

DIVINE MERCY ACADEMY



Student & Family Handbook

2023-2024

601 W. Cameron Avenue, Belgrade, MT 59714

Main Phone: (406) 388 - 7588

Email: info@dmamt.org

Website: www.dmamt.org

School Hours: Mon-Fri 8:15 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Mass at St. John Vianney Parish: Wednesday's 12:05pm (for lower school), Tuesday's & Wednesday's (for upper school).

Head of School: John Bacon

- Email: headofschool@dmamt.org

Dean of High School: Eric Schreiber

- Email: dean@dmamt.org

Administrative Assistant: Scout Lappe

- Email: office@dmamt.org

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).

Mission Statement

“Leading students to Truth through the study of Salvation History, so that they graduate with the academic skills to do well in life and the moral character to do good for the world.”

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.

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I. Mission and Vision Banners

Catholic

- o Jesus Christ is the foundation, goal, and uniting thread of all that we do and teach at Divine Mercy Academy. “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:15-17). We do not have to “force” Jesus or our Catholic faith into anything at Divine Mercy Academy, because all things naturally find their source, meaning, and fulfillment in him. Our life in Christ as a school is driven by our loyalty to the Catholic Church and its living magisterium.

Classical

- o Divine Mercy Academy is a Catholic, classical, liberal arts education that equips students to freely pursue truth, beauty, and goodness. The classical model educates the whole person and is rooted in the transcendent God. The growing renewal is not about adopting a new “model” or “program”; it is about infusing a Catholic vision of reality, which is both visible and invisible. It is about raising students who have *eyes to see and ears to hear* the presence of the Creator in the truth, goodness, and beauty in the world around them. It is an education for joyful hope.

Family Oriented

- o “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. Our school experience honors family life in the relationship building House Model. 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.

Masculine & Feminine Virtue

- o At the very heart of the Christian faith is the mystery of Christ and the Church, and it is in this nuptial union of Christ and the Church that every human being finds their deepest fulfillment. Our embodiment as men and women is not merely accidental, but is central and integral to our identity, vocation, and eternal fulfillment. Indeed, the embodiment of man as man and woman is a “sign” of God’s fruitful, redeeming love for humanity. Divine Mercy Academy seeks to affirm every young man and woman in the inherent dignity of their masculinity and femininity, point them to the divine mysteries of faith embodied in the sexual distinction, and call them to the virtue that is fitting of so great a dignity in Christ.

House Model

- o The House Model is intended to compliment 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.

II. Philosophy of Education

“The Catholic school’s task is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second is the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian.” – *Congregation for Catholic Education, The Catholic School 37*

DMA’s purpose is to cultivate wisdom and virtue by nourishing the souls of our students on all that is true, good and beautiful. Our curriculum interweaves traditional subjects including history, literature, math, science, catechism, grammar, logic and fine arts with students journeying through the historical eras each year (Ancient, Roman, Medieval and Modern eras) which unites their studies across all subjects.

“A good school provides a rounded education for the **whole person**.

And a good **Catholic school**, over and above this, should help all its students to become **saints**.” - Pope Benedict XVI

To attend the mind, body and soul, DMA goes beyond the classroom and incorporates physical education, whole school enrichment activities, daily communal prayer, and Mass during the week. During the school day children are taught to look for God in everything and approach life and learning with wonder and awe.

At the high school level, DMA seeks to offer high school students the full breadth of the Catholic intellectual tradition through a broad variety of course offerings including Theology, Philosophy, Math, Science, Literature, Composition, Art, Latin, and History. Students also cultivate physical development in P.E. and creative development in *schola cantorum*.

As students grow into young men and women, DMA seeks to bring to fulfillment the positive investment of paren. Thus, the high school provides enrichment activities for students to experience how their faith and knowledge interact with the world. This thoughtful engagement provides an opportunity for vocational discernment and professional pursuits.

III. Structure and Organization

Board of Directors

- Ross Mitchell, *Chair*
- Geoffrey Scholl, *Vice Chairman*
- Luke Neal, *Treasurer*
- Rhonda Meyer, *Secretary*
- Jay Lappe, *member*
- Mike Roman, *member*

DMA’s Board of Directors governs Divine Mercy Academy, has fiduciary responsibilities, and is charged with advancing DMA’s Mission & Vision. Information about DMA’s current Board of Directors is available on the school’s website at www.dmamt.org/schoolboard.

The Board meets quarterly, typically on the second Tuesday of November, January, March, and June, at 6pm on campus. Generally, meetings are not open for public comment, but families are welcome to

attend. If you would like address the Board, please submit your request to board@dmamt.org by the Wednesday before the meeting and include the following information:

- Name and Phone number
- Reason for request
- Steps already taken to attend to the matter
- Remedy you are seeking (if applicable)
- Who, if anyone, will be speaking with you
- Approximately how long your address to the board will take

Communication

Communication within the DMA community is of utmost importance as a sign of respect and love towards one another. Therefore, DMA's communication policy aligns with the Church's social teaching on *subsidiarity* (cf. CCC 1883), where priority is given to addressing matters at the most local level possible. This includes making sure situations within the classroom are first addressed with the teacher prior to being brought to the Dean or Head of School. If reasonable solutions are unattainable, then it may be appropriate to include the Dean, Head of School, or (in extreme cases) the Board of Directors as a whole.

**There will be a formal Parent Teacher Conference once a Semester. Dates TBD.

On the part of the school administrators: Transparency

- Will communicate school wide expectations for academics, attendance, and behavior.
- School closures or late starts by 7AM the morning of via email
- Emergencies
- School wide events
- Issues that student/parent/teacher communication is unable to resolve

On the part of teachers:

- Classroom and homework expectations via syllabi or classroom rules/parent memo?
- Due dates for projects, homework, and/or presentations
- Will inform parents of any sensitive topics that would be discussed depending on curriculum.
- Will inform front office of tardies and absences.
- Will inform front office and parents of health issues.
- Will reach out to parents when students are in danger of failing
- Parent-teacher conferences will also provide an opportunity for those conversations

On the part of parents:

- Will inform front office of any absences before 8AM on day of absence and provide proper documentation
- Will participate in parent-teacher conferences when available
- Will follow proper levels of contact beginning with teacher as it pertains to grades/behavior/classroom concerns
- Will collect make up work if student is absent in lower school

On the part of upper school students:

- Will communicate with teachers about upcoming absences (upper school students)
- Will reach out to teacher with concerns involving grades or missing work
- Will reach out to teacher for make-up work if absent

Parents in Partnership

DMA recognizes that parents are the primary educators of their children and that our school seeks to assist with that responsibility. A child is best served when home and school work in harmony. To that end, DMA's "Parents in Partnership" outline specific means for achieving this goal.

- Volunteer 20
 - o Divine Mercy Academy depends on volunteers to make the school day function well and to support various efforts to enrich the students' experience. When all parents contribute some of their time, the school's needs are met without the burden falling on just a few. DMA asks each family to volunteer twenty hours per academic year.
 - *Options for Fulfilling the Volunteer 20:*
 - Monitor recess
 - Provide classroom support
 - Assist with school events
 - Serve as an officer of the Parent-Teacher Organization
 - Provide facility maintenance

*Regular updates and information will be available on DMA's weekly newsletters.

Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)

Membership in the PTO is encouraged but not required for families. 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 (dmpto@gmail.com) for more information and the current meeting schedule.

IV. General Information & Expectations

School Calendar

Located on the school website www.dmamt.org/currentfamilies

There are several events throughout the school year (i.e. Advent and End of the Year programs) where students are expected to participate in as they build up DMA's community and culture, as well as showcase student achievement. Please be on the look out for more information to come.

Students in grades seven and above are expected to attend the camp-out/retreat at the beginning of the school year (more information to come), while all students are encouraged to attend other special events, such as lock-ins, throughout the year. Please address any concerns regarding your student's participation as soon as possible so that solutions or accommodations can be made. Divine Mercy Academy views these opportunities as essential and formative experiences that the students share with one another.

School Hours

The school day goes from 8:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday – Friday. Drop off will be available beginning at 8:00 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. Unless participating in a school sponsored activity, students being supervised by parents after or before school hours should remain outside of all buildings.

Parking

Driving and parking on the fire lane that connects the parking lot to the paved area on campus is not permitted. Families and visitors are to park in the lot near the playing field. Student drivers are to park at St. John Vianney and walk to campus.

Holy Mass

Divine Mercy Academy is a school in the Catholic Tradition and, therefore, 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 genuflect when entering or exiting a pew. Members of the school community should be attentive to keeping the church clean and maintaining a prayerful silence at all times.

Lunch

Students must bring their own lunch as no lunch is provided by the school. Microwaves are available for student use. Lower school students will eat lunch in time to maintain the one hour Eucharistic fast. Students will be permitted to have a midmorning snack and should plan accordingly. No gum chewing is permitted while on campus.

Tardiness and Absences

In order to maintain a strong academic and formative environment, Attendance is critical and mandatory for our students. Being punctual, present, and participatory during the school days is a part of DMA's vision and mission of helping form functional and faithful students, and habituates the virtue of justice to the school and school environment. Families should make every effort to make any absences and tardiness infrequent and limited.

If a student is absent for more than 10 days in a given semester the Head of School will request a meeting with parents to speak on solutions that will reduce absences and tardiness in the future as well as discussion on the impact the absences are having on the student.

**At the upper school level, attendance is taken at the beginning of every class period. Three tardies a week will constitute a detention to be enforced by the Dean or Head of School. This includes three tardies in a day as well as missing morning assembly.

As a measure for student safety, please report absences and tardiness to the school by 8am. Notification by emailing attendance@dmamt.org is preferred. When students arrive late, they should present themselves at the appropriate classroom and check-in with their teacher.

Make-Up Work

For younger students, parents should inquire with their student's teacher to see what was missed. For the upper school, students are expected to take on the responsibility of approaching or emailing their teachers to obtain missed work themselves.

Electronic Devices

To maintain an environment conducive to learning the use of cell phones and any other electronic communication or listening devices is prohibited on campus. Such devices, if brought to school at all, must be turned off and remain in a student's backpack until the student has left campus. Should a student violate this policy, their device will be confiscated and a parent will need to pick it up. For upper school, the expectation is that all phones will be left in their locker or in the Dean's office and can be retrieved at the end of the day.

Medications

Students who require the use of prescription medications must have a parent drop off the medication at the main office in the original bottle with all pertinent paperwork. Students with asthma, severe allergies, or anaphylaxis are permitted the possession or self-administration of medication, as prescribed.

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 sign-in. All school buildings remain locked during the day. Visitors who have not first checked-in at the main office may not enter any building. 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 one training session, which DMA provides each fall, followed by monthly online lessons (emailed) that take only a few minutes to complete. Volunteers who have attended a training session in previous years do not need to attend another unless they have failed to complete the monthly lessons.

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.

Field Trips

Any off-campus activities will require signed permission slips for student participation. Most often, transportation to and from such activities is arranged via parent carpools. Any parent driving students other than their own must be approved by the school and Virtus-trained.

V. Attire

Uniforms

To preserve the learning environment, students are to be in conformity with Divine Mercy Academy's uniform requirements at all times during the school day, including 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 are to be strictly followed as shown in the graphics below (See Appendix A for specific information).

Appearance

Every student is made in the image and likeness of God and, therefore, their appearance should reflect the dignity with which they were created. Students should have a natural hair color - coloring hair with exotic or otherwise unnatural colors poses a distraction for other students and 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. If men have long hair, it must be pulled back and out of their eyes.

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. Additionally, jewelry is permitted but should not lead to distraction or pose a safety issue.

Out of Uniform Dress

There may be occasions for “dress-down days” in which students are not required to wear their uniforms. Students are still expected to abide by the above appearance guidelines as a matter of safety for students of all ages and dress in a modest, respectful, and appropriate manner. “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 and dresses must reach the knees and any pants, including jeans, must not be torn. Shoulders must be covered at all times. DMA will work with a student, and/or his or her parents, who arrives at school dressed in a manner that is inconsistent with these guidelines and Catholic values.

VI. Human Formation

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.

Academic Integrity

Cheating is both an academic violation and a sin. Cheating in grades 6 and under will be handled in conversation with a student's parents, classroom teacher, and Head of School. In grades 7 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 Dean of Upper School and the classroom teacher. Additional offenses will require the Head of School'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.

K-6 Discipline

Behavioral issues in the lower grades will be handled on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of a student's teacher and in communication with parents. The school will approach discipline at this level in a way that is age appropriate. More serious breaches of conduct may be elevated to the Head of School.

7-12 Discipline

Older students are held to higher standards of conduct and reflect the natural increase in responsibility as they become young adults. Respect is a primary focal point for both Mr. Bacon and Mr. Schreiber, and will be expected of all students, teachers, and administrators. Respect is to be given in all situations and be reciprocated by all.

- There is no formal “merits/demerits” system. However, there is 0 tolerance for talking back to the teacher, rolling one's eyes at a teacher, disrespect or disruptive behavior. Repeated disrespect will be grounds for a meeting with the Dean of Upper School and if need be, the Head of School.
- *Detention:* A detention may be given to a student for more serious breaches of conduct or the accumulation of disrespectful behavior. Detentions will be discussed with the student's parents to ensure they are served in a timely manner and that they provide a remedy for the student.

- o Any kind of bullying will be met with an immediate detention and a conversation with the Dean and/or Head of School. There is a 0-tolerance policy for bullying.
- *Expulsion*: Severe violations of school policies may result in expulsion consistent with a family's enrollment agreement. With input from the Board of Directors, the Head of School is the final arbiter in such matters.

Enrollment Procedure

Enrollment for all K-12 applicants consists of two (2) components: *registration* and *tuition management* through FACTS.

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.

FACTS:

- Create/update FACTS account by going to www.factsmgmt.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. **Families who register by May 1st will receive a \$500 tuition discount.

VIII. 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.

Tuition

K-12 is \$6000/year for the first child in a family; \$4800/year for the second child; \$3600/year for the third child; for each additional student is \$200.

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. The average tuition paid per student is \$2,500.

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.

Fundraising

DMA takes great care to operate in a fiscally responsible manner. Tuition covers approximately 50% 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.

Fees

Fees are per student and not subject to discounting. Fees are as follows:

Resource Fee:

- K-6 \$100
- 7-12 \$150
- Upper Grade Fee: 9-12, additional \$750 for books.

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 K-12 DMA 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.

IX. Purpose and Limitation of this Handbook

This handbook does not constitute a contract between Divine Mercy Academy and any individual (student, parent or guardian). 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.

K - 4 Girl's Uniform



Long or short sleeved dress shirt or polo in navy or light blue



Red/navy plaid jumper from Flynn O'Hara



Navy cardigan or fleece with crest from Flynn O'Hara (optional)



Navy or black tights or knee socks



Navy or black leggings with matching ankle socks



Black conservative no heels shoes. Mary Janes preferred.

GUIDELINES

Jumper must go to knees.

If wearing knee socks, shorts are to be worn under jumper.

Barrettes and headbands that are uniform or neutral colored - red, blue, white, brown, black - are allowed.

5-8 Girl's Uniform



Long or short sleeved dress shirt or polo in light blue.



Navy cardigan, v-neck sweater, or fleece with school crest from Flynn O'Hara



Navy polo with crest from Flynn O'Hara



Red/navy plaid kilt from Flynn O'Hara



Navy or black tights or knee socks



+



Navy or black leggings with matching ankle socks

Black conservative no heels shoes



GUIDELINES

School crest must be worn at all times.

Light blue dress shirt or polo must be worn with Flynn O'hara sweater, blazer or fleece.

Kilt must go to knees.

If wearing only knee socks, shorts are to be worn under kilt.

Barrettes and headbands that are uniform or neutral colored- red, blue, white, brown, black- are allowed.

9-12 Girl's Uniform



Long or short sleeved dress shirt or polo in white.



V-neck cardigan, v-neck or crew neck pullover, or v-neck sweater vest in cardinal or fleece in navy, with school crest from Flynn O'Hara



Long or short sleeved polo or banded bottom polo in cardinal with crest from Flynn O'Hara



4 Kick Pleated Skirt in grey or navy from Flynn O'Hara. 100% Polyester only.



Navy or black tights or knee socks

Navy or black leggings with matching ankle socks



Black conservative no heels shoes

GUIDELINES

School crest must be worn at all times.

White dress shirt or polo must be worn with Flynn O'hara sweater or fleece.

Skirt must go to knees.

If wearing only knee socks, shorts are to be worn under skirt.

Barrettes and headbands that are uniform or neutral colored- red, blue, white, brown, black- are allowed.

K - 8 Boy's Uniform



Long or short sleeved dress shirt or polo in light blue



Navy v-neck, sweater vest or fleece with school crest from Flynn O'Hara



Long or short sleeved navy polo with crest from Flynn O'Hara



Khaki chino pants or Carhartt CK8373 in dark tan. No other Carhartt style or color is allowed.



Black belt

Black socks

Black conservative shoes. No laces preferred for K-3.

GUIDELINES

School crest must be worn at all times.

Light blue dress shirt or polo must be worn with Flynn O'Hara sweater, sweater vest or fleece.

No khaki colored jeans, cargo pants or joggers may be worn.

Belts required.

9-12 Boy's Uniform



Long or short sleeved dress shirt or polo in white.



V-neck or crew neck pullover, or v-neck sweater vest in cardinal or fleece in navy with school crest from Flynn O'Hara



Long or short sleeved cardinal polo with crest from Flynn O'Hara



Khaki or navy chino pants or Carhartt CK8373 in dark tan. No other Carhartt style or color is allowed.



Black belt

Black socks



Black conservative shoes.

GUIDELINES

School crest must be worn at all times.

White dress shirt or polo must be worn with Flynn O'Hara sweater, sweater vest or fleece.

No khaki or navy colored jeans, cargo pants or joggers may be worn.

Belts required.

Signature and Acknowledgment of Handbook Page

Print Name:

Date:

Signature: