



Leadership & Service in the IHM Tradition

Villa Maria Academy  
Lower School

A Legacy of Catholic Educational Excellence  
for Girls

Student - Parent Handbook  
2009-2010



Administered by the  
Sisters, Servants  
of the Immaculate Heart of Mary  
Immaculata, PA 19345



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**School Closing #878**

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## **MISSION STATEMENT OF VILLA MARIA ACADEMY**

Villa Maria Academy, a Catholic private day school, located in Immaculata, Pennsylvania, was established over 130 years ago by the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to prepare girls to become Christian women assuming leadership and service roles within the family, the local and global community, and the universal Church. While integrating spirituality with academics, the school-wide goals of Villa Maria call for the inculcation of a love for life-long learning, the development of critical thinking skills, and the nurturing of creativity, aesthetic appreciation, and reverence for the person as a unique creation of God. The educational program encourages students to perceive and maximize their capabilities, to develop positive self-images, and to use these gifts in service to others.

### **VILLA MARIA ACADEMY LOWER SCHOOL**

#### **The History**

Villa Maria Academy incorporates over a century of extraordinary contributions to the education of young women. The richness of its historical heritage exemplifies the clear vision, which preceded, and has led to the present formative, spiritual and academic experience.

In 1871 the crowded conditions in the Motherhouse, Novitiate, and Boarding School of the Sister Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary located in Reading, Pennsylvania, made it imperative to build a new facility. Property was purchased in the borough of West Chester, Pennsylvania. On July 27, 1872 the sisters took possession of their new home and the former Pennsylvania Military Academy became The Academy of the Immaculate Heart.

The Academy grew quickly in West Chester prompting Mother Camilla to look for land on which to build a larger facility. On September 15, 1914, an expanded Villa Maria opened at Immaculata, Pennsylvania. As conceived by Mother Camilla, Villa Maria at

Immaculata had been planned for college purposes. Pending the accomplishment of these purposes, however, it was used as Villa Maria Academy for girls in grades one through twelve.

The development of the college presented a problem for the Academy. For an institution for advanced education to receive accreditation, it had to be segregated in building, student body, faculty, and residence hall from any secondary school. Thus, Villa Maria Academy required a new location.

During the summer of 1924, information was received regarding an available estate about five miles from Immaculata. The property was not for sale in the ordinary sense of the word. It could be transferred for a nominal sum to a purchaser who would guarantee to maintain its present state of careful preservation. The entire estate was acquired by the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary during the summer months of 1924. Negotiations were completed on October 21, 1924.

With little adjustment the buildings were adapted to the purpose of an Academy. The mansion itself was used as a convent and residence hall. The other adjoining buildings described in the deed furnished ample school space for students in grades one through twelve. May 15, 1925 marked the opening of Villa Maria Academy at Green Tree in Malvern.

Villa Maria Academy flourished for fifty years at the Green Tree estate. During this time the student population increased and the school expanded several times. One major expansion included the construction in 1966 of St. Joseph Hall to accommodate students in grades one through eight. Despite efforts to accommodate the steadily increasing population, the facilities were reaching a point where they were no longer adequate for both the grade school and the high school.

Responding to a vision of the future, the elementary grades moved from the Malvern location to the Villa Maria House of Studies at Immaculata. The parents of the Lower School students moved the school to its present location on June 10, 1979. With minimum adjustments and renovations the building was transformed from a residence building into a school for grades one through eight. Classes began at this location on September 4, 1979. A computer program implemented in 1982 broadened the curriculum to include

instruction in technology. Expansion Occurred with the initiation of a kindergarten program in 1984.

In 1986, for the first time in its one hundred fourteen-year history, the school embarked upon a Development Program to raise capital funds for major renovations. This step enabled the school to accommodate a greater number of girls, with a unique and valuable education at an affordable price. At this time generous donors came forth, expressed appreciation of Villa's presence, and witnessed a desire to share a role in the school's standard of excellence in education. The expansion project allowed the creation of additional classrooms and a subsequent reduction in class size. The expansion began with the creation of two kindergarten classes. The addition of a class at each grade level continued each year until its completion in 1990 when there were two classes of each from kindergarten through eight.

The Development Program initiated in 1986 created a Fine Arts Center, a faculty dining room, and a lecture hall equipped with a state of the art multimedia presentation system. Each year the Development Program has added to the excellence of Villa Maria Academy. It has provided a fully equipped science laboratory, cafeteria and library renovations, and the expansion of computer technology.

Since its relocation to Immaculata, the clear vision of its administration has enabled Villa Maria Academy to actualize its goals and proceed confidently into the twenty-first century. Villa Maria's return to Immaculata, as evidenced by its progression of moves, has brought the Academy full circle on the road built upon the heritage of faithfulness and commitment to excellence begun by its originators and continued by those who followed.

Villa Maria's current student body is the most fortunate population in the Academy's history, benefiting from its legacy of quality education, which promises a rich and varied educational experience in a private Catholic school setting. These students along with the faculty, staff and parents, will ensure that Villa Maria Academy's history will continue on the dynamic path that has enabled it to grow and improve across three centuries.

## PHILOSOPHY

Villa Maria Academy is a private, Kindergarten through Grade Eight Catholic girls' school committed to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Possessing a vibrant apostolic commitment, Villa Maria Academy provides an environment where school administration, teachers, staff, and parents serve as role models committed to building a community of faith. The school's primary goal is to prepare girls to become Christian women assuming leadership and service roles within the family, the local and global community, and the universal Church.

While integrating spirituality with academics, Villa Maria Academy seeks to provide a love for life-long learning, the development of critical thinking skills, the nurturing of creativity, aesthetic appreciation, and reverence for the person as a unique creation of God. Academic excellence is promoted through the teaching of basic skills complemented with exposure to creative processes, problem solving, and technological proficiency. As they recognize and maximize their capabilities, students are encouraged to develop a personal relationship with Christ, a positive attitude, and a global perspective. Diverse extra-curricular activities and numerous social opportunities contribute to a faith-filled environment where students are encouraged to reach their fullest potential.

Villa Maria Academy promotes an atmosphere that fosters respect and sensitivity for one another. This is embodied in the school pledge:

*I believe that Jesus is present in each of my classmates and in all my teachers; and therefore, all my actions will show my respect for Jesus.*

Within this Christ-centered framework, reflective practices enhance the totality of school processes that impact personal development and intellectual growth. The Villa Maria Academy

community works cooperatively and collaboratively to develop the religious and educational character of its members by witnessing Catholic values, instilling an enthusiasm for learning and promoting academic excellence.

Under the auspices of the Sister Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the school administration and faculty ensure that the mandates of the Church, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are properly implemented in the school curriculum, policies, and procedures.



## **SCHOOL SEAL**

The school seal of Villa Maria Academy  
is the seal of Mary Immaculate.  
On the blue and white disk is a representation of the  
Immaculate Heart of Mary,  
pierced with the seven-fold sword.  
This symbolizes the role of Mary as the  
Mother of the suffering Christ.  
Above the image of the Heart, twelve golden stars  
signify the virtues and prerogatives  
of the Mother of God.  
Beneath the image of the Heart is the motto of the Academy  
“Nisi Dominus Frustra”  
(Without God All is Vain).  
Lilies, symbols of purity,  
complete the circle of the emblem.

## **VILLA MARIA ACADEMY SCHOOL SONG**

Villa Maria, we love you.  
We'll be true to you  
For we're proud of all you mean,  
Your colors, white and blue.  
In life's rain and sunshine gold  
May God keep us true  
To the dearest spot on earth,  
Villa Maria, You!  
Villa Maria, we love you  
We will stand by you.  
Should your skies be misty gray,  
Our love will make them blue.  
Heart and hand are yours fore'er,  
Our Alma Mater true,  
Pledge of holy gratitude.  
Villa Maria, you!

**Villa Maria Academy**  
**Daily Schedule**

8:15 A.M.	1 <sup>st</sup> Bell – Faculty Prayer in the Performance Center
	Bell – Line Formation
	Pledge of Allegiance
	Lines move to classrooms
8:25 A.M.	Morning Prayer/Classes begin
11:40 A.M.	Angelus
11:45-12:30 P.M.	Lunch Grades K-2
12:15-1:00 P.M.	Lunch Grades 3-5
12:45-1:30 P.M.	Lunch Grades 6-8
3:10 P.M.	Closing Prayer
3:15 P.M.	Dismissal lines announced

### **ADMISSIONS PROCEDURE**

Parents interested in having their child considered for admission to Villa Maria Academy should request a Preliminary Application from the school's Admissions Office. The completion and return of this form will place the student's name on a waiting list for the

appropriate grade. Once this form is on file, the Admissions Director will confirm receipt of this preliminary application, and parents will be invited to a “Visit to Villa” day. Next, a follow-up letter will inform parents of assessment dates and procedures. Included will be a transcript release form, which grants permission to the student’s school to forward a copy of the child’s records to the Villa Maria Academy Admissions Office. The Admissions Committee, comprised of faculty and administrators, reviews each application and makes admission decisions. A record of satisfactory academic achievement, good effort and personal integrity is important. Priority for acceptance is given to siblings and members of the Catholic faith. Villa Maria does not discriminate in the enrollment of students on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Once the applicant has been approved for admission, a letter is sent to notify the parents of acceptance, along with an invitation to a day of orientation for the student. Within two weeks of acceptance, a tuition deposit is requested to complete the registration process.

## **1. REGISTRATION GUIDELINES**

### **Kindergarten Applicants:**

To be eligible for entrance into the Kindergarten Program, **a student must be five years of age by September 1.** In the spring, the kindergarten screening is conducted to assess each student’s readiness level and to inform curriculum and instruction.

Once the Admissions Committee has reviewed the results of the screening, parents will be notified. Within two weeks of acceptance, a tuition deposit is requested to complete the registration process. VMA reserves the right to decline admission or set conditions of attendance.

### **First Grade:**

- Children must be six by September 1<sup>st</sup> and have completed one full year of Kindergarten in Villa Maria Academy or from another kindergarten with recommendations.

### **Kindergarten to Eighth grade:**

Students are accepted to Villa Maria Academy in this order:

- Siblings of students presently in Villa Maria Academy Lower School.
- Children who are members of the Catholic Faith

- Children who are Non-Catholic

**Note:** Non-Catholic students are welcomed and required to participate in all religious-based classes, activities and functions, including daily prayer.

## **2. REGISTRATION**

Registration for Kindergarten students and other students new to Villa Maria Academy usually takes place in January. This registration is only for new students. Registration information is communicated through the school's Admissions Office. There is a non-refundable fee due at the time of registration.

The necessary forms and certificates for admission are:

- Birth Certificate.
- Baptismal certificate (regardless of home parish).
- An updated certificate of medical immunization.
- Copy of current academic records (as applicable by grade level)

## **3. RE-REGISTRATION**

Students registered in Villa Maria Academy are required to re-register annually. Re-registration information for the following year is forwarded to each family through the weekly communication folder. This information is sent home during February, prior to the next school year. Parents are notified of tuition fees and non-refundable re-registration fees at this time. All financial obligations must be current before re-registration. There is a non-refundable registration fee and non-refundable and/or non-transferable tuition deposit required at the time of re-registration.

### **GENERAL POLICIES OF VILLA MARIA ACADEMY**

Villa Maria Academy grounds generally are supervised during school hours, from arrival time until dismissal time, when school is in session. Also, there is general supervision of school-sponsored activities. Villa Maria Academy cannot assume responsibility for students or parent(s) on school grounds during unsupervised times.

## **1. ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

A student is to come directly to the gym between 8:00 A.M. and 8:15 A.M. Parents are asked to bring their children to the Main Office after 8:25AM where a late slip will be issued. Private lessons or meetings with a teacher are exempt from this policy. Students being driven by car are dropped off at the walkway opposite the Main parking lot (not at the playground).

A student who arrives late for school must:

- report to the school office for an admission slip where parents are to sign in the student
- present a note from his/her parent explaining the reason for the lateness
- present the admission slip to the teacher in the class

At the end of the school day, students are dismissed from their classroom as lines are announced from the main office. Children going home by car are met by a parent or guardian inside the gym. Parents are to use the Visitor Parking Lot. (No one is permitted to park along the curbing or on the road in front of the school.)

## **2. CANCELLATION OF SCHOOL**

Cancellation of school takes place during circumstances such as extreme weather, equipment failure, or public crisis. Therefore, school will not be canceled unless a significant safety risk has been created by unusual circumstances. Every practical means is used to notify parents of a cancellation. Villa Maria Academy's emergency closing number, as announced on KYW, is Chester County #878. Also, parents are to listen for their own school district code for transportation information. Email and our Website are other means of notification.

In the unusual event that school is canceled during the school day (as determined by the individual school districts), the school office will make every reasonable attempt to notify parents. Parents are asked to discuss an emergency dismissal plan with their child; this plan is kept on record at school.

Villa Maria Academy requires each parent(s) to complete an Emergency School Closing form at the beginning of the school year. In the case of an Emergency School Closing, the school will follow the procedures stated in this policy and parents will

be notified via: e-mail, website access, radio announcement, television or a personal telephone call from a school homeroom mother.

### 3. **TRAFFIC SAFETY**

The speed limit is 15mph on the school grounds. At all times, drivers must exercise caution and drive slowly on the school grounds and surrounding property of Villa Maria House of Studies. Pedestrians always have the right of way.

### 4. **EARLY DISMISSAL - INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS**

No student will be excused early, except in cases of emergency or other serious need. To request an early dismissal, please send a note to the homeroom teacher who will forward it to the office. The student will be dismissed from the school office. The parent or guardian must report to the school office first and sign the “Early Dismissal Book,” in order to have the child released from school. A student cannot be released to another parent or any other person without direct authorization from the child’s own parent.

### 5. **EMERGENCY CONTACT FORMS**

VMA requires the parent of each student to complete an emergency contact form provided by the school. It is important that the information on this form is accurate and current.

### 6. **BOOKS AND MATERIALS**

***Kindergarten:*** Kindergarten students pay a stationery fee, which covers the cost of all their supplies and materials, as well as many special projects which are done throughout the year.

***Grades one to eight:*** Each teacher will furnish her students with a list of supplies needed for the year. Those supplies are modestly priced in the school store. The school store is open 8:15-8:45 A.M. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. A price list is sent home in the beginning of the school year. Additional copies are available in the school store. Every school student is to carry her books to and from school in a suitable bag. All books are to be covered, with the exception of copybooks. All covers are to be neat and clean, and free from inappropriate markings or messages. Books, copybooks, and

other school materials are to be properly identified with a child's name and room number; this includes articles of clothing.

Students are expected to take care of their personal belongings, their books and their clothing. Payment is to be made for all lost or damaged books. They are also asked to help care for the school buildings and the adjoining property. Any malicious damage will necessitate disciplinary actions and financial compensation.

**7. CELLULAR TELEPHONES/PAGERS/HANDHELD ELECTRONIC GAMES**

Cellular telephones, beepers, pagers, handheld electronic games, personal CD players, and other items that may be distracting or disruptive to the learning environment, may not be used in school. Student use of cell phones is not permitted during the school day.

**8. EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM**

VMA provides an after-school program for those students requiring extended day services. Information regarding registration and fees is sent home at the beginning of the school year. The afternoon Extended Day services are available from 3:30 P.M. until 6:00 P.M. A fee per child per hour is charged. Any student remaining on school grounds after dismissal who is not participating in an after school activity is to report to the Extended Day program until a parent arrives. Fees for the Extended Day program will apply.

**9. LEGAL CUSTODY ISSUES**

Parents are asked to inform school personnel when legal custody of the student resides with one parent. All separated or divorced parents of students enrolled in VMA are to provide the school with a current copy of the court order or custodial agreement adjudicating that determination of custody. This Court Order/Custodial Agreement is placed in a confidential file. This will help school personnel to make effective decisions when the need arises. Custodial parents are asked to supply VMA with copies of restraining orders if the need arises, and inform the non-custodial parent of school information. Those individuals who have legal custody of the student may attend school

meetings, participate in educational decisions, and review educational records regarding that student.

### **Student Records**

Unless a court or custody agreement specifies otherwise, each parent/guardian with legal custody is entitled to access all school records of the child. Without a subpoena or court order, school records of the student may be disclosed only upon written consent of the parent/ guardian with legal custody.

### **Release of a Child**

A student will not be released to a parent/guardian who does not have physical custody, without the written consent of the custodial parent/guardian.

## **10. FAMILY COMMUNICATION FOLDERS**

Effective communication is an important factor that strengthens a positive relationship between the home and school. A regular form of communication is the weekly electronic communication envelope, and occasionally one that goes home with the oldest child in each family. It is the responsibility of the oldest child in each family to provide the communications envelope to parents. Any communications, forms, money, etc. that are brought to school are forwarded to the school office through the homeroom teacher. Students do not deliver items directly to the office or any other department in the school.

## **11. COMPUTERS–ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY**

### **Purpose and Goals**

Computers are a valuable tool for education and one of this school's purposes is to encourage the proper use of computer related technology, including the Internet. Students and all users of computer technology have a responsibility to use these tools properly and in accordance with the policy set forth below:

VMA provides a variety of electronic tools to help students and teachers develop the ability to evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of sources and enable them to work effectively with various computer/communications technology.

VMA encourages critical thinking and problem solving skills, which are needed in this increasingly electronic and global society.

### **Responsibilities of User**

With the right of access comes the responsibility to use the source both correctly and wisely. Access to the Internet may mean that some material found will not meet guidelines set in our Acceptable Use Policy. Monitoring and controlling all such materials is impossible.

The School will make every effort to discourage the appearance of such material; however, the opportunities and information made available by the Internet make it necessary to provide access in order that our students can take advantage of the many resources on the information superhighway.

### **General Requirements for Use of the Internet**

- All users are required to take simple Internet training from the computer coordinator or his/her designee.
- All users and their parent(s) are to sign a student access contract governing use of the computer resources of VMA.
- Only students issued passes or permission and who have completed training may use VMA's computers to access the Internet.
- Use of stations is limited to those who have a clear need for research, with a teacher's approval.
- Transferring copyrighted material to or from VMA without expressed permission of the owner is a violation of copyright law.
- Use of electronic mail and other Internet facilities to harass, offend, or annoy other users is forbidden and subject to disciplinary action.
- E-mail accounts of VMA are property of the Academy and can be restricted and monitored.
- Any attempt to circumvent system security, passwords, or in any way gain access to secured resources is forbidden and subject to disciplinary action.

- Use of the Internet for commercial gain or profit from an educational site is illegal.
- Users are forbidden to move, repair, reconfigure, modify or attach external devices, or load software on the system without the express, prior written consent of VMA.

### **General Requirements for System Operator**

The system operator has the right to monitor all computer activity without prior notice to the user.

VMA may impose additional rules and restrictions at any time.

### **Discipline**

Violations of these rules will be handled by the computer education coordinator and the school administration.

### **Student Rules**

- For reasons of personal safety, students are never to post or transmit personal information about themselves or other people. This includes name, address, telephone/fax number, school address, social security number, photographs, etc.
- Students must not access material that is profane or obscene (e.g., pornography) or that advocates illegal acts, violence, harassment or discrimination toward other people.
- Students are not to plagiarize works they find on the Internet. Plagiarism is taking the ideas or writings of another and presenting them as if they were one's own.
- Students are not to use obscene, profane, lewd, annoying, harassing, vulgar, rude or threatening language.
- Students are not to knowingly or recklessly post or transmit information about persons or organizations that is false or private.
- Students are not to make deliberate attempts to disrupt computer systems or destroy data by spreading computer viruses or by other means. These actions are illegal.

- The illegal downloading of copyrighted software or other written works for use on home or VMA computers is prohibited.

Violations of any of these rules may result in any or all of the following, at the discretion of the School:

- Loss of Internet access privileges
- Disciplinary and/or legal action by the School, law enforcement or other involved parties.

### **Student Access Contract**

Use of the School’s computer resources requires that the student and her parent(s) sign the following Student Access Contract:

I understand that when I am using the Internet or any other computer or telecommunication device, I must adhere to all rules of courtesy, etiquette and laws regarding the copying or use of information as prescribed by either Federal, State or local laws, and school rules of Villa Maria Academy. I have read the School’s Acceptable Use Policy and discussed it with my parent/guardian. I understand and agree that Villa Maria Academy may monitor my use of computer resources; including without limitation e-mail and Internet activity and that any violation of Villa Maria Academy policy is grounds for punishment. My signature below and that of my parent(s) means that I agree to abide by the guidelines of this Acceptable Use Policy for Internet access and computer use.

Student Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parents and Guardians:** You are asked to review the School Acceptable Use Policy with your child(ren) and sign this Student Access Contract.

I hereby release Villa Maria Academy, its personnel and all other institutions with which they may be affiliated, from any and all claims and damages of any nature arising from my child’s use of or inability to use the computer resources of Villa Maria Academy, including without limitation Internet access; also including, but not limited to claims that may arise from the

unauthorized use of such resources to purchase products or services.

I have reviewed the Acceptable Use Policy with my Child. I will instruct my child regarding compliance with the Policy, as well as any additional restrictions that I may impose. As the parent of this student, I have read the Acceptable Use Policy. I hereby give permission for my child to use Villa Maria Academy's computer resources and Internet access. I understand that my child has agreed not to access inappropriate material on the Internet. I also understand and agree that Villa Maria Academy may monitor my child's use of computer resources, including without limitation e-mail and Internet activity and that violation of School policy is grounds for punishment.

Parent/Guardian Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **12. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Extracurricular activities are sponsored for the enrichment and enjoyment of our students.

A variety of after school activities is provided. Information is sent home about each activity and students may register as indicated. Permission slips are required for participation; a fee may be charged. Parents are responsible for the student's transportation. A student's participation in an activity will depend on the student's academic performance and conduct in school and will be determined at the discretion of administration and teacher(s).

## **13. FIELD TRIPS/CLASS TRIPS**

The purpose of every class trip is to broaden the intellectual, cultural, and social experiences of each child. There will be no overnight field trips or activities that the School deems to be high risk. A field trip parent consent form is to be signed by the parent(s) for permission to participate. A class trip is a privilege, which can be taken away, if the administration deems it appropriate. If a parent does not wish a student to attend the trip

for any reason, he/she should notify VMA. The child is to attend school on the day of the trip or be marked absent.

#### **14. TELEPHONE - SCHOOL OFFICE**

The telephone in the school office is for business only. A student may use the phone only in the case of an emergency with the permission of the Principal. Permission will not be given to a student to call home for forgotten supplies or to communicate social plans. Student cell phone use during school is not permitted.

If a child is detained at school for any reason without prior notification, permission will be granted to use the phone.

#### **15. VACATION POLICY**

The planning of family vacations during the academic school year is strongly discouraged. If there are special family circumstances, please contact the Principal.

Teachers will not assign work before the instruction takes place. The homework assignments (Grades 4-8) are posted on the homework website. The student will have reasonable time from the date of return to make up the assignments. It is the responsibility of the student to make up any schoolwork that has been missed during vacation. Any work not made up could affect the grade that the student receives in a particular subject area.

Teachers cannot reteach the material missed by vacationers, but will assist students in their efforts to complete assignments in a timely manner.

#### **16. VALUABLES**

Common sense and consideration are the best guides in determining whether or not to bring personal possessions to school. The school cannot assume responsibility for valuables brought to school; this includes articles of clothing. All personal items should be clearly labeled with a student's name.

### **ACADEMIC POLICIES**

## **1. ATTENDANCE**

Daily school attendance is essential for a student's academic growth. The total numbers of days or hours that school is in session is in keeping with the policies of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

### **Absences**

- A student who has been absent from school, even for one day, is required to present, upon her return, a written note to her homeroom teacher.
- A doctor's certificate may be required for absence due to illness of three or more days.
- In case of an absence or an anticipated late arrival, a parent is required to call the school by 8:00 AM. Leave a message on voice mail indicating the student's name, grade, and room number (610-644-4864, ext.197). Confidential information should not be left in this voice mailbox. If a student's name appears on an attendance report from a homeroom teacher and the school has not been notified, the school will call the parent. The safety and welfare of every student is of primary concern.
- In the case of illness occurring while school is in session, a school official will contact a parent, utilizing the registered emergency phone numbers.
- Any student who cuts school or class may be subject to suspension.
- If a student is absent, make arrangements for a classmate to obtain the assignments or leave a message on the absentee phone indicating what arrangements have been made to obtain the student's work. This work may be picked up at the school office after 2:00 PM. It is the responsibility of the student to complete all missed assignments and assessments in a timely manner.

## **2. VISITORS**

All visitors to VMA, including parents, must enter school through the main door, report to the main office, sign the Visitors Book, and receive a visitor's pass. All parents serving as volunteers are asked to do the same.

Lunches, messages, forgotten books, etc. are to be left at the main office with the student's name and room number. No parent or guardian is permitted to enter a classroom during school hours without the express prior permission of the administration.

### **3. CLASS ROOM INSTRUCTION PROTOCOL**

A student must satisfactorily complete all class assignments and homework on time. Incomplete or late completion of homework assignments will affect the student's effort grade on the report card and may impact an academic grade. Daily performance of students is assessed by the teacher. Neatness, completeness and quality of content of a student's work, as well as class participation, are part of the overall report card grade. Students must use copybooks and other required materials as directed.

It is expected that students:

- be attentive, cooperate and respect the teacher at all times
- show respect for other students and school property
- actively participate in class, orally and in writing

### **4. HOMEWORK**

The objective of homework is the extension of learning beyond class time. Homework includes both written and study assignments, and should be done by the student independently. Assignments should not require more than minimal parental assistance or supervision. Ample time should be allowed for the completion of out-of-class research assignments or projects.

VMA recognizes that teachers, students and subjects vary, but the following time per night is suggested for homework. This includes both written and study assignments.

Grades 1 and 2	30 minutes
Grades 3 and 4	60 minutes
Grades 5 and 6	90 minutes
Grades 7 and 8	120 minutes

### **5. REPORT OF STUDENT PROGRESS**

A student's progress can be viewed at any time via Internet at [www.rvsgradebook.com](http://www.rvsgradebook.com). Parents are provided unique identification numbers and passwords to access their daughter's GradeBook account.

## **6. REPORT CARDS**

Report cards are issued three (3) times a year to students in Grades 1 through 8. Parents are asked to carefully review the student's progress and contact the teacher as needed regarding report card grades. Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled following the completion of the first trimester. A parent's attendance is essential. A conference with the child's teacher may be requested at any time during the school year. Likewise, a teacher may request a special conference with a parent. Conferences normally do not include a third party, e.g. grandparent, relative, friend of the family, etc. VMA requires parents to first meet with the teacher in matters concerning the personal development or academic progress of their child. If this meeting is not satisfactory, another meeting with the Principal/Vice Principal, teacher and parents can be arranged.

## **7. ACADEMIC ASSESSMENTS**

Tests and other assessments are sent home to be reviewed and signed by parents and returned promptly to the teacher.

## **8. STANDARDIZED TESTING**

The Terra Nova is administered each year to students in Grades K-8. The results are communicated to parents and are utilized by the school for curriculum planning.

## **9. STUDENT RECOGNITION**

The IHM Charism Award, a certificate and pin, is merited by those students in grades 1 through 8 who have consistently shown qualities that promote leadership and service. These include, but are not limited to:

- Respect for others in word and example.
- A spirit of inclusion among classmates.
- Positive school spirit.
- Consistent cooperation with school and classroom policies and procedures.

A medal of excellence is awarded to those students in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 who have achieved a final average of 95 or above, a final grade of “3” or above in the added-value subject areas, and a final grade of "3" in personal development, behavior, effort and study skills.

## **10. PROMOTION OR RETENTION**

At the end of the First Trimester, the parent is informed of the student’s academic progress and personal development. In January, the teacher will contact the parent of a student who continues to struggle with academics or other school related issues, to discuss the possibility of support service and/or retention. By May, the teacher will schedule a follow-up meeting with the parent. If retention is indicated, as an intervention in the student’s best interest, the parent/guardian will receive a written notification by June, which must be signed and returned to VMA. Promotion or retention is at the discretion of the Administration in collaboration with the teacher and parents.

## **11. GRADUATION**

Eighth grade students who have completed the prescribed courses of study, and maintained a satisfactory discipline record are eligible for graduation. All financial obligations to VMA, including payment of the graduation fee, must be met.

Procedures for graduation are determined by the Administration in collaboration with the eighth grade teachers.

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

“The school’s task is to cultivate the intellectual, creative and aesthetic faculties of the individual; to develop in the students the ability to make correct use of their judgment, will and affectivity; to encourage just attitudes and prudent behavior and to prepare them for their working lives.”- Pope John Paul II

#### **1. PERSONAL CONDUCT**

Mutual respect and cooperation characterize interactions in the Villa Maria Academy school family. A positive atmosphere of discipline and order creates a safe and supportive learning environment that fosters personal and social growth in all students. Students are encouraged to develop self-discipline and personal responsibility for their attitudes and behaviors. As a result, character and the ability to

make good choices reflecting Gospel values are strengthened. Students are encouraged to seek the common good at all times. The school pledge is the standard by which each student assesses her personal behavior.

Violence, bullying or harassment, in any form, including verbal (oral, written or electronic) or physical behavior is not tolerated at Villa Maria Academy.

Conduct by students or parents, or anyone acting on their behalf, incompatible with the religious and educational mission of Villa Maria Academy is subject to disciplinary review, and may result in expulsion. In extreme cases this may include reporting to the appropriate legal authorities.

This policy also refers to any violent or harassing conduct, which causes public scandal or embarrassment to Villa Maria Academy. This policy applies both on and off the school campus.

The school administration makes the final determination about the inappropriateness of behavior. If a student is suspended, the circumstances of the suspension may require further intervention before the student may return to school.

## **2. CAFETERIA**

The same general expectations for classroom behavior apply in the cafeteria and lunch recess area. Students are to remain orderly in line while awaiting the purchase of their lunch. Students may leave their table only when excused by the lunch monitor or designated adult. Courtesy and good manners are expected of all students at all times. If a student's behavior is not acceptable, appropriate action will be taken to correct the situation. This may include administrative intervention and/or conferencing with a parent.

Students can purchase lunch or bring lunch from home. Beverages and snacks are available to students in Grades 1-8 for purchase. The school cafeteria offers a daily lunch menu that aligns with the National School Lunch Program Standards. Providing balanced meals and healthier snack choices are part of

the established Wellness Plan maintained by Villa Maria Academy.

Monthly lunch menus are published and submitted with payment to the food service department. Student accounts must be kept current in order for a student to participate in the purchasing of lunch and snacks.

### **3. BUS CONDUCT**

Every School District has established the following general rules in order to insure the safety of all passengers.

- Use only the bus and the bus stop assigned.
- Orderly behavior is required at the bus stop.
- Remain seated, facing front, when the bus is in motion.
- Talk quietly and make no unnecessary noises.
- Do not talk to the driver unless it is necessary.
- Keep head and arms inside the bus.
- Do not litter the inside of the bus or throw anything out the window.
- Be quiet when the bus is crossing railroad tracks.
- Students are not permitted to change their assigned bus without district authority.
- Never stand until the bus comes to a complete stop.

Infractions of the above rules are reported by the school district to the parents through the Principal. Continual abuse of bus privileges can result in a suspension or the denial of transportation.

### **4. DEMERITS**

The following explanation serves as a guideline for the issuance of demerits. It is not an all-inclusive list. The number of demerits may be adjusted accordingly by the teacher/ principal, as the seriousness of the infraction is assessed.

- Not prepared for class – not having proper supplies or books for class repeatedly. Demerit will be issued after a warning has been given.

- Improper behavior – including, but not limited to disturbances in class, playground or lunchroom
- Gum chewing/eating in class - gum is not permitted on campus, including the school, chapel or parking lot; snacks may be eaten only at the designated time and place.
- Dress code violation – any infraction of the uniform dress code.
- Cheating/Plagiarism – the taking or giving of schoolwork that is not one’s own – or if the teacher has probable cause to suspect such an action.
- Disrespect – any improper attitude displayed toward any teacher, staff member, volunteer parent, and administrator or fellow student.
- Abusive language – any inappropriate written or verbal language used on school premises.
- Damaging property.
- Failure to return a signed demerit slips – demerits are returned the next school day.
- Any other behavior that warrants disciplinary attention.
- Electronic device usage, including cell phones, during school time.

When a student receives a demerit, the parent must sign it and return it the following day to the issuing school official. A parent signature indicates that the parent has seen the demerit. An infraction that merits(5) five demerits warrants an immediate detention.

## **5. DETENTION**

A detention is warranted after five accumulated demerits or after one infraction which warrants five demerits. An administrator/teacher will extend a twenty-four hour parental notice for a detention. All detentions must be served in a timely fashion.

## **6. SUSPENSIONS**

Just and appropriate disciplinary policies are essential to the educational process. VMA’s procedures, which are remedial in nature, include the necessary provisions that protect the common good of the school community.

Serious infractions on campus, bus or at any school activities may result in an immediate suspension or a more serious disciplinary action. Some examples of serious infractions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Blatant disrespect for authority
- Bomb scares or false alarms
- Absenting oneself from class or any other school area without legitimate permission
- Harassment or bullying (verbal and/or physical)
- Possession of any item which may present a danger to others
- Possession and/or use of drugs, narcotics, tobacco or alcoholic beverages
- Vandalism
- Stealing
- Truancy
- Violent or abusive behavior
- Technology or electronic device misuse

Suspension may lead to expulsion. The Principal will inform the parents of the seriousness of the matter that warrants a suspension and seek their immediate cooperation in a corrective program designed to resolve the student's problem.

## **7. PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT SUSPENSIONS**

Infractions of a serious nature are liable for suspension as determined by the school. Parents will be informed in writing of the suspension as well as by phone. In-school or out-of-school suspension will be determined by the Administration. Following suspension, parents will attend a conference with the Administration. Students removed from the school community will not be readmitted before a parental interview has been conducted, and all other conditions for re-admittance have been satisfied. Parents and student are to sign a formal agreement in which they signify their understanding of the suspension and agree to assume responsibility for future inappropriate behavior. When necessary, a student will be referred to a counselor. The signed agreement of parents and a written report of the suspension are filed in the student's record. Suspension records are not a part of the student's permanent or cumulative record.

Suspension records will be made available to authorized school personnel and parents.

## **8. EXPULSION**

After two (2) formal suspensions, a student may be liable for expulsion. In certain instances the infraction may warrant immediate expulsion. Villa Maria Academy reserves the right to dismiss any student whose conduct or parent's conduct is inconsistent with its policies, the common good of the school community or Catholic teachings. Parents will be informed in writing of an expulsion.

## **9. HARASSMENT**

VMA prohibits harassment and bullying including sexual harassment. Sexual harassment refers to any unwelcome sexual attention, sexual advances, and requests for sexual favors or other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Any student or parent who is determined by the principal to have violated this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

## **10. UNIFORM POLICY AND DRESS CODE**

Neatness and cleanliness in personal attire are part of a child's education and the responsibility of the student and her parents. When a child looks and feels good about herself, she acts and works accordingly. This supports a positive sense of self-worth and confidence. A parental note is to be presented to the teacher when the required uniform is not worn. On occasion, a medical need may require a deviation from the official uniform.

When permission is granted for students to wear other clothing, the choice of outfit must be in keeping with the school philosophy. Therefore, overly revealing tops, any tight fitting clothing or inappropriate messaging on clothing are not acceptable.

The decision of the Administration is final on all matters dealing with school uniform policy.

The school uniform identifies each student as a member of VMA and should be worn correctly, completely and with pride. Uniforms are supplied by Flynn & O'Hara Uniforms. (1-800-441-4122 or 1-215-637-4600) Visit their website at [www.flynnohara.com](http://www.flynnohara.com)

### **Winter Uniform**

Navy jumper (Grades K-4)  
Navy tights or navy knee socks  
Gray plaid kilt (Grades 5-8)  
White turtleneck (Regulation)  
with VMA logo  
Navy cardigan sweater with  
monogram (K-4)

### **Fall/Spring Uniform**

Blue cord jumper (Grades K-4)  
Navy ankle socks  
Blue cord kilt (Grades 5-8)  
White short sleeve golf shirt with  
monogram

**A navy vest or V neck sweater with the school logo is worn by grade 5 students.**

**A navy blazer, with the school seal over the left chest pocket, is worn by students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 throughout the school year.**

*The length of all uniforms is just above the knee  
(not more than 2 inches above).*

*Knee socks must be worn to the knee;  
ankle socks must be worn to cover the ankle completely.*

### **Gym Uniform**

#### **Winter**

Navy regulation sweat pants  
(No un-hemmed cuff)  
Navy long-sleeved sweatshirt  
with VMA monogram  
White short-sleeved golf shirt with  
monogram or white turtleneck  
White ankle socks  
White sneakers

#### **Spring**

Navy mesh shorts with VMA  
monogram  
White short-sleeved golf shirt  
with VMA monogram  
  
White ankle socks  
White sneakers

*White sneakers may have blue trim.*

### **Dancewear**

Black Jazz Pants (Gr. 1-8)

Pink Ballet Shoes

### **Footwear**

Navy loafers, navy tie shoes, or navy buckle shoes.

The entire shoe must be BLUE, and should have a traditional sole.

### **HAIR**

Hair must be neat, clean and well groomed, as well as cut and styled in an appropriate manner. Hair should be styled away from eyes. A “fad” or “trendy” haircut/hairstyle, including extreme color changes is not acceptable. Blue and /or white ribbon only may be worn in the hair.

### **JEWELRY**

A student may wear a plain watch and a religious medal/cross. Only a single set of small, simple post earrings may be worn in the lower lobe. Excessive jewelry is not permitted.

### **MAKE-UP**

No make-up, including nail polish, fake nails, or painted nail tips is permitted. No body tattoos or piercing are acceptable.

### **HEALTH**

A Registered Nurse is on duty each day...M-T-W-F- 8:30-3:00  
Th – 9:00 – 2:30. The nurse’s responsibility is the care and safety of all students. The nurse maintains all Health Records. Please update any changes as soon as possible with the nurse’s office.

The State of Pennsylvania mandates the following Health Requirements for the children of school age who are attending elementary school, high school, both public and private school, and for those entering kindergarten:

**New Entry:** (Kindergarten or any new student)

- Physical Exam (including health history and allergies)
- Dental Exam
- Record of Immunizations
- All health records from the previous school must be sent to VMA. It is a PA state law that these records be kept at the school the child is attending. The original is necessary, not a copy.

**Physicals:** 6<sup>th</sup> Graders and all students participating in sports.

**Dental Exams:** All 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Grade students

## 1. REQUIRED IMMUNIZATIONS

Proof of completed PA State mandated immunizations are required **before** a child may attend school.

PA State Law states, “that a child may not be admitted to school without proof of these immunizations”.

- **Diphtheria/Tetanus:** 4 or more doses, the fourth is required after the age of four
- **Polio Vaccine:** 3 or more doses required
- **MMR Vaccine:** 2 doses are required, the first dose given after the 1<sup>st</sup> birthday.
- **Hepatitis B:** 3 doses are required (properly spaced)
- **Varicella:** 2 doses of vaccine or history of disease (phased in by 2010/2011)

**Students entering the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade starting in 2009-2010 need:**

- 1 dose of tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (**Tdap**) if 5 years has elapsed since last tetanus immunization)
- 1 dose of meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV)

## 2. EMERGENCY CARDS

These cards are sent home on the first day of school and should be returned to the teacher **as soon as possible** within the first few days of school. Please remember to fill out both sides.

List all allergies and health/medical conditions. This is **crucial** information.

Two cards are kept on file for each student. One is in the Health Room and the other is in the Main Office.

Please be sure these cards are always kept updated with phone number changes, etc. Please let the nurse know of any changes anytime throughout the year as soon as possible.

Please understand that emergency contacts are people who have your permission to pick up your daughter from school in case of illness when you cannot be reached. Make sure these people are aware of being your daughter's emergency contact. Please check your voice messages, tape machines and email frequently.

It is very important that we be able to reach you in case of an emergency!

## 3. SCREENING

The Nurse maintains:

- Vision, Height and Weight checks done yearly on all students.
- Hearing checks are done in grades K, 1, 2, 3, and 7.
- Physical exams are required no later than within 3 months of entry into grades K and 6.
- Dental exams are required no later than 3 months if entry into grades K, 3, and 7.
- Scoliosis screening is required for grades 6 and 7.
- Health report cards are issued after all health screenings each year.

Please have all Physical and Dental forms returned to school as soon as possible.

### **Sports Physicals**

All students participating in VMA sports must have a yearly physical. The forms must be up to date and on file in the Nurse's office *prior* to the beginning of tryouts for that sport. A student will not be able to practice or play in a game if their physical form is not on file in the Nurse's office.

#### **4. ACCIDENTS /ILLNESS**

Parents will be contacted by phone with the following types of injuries: deep cuts, head, eye, ear, joint or bone, tick or insect bites.

Parents will be contacted by phone with the following illnesses:

Wheezing or difficulty breathing, allergic reactions, fever of 100 degrees or more, vomiting, diarrhea, severe pain of headache, rash, sore throat with fever or anything else that the nurse feels requires parental attention.

Those "boo-boos" that require only a Band-Aid; will be handled without a call!

#### **When to keep your child home from school:**

- Fever of 100 degrees or higher and your child should be fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication.
- If your child has a low-grade fever of 99 degrees and has other symptoms of cough, headache, sore throat, nausea, cramps or generally looks sick.
- If your child has a GI virus that includes vomiting or diarrhea, they should not return until they have gone 24 hours without vomiting or diarrhea. If your child vomits in the morning prior to the school day, please don't send them that day.

- If your child has severe congestion, including chest, nasal, sinus or frequent sinus discharge, please do not send them to school.
- If a child is coughing enough to need cough medicine during the school day, she should be kept home. Coughing is one of the most common ways to spread germs.
- If your child has a contagious disease such as undiagnosed rash, mononucleosis, chickenpox, pink eye/conjunctivitis, lice, strep throat, etc., they should return to school 24 hours after the start of treatment. In the case of chick pox, all scabs must be dry. In the case of lice, it must be treated and the head free of lice and nits. Notify the school when lice are discovered at home so we can eliminate it as quickly as possible. Your daughter should report to the nurse before returning to class on the day she returns to school.
- If you ever have any questions, please call the nurse's office at ext 103.

**When to return to school after an illness:**

A Parent Guide to help determine whether or not your child may return to school.

<b><u>DISEASE</u></b>	<b><u>EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL</u></b>
*Undiagnosed Rash	Until diagnosis is established or symptoms are gone for 24 hours
*Chicken Pox	All scabs must be dry
*Contagious Conjunctivitis	24 hours after start of physician prescribed treatment
Fifth Disease	No exclusion
*Hepatitis	Physician directed. Physician should indicate allowed activity and physical education restriction, if any prescribed.

*Impetigo	24 hours after start of physician prescribed treatment
*Meningitis	Physician directed. Physician should indicate allowed activity and physical education restriction, if any prescribed.
*Mononucleosis	Physician directed. Physician should indicate allowed activity and physical education restriction, if any prescribed.
Pediculosis	Until treated and free of lice and nits
Pinworms	Until first dose of treatment
Ringworm	Until skin is clear of all scabs or crusts or a physician's note indicating noninfectious.
*Scabies	24 hours after start of physician prescribed treatment
*Scarlet Fever or Strep Throat	24 hours after start of physician prescribed treatment
Staph or Strep of the Skin	24 hours after start of physician prescribed treatment

\*Indicates a physician's note must accompany the student upon return to school.

## 5. MEDICATIONS

If a student needs to take medication in school, we request that the medication be delivered directly to the school nurse's office by the parent when at all possible. There is a medication form, "PERMISSION TO ADMINISTER MEDICATION IN SCHOOL", which needs to be filled out by the parent/guardian.

All medicine, both prescription and over the counter, must be in its original container, labeled with name of child, name of

medication, dose time and amount and any special instructions. Check expiration dates. No expired medicine will be given to students.

Medication listed on emergency cards will be administered to a student only if the medication has been checked “yes” on the card which gives us parental permission for its administration.

If your child has asthma and uses a rescue inhaler (like Albuteral), it is advisable to bring one into the nurse’s office, so there is one here for the year for he in case she needs it.

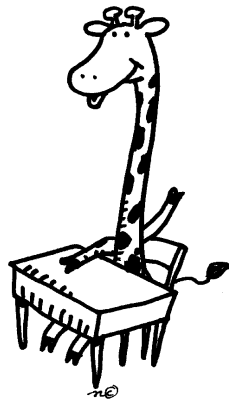
If your child has taken a medication in the morning prior to school, it is advisable to send a note to school with them so the nurse can be aware. Most students know that they took something, but not what kind of medicine.

No student may ever carry medication (prescription or over the counter) on her person while on school grounds. All medication is kept in the nurse’s office.

## **6. HEALTH EDUCATION**

Throughout your daughter’s years at Villa Maria, she will be educated on various health issues such as: Nutrition, Proper Hand washing, Dental Health, Puberty and Menstruation, Personal Hygiene, Stranger Safety, Bullying & Internet Safety, Fire Safety, Smoking, etc.

Please make an appointment with the school nurse, if you or your daughter has any specific health issues or concerns.



## **Villa Maria Academy**

### **School Pledge**

I believe that Jesus is present  
in each of my classmates  
and in all my teachers;  
and therefore,

all my actions will show  
my respect  
for Jesus.

It is expected that the policies and procedures of Villa Maria Academy will be observed by all who attend our school. The cooperation of parents is an essential element of the partnership that helps to create the best learning environment for our students.

7/16/09 Revised

*Fidelity*



*Creative Hope*



*Love*