



# NOTRE DAME CATHOLIC SCHOOL

*Walk with Faith. Excel in Academics. Lead with Character. Live Extraordinary Lives.*

## **Mission Statement**

Notre Dame Catholic School, a ministry of the Diocese of Gary, walks with faith in Jesus Christ and excels in academics to form students of strong character who are prepared to lead, serve, and live extraordinary lives.

## **Guiding Vision**

We believe every person is created in God's image and loved by Christ. We strive to recognize Christ in ourselves and in others, and to show His love through kindness, respect, and service each day.

## **Educational Philosophy**

Notre Dame Catholic School embraces the vision of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, weaving together faith, academic excellence, and social responsibility as outlined in the Curriculum Guide for Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Gary.

Our approach includes:

1. Helping students grow into compassionate, faith-filled individuals who value life and live with integrity.
2. Providing a strong religious education that supports each child's spiritual growth and understanding of Catholic values.
3. Supporting each student's intellectual, social, and physical growth through diverse teaching strategies, including whole and small group learning, departmental instruction, and hands-on experiences.
4. Guiding students to explore their strengths and consider future paths with confidence and purpose.

Our teachers believe that blending the art and science of teaching within a faith-based environment allows every child to thrive. By nurturing the whole child—spiritually, academically, socially, emotionally, and physically—we help students discover and develop their God-given talents. Every day, in every classroom, we live out the Notre Dame Code: We see Christ in ourselves and in others, and we strive to be Christ for one another.



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## **Handbook Policy Statement**

This handbook is a living document and is subject to revision at the discretion of the school and/or Diocese. The school reserves the right to amend, modify, or discontinue any policy, procedure, or provision contained herein at any time, with or without prior notice, as deemed necessary to support the mission and operation of the school. Notification of substantive changes will be provided as appropriate.

## **Purpose of the Parent/Student Handbook**

This handbook outlines the policies and daily procedures that guide our school community. It's important that both students and parents read through it together and understand its contents. When parents, students, and teachers work as a team, the school experience is more positive, productive, and enjoyable for everyone.

## **Parents' Role in Education**

At Notre Dame Catholic School, we are thankful to work with parents in teaching and guiding their children. Parents are a child's first and most important teachers. We believe it's your job—and your gift—to help your child grow in every way: spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, and socially.

The lessons we teach at school and in church grow stronger when they are also supported at home. We ask you to work with us as partners to help your child become the best version of themselves, always putting God at the center.

## **Parent/Guardian Communication**

To help families stay informed, we send a school newsletter every Thursday by email. Please read it each week for important updates.

You can check your child's grades and progress through **FACTS**, our school's online system. Parents create a FACTS account when they join Notre Dame. Report cards are shared in FACTS at the end of each semester. Paper copies are also sent home each quarter and available at the end of the year.

Good communication between teachers, parents, and students is very important. Please allow at least **24 hours** for a response to any email. If your message requires a long or detailed response, or involves a sensitive matter, we ask that you **schedule an in-person meeting** instead of continuing over email.

We also use Parent Alert, Facebook, Instagram, and email to share school-wide updates or emergency information.



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## **Academic Integrity (Honesty)**

At Notre Dame Catholic School, we teach students to be honest and responsible in all their work. Cheating, copying, or turning in someone else's work as your own is not allowed. This includes work done online.

If a student cheats or plagiarizes, they will receive a failing grade and may also face detention, suspension, or even removal from school. Students involved in cheating may also be removed from sports or other activities.

All cases are taken seriously, and repeated offenses will have stronger consequences.

**The principal and/or school administration will make the final decision on what action is taken for each situation.**

## **Honor Roll (Grades 1–8)**

The honor roll celebrates students who are working hard and doing well in their core academic subjects (like math, reading, and science). Specials classes like art, music, and PE are not included.

To qualify for the honor roll, **a student must also earn a 3 or higher in both effort and conduct** in all classes.

### **Honor Roll Levels:**

- **Pastor's Honor Roll:** 4.0 GPA or higher
- **Principal's Honor Roll:** 3.7–3.99 GPA
- **Honor Roll:** 3.5–3.69 GPA

## **Academic Probation**

Any student with a **GPA below 2.0** at the end of a grading quarter due to **lack of effort** will be placed on **Academic Probation**.

### **What does "lack of effort" mean?**

"Lack of effort" means a student is not meeting expectations for responsibility, engagement, and active participation in their learning. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Frequently missing or incomplete assignments**
- **Not turning in homework** on time without a valid reason
- **Not preparing for tests or quizzes**, shown by poor performance



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- **Lack of participation** in class discussions, group work, or activities
- **Not using class time effectively** or being frequently off-task
- **Disregarding teacher instructions or feedback**
- **Consistently low grades** due to minimal effort or carelessness
- **Not asking for help** or using support when it's available
- **Showing little motivation** or interest in improving academically

## Late Work Policy

- Students may turn in late work **one day late with a 10% grade penalty.**
- Work turned in **after that grace period** will receive a **zero.**

**Note:** This does **not** apply to excused absences. Students have **one day for every day missed** to complete work without a grade penalty.

## Academic Probation Process

- Students on probation will be **reviewed every 3 weeks** by the **principal, teachers, student, and parents.**
- An **academic improvement plan** will be created and monitored.
- **Extra help sessions** are available by request and should be arranged with the student's teacher(s).

## Restrictions During Probation

Students on academic probation will **not be allowed to participate** in:

- **Sports or other extracurricular activities**
- **Field trips**
- **Dress down days or other special events**

The principal and/or school administration will make the final decision on what action is taken for each situation.

## Ongoing Academic Probation

If a student is on Academic Probation for **three consecutive grading quarters**, the **principal, teachers, and Response to Intervention (RTI) Team** will meet to decide whether the student will be:

- **Promoted to the next grade,** or
- **Allowed to continue enrollment** at Notre Dame Catholic School



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## **Attendance**

At Notre Dame Catholic School, we believe that being at school every day and arriving on time is very important for success. When students, parents, and staff work together, we help students build habits like responsibility, punctuality, and self-discipline that will prepare them for life.

Students who miss a lot of school may have to repeat their grade or may no longer be allowed to attend Notre Dame, based on the principal's decision.

## **Unavoidable Absences (Excused Absences)**

(Examples: illness with note, funeral, doctor's appointment, principal-approved reasons)

- If your child will be absent, please **call the office by 9:00 am every day** they are out. If we don't hear from you, we will call to check.
- Students should be free of fever or stomach issues for **24 hours without medication** before returning to school.
- If sent home for fever or digestive problems during the day, students **cannot come back the next day**.
- If your child misses **3 or more days due to illness**, parents **may be asked to provide a doctor's note at the principal and/or administration's discretion** when the student returns.
- For early pick-ups or late arrivals due to medical reasons, please **call the office by 9:00 am**.

## **Absent by Choice (Unexcused Absences)**

(Examples: no call/no show, vacations without notification or academic proof)

- Please try to schedule vacations during school breaks.
- Teachers will **not provide assignments before the rest of the class receives them**. Students must check their Google Classroom daily (if used) for missed work.
- Teachers will give handouts and assignments to students when they return. Students have **3 days** to complete missed work and tests, outside class time (like recess or before/after school). No credit will be given after 3 days.
- Teachers will **not reteach lessons** missed during vacations; parents and students are responsible for this.
- If a vacation falls at the end of a quarter or school year, all work must be completed **before** the vacation, as arranged with the teacher.
- If no advance notice is given or academic proof is not provided, students will receive **zero credit** for missed work.



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## Travel

Families may request a one time excused absence for travel during the school year. To qualify:

- Students must provide **proof of academic experience or learning** done during the vacation (e.g., a report, project, or journal, as determined by the teacher).
- All **make-up work must be completed within the allowed time frame** (3 days after return, or per teacher's schedule).

If the academic experience proof is not submitted or work is not completed on time, the absence will be considered unexcused.

**Important:** Excessive travel during the school year—even if planned with notice—can impact your child's progress and may lead to dismissal from Notre Dame Catholic School.

## Tardies

Being on time helps students develop self-discipline and respect for others.

- A student is tardy if they are **not in their classroom and ready by 8:15 am** without a pass from school staff.
- Medical or dental appointments are the only excused reasons for being late.
- **Parents must walk their child into the building and sign a tardy notice at the office** whenever their child arrives late.

Students may be **dismissed from Notre Dame for excessive absences or tardies**, at the discretion of the principal and/or administration.

## Mass Day Attendance

Students attend weekly Mass. Grades PS-8 attend together on Mondays and Wednesdays.

All Masses begin at **8:30 a.m.**, and families are encouraged to attend. Students must wear the formal uniform on Mass days. **No "Non-Uniform Today" (NUT) passes are permitted on Mass days. Preschool & PK do not wear uniforms.**

## Extracurricular Activities

Students are expected to attend school **all day** to participate in any sports or extracurricular activities that day. Approved field trips or school events count as attending. Exceptions for medical appointments or funerals must be approved by the office. Sleeping in with parental permission is **not allowed** as an excuse.



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## **Medications**

Students are not allowed to have any medications in their possession while at school. All medications must be brought to the office along with a parental note and a doctor's signature giving directions for administering the medication. Parents must keep the main office informed of any medical conditions, including allergies. Allergies must be disclosed to the office, and parents must complete a Medication Authorization Form and Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Plans, both requiring a doctor's signature.

Students in grades 4 through 8 may also have a Student Self-Carry Medication Contract, which must be completed by parents and signed by a doctor, allowing them to carry certain medications with approval.

## **Homework Policy**

Homework is an important part of the learning process at Notre Dame Catholic School. Success requires students to be organized, disciplined, and prepared each day. Students should expect homework assignments most nights.

If a student has an excused absence, they are responsible for obtaining any missed work. On the day they return, students must make arrangements with their teachers to complete assignments within a timeframe set by the teacher. Homework will **not** be accepted for unexcused absences or suspensions.

Students who attend any part of the school day must submit any homework due that day.

## **Code of Conduct & Discipline**

Notre Dame Catholic School is committed to creating a caring and respectful community grounded in Gospel values and the love of Jesus. Our goal is to provide a safe and positive environment where all members of our school family can learn, grow, and thrive.

## **Behavior Expectations**

We believe that respectful behavior is essential and must be taught, learned, and practiced. Firm and fair discipline helps students grow into mature and responsible Christian leaders.

## **Prayer and Liturgy**

As a Catholic school, prayer and liturgy are important parts of our community life. During these times:

- Students should remain silent unless invited to pray aloud or sing.



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- All students, regardless of faith, are expected to participate respectfully.
- Students who are not Catholic should observe respectfully and remain silent during prayers and Mass.

## **Sacramental Preparation and Participation Policy**

Students preparing to receive a sacrament are expected to participate regularly in Sunday Mass as an essential part of their faith formation. Regular Mass attendance as a family reflects a shared commitment to the sacramental life of the Church and strengthens the partnership between home and parish. Students who do not demonstrate consistent participation in Mass may be deemed ineligible to receive the sacrament at that time.

## **Respect for Everyone**

All members of our school community—including students, parents, teachers, staff, and administrators—are expected to treat one another with respect and kindness at all times. This includes:

- In the classroom
- On school grounds and nearby areas
- At all school events, on and off campus

## **Conduct Outside of School**

Behavior off-campus that negatively affects Notre Dame Catholic School may result in disciplinary action, including expulsion. All discipline decisions are at the discretion of school personnel.

## **Our Shared Commitment**

Faculty, staff, students, and parents work together to maintain a learning environment that values respect, education, and care for others and their property.

## **Classrooms**

Each teacher at Notre Dame Catholic School has a classroom management plan that aligns with our school-wide expectations. Since every class and age group is different, rules and consequences will be tailored to fit the needs of the students in each classroom.

## **Lockers**

Lockers belong to Notre Dame Catholic School and may be inspected by school personnel at



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any time. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

Students with valuables are encouraged to consult the school office for alternative storage options. Lockers should be kept clean, and any decorations inside must not cause damage.

**The administration reserves the right to search lockers at its discretion.**

## **Lunches**

Students are expected to bring a traditional “brown bag” lunch each day.

No student should ever go without lunch. While NDCS will provide lunch in emergency situations, families are ultimately responsible for providing meals.

Parents will not be reimbursed for hot lunches missed due to absences. Questions about the hot lunch program should be directed to the school principal.

Parents are strictly prohibited from contacting hot lunch vendors directly. Doing so may result in suspension of online ordering privileges.

## **Discipline Procedure**

Our goal is to maintain a positive learning environment where good behavior is encouraged and expected. Teachers will model positive choices and use them to guide students.

For minor misbehaviors, teachers may use consequences such as:

- Loss of privileges
- Time-outs
- Loss of recess

We want to remind families that situations are routinely handled by classroom teachers as part of our school day and learning environment. Teachers are skilled at guiding students through challenges, promoting reflection, and reinforcing expectations. For this reason, teachers will not reach out to parents immediately for every situation. Parent involvement is typically sought when additional support is needed or when a pattern of behavior arises.

If misbehavior continues, parents will be notified by the teacher. Open and honest communication between parents and teachers is important to understand the issue and help the student improve their behavior. We appreciate your trust as we help students grow in responsibility, empathy, and independence.



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## **Student Responsibilities**

Students are expected to:

- Follow school policies designed to help them grow and take responsibility
- Show courtesy in all interactions
- Be prompt and fulfill their responsibilities
- Care for the school environment
- Use good judgment and act appropriately

## **Administrative Role**

The principal and/or administration has the final say in deciding if actions are appropriate and what consequences should be given. Parents will be informed about discipline through referral slips, FACTS notifications, phone calls, or emails.

It's important that parents support this process by discussing the behavior with their child and working together on ways to prevent future issues.

**The principal and/or school administration will make the final decision on what action is taken for each situation.**

## **Corrective Action & Consequences**

This policy applies to any student:

- On school property
- Attending school or any school-sponsored activity
- At any other time or place, including online (social media, electronic communication, etc.), when behavior affects the safety, order, or reputation of students, staff, or the school

## **Possible Consequences**

### **Detention**

- Scheduled by the principal and/or administration.

### **Probation**

- May be assigned after several disciplinary issues.
- Lasts for a period set by the school.
- During probation, all extracurricular activities are suspended.
- If behavior does not improve, withdrawal from school may be considered.



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## **Suspension**

- Can be in-school or out-of-school depending on the offense.
- No credit is given for work missed during suspension.
- A meeting with the principal, parents, student, and teacher will be held before suspension.
- Withdrawal may be considered if behavior does not improve.

## **Withdrawal**

- A serious action reserved for students who pose a threat to themselves or others.
- May also be used if parents violate handbook policies.

**The principal and/or school administration will make the final decision on what action is taken for each situation.**

## **Harassment Policy**

At Notre Dame Catholic School, our students, faculty, parents, staff, and supporters are dedicated to creating a caring, safe, and respectful environment where every student can learn and succeed.

If harassment occurs, students should know that all reports will be taken seriously and handled quickly, thoroughly, and effectively.

We also expect anyone—students, educators, family members, or other school community members—who sees or knows about harassment to report it immediately to school personnel. Reports can be made confidentially if desired.

**Please note:** The school cannot address situations unless it is informed of the parties involved, as well as the date, time, and place the incident occurred. Situations should be current; issues from the past that were not previously brought to our attention may be difficult to investigate or resolve appropriately.

### **Important:**

The principal is the final authority in all disciplinary matters and may override any rules or regulations if deemed necessary for just cause.



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## **Legal Action Policy Statement**

Any family who initiates or participates in legal action against the school and/or the Diocese is required to withdraw their student(s) immediately. The school reserves the right to deny future re-enrollment in such circumstances. Enrollment is understood as a partnership between the family and the school; legal action is considered a breach of that partnership.

This policy is not intended to discourage families from exercising their legal rights, but to acknowledge the practical challenges and potential conflicts that arise when legal disputes occur within the school community. Withdrawal is necessary to allow the diocese/school to address the matter appropriately while maintaining a focused and uninterrupted educational environment for all students.

## **Uniform Policy**

Wearing your uniform properly and with pride reflects positively on you and the entire Notre Dame Catholic School community. At Notre Dame Catholic School, we want to create an environment that supports the highest level of academic focus. Since how students present themselves affects their attitude and the respect they earn, everyone is expected to follow the uniform guidelines carefully.

Uniforms must be properly sized, clean, and worn correctly each day. All plaid uniform items and sweaters must be purchased directly from our official uniform company; substitutes or look-alike brands are not permitted. Vendor information can be found on the Notre Dame Catholic School website.

Clothing must fit well and be clean at all times. Students are expected to maintain good personal hygiene. Jackets are not permitted during academic time and should be removed once inside the building.

If an item is purchased elsewhere, it must *exactly* match the style and appearance of items from our official uniform company. For example, cargo pants or shorts are not allowed, and dress shirts must reflect the approved design and fit.

## **Uniform Violations**

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children wear the proper uniform every day. If a student is out of uniform without a valid **No Uniform Today (NUT)** pass, parents will be charged \$5.00 per day for the violation. These charges will be billed through FACTS accounts at the end of each month. Uniform violations include any aspect of the uniform, such as incorrect socks or missing belts.



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## **Student Appearance: Hair Guidelines**

Hair should be clean, neat, and well-groomed at all times. Hairstyles for both boys and girls should not be distracting or draw undue attention. Extreme styles, including shaved designs, unnatural colors, or exaggerated lengths, are not permitted.

Boys' hair should be kept trimmed and styled so that it is above the eyebrows to ensure it does not interfere with learning.

Girls' hair should be maintained in a neat and appropriate style. Hair that falls into the face should be secured to ensure it does not interfere with learning.

The school administration reserves the right to determine whether a hairstyle is appropriate and in keeping with the school's standards.

## **Cold Weather Uniform Restrictions**

Boys and Girls during the months November through February are not permitted to wear shorts. Tights or leggings must be worn under skirts, skorts, and jumpers.

## **Detailed Dress Code**

### **Boys and Girls:**

- **Pants/Shorts:** Plain or pleated navy twill pants or shorts, purchased from the uniform company or locally.
- **Belt:** Simple black, dark brown, or navy blue belt must be worn with slacks and shorts.
- **Polos:** Solid white or light blue polos (short or long sleeve), free of visible logos, may be purchased locally. Polos must be tucked in.
- **Shirts/Blouses:** Solid white or blue oxford cloth button-down shirts (short or long sleeve). Shirts must be tucked in.
- **Undershirts:** Encouraged to be worn and must be solid white with no writing, logos, or colors.
- **Ties:** Navy blue or NDCS plaid ties must be worn, purchased from the uniform company only. Navy blue bowties are also acceptable.
- **Sweaters:** must be purchased from **the official uniform company**.
- **Sweatshirts:** School uniform sweatshirts purchased through the school may be worn **on non-Mass days only**.
- **Shoes:** Closed-toe shoes with backs are required. No flip-flops, Crocs, moccasins, Birkenstocks, slippers, shoes with lights, wheels, or heels. Athletic shoes and dress shoes/boots are allowed.



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- **Socks:** Must be worn above the ankle and be navy, black, white, or gray with minimal logos. Socks can be purchased locally or from the uniform company.
- **Makeup/Nail Polish:** No makeup allowed in grades PS-5. Modest makeup and nail polish allowed in grades 6-8.
- **Jewelry:** Girls may wear up to two post earrings per ear; no dangling or hoop earrings. Boys may not wear earrings. Simple crucifix, cross, religious medal, or scapular may be worn by all.
- **Fragrances:** No perfume or heavily scented lotions are allowed at school.

## Girls' Dress Code

- **Jumpers:** Required for girls in grades K–4. Must be purchased from the uniform company. Length must be no more than 2 inches above the knee.
- **Skirts:** Must not be rolled at the waist. Length must be no more than 2 inches above the knee. Must be purchased from the uniform company.
- **Skorts:** May be worn by girls in grades K–8. Must be purchased from the uniform company. Length must be no more than 2 inches above the knee.
- **Tights & Leggings:** May be navy blue, gray, white, or black. Leggings must be simple and unadorned. Plain white crew socks are allowed year-round. Socks must come above the ankle with minimal logos, lace, bows, or trim.
- **Ties:** NDCS plaid cross ties must be worn and may only be purchased from the uniform company. Traditional ties and bowties are also acceptable.
- **Sweatshirts:** School sweatshirts purchased through the school may be worn **on non-Mass days only**.

## Formal Uniform (Mass Days)

- **Solid white or blue oxford cloth button-down shirt (short or long sleeve).**
- **Shirt must be tucked in.**
- **Standard uniform bottoms and NDCS ties are required.**
- **A navy blue uniform sweater, purchased from the official uniform company, is required on Mass days.**
- **Sweatshirts are not permitted on Mass days.**

## Non-Uniform Guidelines

At the discretion of the principal, non-uniform days will be announced. On these days:

- Clothing must be modest and appropriate for school.
- Clothing must be in good condition.
- Skirts must follow the regular length rule—no more than 2 inches above the knee and not rolled at the waist.



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- Nice jeans are allowed, but must have **minimal holes**, and holes must **not be above the knee**. Jeans should not be excessively tight, baggy, too long, or worn low.
- Shirts must fully cover the midsection.
- No pajama-type clothing, slippers, or inappropriate graphics.

## **Dress for Field Trips, Events, & Functions**

When representing Notre Dame Catholic School at field trips, academic events, special programs, luncheons, award ceremonies, or for media/photo appearances, students are required to wear the **standard school uniform**.

If there is a need for a uniform variation, it must be approved in advance by the **sponsoring faculty member and the principal**.

## **Family Service & Financial Obligation**

Notre Dame Catholic School relies on the involvement of families to support the school's mission of providing excellent Catholic education. Parents help in many ways—serving as art docents, classroom aides, event volunteers, library helpers, or chaperones. This spirit of service is not only essential to school operations but also helps build a strong, faith-filled community.

Because tuition alone does not cover the full cost of a child's education, each family is required to fulfill a **\$750 service and financial obligation** per school year.

This obligation can be met in one of the following three ways:

1. **Participating in approved fundraising events** that generate profits for the school.
2. **Opting out** and directly paying the full \$750 obligation.
3. **Paying the obligation in monthly installments** over the course of the school year, added to your FACTS account.

Families who do not meet the \$750 requirement through service or payment by the end of the school year will be billed for the remaining balance.

Notre Dame provides **an abundance of opportunities throughout the school year** for families to earn profit hours. These activities will be shared regularly, and participation is strongly encouraged. Any service not listed or announced must be approved in advance by the principal.

**Important:** All hours and contributions must be logged and submitted by the parent in their



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**FACTS** account in order to receive credit.

If you commit to volunteering for an activity, event, or committee, please take that commitment seriously. Volunteer roles are essential to the success of school programs and fundraisers. If you fail to follow through with your commitment, **no credit will be given for any of the hours logged**, even if partially completed. Additionally, if an event does not receive enough volunteer support, **it may be canceled**.

## **Technology Policy**

### **Online Communication**

All Notre Dame Catholic School families are provided with access to online accounts through our Student Management System. **All school communication is conducted electronically.** Families are expected to **check their email and FACTS account daily** to stay informed about school updates, student progress, and important announcements.

### **I. Internet Use**

At Notre Dame, the Internet is an important educational tool that enhances learning across all grade levels. It serves as a motivation for improving reading and writing skills, supports research, and connects students with real-world knowledge and professionals.

Internet use is considered a **privilege—not a right**—and is subject to regulation and monitoring. All student usage must support educational objectives and be consistent with the mission of Notre Dame Catholic School.

**Please note:** The school is **not responsible for Internet access at home** outside of school hours, even if the student is using a school-issued device.

**School-issued devices are to be used solely for assigned schoolwork.** Personal use, entertainment, gaming, or non-academic activities on school devices are not permitted.

### **II. Acceptable Use**

All Internet and technology use must:

- Support classroom instruction, research, and educational activities.
- Follow school rules and expectations.
- Respect the privacy and rights of others.
- Comply with Notre Dame's Catholic values and Code of Conduct.



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Students are expected to act responsibly and respectfully while using technology. Files stored on school computers and networks **may be reviewed at any time** by school personnel to maintain system integrity and ensure proper use. Students should not expect privacy in files or messages stored or transmitted on school devices or servers.

### III. Unacceptable Use

**The following actions are strictly prohibited and may result in the loss of technology privileges, disciplinary action, or legal consequences:**

- Accessing, sharing, or viewing immoral, obscene, violent, or sexually explicit materials.
- Sending or displaying offensive, unchristian, or inappropriate messages or images.
- Using inappropriate, violent, or explicit language.
- Harassing, bullying, or threatening others online or through digital communication.
- Damaging or attempting to damage computers, networks, or other users' data.
- Violating copyright or intellectual property laws.
- Using another person's password or account.
- Accessing or altering another student's folders, files, or digital work.
- Intentionally wasting bandwidth or system resources.
- Using school devices or networks for commercial gain or unauthorized activities.
- Violating any federal, state, or local laws while using school technology.

**Note:** Malicious use of the network—including the creation of programs that harass others, infiltrate or damage systems, or intentionally disrupt technology—is strictly forbidden. The school reserves the right to monitor all use of its network and devices. Files or communications may be accessed, removed, or reported to authorities if they violate school rules or applicable laws.

### **Social Media Policy for Parents and Students**

At Notre Dame Catholic School, we respect the rights of students and parents to use social media, networking sites, blogs, forums, and personal websites. However, **use of these platforms must never damage the reputation of the school, its students, faculty, staff, families, or the Catholic identity of our community.**

While we do not actively monitor off-campus online activity, when inappropriate or harmful content is brought to the attention of school leadership, the administration reserves the right to respond in accordance with school and diocesan policy.

**Any behavior online—inside or outside of school—that disrupts learning or negatively impacts others will be addressed seriously.** This includes the potential for disciplinary action, removal from Notre Dame Catholic School, and, where appropriate, referral to law enforcement.



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## **General Expectations for Parents and Students on Social Media:**

- Online behavior, even on personal accounts, **reflects on our school**; set boundaries accordingly.
- Carefully manage privacy settings and exercise good judgment when posting.
- Students may **not access social media sites using school networks or devices**.
- Never impersonate others online. Most anonymous posts are traceable.
- Do not make defamatory, discriminatory, or offensive statements about the school or members of the community.
- Refrain from posting or sharing rumors, threats, or any form of **cyberbullying**.
- Do not post, access, or distribute **obscene, pornographic, or inappropriate content**.
- Do not share confidential information about the school, students, or families.

Violations of this policy may result in:

- Suspension or loss of access to technology, school email, or school networks.
- Disciplinary consequences including **probation, suspension, or dismissal**.
- Notification of **law enforcement** if behavior violates civil or criminal law.

**Parents are equally accountable for their social media conduct. The school administration will evaluate violations on a case-by-case basis and determine consequences accordingly including dismissal from Notre Dame Catholic School.**

**The principal and/or school administration will make the final decision on what action is taken for each situation.**

## **Student Email Policy**

Notre Dame Catholic School provides student email accounts for educational use and internal communication. The use of school-issued email is a **privilege**, and students are expected to use it responsibly and safely.

- Personal email accounts should **not** be accessed on school devices or networks.
- Students must **use appropriate, respectful language** at all times.
- Students must not send or respond to emails containing suspicious links, unknown attachments, or unsafe content.
- Communication should only occur with approved contacts or within the scope of school-related work.
- All school email is **monitored and archived**; students have no expectation of privacy.

**Important:** Students and parents **should not use school-issued student email accounts as**



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**a form of communication during the school day.** All communication between parents and students during school hours must go through the **main school office**. This ensures student safety and minimizes classroom disruption.

Failure to follow the student email policy may result in disciplinary action or loss of email privileges.

**The principal and/or school administration will make the final decision on what action is taken for each situation.**

## **COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act)**

Notre Dame Catholic School uses several third-party software and web-based services for educational purposes, including our online gradebook system, FACTS, and other programs. These programs require certain personal information—such as the student's name and email address—to operate.

Students starting in Kindergarten receive a Notre Dame email account to access FACTS Online Student Access. These accounts are for **academic use only**.

Under federal law, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) requires websites to notify parents and obtain parental consent before collecting personal information from children under 13 years old.

For more information about COPPA, please visit:

<https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/complying-coppa-frequently-asked-questions>

## **Cell Phone and Smartwatch Policy**

Students are **not allowed to have cell phones or smartwatches on during instructional time**. For emergencies, students may use the office phone. Cell phones and smartwatches may be used to support communication during practices and extracurricular events.

## **Building Hours**

The main school building is open from **8:00 AM to 3:30 PM** on school days. Any students in the building outside these hours must be supervised by a faculty member or an adult approved by the Principal or Athletic Director. Students are only allowed in the areas where their supervised activities take place.



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## **Change of Address/Email/Phone Number**

It is important to keep school records up to date. Please notify the main office promptly of any changes in address, phone number, email, or other important information.

## **Safety Drills**

Notre Dame Catholic School conducts safety drills regularly as required by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE). These drills include fire drills, tornado drills, and lockdown drills such as code red and code blue. The purpose of these drills is to prepare students to respond quickly and safely in case of an emergency. Safety rules and procedures are reviewed frequently and posted in every classroom. Students are expected to follow instructions quietly and promptly during all drills. Any talking or disruption during drills will result in disciplinary action.

## **Emergency Protection Plans**

In the event of an emergency requiring lockdown or evacuation, **parents are asked NOT to contact the school or come to campus** until the administration and Michigan City Police Department have cleared the situation.

## **Emergency Notifications and Evacuation Procedures**

Parents will be notified by email or text alert when an emergency arises. In the event of a school evacuation, parents are asked to gather at **AI's on Karwick Drive**. A school representative will be present to assist families at this location.

## **Physical Fitness Activities**

Under Indiana law, the school is **not liable for injury or death** resulting from the inherent risks of physical fitness activities. These risks include those naturally associated with exercise, sports, use of equipment, or facilities. Injuries may also result from negligent actions by yourself or others. By participating, you accept these risks.

## **School Closings**

Notre Dame Catholic School follows the **Michigan City Area Schools** for weather-related closings and delays. When weather is uncertain, please check the Notre Dame Facebook or Instagram pages, your email, or sign up for FACTS text alerts for updates.



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## **Smoking and Vaping**

Notre Dame is a smoke-free and vape-free campus. Smoking or vaping at any Notre Dame function, school-sponsored event, or anywhere on school grounds is strictly prohibited.

## **Website**

Our school website, [www.ndcsmc.org](http://www.ndcsmc.org), is the primary and most up-to-date source of information for parents and the school community.

## **Withdrawal Procedures**

If you plan to withdraw your student from Notre Dame Catholic School, please notify the main office first. All financial obligations must be settled before transcripts or records can be sent to the new school.