



AVE MARIA
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

STUDENT-PARENT HANDBOOK

Trust in the Lord,
Be Virtuous,
Work Hard

Ave Maria Catholic School

412 2nd St SE, Watertown, SD 57201

605-886-3883

avemariacatholicschool.org

Revised August 2026

This handbook contains certain policies and procedures of Ave Maria Catholic School. Ave Maria Catholic School administration may change any of its policies and procedures and apply them as circumstances dictate. If you have questions about a particular policy or procedure, please contact the Principal.

AVE MARIA CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Mission Statement

To nurture a lifelong commitment and love for the Catholic faith through prayer, sacraments and service and to provide an environment of academic excellence in which our students can achieve their highest personal potential.

PHILOSOPHY OF AVE MARIA CATHOLIC SCHOOL

At Ave Maria Catholic School, the belief is that parents and teachers are partners in the education of our children. Since children are a gift from God, parents and teachers are called to teach the whole child, to build a sense of self-worth in each child, and to strive to lead the child to a love of learning and an appreciation of what is good and beautiful.

While tasks, skills, and facts are vitally important within a Christian atmosphere, the final focus of education at Ave Maria Catholic School is towards the blending of tasks, skills, and facts to build mature Christian adults.

Admission

Ave Maria Catholic School endeavors to accommodate students with special needs, as the school's resources and capabilities reasonably permit. The school reserves the right to decline admission or impose reasonable conditions of attendance.

Ave Maria Catholic School follows the local public school district's age requirements for admission. In the case of children coming from different public school districts, the school administration determines the admission date.

The necessary forms and certificates for admission are:

1. Birth Certificate
 2. Baptismal Certificate (regardless of home parish or denomination).
 3. Signed permission form to access state immunization website to obtain student immunization records. Immunizations must be up-to-date according to federal and state laws.
- * Every child must have these documents when enrolling at Ave Maria Catholic School.

Registration Guidelines

Families are accepted into the school in the following preferential order:

- a. Families with children currently enrolled in our school
- b. Families from parishes within the Ave Maria Pastorate
- c. Families from Diocesan parishes who do not have children currently enrolled
- d. Families from other faiths

Registration

Families currently registered at our school are required to enroll annually; registration forms will be sent home in January. Registration information will be communicated through the principal's letters called the "Ave Maria Messenger," weekly classroom newsletters, and the parish bulletins. There is a non-refundable fee due at the time of registration. The School Council will review budget needs and annually determine the fees for preschool and full time students.

Admission of Students of Other Faiths

Students of all faiths may be admitted to our school under the following conditions:

- a. Adequate facilities and space are available, without denying the admission of eligible Catholic students.
- b. The parents/guardians agree in writing to permit their child(ren) to attend religion classes and religious functions that are offered as part of the school program.
- c. The parents/guardians commit themselves in writing to accept and to promote the philosophy, goals, objectives, and regulations of our school.
- d. The parents/guardians agree in writing to assume responsibility for all financial obligations.

Enrichment/PreKindergarten Requirements:

- a. Enrichment students must be 4 by September 1st of the school year in which they are enrolling and they must be potty trained. Students must have the ability to be attentive during direct instruction.
- b. PreKindergarten students must be 4 by September 1st of the year in which they are enrolling.
- c. Kindergarten students must be 5 by September 1 of the year in which they are enrolling, provide a certified copy of the students birth certificate, and up to date immunization records.

Transfer of Student(s)

Parents of students transferring to our school will be asked to fill out a Request for Information form. This form will be sent to the school that the student(s) attended previously in order to receive their academic information.

Tuition

Ave Maria Catholic School provides quality Catholic education through the efforts of our parish priests, faculty, staff, volunteers, parish community, and most of all, through the many sacrifices made by the parents/guardians of the children enrolled here.

Tuition is determined in the spring for the following school year. Ave Maria Catholic School may impose fees for other items. (See Activities/Sundry Fees)

In justice to all parents and the parish community, parents are expected to keep tuition payments up to date. Both parents are jointly responsible for tuition and other fees charged by Ave Maria Catholic School.

A non-refundable Registration Fee is required each year and will be billed in September. The fee is \$50.00 per family for K-Grade 6. If a family is enrolling only an Enrichment/PreKindergarten student, the fee is \$25 per family for Enrichment/PreKindergarten.

Tuition Policy

Parents will be directed to enroll in Blackbaud at our fall open house. Tuition payments are due on or before the 10th day of each month according to the plan selected at the time of registration. Remember, tuition payments can be made more often than your selected plan requires.

Payments must be made by the deadline dates. Late payments are charged a \$40.00 per month late fee. Tuition is the minimum amount which must be paid toward the total cost of educating each student. If it is within your capability to contribute more toward the total cost, you are encouraged to do so.

If families prefer to make tuition payments according to a schedule other than those listed above, arrangements can be made with the office. Tuition payments may also be dropped off at the office.

Tuition Assistance

The Ave Maria Catholic School and Pastorate 6 are committed to the principle that no child will ever be refused attendance at Ave Maria Catholic School because of the inability to pay tuition. If a family feels they are unable to meet their financial commitment, they can apply for tuition assistance through South Dakota Partners in Education in the spring for the upcoming school year. The applications are available through the office.

Families must apply for the South Dakota Partners in Education scholarships before being considered for tuition assistance through the school.

South Dakota Partners in Education grants are awarded to qualifying families. Any students K-12 are eligible to apply for an SDPE grant. Please visit the school office for application information.

All families attending Ave Maria Catholic School are encouraged to participate in buying SCRIP and other fundraisers to help support our school.

Past Due Tuition

Lunch and Snacks

On-site food service is provided at Ave Maria Catholic School. All students stay for lunch during the school year. K-1 students have 30 minutes for lunch, then 20 minutes for recess. Grade 2-6 have 25 minutes for lunch, then 20 minutes for recess. If a parent wishes to have a child leave school at lunchtime, prior arrangements must be made through a note sent to the teacher and forwarded to the office, or a phone call to the office. The child must have an adult with him/her when leaving for and returning from lunch. The parent/guardian needs to stop in the office to check the child(ren) out. Enrichment - 2nd Grade students receive a healthy snack provided by the parents. According to the state guidelines from the State, fast food products are not allowed to be brought into the school. If a child brings a sack lunch from home, the lunch is expected to be healthy. Students can purchase a carton of milk for \$0.60. **Ave Maria Catholic School does not allow peanut or tree nut products for school lunch. See individual classrooms for peanut/tree nut policies.**

Seconds may be available for purchase on days when extra meals are available. If seconds are available to students, those who choose to take seconds will be charged an extra \$2.00. This fee is not covered by the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. Parents/guardians should discuss with their students if they do not wish for seconds to be purchased.

1. If tuition payments are not made according to the selected schedule, the following procedure will be followed:
 - a. 60 days late – a phone call or letter from the finance office
 - b. 90 days late – continued enrollment placed on high risk; if no contact from the family has been made, the student(s) may be suspended from class for the following semester.
2. A monthly report will be given to the principal and superintendent for the purpose of monitoring delinquent payments
3. Students of a family who owe unexcused tuition from past years will not be admitted to Ave Maria Catholic school until all tuition is paid in full or until special arrangements for payment have been made.
4. A family that leaves Ave Maria Catholic School with an unpaid balance and has failed to cooperate with the school in keeping to the payment arrangements will have their account turned over to a collection agency.
5. Tuition Assistance is not available for preschool.

Emergency Situations and Tuition Payments

The Ave Maria Catholic School and the administration are aware that emergency financial situations may develop during the course of the year that may make the payment of tuition difficult or in some cases impossible. If an emergency (e.g., illness, unemployment) situation develops during the course of the school year, parents are asked to contact the finance office or principal to request special arrangements for payment.

Involvement of Parents/Guardians

Parents and guardians must weigh seriously their obligation to educate their children in an atmosphere of love and respect for God and others. The home is the first school of the social virtues essential to any well-ordered society.

Active cooperation of parents and guardians is expected and requires the following:

- Sending their child(ren) to school physically fit, clean, properly dressed and fed.
- Assisting their child's spiritual, academic, and moral development through careful attention to his/her report card, supervision of home study and behavior, and cooperation with Ave Maria Catholic School in matters of activities, recreation, academics, and discipline.
- Setting a good example by personally refraining from any activity that would violate school policy, Catholic teachings, or the law.
- Showing respect for school personnel as professionals working for the well being of your child(ren).
- Supporting the policies of the school.
- Attending Mass on weekends and holy days with your children.
- Participating in the liturgical and sacramental life of the parish.
- Promoting family prayer and faith traditions at home.
- Volunteering, giving service and financial support to the school and parish.
- Witnessing gospel values in our everyday lives.

Dress Code

Neatness and cleanliness in personal attire are part of a child's education and the responsibility of the parents. When a child looks and feels good about himself, he/she acts and works accordingly.

Any student not in compliance with the dress code will need to call home.

Personal appearance that constitutes a distraction is not permitted. Final approval/disapproval is at the discretion of the principal.

A student's appearance, clothing, and hair need to be neat and clean at all times. The following rules will apply:

1. **Pants/Slacks** must be at the waist, belted if needed. They must be clean and without large and inappropriately placed holes.
2. **Skirts/Shorts** must be fingertip length to prevent exposure of the undergarments. Biker shorts are not allowed, unless under a dress. Shorts may be worn only when daytime temperature reaches 55 degrees.
3. **Shirts** must be clean and without holes. No spaghetti straps or crop tops are allowed. Sleeveless shirts with sleeves more than 1 inch in width are acceptable. A t-shirt with an inappropriate message will be handled with one of the two options listed:
 - (A) A t-shirt with an inappropriate message will be turned inside out to hide the message.
 - (B) Call home and have another shirt brought to school for the student to wear for the day.
4. **Footwear:** All students must wear socks and athletic tennis shoes/sneakers during the school day. To be acceptable, shoes must have rubber soles, enclose the entire foot, and secure tightly with laces/straps. Crocs, sandals, boots, slip-ons (slide on sneakers okay), platforms, and shoes with wheels are not

permitted. Students who do not wear appropriate footwear will be held out of physical activities for their own safety. Parents will be notified.

5. **Accessories:** No permanent tattoos are permitted. Jewelry needs to be appropriate because of safety issues. Children may be asked to remove any inappropriate jewelry.
6. **Winter Attire:** Warm coats, snow pants, snow boots, hats, and mittens, are required during the winter months. **(If students don't have appropriate winter attire they will be required to sit on the bench at recess) The School will not be providing hats, mittens, snow pants, coats or boots when forgotten.**
7. **Hair:** No unnatural permanent hair color. Hair color to match special dress up days is permitted.
8. **Piercings:** No facial piercings.

Dress Code for Mass Days

Our school mass is usually on Fridays at 9:00am at Immaculate Conception Church.

Students are expected to wear any of the following for their mass attire:

- Navy Blue polo shirt with a collar, purchased from the school or on your own with gray, black or khaki solid color pants.
- The students can wear shorts as long as they are gray, black or khaki and are fingertip in length
- **No Hooded Sweatshirts**
- **No holes in pants**
- **No sweatpants or jeans**
- **If students don't dress appropriately for Mass Day, parents will be called and asked to bring a change of clothing.**

Attendance

Regular school attendance impacts positively on the child's academic development. The total amount of days that school is in session is prescribed by the South Dakota Department of Education and Cultural Affairs.

Arrivals

Students can start to arrive at 6:45am to attend the KOT Program. Families who wish to have their children in this program need to pre-register. KOT is a licensed child care program. Students who arrive prior to 7:50 will be clocked into the KOT Program and charged.

Upon arrival, all students will gather in the gym. The gym will be supervised by staff members. Students will have options to walk, read, talk quietly with friends, etc. Breakfast is also offered with an additional cost. Students may go to the lunchroom starting at 8:00 am for breakfast. Serving will end at the start of announcements.

The Pledge of Allegiance, daily announcements, devotion, and prayer will begin at 8:20. Students will go to their classrooms following announcements.

Absences

The policies regarding absences are as follows:

- a. A parent or guardian is required to call the school office (886-3883) by 9:00 a.m. the day the student(s) is absent.

- b. If your child is going to be absent, or arrive late at school, you are required to call the school by 9:00 a.m. If your child's name appears on an attendance report from the teacher and you have not phoned to let us know why your child(ren) is absent, please expect a call from the school to verify the absence. If the school is unable to reach you by phone, a home visit by administration and/or a truant officer will be made immediately. Your child's safety and welfare are of great importance to us.
- c. In the case of illness during school hours, a school official will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- d. In order to arrange for assignments of children who are absent due to illness, call the school office by 9:00am. Homework can be sent home with a sibling or picked up in the office after 3:30pm. It is the responsibility of the student (according to school homework policy) to complete work and tests that have been missed due to absence. For extended vacation absences students will be given homework upon their return.

Tardiness

The school day begins at 8:20, students not present at this time will be considered tardy. Consistent unexcused tardiness will be considered parental neglect, which will be reported to the principal. Tardiness impacts academic success. Excessive tardiness will result in a principal and parent conference. During this conference, a resolution will be reached on how to solve the problem of tardiness.

Daily Dismissals

Children are dismissed from their classrooms by the teachers at 3:20pm. **No child may leave the building prior to dismissal without permission. Parents must stop into the school office to sign their child(ren) out.**

Weather related announcements:

AVE MARIA CATHOLIC SCHOOL WILL ALWAYS FOLLOW THE WATERTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT'S CALL ON WEATHER RELATED LATE STARTS, EARLY OUTS AND NO SCHOOL DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER CONDITIONS.

Early Dismissal Due to Weather Conditions

Ave Maria Catholic School **will follow** the Watertown School District's early dismissal schedule due to weather. Ave Maria Catholic students will ride the bus home if weather conditions are such that the Watertown School District's buses are able to run. Early dismissal closings due to weather will be announced through Flocknote and email. Ave Maria Catholic School will follow the Watertown School District's announcements on the news and radio.

No School Announcements/ Weather Related

Ave Maria Catholic School will follow the Watertown School District's schedule for **No School Due to Inclement Weather**. All late starts and/or closings will be announced through Flocknote. Ave Maria Catholic School will follow the Watertown School District's announcements on the news and radio.

Academic Early Dismissals

Ave Maria Catholic School **does not follow** the Watertown School District's teacher in-service early dismissal schedule. **Please refer to the Ave Maria Catholic master school calendar to make note of the teacher inservice early dismissal schedule at our school. On these days the PM school bus may not be offered.**

Vacation Policy

The planning of family vacations is **strongly discouraged** during the school year. Please contact the principal directly if there is a need for your child to be gone during the academic year. Students will receive homework after they return from vacation. Unless otherwise planned with that teacher. This allows for a more accurate homework distribution. If homework is requested ahead of time and granted by the teacher, that work is due upon return to school. **Please remember nothing replaces actual classroom instruction.**

Communications

We seek to actively involve parents in the education of their children. As partners in education, the school will communicate with parents and students through conferences, written reports, phone calls, e-mail, Infinite Campus, the school website, the “Cavalier News”, and teacher newsletters during the school year. Parents should immediately contact the school/teachers with questions, concerns, and suggestions regarding their child or the school program.

If you wish to contact a teacher, you may email, send a note, or call the school office and leave a message and the teacher will return your call.

If a teacher/staff member chooses to give out a personal phone number please be considerate and don't text or call on weekends or evenings unless there is an emergency.

PRIVACY/FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a Federal law, requires that Ave Maria Catholic School, with certain expectations, obtain your written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child's educational records.

Parents who have children attending Ave Maria Catholic School have the right to inspect their child's records, the right to seek to amend information in the records they believe to be inaccurate, misleading or an invasion of privacy, and the right to consent to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from their children's records. Ave Maria Catholic School complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), (20 U.S.C.1232g:34CFR Part 99).

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Recess

When there is snow, students without boots during recess will stand by the building and students without snow pants cannot play in the snow. Students still need tennis shoes for P.E.

Students will remain inside for recess if the air temp is below zero degrees Fahrenheit OR if the wind chill is -10 below zero or colder OR it is raining.

If a parent would like to request a student remain indoors for recess due to illness, a doctor's note must be provided.

Transportation

In the beginning of the school year, parents/guardians are asked how their child(ren) will arrive and leave school.

1. Bicycles:
 - a. Students are permitted to ride bicycles to school. Bike locks are required. Students must follow state and local bicycle laws, including the wearing of appropriately sized helmets.
2. Bus:
 - a. Our local public school district provides bus transportation for our students. Please inquire at the Bus Barn (605-882-6335) for more information. Please do not request permission, written or verbal, from the principal for a student who is a non-rider to take the bus to any location on a given day. The school is not in a position to grant such a request. If you wish to pursue such a change, you may call the transportation office at (605-882-6335).
3. Car pick-up:
 - a. Parents who pick up students must park their cars and meet the students at the school dismissal area. A staff member will oversee car pick-up procedures daily.
 - b. Parents are to park in the designated areas or on the side of the road around the school building.
 - c. A student(s) will be sent to the KOT program if they are not picked up by 3:40 P.M. If a parent arrives late for an unexpected reason, please call the school prior to 3:40 so the student(s) is not sent to KOT. The student will wait inside the front doors.
4. Walkers:

- a. Students walking home must go directly home after school so parents know their whereabouts. There is no after school supervision unless signed into KOT.
5. Kids On Target:
Students who are planning to attend the KOT after school program need to line up in the KOT line. Students will be escorted by a staff member to the designated area to sign in. Students will follow directions and sit down for further instructions and to eat a healthy snack.

Staff Provided Transportation

Diocesan Policy dictates that Ave Maria Catholic School can only provide transportation within the district for students on an Individualized Education Plan or ELL Services through Watertown Public Schools. When possible we will try to schedule these services so a parent can drop off at the beginning of the day or pick up at the end of the day to limit the number of transports taken.

Telephone-School Office

The telephone in the school office is for business only. A student may use the phone only with the permission of the staff. Permission will not be given to a student to call home for social plans.

If a child is detained at school for any reason without prior notification, permission will be granted to use the phone. Urgent messages for students will be communicated to them from the school office. Messages can be given to the administrative assistant when necessary, and they will be given to the appropriate teacher.

Cell Phones/Handheld Electronic Games

Cell phones, handheld electronic games, and other items that, in the view of the school, may be distracting or disruptive to the learning environment, are not permitted to be turned on or taken out of book bags during school hours. If they are disobeying, the device will be confiscated and held in the principal's office until 3:20pm.

Smart Watches - These devices will be treated like any cell phone and kept in book bags from 8:20am-3:20pm. Notifications on these devices during class are a distraction in their learning and the classmates around them. Messages to students during the hours of 8:20am-3:20pm need to come through the school office.

Homework Guidelines

Homework components:

1. Preparation and Reinforcement
2. Assessment (evaluation tool)
3. Bridge (parental awareness and involvement)
4. Responsibility (independence and time management)

Homework should reflect authentic guided practice...

Of concepts introduced in class (flash cards, review sheets, independent reading, test preparation)

- Of work not completed in class (makeup work)
- That is developmentally appropriate (special projects, research experience, development of creativity, etc.)
- Of skills taught (memorization of facts and concepts taught in content areas).
- That provides an opportunity for parental involvement and support
- Of mastery expectations (revision of work)
- Within an appropriate timeline for completion

Parents Should...

- Make homework a priority (monitor extracurricular commitments)
- Provide a quiet study area and necessary supplies
- Reinforce with praise and support
- Set aside appropriate time
- Counter children's attempts to avoid homework
- Communicate with the classroom teacher
- Encourage children to do their own work
- Reinforce meeting the homework deadlines

Students Should...

- Complete all assignments to the best of their ability and skill levels (according to directions)
- Complete assignments in a timely manner (missed/incomplete assignments due to illness/vacation)
- Submit work that is done neatly (legibly)
- Complete their own work, seeking help as appropriate
- Recognize homework as a growth opportunity
- Maximize use of study time (test preparation, daily work)
- Demonstrate ownership of homework (necessary materials, time management, attention to detail)
- Develop age appropriate organizational skills (using a planner, assignment notebooks, time budgeting of schoolwork and activities)

Homework Policy Guidelines

If a student is absent for ½ day or 1 day from school because he or she is sick or on vacation the student will have 2 days to make up the assignments. **For example if a student is absent on Monday for illness, the missed assignments would be due to the teacher on Thursday at class time for each academic area.** Any work requested before a vacation is due upon return to school.

If a student needs to be gone for a special set of circumstances, special arrangements will be made to accommodate the student.

If a student has late work on a consistent basis a conference will be scheduled with the principal and the teachers involved. The purpose of the conference is to develop a plan in which the student can be successful in completing his or her assignments. Parents will be informed of the conference and the plan devised for their child.

Academic Responsibilities

Teachers will note if a student is experiencing academic difficulties in either assignments or test scores, and will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) to inform them of the possibility of academic probation.

Mid-term Grades

Mid-term grades may be accessed through the Infinite Campus Portal. They will not be sent home.

Promotion or Retention

Student progress is monitored throughout the school year. Parent /Teacher Conferences will be held once in the fall and once in the spring. In January the teacher will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student if he/she continues to experience difficulty, and to discuss the possibility of retention and/or support services. By the end of March, the teacher will schedule a follow-up meeting with the parent(s) /guardian(s) and the principal. If retention is indicated, the parent(s) or guardian(s) will meet with the principal to establish a plan to prepare the student, as well as his or her classmates, for the transition back to his or her current grade level.

Report Cards

Report cards are issued four times a year, at the end of each quarter. Teachers K-5 use Standards-Based Report Cards.

Books and Materials

Textbooks

The school provides textbooks for student use. Books can be covered with book covers purchased by the student if he or she so desires. Fines and replacement costs will be assessed for damaged, lost, or stolen books.

Lockers

All students will be provided with a locker for use throughout the school year. Students will have their own locker as long as space allows. Students will be responsible for keeping their lockers clean and presentable. No food or tape are allowed in lockers. Students will not be allowed to lock their lockers or decorate the exterior. It will be at the discretion of the principal to remove any inappropriate or distracting items or decor from a student's locker.

Toys & Personal Items

Students may not bring toys, stuffed animals, squishies, NeeDohs, or fidget toys or other non-school related play items to school unless specifically authorized by the teacher for a classroom activity. Items brought without permission will be collected by staff and returned to the student or parent at the end of the school day.

Guidance

K-6 grades will receive Lessons on Social/Emotional Skills 1 day a week as part of PE's Healthy Living Lesson.

Library

The library is available for student use according to a pre-arranged schedule. Our librarian is available on a part time schedule. Lost or damaged books will be assessed a fee per book.

Physical Education

Students need to wear ATHLETIC TENNIS shoes to P.E. class every day. For safety reasons, no flip-flops or sandals are allowed during Physical Education class. THIS IS NOT OPTIONAL

Federally Funded Programs

Under the No Child Left Behind Act, the federal government requires equitable participation for students attending private schools in the following areas providing that the local public school district receives funding for these areas:

- Disadvantaged children – Title I, Part A
- Reading intervention and improvement – Title I, Part B, Subpart 1
- Family Literacy, Even Start Program, Title I, Part B, Subpart 3
- Migrant education – Title I, Part C
- Teacher and principal training – Title II, Part A
- Professional development for math and science – Title II, Part B
- Technology education and teacher training – Title II, Part D
- Programs for limited English proficient students – Title II, Part D
- Safe and drug free schools – Title IV, Part A
- After-school programs, 21st Century Community Learning Centers – Title IV, Part B
- Innovative programs – Title V, Part A
- Programs for gifted and talented students – Title V, Part D

Co-curricular Activities

Co-curricular activities are sponsored for the enrichment and enjoyment of our students. The following programs are available:

Activity & Sundry Fees:

The following fees will be billed and are not refundable:

- **Registration Fee**
- **Orchestra/Band Fees for participants**

The following fees will be billed and are optional and non refundable:

- Yearbook
- Field Trips
- Co-curricular activities
- Mass Shirts & Cavalier Apparel

6th Grade Boys and Girls Basketball and Girls Volleyball

6th grade students will have the opportunity to participate in basketball and volleyball through the Watertown School District.

Assemblies

Classroom teachers will escort their students to the assembly presentation area. Students are expected to conduct themselves with appropriate and acceptable behaviors. **No whistling or shouting is allowed during presentations.** If the person(s) presenting the assembly gives the students the opportunity to ask questions, students are expected to ask things that are appropriate to the topic that was presented.

Splitting Classes and Student Placement

The decision to split a grade level into two classes will be made when the numbers reach certain levels.

K-3rd - Maximum number of students prior to splitting is 23. When the class reaches 20-23 students the need for a Paraprofessional will be assessed.

4-6th Grade - Maximum number of students prior to splitting is 26-28. When the class reaches 24-28 students the need for a ParaProfessional will be assessed.

The procedure for determining student placement when we have grade levels with multiple classrooms will go as follows.

Primary purpose for the placement process is to create a classroom environment that allows teachers to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of every student. When looking at placement there is a balance of variables, which include:

- Levels of academic progress and student needs
- Projected number of students at each grade level
- Social and emotional maturity
- Family situations eg. twins, siblings
- The ratio of boys to girls
- The number of classrooms available
- Behavior

Our teachers/principal meet and collaborate about what is in the best interest of each student.

Field Trips/Class Trips

Field trips are a privilege. Students can be denied that privilege if they fail to meet academic and/or behavioral requirements.

- Field trips provide a learning experience for students.
- Teachers or principal will inform parents, in writing, about field trips.
- **By signing the Parent Agreement on the back page of the handbook, families agree to their students attending field trips. Parents/Guardians must notify the school if they do not allow a specific field trip.**
- Students will be required to leave and return to school in the same vehicle unless the school administrator has issued permission beforehand.
- Parents are asked not to bring drinks or treats for students on field trips unless arrangements have been made beforehand. Parents are also asked not to stop anywhere to pick up “treats” during field trips unless permission has been prearranged with the principal.

Code of Conduct

The student is an Ave Maria Catholic School student at all times. A student who engages in conduct, whether inside or outside the school, that is detrimental to the reputation of the school, may be disciplined by school officials.

Harassment

Forms of harassment such as, sexual harassment, verbal remarks, physical threats, bullying on-line (including blogs, chats, and e-mails), or other such intimidation, are considered unacceptable in the school setting.

Sexual harassment is illegal, unacceptable, and will not be tolerated. No student of the school may sexually harass another. Any student will be subject to disciplinary action including possibly expulsion for violating this policy. Sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome sexual advance, solicitation or sexual activity by promise of rewards, coercion of sexual activity by threat of punishment, verbal sexist remarks or physical sexual assaults. Any form of sexual harassment can affect a student’s academic performance or create a hostile or offensive educational environment regardless of intent.

All of Ave Maria Catholic School employees and students are held accountable for maintaining a working and learning environment free of sexual harassment. Careful scrutiny will be undertaken of all allegations of sexual harassment. False allegations that are malicious or ill-founded may constitute slander.

Students should report such incidents to the principal and/or responsible administrator. All reported incidents will be thoroughly investigated and subject to disciplinary action. Confidentiality consistent with due process will be maintained. If a student files a written complaint because of dissatisfaction with the handling of the complaint, he or she may utilize any applicable grievance procedure.

Serious Infractions may result in an immediate suspension or dismissal and apply when a student is on campus, on a bus, or at school-sponsored functions. Some examples of serious infractions include the following:

- a. Truancy – unexcused absences
- b. Violent Behavior – any fighting or behavior that causes physical injury
- c. Bullying
- d. Blatant disrespect for authority – to any adult in the building
- e. Possession and/or use of drugs, narcotics, tobacco, or alcoholic beverages on campus or on a bus.
- f. Irreverence.
- g. Vandalism – destruction or defacing of parish or school property.
- h. Profane/obscene language or gestures or engaging in immoral conduct.
- i. Possession of any item which may present a danger to others in school or out.

Bullying Policy: It is Ave Maria Catholic School Policy that any type of harassment or bullying is prohibited, in some cases illegal and shall not be tolerated per administration discretion, any student violating this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action (e.g. detention, suspension, expulsion) including the possible involvement of law enforcement.

Definition: Bullying is a pattern of repeated conduct that causes physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students that may include threats, intimidation, stalking as defined in chapter [22-19A](#), physical violence, theft, destruction of property, any threatening use of data or computer software, written or verbal communication, or conduct directed against a student that:

- (1) Places a student in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property; and either
- (2) Substantially interferes with a student's educational performance; or
- (3) Substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a school.

For the purposes of §§ [13-32-14](#) to [13-32-19](#), inclusive, bullying also includes retaliation against a student for asserting or alleging an act of bullying.

Outward threatening behavior, cyberbullying, (i.e. instant/text messaging, social media), or other such intimidation tactics are considered unacceptable in the school setting. Students making such threats (seriously, in jest or online) face disciplinary action.

Examples:

- Direct or indirect, blatant or subtle, threats involving an imbalance of power through repeated and intentional actions.
- Any behavior considered physical aggression, social aggression, verbal aggression, written aggression, intimidation, sexual harassment, or racial/ethnic harassment.
- Isolation of the victim by making them feel rejected by his/her community.
- Malicious gossip and rumor spreading.
- Physical – harmful actions against another person's body (e.g. hitting, kicking, pushing, invading others personal space).
- Verbal – Speaking to a person or about a person in an unkind or hurtful way (e.g., profanity, name calling, teasing, taunting, mocking, spreading rumors, comments such as I hate him/her)
- Sexual - any unwelcome sexual advance, solicitation or sexual activity (e.g., sexual activity with a promise of rewards, coercion of sexual activity by threat of punishment, verbal sexist remarks or physical sexual assaults.) This conduct has the effect of unreasonably interfering with an

individual's academic performance or of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational environment regardless of intent.

- **Visual** – providing visual evidence of material meant to harm an individual (e.g., sexting, e-mail, text messaging, internet, pictures, and notes.)

Reporting: Student/parents should report harassment/bullying to the teacher and/or Administration. All reported incidents will be thoroughly investigated and subject to disciplinary action. Confidentiality consistent with due process will be maintained. If a student is dissatisfied with the handling of a complaint, he/she may file a written complaint and utilize any applicable grievance procedures. School system employees, school resource officer, and students are responsible for maintaining a working and learning environment free from harassment/bullying. All allegations will be carefully scrutinized. An investigation will be conducted on any alleged incident of bullying committed against a child while the child is aboard a school bus, at a school bus stop, or at a school-sponsored event. False allegations that are malicious or ill-founded may constitute libel or slander.

To report a bullying incident anonymously, please fill out the link below:

<https://forms.gle/oMRbugX29cQiDWRa7>

Suspensions / Dismissal

The principal will inform the parents/guardians of the seriousness of the individual's actions and seek their immediate cooperation in the corrective program designed to resolve the student's problem, if possible.

The plan of action will be developed by administration and then implemented by all parties involved.

- In-School Suspension (ISS):** The student(s) will be assigned to a closed study hall. Make-up work must be completed during this time. A student may face a reduction in his/her grades.
- Out-of-School-Suspension (OSS):** The student(s) is not to be in the school building or on school property during this suspension, including school sponsored evening or weekend activities. Make-up work must be completed and is the responsibility of the student(s). A student may face a reduction in his/her grades.
- Expulsion:** Expulsion is an extreme, but sometimes necessary, disciplinary measure for the common good. Any student will be subject to expulsion for any conduct which is of such a nature as to jeopardize the good name of the school community or which is detrimental or harmful to any member of Ave Maria Catholic School. Defiance of authority, overt disrespect for the laws of attendance, drinking, drug use, vandalism, theft, possession of weapons, or other serious offenses may demand permanent expulsion.

PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE/INTERVENTION PLAN

Applicable Areas: classrooms, hallways, school grounds, lunchroom, church, assemblies, bathrooms, and field trips

Level	Expected Behavior	Inappropriate Behavior	Intervention/Staff Action	Alternative Action	How Recorded
1	• Listen carefully • Walk/work quietly • Follow directions and school rules • Respect people and property • Keep hands and feet to oneself • Handle snow/objects on playground appropriately • Complete assignments on time • Be kind in word and action • Follow the uniform code	• Not listening • Disobeying directions and rules • Disrespect for people and property • Put downs • Talking back • Hurting others (minor) • Inappropriate gestures/language • Incomplete assignments	• Verbal reminder of expected behavior • Stop behavior • Correct inappropriate behavior • Teach appropriate behavior • Put student on notice that inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated	• Optional parent notification • Optional principal notification	• No record unless 2nd violation • Each tardy infraction recorded by classroom teacher
2	• Continued behaviors in Level 1 • Speak with courtesy and respect • Be honest	• Continued behaviors in Level 1 • Hitting or hurting • Vulgarity/swearing • Defiance of authority • Taunting/verbal intimidation • Stealing • Cheating • Verbal & physical abuse	• Stop behavior • Correct inappropriate behavior • Teach appropriate behavior • Put student on notice that inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated • Behavior recorded • Parent notified	• Loss of recess • Loss of privileges • Principal referral • Possible suspension (ISS/OSS)	• Document in Campus
3	• Continued behaviors in Level 2 • Follow directions • Be kind in word and action • Display controlled behavior • Respect for people and property	• Continued behaviors in Level 2 • Swearing at a teacher • Property vandalism • Harassment • Alcohol/drug misuse/violation	• Stop behavior • Behavior recorded • Principal referral • Parent notified	• Loss of privileges • Suspension (ISS/OSS) • Parent conference • Behavior contract	• Document in Campus
4	• Continued behaviors in Level 3 • Contributes to a safe environment • Displays controlled behavior	• Continued behaviors in Level 3 • Assaulting others • Weapons • Threats to others • Continued serious misbehaviors	• Stop the behavior • Parent referral • Parent conference • Behavior contract • ISS/OSS • Notify superintendent	• Suspension (ISS/OSS) • Expulsion • Notify public authorities	• Document in Campus

The administration holds discretionary power in regard to actions taken in regard to serious infractions.

Concern Procedures

Our objective is to address concerns in a confidential, informal, and rapid manner. If a parent has a concern, these are the steps to follow:

- A parent should first discuss the concern with the teacher, with the objective of resolving the concern informally. If a parent or teacher is not comfortable meeting alone; the principal may be included.
- If the concern is not resolved with the teacher, the concern will be discussed with the principal, with the objective of resolving the concern informally. A written response will be furnished to the parent if requested.
- If the concern is still not satisfied, the parent may take their concern to the superintendent.

Safety

1. For the safety of our staff and students, all visitors must report to the office when entering the building and sign in with the Administrative Assistant.

Security Access System Policy:

We have an intercom/card access system on our front door.

Security Key Cards are used to access the school's main door during hours that the school office may be closed, or for families that may need to access the building multiple times a day.

- KOT families will be issued key cards for access during the hours of 6:30am-8:00am and 3:20pm-6pm.
- Parents who use the school gym for practice will be issued a key card for access.
- If you are interested or have a need for a key card please inquire in the school office.

The first key card is issued to you at no charge – additional key cards are \$10. If the key card is returned you will be credited \$5.

2. Illness
 - a. Students with a temperature, body aches, and vomiting/diarrhea will be isolated from other students. A call to a parent/guardian will be made immediately for the child to be picked up. If a parent/guardian is unavailable, the school will call 911 if the situation deems necessary. We will follow CDC policy on all contagious diseases including head lice.
3. Fire Drills
 - a. Fire drills are conducted four times per year. The students are instructed to leave the building quickly and in silence when the alarm rings according to directions posted in each area.
4. Tornado Drills
 - a. Tornado drills are conducted twice a year. The students are instructed to go quickly and quietly when the alarm rings to their designated location.
5. Bomb Threat
 - a. In case of a bomb threat, Ave Maria Catholic School students will exit the building using the designated fire drill evacuation plan. Staff will direct students to the IC Parish Center or the Knights of Columbus building to await further instructions. Staff will follow safety management guidelines which are posted in all the classrooms.
6. Lockdown

- a. When the lockdown announcement is made, staff members will clear all students from the hallways and have them go to the nearest classroom. Students and staff members will be confined in their room until notified of evacuation plans or that the situation is clear. Staff members will lock all doors and windows and turn off the room lights.
- b. Staff members will have students move away from windows and doors and sit near an interior wall out of the line of sight from hallway windows.
- c. Staff members and students will remain in the classrooms until further instructions are given over the intercom system.
- d. If necessary, as the building is cleared by appropriate personnel, our reunification point is First United Methodist Church, 4 2nd Avenue SE, Watertown.

Medications

It is generally recommended that prescription medicines be given to the student before and/or after school in accordance with the physician's directions. In those rare instances where the medication must be given during the school day, follow procedures below:

Prescription, and non-prescription over the counter medications, must be in the original container with a note from the parents and physician to include:

- name of medicine
- dosage
- time of administration
- dates to be given
- reason for medication

Students requiring medical attention must report to the office. No medications should be placed in lunch boxes or school bags for students to self-administer. All medications must be taken to the office and checked in.

If a student requires emergency medical care because of an injury, a parent/guardian will be called immediately. If a parent/guardian is unavailable, the school will call 911 if the situation deems necessary.

Before any medication is administered a parent or guardian will be contacted for permission to dispense any OTC drugs. Part of the registration process is parental agreement to allow administration of medications and to hold harmless Ave Maria Staff in the administration of these medications.

Smoking

The school building and grounds are a smoke-free environment. No smoking or vaping is allowed in the school building. Violations will result in suspension from school and school related activities until a conference can be arranged with the parents and the principal.

Ave Maria Catholic SCHOOL
WEATHER ANNOUNCEMENTS AND OPERATION BLIZZARD

We have a number of students in our school who utilize the public school busing. This causes the need for an increased awareness of problems caused by blizzards, blocked roads, and the possibilities of buses not being able to proceed normally.

Ave Maria Catholic school follows the Watertown Public School system's guidelines regarding postponing or calling off school.

The three most common procedures are:

1. Schools will be closed because of adverse weather and buses will **not** go out on routes that day.

No classes will be held.

- A. Announcements will be made via Flocknote and email prior to 6:30 a.m. that school will be closed and buses will not operate.
- B. Students will not report to school.

2. Schools will be delayed in opening due to various factors. The announcement will indicate that school will start either one or two hours late.

- A. An announcement will be sent via Flocknotes and email. Bus pick ups will be either one or two hours later than normal when school is delayed. Parents should allow extra time on bus stops as buses may have problems traveling on roads during a delayed opening. Staff will be unavailable until 1/2 hour before the scheduled time. **DO NOT DROP STUDENTS OFF BEFORE THIS TIME.**
- B. If there is a late start **there will be no AM PreKindergarten classes/No AM KOT.**

3. Storms which occur after the children are in school.

- A. City children will be sent to their homes before conditions become too difficult.
- B. Bus children will be sent home on buses early, if conditions warrant. Announcements will be made via Flocknotes and email prior to sending buses out.
- C. If conditions are too bad to send children home on buses, announcements via Flocknotes and email that children will remain in Watertown and "Operation Blizzard" will go into effect. Operation Blizzard" is the plan that will go into effect for the rural bus students who might not be able to get home on the bus route.
- D. Once students are picked up by the school district, they become the responsibility of the Watertown School district.
- E. KOT will be available for one (1) hour after school is dismissed.

Parents' decisions related to transportation of children during storms will be honored at all times.

Computer-Acceptable Use Policy

The use of the Internet and all technology at Ave Maria Catholic School is a privilege, not a right, and any inappropriate uses will result in a cancellation of the privilege. These guidelines are provided so that users are aware of their responsibilities. Users are required to make efficient and ethical utilization of the network resources. If a user violates any of these provisions, his or her computer access will be terminated and future access will be set up on a limited basis with supervision. The signatures on the Ave Maria Computer policy are legally binding and indicate that parties who have signed the policy have read the terms and conditions carefully and understand their significance.

1. The use of an Internet account will support research and education.
2. Users are expected to abide by the accepted rules of network etiquette. These include but are not limited to the following: A) Be polite. B) Use appropriate language. C) Do not reveal your personal address or phone number or those of other students or colleagues.
3. Security is a high priority. If a user feels they can identify a security problem, notify an administrator. Do not go looking for a security problem. Do not demonstrate the problem to others. Attempt to bypass security will result in the cancellation of privileges.
4. Vandalism will result in cancellation of privileges. Vandalism is defined as any attempt to harm or destroy data. This includes uploading or creating a computer virus.
5. Note that electronic mail (e-mail) is not private. Ave Maria staff that operate the computer system have access to all mail.
6. Any questions about the network should be directed to the administration.

Students will sign the Technology Acceptable Use Policy and Grades 3-6 will sign the Chromebook Policy with the Technology Coordinator.

Publicity

Ave Maria Catholic School would like to showcase special events and activities through our publications and social media accounts. By signing the Parent Agreement, you are permitting us to promote the exciting happenings at Ave Maria Catholic School in which your child participates.

If you do not consent to the use of photographs or videos, the office must receive written notification from the parents/guardian by September 5th.

Volunteers

Ave Maria Catholic School relies on volunteers to help with many aspects of the school. Volunteering is a way to increase engagement in the school and church.

The Ave Maria Catholic School Volunteer Policy requires 10 hours of volunteer time per family each year. Families may choose to pay a fee of \$500 instead of volunteering. Volunteer hours can include time helped with the school or a parish within our Pastorate. Throughout the year, the school office will offer volunteer opportunities to the families. Parents/Guardians are responsible for submitting/recording the volunteer hours through a link provided on our website. We will provide abundant opportunities for volunteering. Opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- Assisting with a fundraising events (serving on a committee or helping the day of)
- Baking treats for specific events (baked goods = 1 hour)
- Selling SCRIP after Mass (log 1 hour)

- Summer cleaning/moving for school building projects
- Serving on School Council
- Chaperoning field trips
- Serving at weekend Mass (students)
- Helping with weekend Mass (parents)
- Assisting with events or fundraisers for your parish
- Teaching Wednesday religious education classes

Kids on Target

Before & After School Care Program

Mission

The mission of Kids On Target is to provide a safe, positive, child centered environment where children can explore hands-on educational activities and develop age appropriate social skills. Kids On Target staff is committed to the success of all children we serve. Kids On Target program is designed to serve the day care needs of school age children.

License

Our child care program is licensed by the State of South Dakota through the Department of Social Services, and therefore complies with the child care regulations presented by the State of South Dakota. Children are supervised at all times. We have a staff to child ratio of 1:15 at the Ave Maria Campus and 1:10 at the Holy Name Campus.

For more information on our program or to enroll your child(ren), Kids on Target Handbooks are available in the Office.

The Technology Program at Ave Maria Catholic School is committed to teaching our students a positive, acceptable, and appropriate use of technology. This agreement applies to school-owned devices and all other devices used at Ave Maria Catholic School. We want our students to have fun and stay safe online. This includes Digital Citizenship. Digital Citizenship is an important concept to teach and instill in our students. Responsible Digital Citizenship can help your child have a safer and more satisfying experience online.

Responsible Digital Citizenship

- Behaving lawfully – for example, it's a crime to hack, steal, illegally download or cause damage to other people's work, identity or property online
- Protecting your privacy and that of others (Digital Footprint)
- Recognizing your rights and responsibilities when using digital technologies
- Thinking about the impact of what you do online on yourself, on other people you know, and on the wider online community (Cyber Bullying)

Cyber Bullying includes sending mean, threatening, or hurtful messages, posting or sharing embarrassing pictures or information, pretending to be someone else online to hurt another student, deliberately excluding someone from an online activity, creating or sharing hurtful content about another student, or using a school device or account to harass, embarrass, threaten, or intimidate someone. In accordance with South Dakota law, cyberbullying involving computers or other electronic devices may be addressed by the school even when the conduct occurs outside of school property or outside of school hours. The location or time of an electronic incident does not prevent the school from taking disciplinary action when the conduct meets the definition of bullying under South Dakota law. Students are expected to treat others with respect and to report suspected cyberbullying to a parent, teacher, or school administrator.

The use of the Internet and all technology at Ave Maria Catholic School is a privilege, not a right, and any inappropriate uses will result in a cancellation of the privilege. These guidelines are provided so that users are aware of their responsibilities. Users are required to make efficient and ethical utilization of the network resources. If a user violates any of these provisions, it may result in loss or restriction of technology privileges, parent/guardian notification, disciplinary action, financial responsibility for damage, and/or other consequences consistent with school policies depending on the nature and seriousness of the violation.

1. The use of school technology accounts will support research and education. Students may not intentionally access, create, download, save, or share content that is inappropriate for school or contrary to the mission and values of Ave Maria Catholic School.
2. Users are expected to abide by the accepted rules of appropriate and respectful technology use. These include but are not limited to the following: A) Be Polite. B) Use appropriate language. C) Do not reveal any information.
3. Students should not use or access school technology on their own initiative without permission from a supervising teacher or school staff member.
4. Security is a high priority. If a user feels they can identify a security problem, notify an administrator. Attempting to bypass security will result in the cancellation of privileges.
5. Vandalism will result in cancellation of privileges. Vandalism is defined as any attempt to harm or destroy data/equipment.
6. Student email accounts are not private. Ave Maria Catholic School Administration, who operates the computer system, has access to all emails. These emails will be used as a teaching tool.

7. Students should not use another student's accounts, devices, or change another student's work or files.
8. All technology at Ave Maria Catholic School should be treated respectfully. If a student is found negligent when caring for his/her assigned technology, the family may be fined.
9. Students should immediately report to a teacher or administration any technology use that is unsafe, inappropriate, threatening, bullying, or makes them uncomfortable. Students should also report if they accidentally access inappropriate material.

I read the terms and conditions carefully and understand their significance.

Student Name: _____ Signature: _____

Parent Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Diocese of Sioux Falls Parental Covenant

Since as parents we are the primary educator of our children, we will participate in the education of our children by:

- ... recognizing that all that we are and have is a gift from God
- ... attending Mass on weekends and holy days with our children (Catholics)
- ... participating in the sacramental life of the church regularly (Catholics)
- ... promoting positive attitudes toward school at home and in the community
- ... bringing concerns about our child directly to the teacher
- ... showing respect for the teacher as a professional person working for the well-being of our child
- ... following the policies of the school
- ... promoting family prayer and faith traditions at home
- ... encouraging my child in his/her call to holiness and vocational discernment
- ... volunteering and giving service to the school and parish (place of worship)
- ... witnessing Gospel values in our everyday life
- ... practicing the virtues of our Catholic faith in our everyday life
- ... agreeing to not knowingly supply or assist any student in obtaining or using drugs or alcohol

As a Diocese of Sioux Falls Catholic School, parents can expect:

- ... An Authentic Catholic education
- ... A positive, professional relationship with students, characterized by mutual respect, warmth, and good will
- ... Regular parent communication regarding their child's progress
- ... Standards of student behavior enforced in a fair, firm, compassionate and educationally sound manner

Parent Agreement

I confirm that I have read the Ave Maria Catholic School Student-Parent Handbook for the 2026-2027 school year and agree to abide by the policies and procedures detailed within the handbook. This agreement applies to all family members enrolled at Ave Maria Catholic School.

Parent Name (Print): _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____