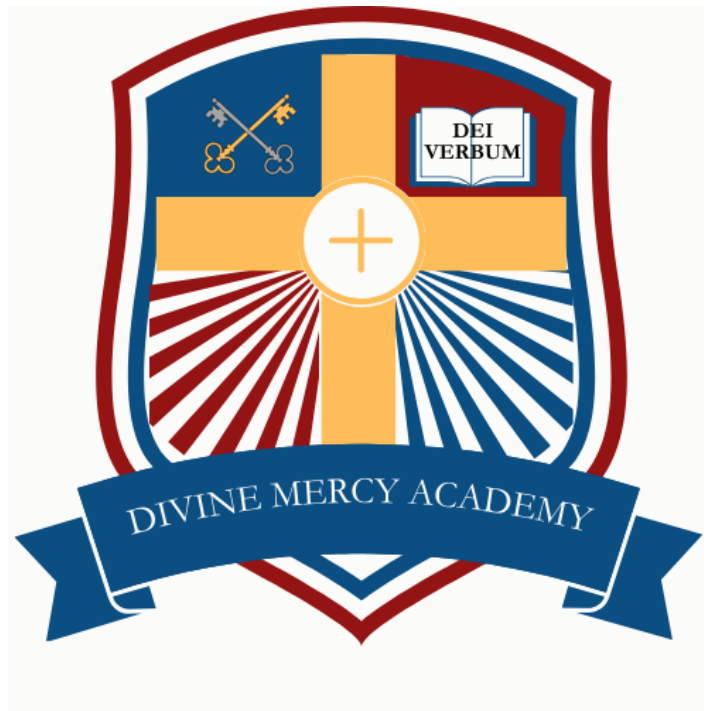


Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam



Student & Family Handbook

2025-2026

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I. 100. School Contact Information & Legal Statuses:

- **Address:** 601 W. Cameron Avenue, Belgrade, MT 59714
- **Main Phone:** (406) 388 - 7588
- **Email:** info@dmamt.org
- **Website:** www.dmamt.org
- **School Hours:** Mon-Fri 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
- **Executive Director: Jay Lappe**
 - Email: jay.lappe@dmamt.org
 - Phone: 1-949-690-1161
- **Principal: Cheryl Roller**
 - Email: cheryl.roller@dmamt.org
- **Office Manager: Mary Pendleton**
 - Email: mary.pendleton@dmamt.org

101. Non-Profit Status:

- Divine Mercy Academy is an independent private school in the Catholic tradition. DMA is not a diocesan school. No funds are received from the Diocese of Helena. Divine Mercy Academy is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization (Federal Tax ID No. 46-0532968).

102. Non-Discrimination Policy

- Divine Mercy Academy, Inc. admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, financial assistance policies, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

103. Canonical Recognition Status:

- Divine Mercy Academy, in faithful obedience to the Risen Lord, seeks full communion with the Catholic Church by aligning with her bishops. We have formally requested canonical recognition as a Catholic school in the Diocese of Helena and submitted the required documentation. Though privately owned, governed, and funded as an independent nonprofit, we will soon be canonically recognized as a legitimate Catholic apostolate with the endorsement of the Bishop of Helena and his successors. This relationship affirms our mission to serve the faithful of the Gallatin Valley and the parishes' shared responsibility to support our role in evangelization and education.

104. Accreditation Status:

- Divine Mercy Academy has partnered with Lumen Accreditation, an accrediting work of the Institute for the Transformation of Catholic Education, which is operated by the Catholic University of America. The accrediting team will visit campus in October of 2025.

II. 200. Mission & Vision Banners

201. Mission Statement

- Divine Mercy Academy holistically forms young men and women in an environment to cultivate beauty, seek truth, and do good. Rooted in Christ Jesus, and centered on the Eucharist, our classical Catholic education nurtures virtue, intellect, and spirit, empowering students to fulfill their vocation as faithful disciples and leaders in service to God and society.

202. Banners

● 202a. Catholic

- At Divine Mercy Academy, Jesus Christ is the foundation, purpose, and unifying thread of all we teach and do. As Colossians 1:15–17 reminds us, all things were created through and for Him, and in Him all things hold together. We do not need to "add" Christ or the Catholic faith to our work—everything naturally finds its source and fulfillment in Him. Our life as a school flows from a deep fidelity to the Catholic Church and her living Magisterium.

● 202b. Classical

- Divine Mercy Academy offers a Catholic, classical liberal arts education that forms the whole person to freely pursue truth, beauty, and goodness. Rooted in the transcendent God, this renewal is not a new program but a restoration of a Catholic vision of reality—seen and unseen. It shapes students with eyes to see and ears to hear the Creator's presence in all things, fostering an education of joyful hope.

● 202c. Family Oriented

- "As the family goes, so goes society" – Pope St. John Paul II. John Paul II affirms the beauty of family life as does Divine Mercy Academy. At DMA, we promote the role of parents as the primary educators of their children. It is in the family where students' dignity is promoted and affirmed. DMA seeks to contribute to the renewal of the family, especially through our adherence to Pope St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body.

● 202d. Masculine & Feminine Virtue

- At the heart of the Christian faith is the nuptial mystery of Christ and the Church, where every person finds true fulfillment. Our identity as male or female is not incidental but central to our vocation and eternal destiny. The distinction of man and woman is a sign of God's redeeming, fruitful love. Divine Mercy Academy affirms the inherent dignity of each student's masculinity or femininity, points them to the divine mystery reflected in this distinction, and calls them to live with the virtue worthy of their dignity in Christ.

● 202e. House Model

- The House Model is intended to complement the family orientation of the Divine Mercy Academy community and encourages community among students of all ages. This model allows older students to mentor younger students, younger students to grow in confidence, and all students to grasp the importance of virtue in their friendships.

III. 300. Philosophy of Education

- Divine Mercy Academy exists to cultivate wisdom and virtue by nourishing students' souls with what is true, good, and beautiful. As the Church teaches, Catholic education unites faith with culture and life, forming both intellect and character. Our integrated curriculum weaves together subjects—history, literature, math, science, catechism, grammar, logic, and fine arts—through a journey across historical eras (Ancient, Roman, Medieval, Modern), uniting learning across disciplines.
- Rooted in a Catholic vision of the whole person—mind, body, and spirit—DMA fosters a strong partnership with parents, recognizing the family as the primary educator. Beyond academics, students grow through physical education, enrichment activities, daily prayer, and weekly Mass. They are taught to seek God in all things and to approach life with wonder, awe, and the hope of becoming saints.

IV. 400. Structure & Organization

401. Board of Directors

- Sean MacDonald, *Chair*
- Geoffrey Scholl, *Vice Chairman*
- Luke Neal, *Treasurer*
- Mark Davis, *member*
- Bob Hohne, *member*
 - DMA's Board of Directors governs Divine Mercy Academy, has fiduciary responsibilities, and is charged with advancing DMA's Mission & Vision in conjunction with DMA leadership. Information about DMA's current Board of Directors is available on the school's website at www.dmamt.org/schoolboard.
 - The Board meets on the First Tuesday of the Month at 6:00pm. in the cafeteria (Bosco).
 - General meetings begin at 6pm and are open to the public to attend. If anyone would like to address the Board, please submit the request to board@dmamt.org by the Wednesday before the next meeting and include the following information:
 - Name and Phone number
 - Reason for request
 - Steps already taken to attend to the matter
 - Remedy to be sought (if applicable)
 - Any additional presenters
 - Approximately how long your address to the board will take

402. Communication

- Clear, respectful communication is essential to the Divine Mercy Academy community. In keeping with the Church's teaching on subsidiarity (cf. CCC 1883), concerns should first be addressed at the most local level—starting with the teacher—before involving DMA leadership if necessary.

General Guidelines:

- Teachers may share personal phone numbers at their discretion, but routine communication should occur via email or in person.
- Teachers are expected to respond within two business days; if not, parents may contact the Principal.

School Administration Will:

- Communicate expectations for academics, attendance, and behavior.
- Announce school closures/late starts by 7 AM via email.
- Inform families of schoolwide events and emergencies.
- Intervene in unresolved student/parent/teacher matters.

Teachers Will:

- Share classroom expectations via syllabi or periodic updates.
- Communicate due dates for assignments and projects.
- Notify parents of sensitive topics tied to the curriculum.
- Record tardies and absences.
- Alert parents if a student is at risk of failing.
- Participate in parent-teacher conferences.

Parents Will:

- Notify their child's teacher of absences before 7:45am.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences.
- Follow the proper communication chain (teacher → Principal → Director).
- Collect make-up work for lower school students when absent.

Upper School Students Will:

- Notify teachers of upcoming absences.
- Communicate directly with teachers about grades, missing work, and make-up assignments.

403. Parents in Partnership

- Divine Mercy Academy affirms that parents are the primary educators of their children, and our role is to support that mission. When home and school work in harmony, students thrive.
- **Volunteer 20:**
 - To help the school run smoothly and enrich student life, each family is expected to contribute 20 volunteer hours per academic year. This shared effort ensures no single family bears the burden.
- **Ways to Volunteer:**
 - Serve on the auction or fundraising committees
 - Monitor lunch or recess
 - Support teachers in the classroom
 - Assist with school events
 - Help with facility maintenance
 - Serve on the Parent-Teacher Organization Board
- Volunteer opportunities and updates are shared through DMA's newsletter.

404. Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)

- All parents are members of the PTO. The aim of the PTO is to assist teachers, help facilitate school events and provide fundraising support for field trips and other activities. The PTO meets monthly. Please email the PTO (dmapto@gmail.com) for more information and the current meeting schedule.

V. 500. General Information & Expectations

501. School Calendar

- Located on the school website www.dmamt.org/currentfamilies
- School Events (i.e. Recitations, Advent Program, & End of the Year Program) students are expected to participate, so please consult the calendar for scheduling purposes.
- Divine Mercy Academy views these opportunities as essential and formative experiences that the students share with one another.

502. School Hours

- The school day goes from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday – Friday. Drop off will be available beginning at 7:45 a.m. every day in Frassati Gym.
- Parents must pick up or make arrangements to pick up their child(ren) no later than 3:45 p.m. unless students are staying for an after-school activity. Students may not remain on campus unsupervised per Virtus child safety policy.
 - Students should not be in any building unless authorized by DMA staff.

503. Parking

- Driving and parking on the fire lane that connects the parking lot to the paved area on campus is not permitted.
 - Chain should be left up, unless granted special permission by administration
- Families and visitors are to park in the lot near the playing field. Student drivers are to park at Alliance Church and walk to campus.

504. Holy Mass

- Divine Mercy Academy, in communion with the Diocese of Helena, expects every student who is enrolled at the school will attend Mass with fellow students and teachers.
- Students are expected to be silent and reverent during Mass and all other liturgical and devotional events - such as Adoration - while at the Church.

505. Meals and Snacks on Campus

- Students must bring their own lunch as no lunch is provided by the school. A few microwaves are available for student use, but should not be overly relied on.
- Students will be permitted to have a midmorning snack and should plan accordingly.
- Any dietary restrictions or allergies should be reported to the school

506. Tardiness & Absences

- As a measure for student safety, please report absences and tardiness to the school by 7:45am.
 - All cases of absences or tardies should be emailed to attendance@dmamt.org so teachers and administrators will know.
 - If a Lower School student (grades K - 5) is tardy, they must present themselves to the office in JP II and check-in with school administration. Upper School students (grades 6 - 12) should go directly to Faustina Hall.
 - **Tardies count as half-absences**
 - **If a student misses more than 15% of the school year, the student may not be allowed to move on to the following grade (i.e. 22+ absences, 44+ tardies, or any combination of this).**
 - A tardy is defined as arriving to the gym (Frassati) after 8:00am for morning assembly.

- Attendance is critical in maintaining a strong academic and formative environment, and is mandatory for our students
 - As part of this formative component, students are expected to be punctual, present, and participatory during the school days.
 - It is part of DMA's vision and mission of helping form functional and faithful students who habituate the virtue of justice to the school and school environment.
 - Families should make every effort to make any absences and tardiness infrequent and limited.
- Repeated incidences of tardiness and absences will result in a meeting with parents and the school leadership team to find solutions to ensure a healthy learning environment for those students and their classmates.
 - At the upper school level, attendance is taken at the beginning of every class period.

507. Make-Up Work

- When a student is absent, regardless of reason, they are responsible for any and all work missed. (Teachers discretion)

508. Electronic Devices

- To maintain a focused learning environment, the use of cell phones and electronic devices is prohibited on campus. Devices must be turned off and kept in lockers until students leave for the day.
- **K–8:**
 - Classrooms are intentionally low-tech. Unless for documented medical or learning needs, students should not bring or use personal phones, tablets, or laptops on campus.
- **High School:**
 - Laptops, tablets, or phones may only be used with explicit permission from a teacher for the approved purpose.
 - Unauthorized use of any device will result in a detention and confiscation. Parents will need to pick up the device at the end of the school day.

509. Illness, Medications, and Treatment

- Students with symptoms such as a fever over 100°F, vomiting, diarrhea, or any illness that hinders basic academic performance must stay home **until symptom-free for 24 hours**. If symptoms arise during the school day, parents are expected to pick up their child promptly.
- DMA reserves the right to respond appropriately to highly contagious or dangerous illnesses but is not obligated to follow the protocols of public institutions. Our approach prioritizes student and community well-being through prudent decision-making.
- Prescription medications must be dropped off at the main office by a parent in the original container with required documentation. Students with conditions such as asthma, severe allergies, diabetes, or anaphylaxis may carry and self-administer medication as prescribed. Families must notify the office of the condition, medication, and treatment plan.

See Addendum with further Medication protocols.

510. Safety Protocols

- *Emergency Drills:* Fire and other safety drills will be conducted periodically.
- *Visitors:* For the safety of our students and faculty, all visitors who come on campus during the school day must report to the office and check-in.
 - All school buildings remain locked during the day.
 - Visitors who have not first checked-in at the main office may not enter any other buildings. Parents must notify administrative staff of their presence before entering the classroom for any reason.
 - Recess monitors and other volunteers should likewise check-in at the office and receive a volunteer badge.
- *Volunteers:* All volunteers who work with students must be Virtus trained to comply with requirements of the Diocese of Helena. Virtus requires an online training session, followed by a monthly online bulletin which must be read and question that follows answered correctly.

511. School Closings

- If, for any reason (including inclement weather), Divine Mercy Academy needs to cancel classes, families will be notified via email by 7:00 a.m. (teachers by 6:30a)

512. Field Trips

- Any off-campus activities will require permission slips for student participation.
- Transportation to and from such activities is arranged via parent carpools.
- There will be no field trips/off-campus activities permitted with less than a minimum of 2 weeks notice AND approval.
- Any parent driving students other than their own must be approved by the school and Virtus-trained.
 - If driving students other than their own, parents need to be mindful of what radio/music/videos are played because not all families allow the children to listen/watch the same things.

VI. 600. Attire

601. Uniforms

- Students are to be in conformity with Divine Mercy Academy's uniform requirements at all times during the school day, especially at Holy Mass.
- DMA crested fleeces and sweaters are available for use in cold-weather months.
- DMA authorized or endorsed outer wear may be worn as well (i.e. 4H, Pro-Life, Knights of Columbus, or school club attire) with permission of Head of School or Dean.
 - Hoodies, sweatshirts, coats or other non-uniform outerwear are not permitted in the classroom or at Mass.
- **Uniforms do not need to be new. The school offers a free uniform swap in Bosco**
 - Uniforms must be clean and free of rips/stains
 - Girls wearing skirts and kilts must wear either black or navy leggings or black or navy knee high socks
 - Conservative monochromatic or two-tone shoes
 - Outerwear worn in the classroom must be crested or approved for school wear
 - Weather appropriate boots may be worn to/from school but students need to have conservative shoes available at school
 - Jumpers, kilts, and crested pieces will come from Flynn O'Hara.

- **Kindergarten - 5th Grade Girls:**
 - *Old Navy, Target, French Toast, Flynn O'Hara, or any similar brand*
 - Red Flynn O'Hara Jumper
 - Long or short sleeve light blue or navy polo
 - Navy or black knee high socks with shorts
 - Navy or black leggings
 - Conservative monochromatic or two-tone shoes; no heel or sandals
- **Kindergarten - 5th Grade Boys:**
 - *Old Navy, Target, French Toast, Flynn O'Hara, or any similar brand*
 - Long or short sleeve polo shirt in navy
 - Uniform khaki or navy chino pants with belt loops
 - Uniform khaki or navy shorts (optional in September and May)
 - Conservative black or brown belt
 - Conservative monochromatic or two-tone shoes
- **6th, 7th & 8th Grade Girls:**
 - *Old Navy, Target, French Toast, Flynn O'Hara, or any similar brand*
 - Gray Flynn O'Hara, or other brand, knee length pleated skirt
 - Long or short sleeve light blue dress shirt or navy polo
 - Navy, black, brown (or other neutral color) socks (w/shorts) or leggings
 - Conservative monochromatic or two-tone shoes; no heels or sandals
- **6th, 7th & 8th Grade Boys:**
 - *Old Navy, Target, French Toast, Flynn O'Hara, or any similar brand*
 - Long or short sleeve polo shirt in navy
 - Uniform khaki or navy chino pants with belt loops
 - Conservative black or brown belt
 - Conservative monochromatic or two-tone shoes
- **High School Boys:**
 - *Old Navy, Target, French Toast, Flynn O'Hara, or any similar brand*
 - Khaki or navy chino pants with belt loops
 - Long or short sleeve cardinal polo
 - Long or short sleeve white dress shirt or polo to be worn under crested v-neck cardigan, crested cardinal vest, crested v-neck pullover, or crested navy fleece
 - Conservative black or brown belt
 - Conservative monochromatic or two-tone shoes
- **High School Girls:**
 - *Old Navy, Target, French Toast, Flynn O'Hara or any similar brand*
 - Grey or navy pleated, knee length uniform skirt
 - Long or short sleeve cardinal polo
 - Long or short sleeve white dress shirt or polo to be worn under crested v-neck cardigan, crested cardinal vest, crested v-neck pullover, or crested navy fleece
 - Navy, black, brown (or other neutral color) socks (w/shorts) or leggings
 - Conservative monochromatic or two-tone shoes; no heels or sandals

602. Appearance

- Every student is made in the image and likeness of God and their appearance should reflect the dignity with which they were created.
 - Students should have a natural hair color
 - Colored hair with exotic or otherwise unnatural colors is not permitted.
 - Students are required to maintain the hair on their heads and faces such that it is neatly styled and the student's face is easily identifiable.

- For gentlemen, hair must be well-groomed, and if men have facial hair, it should be groomed and styled neatly.
 - Men will not be allowed to have hair length longer than their collars or over their ears.
- For women, make-up may be used according to the discretion of the student's parents. Any use of make-up should be tasteful and natural in tone.
- Hats are not permitted inside any building.
- Jewelry is permitted but should not lead to distraction or pose a safety issue.

603. Out of Uniform Dress

- **Physical Education:**
 - Appropriate length athletic shorts (Girls may wear shorts that go to their fingertips), or, sweatpants/joggers
 - No yoga pants/leggings
 - T-shirt or appropriate top
 - Tennis Shoes are required (Please no snow boots or cowboy boots for PE).
 - Students need to bring clothes for PE to be left at the school during the week.
 - PE attire may be street wear but must be appropriate for school and free of anything explicit or profane.
- **"Dress-down days":**
 - Students are required to abide by the above appearance guidelines
 - All dress is to be modest, respectful, and appropriate.
 - "Leggings" or "yoga pants" are not permitted at any time.
 - Clothing affixed with words, logos, symbols, or images must not be obscene or otherwise inappropriate.
 - Skirts & dresses will be permitted depending on the events (i.e. field trips or more athletic driven events) must reach the knees.
 - Any pants, including jeans, must not be torn
 - Shoulders must be covered at all times.
 - Conservative monochromatic or two-tone shoes - no heels or flip-flops.
 - DMA will address students who arrive at school dressed in a manner that is inconsistent with these guidelines and Catholic values.
- **Spirit Days:**
 - Most Fridays will be spirit dress which will be jeans, tennis shoes, and a DMA top (i.e. sweatshirt, polo, etc).

VII. 700. Human Formation

701. Relationships

- To create a familial culture, Divine Mercy Academy focuses on relationships, both with students and parents, for the formation of students in wisdom and virtue. This echoes Don Bosco's *Preventative Educational Method*, which seeks to first, make clear rules and expectations, and second, accompany students in such a way that they can be counseled and corrected. Communication with parents is of the utmost importance in the effort of human formation, as DMA assists parents in their God-given responsibilities.

702. Academic Integrity

- Cheating is both an academic violation and a sin.

- Cheating in grades 5 and under will be handled in conversation with a student's parents, classroom teacher, and Principal.
- In grades 6 and above, the first two offenses for cheating or plagiarism will result in an automatic zero on the assignment and an opportunity to serve the school in recompense in conversation with the Principal and the classroom teacher.
 - Additional offenses will require the Director's discernment and a discussion with the student's parent(s) regarding the student's enrollment at DMA. Accusations of cheating are very serious and Divine Mercy Academy will allow for appropriate appeal when an accusation is made.

703. Discipline

- All Discipline is centered on redirecting behavior towards the true, good, and beautiful.

703a. K-5 Discipline

- Behavioral issues in the lower grades are addressed case-by-case by the teacher in partnership with parents, using age-appropriate discipline. Serious matters may be referred to the Head of School.

703b. 6-12 Discipline

- Older students are held to higher standards of conduct, reflecting their growing maturity and responsibility. Respect is expected and reciprocated among students, teachers, and administrators at all times.
- While DMA does not use a formal merits/demerits system, there is zero tolerance for disrespectful behavior, such as talking back, eye-rolling, or classroom disruptions. Repeated offenses will result in a meeting with the Principal.
- **Detention:**
 - Issued for serious or repeated misconduct. Parents will be informed to ensure timely and constructive resolution.
- **Bullying:**
 - Any form of bullying results in immediate detention and a meeting with the Principal and/or Director. DMA maintains a zero-tolerance policy for bullying.
- **Expulsion:**
 - Severe policy violations may lead to expulsion, as outlined in the enrollment agreement. Final decisions rest with the Director, in consultation with the Board of Directors.

VIII. 800. Enrollment Procedure

- Enrollment for all K-12 applicants consists of two (2) components: *registration* and *tuition management* through FACTS.
- **Returning families who do not re-enroll by June 1st will need to have a family interview with the Principal or Director before being able to register.**

801. Registration:

- Visit www.dmamt.org/enroll
- Complete and submit all online forms.
- The first year at DMA, applicants need to provide a birth certificate, current immunization record, and previous school records, if applicable. When additional immunizations are given, a new record is required.

802. FACTS:

- Create/update FACTS account by going to www.factsmgt.com or visit www.dmamt.org/enroll and select “FACTS login”.
- Input/update financial institution information and student information.
- If you are applying for tuition reduction, complete the application on FACTS. If this is done after March, it is possible you will not receive your adjusted tuition amount until August.
- Approve payment plan.

**Enrollment is complete when all registration forms are submitted, and payment plan is approved by Divine Mercy Academy.

IX. 900. Tuition and Financial Aid

- Divine Mercy Academy is an affordable option and an investment in the education and formation of your child(ren). Accessibility to opportunity is the hallmark of Catholic Social Teaching, and DMA does everything it can to live out that tenet of our Faith.

901. Tuition

- K-12 is \$6400/year for the first child in a family; \$5100/year for the second child; \$3900/year for the third child; for each additional student is \$230.

902. Financial Aid

- Tuition levels have been set as low as possible. To further assist families, DMA partners with FACTS, a third-party tuition management provider, to determine reductions for tuition according to their specific financial circumstances.

903. ACE Scholarships

- Families are encouraged to apply for ACE Scholarships, an organization in Colorado and Montana that provides partial financial aid to families in need. Applications are available through FACTS and should be submitted prior to April 1st.

**In order for families to qualify for the Saint Nick fund they must have already applied for the ACE scholarship.

904. Fundraising

- DMA takes great care to operate in a fiscally responsible manner. Tuition covers approximately 30% of DMA’s operating budget; donations and fundraising account for the remainder. Families are expected to assist the school in fundraising since it enables DMA to provide tuition reduction.

905. Fees

- Fees are per student and not subject to discounting. Fees are separate from tuition and are as follows:
 - Resource Fee:
 - \$200 per student
 - Due the first semester of school via FACTS, cash or check

906. Services Provided by FACTS

- *Payment Processing:* FACTS provides all families the security and confidentiality that they deserve for their payment processing. Families can access FACTS at www.factsmgt.com. All families will set up an account with FACTS, which takes about 2-3 minutes to complete. Tuition payments are automatically made monthly.

- *Confidentiality:* Most families at DMA utilize FACTS for tuition reduction. FACTS will handle your personal information and determine a reduced tuition amount based on your family's income, number of children, and other essential family expenses. This process is confidential and secure, with a financial assistance award letter emailed/ mailed to you from FACTS showing your responsibility for tuition.
- *Renewing Accounts:* FACTS applications must be renewed every year, ideally by March for the upcoming school year. Families who apply after March 31st may experience a delay as late as August in receiving confirmation from FACTS.

X. 1000. Purpose and Limitation of this Handbook

- All policies will be applied with deference to legal rights of students and parents required by law. The policies stated in this handbook are subject to change at any time at the discretion of the School Board in conjunction with the Head of School and Dean of Upper School, as are all other policies, procedures, or programs of Divine Mercy Academy.
- The free association of individuals in a community or group of any kind (i.e., Church, family, civil society) imposes, by nature, certain obligations on its members for its proper functioning and well-being. Our school community is no exception. This should not be viewed as a diminishment of personal freedom but rather an enhancement of it for it provides an environment that is most conducive for the education and formation of students. Upon enrollment at Divine Mercy Academy, families acknowledge the policies and rules set forth in this handbook which guide and order Divine Mercy Academy.



Signature and Acknowledgment of 2025-2026 Student & Family Handbook

(To be printed and returned)

Print Name:

Date:

Signature: