.

## **WELLNESS**

### **Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace**

It is the policy of St. Alphonsus Catholic School, as part of the Diocese of Biloxi, that all employees and applicants be given every opportunity to enjoy the benefits of working in an environment which is free of the dilatory effects of drugs and alcohol, and to be shielded from those persons who are connected in any way with the unlawful manufacture, distribution, possession or use of the same. The unlawful manufacture, dispensing, distribution, possession, or use of a controlled substance is strictly prohibited in any and all employer work places and by any and all employees, staff, or volunteers of the school.

St. Alphonsus Catholic School is a tobacco-free/drug-free environment and encourages good health through proper nutrition, exercise, and knowledge. Teachers are asked to limit sweet snacks and food rewards and to encourage exercise at recess. Students may bring small, capped water bottles from home for use in the classroom if it does not interfere with teaching and learning.

### **Immunization Law**

Mississippi Law (Senate Bill 2650) states, "It shall be unlawful for any child to attend school, kindergarten, or similar type facility intended for the instruction of children either public or private unless they shall first have been vaccinated against those diseases specified by the State Health Officer." A Certificate of Compliance (MS Form 121) is required from a private physician or a Mississippi county health department prior to attending St. Alphonsus School.

### **Health Care**

St. Alphonsus Catholic School does not have an attending physician or nurse. Parents should inform the school of any medical condition/allergy that their child may have and should apprise the school in writing of any exceptional circumstances or medical responses as ordered by an attending physician. Teachers and staff, mindful of these

conditions, will take this information into consideration when requiring students to complete physical tasks and/or providing snacks to them.

Medication is administered at school only through the front office and only under set conditions. Medicine must be delivered to the front office by a parent or their designee and a medication form must be completed with a parent/guardian signature. Medication must be in its original container. If a prescription medication is to be administered, the label must be current and show the correct name and dosage.

### **Communicable Diseases**

Any student having evidence of a communicable disease should have a physician diagnose the disease and prescribe suitable treatment. The administration may require a written note from the student's family doctor or public health department before a student returns to school. Some common communicable diseases may require absence from school and school-related activities for a period of time. For specifics regarding return to school guidelines, please refer to the Mississippi State Department of Health document "Communicable Diseases and Conditions RETURN TO SCHOOL Guidelines" dated December 2016, found at [msdh.ms.gov](http://msdh.ms.gov).

### **First Aid/Universal Precautions**

Students are sent to the office to attend to injuries that cannot be addressed in the classroom. Parents will be informed of injuries/health complaints by phone or note. Whenever a serious accident occurs, the principal or his designee will inform parents directly. Parents should respond immediately if asked to come to the school.

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## **LEARNING COMMUNITY**

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The Catholic Diocese of Biloxi Handbook of Catholic School Policies, dated July 2019, delineates the roles of pastors, principals, school advisory councils, and parent-teacher organizations and is available for review in the principal's office.

Although Christ is the reason for the school, students are the focus of the school. All decisions are made for the betterment of students. Parents/guardians, as the prime educators of their children, work in collaboration with school personnel. Additionally, extended family members share knowledge and wisdom of the community. As joyful members of the school community, grandparents are celebrated each fall in Grandparents' Mass which is followed by a brief reception. Grandparents are always welcome in our school. Many grandparents come often to have lunch and some volunteer in a variety of ways to assist in the school. Teachers, as dedicated professionals, participate in the development of students and create an environment conducive to individual learning. Assistant teachers assist in the educational process by assisting teachers in the work of accomplishing the St. Alphonsus Catholic School mission. All staff members assist the teachers in the educational process and work to accomplish St. Alphonsus Catholic School's mission.

### **School Advisory Council**

The St. Alphonsus School Advisory Council serves to advise the pastor and principal in matters pertaining to the St. Alphonsus Catholic School's vision and mission. School Advisory Council members for the coming academic year are appointed at the end of the prior year and meet regularly (usually monthly) throughout the school year. The Guide for School Advisory Councils, dated Fall 2019, delineates the roles of school advisory councils in the Diocese of Biloxi and is available for review in the principal's office.

### **School Improvement Committee**

The St. Alphonsus Catholic School Improvement Committee is comprised of the principal, selected staff members, and may include parents. The Committee assists the principal in managing the school improvement process through an advisory capacity.

### **Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO)**

The Parent/Teacher Organization is comprised of the pastor, principal, teachers, and parents/or guardians of children who attend St. Alphonsus Catholic School. The primary purpose for this organization is to encourage cooperation and support between the home and school.

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## **MAINTENANCE**

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All community members are responsible for helping to keep the school clean and orderly. Although the school employs maintenance and housekeeping services for the school, students should assist in keeping their classroom, school and school grounds clean. Any litter on the ground or in the halls should be picked up and placed in the proper receptacle.

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## **PARENTAL / GUARDIAN CUSTODY ADHERENCE GUIDELINES**

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In order to provide the services rendered by the law, a certified copy of the complete Custody Agreement must be on file in the school office.

The Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Biloxi adhere to the Buckley Amendment (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act) in regard to privacy of student records and the rights of noncustodial parents. It is the responsibility of the parents to share any official custodial information decided through the courts. Official custodial agreements will be kept in a confidential file in the office of the principal. In the absence of any court document, the school will view each parent as having full legal custody of his/her child. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, noncustodial parents have the right to receive records about their child's academic progress or lack thereof.

Be advised that if a teacher is subpoenaed to testify in a child custody case, the parent will need to pay the cost of a substitute teacher and any other costs associated with the testimony (mileage, parking, food, etc.).

The school can only release a child to those having a legal right to remove a child or someone who was previously authorized by a parent or legal guardian. Absent a court document stating otherwise, both legal parents have the right to visit and pick up a child. Any person not listed on the student's emergency card are not allowed to check-out or pick-up the student. Parents must provide the school written authorization in advance in order for the school to allow a person not on the child's emergency card to pick-up from school. If a person who is not on the school's list for authorized pick up attempts to pick up a student, and in so doing violates Diocesan policy, disturbs the peace, or violates local, state or federal law, the school reserves the right to contact law enforcement.

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## **PHOTOGRAPHY / STUDENT PRIVACY**

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Parents are asked to be courteous and considerate when taking pictures at school and to discuss permissions and limits with parents of students other than their own before photographing. No picture that would prove embarrassing or cause discomfort to the school or any member of the school community should be posted to social media. Postings that results in injury or embarrassment to the school or any member of the school community may result in dismissal and/or legal action.

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## **TRANSPORTATION / DISMISSAL**

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Each teacher creates and maintains a dismissal log. The log documents the person the student is dismissed to after school and notes any special arrangements. Written permission by note, email, or fax is required if a student is to go home with another student. Phone calls to make these arrangements during the school day are not allowed. Once students leave school grounds at the end of the day, they are no longer under the care of the school. They are to proceed directly to their destination and are not to return to school.

### **Bicycles**

Written permission is required from a parent or guardian before any child will be permitted to ride a bicycle from school. When on school grounds, bicycles should be walked, not ridden. Bicycles should be locked. St. Alphonsus Catholic School will not assume any responsibility for bicycles on its campus. Children riding a bicycle should wear a helmet. Bike riders are dismissed as walkers.

### **Cars**

Car dismissal for students in grades K-6 is conducted in the rear of the school. Drivers should refrain from cell phone use while moving through the dismissal line. Traffic flows from Washington Avenue through the east

parking lot entrance to the Calhoun Street exit. Students wait in the dismissal area with their class until their ride is present. The driver remains in the vehicle and waits for his/her child/children to be escorted to the vehicle. Parents are not to pick up students from Calhoun Street or the rectory driveway. A person on duty will direct vehicles to proceed to the Calhoun exit. Upon completion of dismissal, all remaining students are escorted and signed-in to aftercare.

Students are dropped off in this same location in the morning. Vehicles enter the school grounds from Washington Avenue and exit onto Calhoun Street. Drivers should ensure that there is someone to receive students before they depart.

Pre-kindergarten students (if not in morning care) should be escorted to their classroom each morning, using the front area of the school for parking. Pre-kindergarten parents will also pick up their children from the classrooms in the afternoon. Brothers and sisters of pre-kindergarten students will check in with the staff member on duty in the library corridor and wait there until an authorized adult arrives to pick them up. Children not picked up by 3:25 are taken to the cafeteria for after care.

### **Rainy Day Dismissal**

On rainy day dismissals, traffic enters from Washington Avenue and proceeds through the parking lot to the outside entrance of the gym. A staff member will call students from the gym as their rides approach. Students are escorted by a teacher to the vehicle while the driver remains in the vehicle. The driver proceeds to exit on Calhoun Street. All teachers assist in this process. Parents should not park and attempt to enter the gym to retrieve children. This impedes the safe flow of children and traffic.

### **Walkers and Safety Officer**

A School Safety Officer is provided by the Ocean Springs Police Department and is stationed in front of the school on Jackson Avenue. The School Safety Officer handles all traffic (walking and vehicular) in this area each morning and afternoon. Parents are not to stop in the street and allow students to walk into school alone.

Written permission is required from a parent/guardian before any child is permitted to walk home from school. Walkers are dismissed only from the front of the school and may only cross Jackson Avenue with permission of the School Safety Officer.

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## **UNIFORM DRESS CODE**

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All St. Alphonsus Catholic School students in Grades K through 6 are required to wear the prescribed uniform on regular school days and appropriate clothes on announced free-dress days. Uniforms are meant to be uniform to encourage a sense of belonging.

Students not in proper uniform will be handled in a consistent but sensitive manner depending on the student's grade level. A note or phone call will be made to the parent to discuss the best way to handle the breach in the uniform code. Parents are asked to cooperate with school personnel when asked to assist with correcting improper uniform dress.

Although non-uniform sweaters, jackets, and coats are allowed in classrooms and on the playground, only jackets and sweaters on the uniform list are allowed in church.

For safety reasons, appropriate shoes for P.E. class should be worn by all students. An athletic or tennis shoe is the preferred footwear.

For students in pre-school classes, comfortable play clothes are to be worn. No tank tops, muscle shirts, or shirts that do not cover the mid-section are to be worn by any age. For safety reasons no flips, jellies, pointed boots, or open-toe shoes are permitted. No clothing that is ripped, shredded, tattered or cut-out is allowed. Jeans or pants should not be unduly tight or fitted. Running shorts are not appropriate for school attendance. Stretch capris or leggings should not be worn without over coverage, i.e., tunics, skirts or pants.

All books, school bags, lunch boxes, clothing, etc. should be marked with the child's name. Monograms on clothing may only be used if inconspicuous. Keep in mind the purpose of uniforms. Monograms must be in

matching colors (white on white, navy on navy), and discretely placed on the back of the collar or waistband. Purses and wallets should have a form of identification.

The school emblem may not be reproduced without permission, nor applied to an unapproved article. Uniforms can be purchased at Shalimar Apparel in Ocean Springs or School + Scrubs in Biloxi.

## Uniforms

### GIRLS Grades K-6

### BOYS Grades K-6

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DRESS UNIFORM</b> (REQUIRED FOR MASS)</p> <p><b>TOP Choices:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White Oxford blouse with emblem</li> <li>• Peter-pan blouse</li> <li>• Blouse w/sailor collar (with tie)</li> </ul> <p><b>BOTTOM Choices:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plaid jumper</li> <li>• Shorts</li> <li>• Skirt (playground pants under skirts) *</li> <li>• Skort</li> </ul> <p><b>Options:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red or navy cardigan or vest with emblem</li> <li>• School Sweatshirts may be worn over a collared shirt (see sweatshirt allowance details below)</li> </ul> <p>(all items above are also acceptable for “casual” uniforms)</p> <p><i>* Hemlines and shorts no more than 4” above knee when kneeling.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DRESS UNIFORM</b> (REQUIRED FOR MASS)</p> <p><b>TOP:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White Oxford shirt with emblem</li> </ul> <p><b>BOTTOM Choices:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plain navy shorts</li> <li>• Plain navy pants (no cargo pants)</li> </ul> <p><b>Options:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red or navy cardigan or vest with emblem</li> <li>• Sweatshirts may be worn over a collared shirt</li> </ul> <p>(all items above are also acceptable for “casual” uniforms)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CASUAL UNIFORM</b></p> <p><b>TOP:</b> White polo shirt with emblem <i>with</i> plain white short-sleeved undershirt underneath</p> <p><b>BOTTOM:</b> Navy slacks (no outside pockets)</p> <p><i>Note: No layering of clothes is allowed; shirts must remain tucked-in</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CASUAL UNIFORM</b></p> <p><b>TOP:</b> White polo shirt with emblem</p> <p><b>BOTTOM:</b> Plain navy shorts or pants (no cargo pants)</p> <p><i>Note: No layering of clothes is allowed; shirts must remain tucked-in</i></p>



<b>(Girls K-6 continued...)</b> <b>ACCESSORIES / OTHER</b>	<b>(Boys K-6 continued...)</b> <b>ACCESSORIES / OTHER</b>
<p><b>Socks:</b> Plain white</p> <p><b>Tights:</b> Plain navy or black (no designs)</p> <p><b>Shoes:</b> Typical sports shoes, (no lights, bells, or rollers; no flashy, bright or neon colors); brown, navy, or black leather shoes, or saddle oxfords in black or navy. No high heels, high tops, or boots.</p> <p><b>Belt:</b> Navy, brown, black, or plaid - with any belted garment</p> <p><b>Hair:</b> Neatly-groomed, out of eyes, natural color</p> <p><b>Accessories:</b> Single stud earrings; conservative neckpieces or bracelets allowed; no make-up or tattoos; nails free of polish; hair accessories must match uniform colors; no hats</p> <p><b>T-shirt:</b> Red with emblem (outdoor field trips only)</p> <p><b>Sweatshirt:</b> Red or navy with emblem (not for mass, unless worn with collared shirt with collar exposed)</p> <p><b>Sweater:</b> Red or navy cardigan or vest with emblem</p> <p><b>Jackets:</b> Navy fleece vest or jacket or navy nylon windbreaker with emblem</p> <p><b>Overcoat:</b> (no code)</p> <p><i>Note: Non-uniform coats and jackets are not to be worn in the classroom or church</i></p>	<p><b>Socks:</b> Plain white</p> <p><b>Shoes:</b> Typical sports shoes, (no lights, bells, or rollers; no flashy, bright or neon colors); brown, navy, or black leather shoes, or saddle oxfords in black or navy. No high tops or boots.</p> <p><b>Belt:</b> Navy, brown, black, plaid</p> <p><b>Hair:</b> Neatly-groomed, cut above the collar and sides no longer than mid-ear, cut above the eyebrow, natural color</p> <p><b>Accessories:</b> No earrings; conservative neckpieces or bracelets allowed; no tattoos; no hats</p> <p><b>T-shirt:</b> Red with emblem (outdoor field trips only)</p> <p><b>Sweatshirt:</b> Red or navy with emblem (not for mass, unless worn with collared shirt with collar exposed)</p> <p><b>Sweater:</b> Red or navy cardigan or vest with emblem</p> <p><b>Jackets:</b> Navy fleece vest or jacket or navy nylon windbreaker with emblem</p> <p><b>Overcoat:</b> (no code)</p> <p><i>Note: Non-uniform coats and jackets are not to be worn in the classroom or church</i></p>

### **Privilege Option: 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Only**

Both boys and girls in these grades may wear Sperry loafers (Bluefish/Billfish/Angelfish) as a shoe option, light brown color.

### **Privilege Option: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Only - Dress Uniform**

Both boys and girls in the sixth grade ONLY have the option of wearing a navy blazer (with emblem), as long as the dress uniform shirt option is worn in conjunction with it.

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## **USE OF SCHOOL / PARISH FACILITIES / PROPERTY / MATERIALS**

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Any use of the gym, cafeteria, or parish hall after school hours must be scheduled in advance through the church office. Use of the Knights of Columbus Hall should be scheduled in advance with the Knights of Columbus. General securing and cleaning of the space is the responsibility of the sponsoring group. Clearing and cleaning arrangements should be made in advance and cleared with the principal. Facilities must be left clean and trash removed.

Students are expected to care for school and personal property appropriately. School personnel reserve the right to inspect a student's desk and contents at any time, even if the student is not present. Parents may be charged for replacement of damaged school property.

