



MARY QUEEN OF APOSTLES SCHOOL
PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK

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Mary Queen of Apostles Preschool Parent Handbook

The philosophy and mission statement of Mary Queen of Apostles School are the cornerstone of our program and environment. Through our beliefs and values we determine our policies and procedures. Through our documents, we encourage our families, our students, and our staff to act and interact so that we are responsible members in a community of learners, witnesses to our faith, and reflections of Christ.

*Catherine M. Collett
Principal*

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QUEEN OF APOSTLES SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

“Christian education is intended to make our faith become living, conscious, and active through the light of instruction.”

We, at Mary Queen of Apostles School, focus on educating the total child. We stress the academic and spiritual development of each child in a Christ-centered learning community through relationships and actions that model Christian values and beliefs.

As caring professionals we provide a solid foundation in the fundamentals with a challenging and extensive curriculum evolving to meet the needs of the students in an ever-changing world. We foster social justice, instill Catholic, Christian morality, encourage an appreciation for the Catholic Church, and an integrated love of all God’s creation. We encourage service to God through service to others.

We strive to maintain high standards of conduct and heightened accountability in academics and the development of age-appropriate skills. We guide the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, and social growth of children and youth. We provide a safe and nurturing environment, promoting respect for the dignity of each person and emphasizing individual responsibility.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Serving the Greater New Kensington Area and surrounding communities, Mary Queen of Apostles School educates the whole child, forming the promise of tomorrow, a new generation of disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Mission of Catholic Education

The mission of Catholic schools within the Diocese of Greensburg is to create a Catholic Christian learning environment to prepare students for their life's journey. While parents are the first teachers, the task of our schools is to assist parents in fulfilling their responsibility as primary educators of their children. Schools challenge students to develop the Gospel values, academic mastery, spirit of community service, and global perspective that will give their lives passion and purpose.

Beliefs ~

- ❖ *Catholic schools have an impact on the moral consciousness of our society.*
- ❖ *All children can learn.*
- ❖ *Gospel values provide opportunities for students to live and proclaim the teachings of Jesus and the Church.*
- ❖ *Each individual has worth and deserves respect and dignity.*
- ❖ *Successful learning builds self-esteem.*
- ❖ *Education is to be shared by the school, the home, the student, the parishes, and the community.*
- ❖ *Learning is most effective in a safe, caring environment.*
- ❖ *Teachers and administrators are professional decision-makers who facilitate children's learning while continually learning.*
- ❖ *Change creates the need for life-long learning.*
- ❖ *High expectations directly affect performance.*
- ❖ *Excellence in education is worth the commitment of time, effort, and money through a shared responsibility of parents and parishes.*
- ❖ *An educated citizenry ensures a strong foundation for a democratic society.*
- ❖ *The Catholic school system is an important key to the development of a parish community.*

Handbook of Policies, Office of Catholic Schools, Diocese of Greensburg

School Governance for Mary Queen of Apostles School

Bishop of Greensburg

-The chief shepherd of the diocese, who authorizes the creation and continued operation of Catholic School.

Board of Members

-Pastors of the parishes that sponsor the School and the Superintendent of Catholic Schools, who oversee the School's mission, set policy, manage the School's business, property, and financial affairs according to the policies of the Diocese of Greensburg. An Administrator is appointed by the Bishop to head this governing body.

Administration

-The Principal, appointed by and accountable to the Board of Members, who serves as the educational leader of the School and oversees the faculty and staff.

-The Principal, following the Policy Handbook of the Diocese of Greensburg, assumes the responsibility for designing and directing a sound educational program and for coordinating the efforts of all the people involved in the school community in such a way as to create and foster an environment in which the Catholic faith can be learned and lived. The Principal maintains an educational climate by providing professional and spiritual growth of both staff and students.

School Advisory Council

- The SAC is an advisory group appointed by the Bishop to advise the Administration on matters of marketing, development, enrollment, and fundraising following the by-laws established by the Diocese.

Nothing contained in the Preschool Parent Handbook is intended to, or shall be construed to, create contractual obligations, expressed or implied, on the part of the parishes, the Diocese of Greensburg, or Mary Queen of Apostles School. The contents of this handbook are subject to alteration or modification by the school or diocese as circumstances may require.

Admissions

Students are admitted to Mary Queen of Apostles School in this order and for wait-listing:

1. Students currently enrolled
2. Catholics from the five sending parishes
3. Catholics from the Diocese of Greensburg
4. Catholics from other Dioceses
5. Non-Catholics

Admissions require proof of vaccinations, copies of health records, birth certificate, and proof of residence.

Admission to MQA is considered complete when the application form and fee are returned *and* when the Payment Option Form is returned and tuition payments begin. Students do not go to class until these things are current.

As Mary Queen of Apostles School is a private, non-public institution, the administration reserves the right to terminate the enrollment of a student for any reason and at any time. Any disciplinary policies and procedures are simply guidelines that the school generally follows. The guidelines do not impede this right by administration to terminate the enrollment of a student for any reason at any time.

Arrivals and Departures

Preschool Arrival

Preschool students are to arrive 10 minutes prior to the start of the session. Morning students should arrive at 8:20 for the 8:30 session. Afternoon students should arrive at 11:50 for the 12:00 session.

Drop off for the morning session is at the lower entrance of the school building. Drop off for the afternoon session is at the upper main entrance of the school building.

The preschool aides will be at the door to greet your child and guide him/her into the classroom for the 10-minute period prior to the start of the session.

Please exit the drop-off area as quickly and safely as possible with respect for others traveling the school grounds.

If you need to come into the building with your child, please park in the lot along Young Street, walk to the main entrance, ring the bell for admittance, and sign in at the office.

If you arrive after 8:30 for the morning session or 12:00 for the afternoon session, please bring your child to the main door. Ring the doorbell, identify yourself, and the secretary will check your child in for the day and escort him/her to the classroom.

**See Preschool Arrival Map*

Preschool Departure

Preschool students are dismissed at the lower entrance of the school building. The morning session is dismissed at 11:00. The afternoon session is dismissed at 2:30.

The preschool aides will dismiss the students one at a time. Please form a line and wait for your child to be escorted to your car. Please exit the dismissal area as quickly and safely as possible with respect to others traveling the school grounds. If a child's car transportation does not arrive, the child will be brought to the office so arrangements can be made.

If your child needs to be dismissed early, send a note to the teacher stating the time of the dismissal. Report to the office to collect your child.

**See Preschool Dismissal Map*

If a court order exists specifying restrictions of to whom the child(ren) may be released, a copy of the court order is to be presented to the principal.

Dismissal Notes/Changes

Any change in dismissal for any child(ren) must be communicated to the school through a note and presented to the teacher. Phone calls requesting an *unplanned or emergency dismissal* MUST BE CALLED IN to the school office at 724.335.5911.

Communication

- o Communication between school and family is vital.
- o It is very important that there be good communication between the parent and teacher. Parents may contact the teacher to schedule a phone conference or meeting with the teacher. Please send a note or email to the teacher.
- o Home/school communication should be addressed to the person for whom it is intended. To ensure proper handling of orders, forms, etc. brought from home, envelopes should be used as needed and be marked with the contents.

The following are examples of home/school communications:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Notes to teachers | Medical forms |
| Notes to Mrs. Collett | Scrip orders |
| Early dismissal notes | Conference requests |
- o One formal conference is scheduled each year. The conferences are set in January for the 4-year olds and in February for the 3-year olds. Notification of conference time will be sent prior to these meetings.
 - o *In cases where the child does not reside with both parents, both parents are able to receive school information. This is done by providing the school with a mailing address and an email address for the parent that does not have physical custody.* Parents have the right to see their child's records and communicate with the teacher. If a court order restricts this, it is the parent's responsibility to provide a copy of the order to the principal.

If you do not want any or certain information shared with others within the school community, an opt-out form details what information is permitted and/or not permitted to be shared. This does not include information shared with legal authorities or authorized agencies.

All school communications from the main office will be sent via email or will be posted on the school web site at www.mqaschool.org. If you do not have Internet access, please contact the school offices so that an alternative to email is provided for your family.

Conferences

- o Conferences for 4-year preschool and 3-year preschool are held in February. These conferences are scheduled throughout the school day. Children do not report to preschool that day.

- o Conferences may also be held any time throughout the year when parents or teachers deem them necessary. Scheduling conferences should be done through contact between the teacher and parent/guardian.

Curriculum

The preschool curriculum is based on the Preschool Continuum for Learning and Early Childhood Standards of the State of Pennsylvania. The document is available for review in the school office. The preschool day includes:

- o Prayer, Bible stories, faith development activities
- o Creative, dramatic, and interactive play
- o Fine motor/Large motor activities
- o Art, music, and movement activities
- o Language activities
- o Math and science activities
- o Socialization activities
- o School appropriate behaviors through following directions, working with others, active listening, taking turns, etc.

Delays and Closings

- o In case of severe weather conditions or any other emergencies; announcements will be made over KDKA (radio and TV), WPXI (radio, TV and web site), and WTAE television.
- o Mary Queen of Apostles School follows the weather delays and closings for the New Kensington Arnold School District. Mary Queen of Apostles School will have its own announcement of delays and closings.
- o If school is delayed 1 hour, the morning session of preschool will begin at 9:30.
- o If school is delayed 2 hours, the morning session of preschool will not report for the day. After the first morning session cancellation, an alternating schedule will be made for the morning and afternoon classes to report. A phone tree will be given to alert each session as to what is happening for the day – whether the session will report to school or be cancelled for the day.

Discipline Policies

All children are expected to behave appropriately for their age and for a school setting. The manner and respect taught at home are extended to the school community including faculty members, priests, volunteers, custodians, aides, visitors, and all children. Above all, children must be taught to respect themselves, their materials, the school, the possessions of others, and the property they have for their use.

Mary Queen of Apostles School reserves the right to discipline students who, through their lack of responsibility, inappropriate behavior or comments, poor attitude, or disrespect infringe upon the rights of others in the school community. It is expected that parents will be supportive of the teachers/school in these matters.

Mary Queen of Apostles School follows the Handbook of Policies of the Diocese of Greensburg. These policies include:

- o *Acceptance and Disenrollment Policy*
- o *Sexual Harassment Policy*
- o *Substance Abuse Policy*
- o *Weapon Policy*

- *Wellness Policy*
- *Technological Resources and Communication Policy*
- *Tuition Policy*

Information on these policies can be found in the Parent/Student Handbook found at www.mqaschool.org .

Dress

It is suggested that children wear casual, comfortable clothing suitable for the weather so that they can work and play in complete comfort. All removable clothing should be clearly labeled with the child's name. Also be aware that we will be using clay, glue, paint, etc.

Your child will be bringing papers home from school that he/she would like to share with you. Therefore a backpack is recommended. **Please be sure to check backpacks each day because important notices from the office or our own classroom may be sent home with your child.** All backpacks should be a reasonable size and should be labeled with your child's name.

Your child should wear closed shoes like tennis shoes. They should be able to complete gross motor activities safely and travel the hallways and stairs safely.

At this age it is not uncommon for the children to have accidents. Please send an extra set of clothes in a (Ziploc) bag **with your child's name on it**. This is a requirement for the 3-year olds and is up to your discretion for the 4-year olds.

Emergency Cards

Each year an emergency card must be filled out for the office. The cards are kept on file in the school office. The preschool classroom also has its own emergency card that you will be asked to complete.

Emergency Early Dismissal Procedure and Crisis Plan Basics

In the event of an emergency early dismissal due to inclement weather, severe weather/natural disaster, or crisis situation, please refer to the basics of Mary Queen of Apostles Crisis Management Plan described below. The emergency card asks for specific directions in regard to emergency dismissals.

Inclement Weather

1. If an early dismissal is called by New Kensington Arnold SD due to weather, Mary Queen of Apostles will also announce an early dismissal. The announcement will be broadcast on WTAE, WPXI, and KDKA. We will dismiss according to the information on the emergency card.
2. When an early dismissal is called, follow the procedures listed at the end of this section.

Severe Weather/Natural Disaster

1. Students, teachers, and administrative staff participate in a severe weather drill annually at each site.
2. Students, teachers, and staff report to an inside space at the lowest level remaining in the building they occupy at the time of the drill or emergency. At the Freeport Road Site, this is the hallway of the basement floor in the main building.
3. Emergency cards, first aid kits, crisis kits, and cell phones are taken to these areas.
4. Only EMS personnel will be permitted to enter the building. Parents are to refrain from calling the school and are to wait for the all clear given by the Emergency Medical Service.

5. If an early dismissal is called by New Kensington Arnold SD, Mary Queen of Apostles will also announce an early dismissal. The announcement will be broadcast on WTAE, WPXI, and KDKA. We will dismiss according to the information on the emergency card.
6. When an early dismissal is called, follow the procedures listed at the end of this section.

Fire

1. Students, teachers, and administrative staff participate in fire drills monthly at each site.
2. Students, teachers, and staff exit the building using the closest exit and move away from the building and fire lanes.
3. Emergency cards, first aid kits, crisis kits, and cell phones are taken to these areas.
4. Only EMS personnel will be permitted to enter the property. Parents are to wait for the all clear given by the Emergency Medical Service and Fire Department.
5. If an early dismissal is called by MQA, the announcement will be broadcast on WTAE, WPXI, and KDKA. We will dismiss according to the information on the emergency card.
6. When an early dismissal is called, follow the procedures listed at the end of this section.

Crisis Situations

Crisis Situations are handled in one of two ways. Either the entire site goes into a lock-down or the site is evacuated to another location. The evacuation site is determined by the nature of the crisis and time frame.

- The primary evacuation site is Mt. St. Peter Church on the property.
- The alternative evacuation site is St. Mary of Czestochowa Church at 857 Kenneth Avenue.

Lock-Down

1. Students, teachers, and administrative staff participate in a lock-down drill each semester at each site.
2. Outside doors are checked; restrooms and hallways are checked.
3. Classrooms are locked. Students and teachers are positioned in the safest place within the room. Windows and blinds are closed; lights are off.
4. If possible, classrooms are monitored from office. Office is also in lock-down mode.
5. Protocol for crisis is followed according to the diocesan and school Crisis Management Plans and determined by the nature of the crisis.
6. Only EMS personnel will be permitted to enter the property. Parents are to wait for the all clear given by the Emergency Medical Service, Police Departments, and/or Fire Department.
7. If an early dismissal is called by MQA following the all clear, the announcement will be broadcast on WTAE, WPXI, and KDKA. In this case, we will dismiss according to the information on the emergency card.
8. When an early dismissal is called, follow the procedures listed at the end of this section.

Evacuation

1. Students, teachers, and administrative staff participate in an evacuation drill annually at each site.
2. Students, teachers, and administrative staff are evacuated to one of two locations depending on the nature of the crisis.
3. Emergency cards, first aid kits, crisis kits, and cell phones are taken to these areas.
4. Protocol for crisis is followed according to the diocesan and school Crisis Management Plans and determined by the nature of the crisis.
5. Only EMS personnel will be permitted to enter the evacuation site. Parents are to refrain from calling the school and are to wait for the all clear given by the Emergency Medical Service, Police Departments, and/or Fire Department.

If an early dismissal is called by MQA following the all clear, the announcement will be broadcast on WTAE, WPXI, and KDKA. In this case, we will dismiss according to the information on the emergency card. If the location for dismissal is changed, please tune to KDKA. The other services are automated and cannot provide this information.

6. When an early dismissal is called, follow the procedures listed at the end of this section.

Early Dismissal Procedure Directions

1. Announcements will be made through WTAE, WPXI, and KDKA.
2. Each child's dismissal is determined by the options listed on the Emergency Card, which is completed annually by parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year.
3. Car riders will be dismissed as their parents/guardians/responsible person arrives at the site.

Health Regulations

Emergency Cards

- o Emergency health cards are kept on file for each child. Please verify the information on the emergency card. Make changes as needed and return it to the teacher.
- o Emergency cards allow us to contact a designated person in the event of an emergency concerning your child.
- o Keeping this information up to date is a necessity. Please inform the school immediately of any change in address, telephone number, family status, or emergency contact person.

Nurse

- o We do have the services of a school nurse. The nurse will be at the Freeport Road Site and the Leishman Avenue Site as needed. She is in frequent contact with the Nurse Paraprofessional who will be at each site at scheduled times.
- o The nurse is responsible for the medical records and directs the annual Vision, Hearing, Physicals, Dentals, BMI, and Scoliosis Screening as they are scheduled for each site.
- o A Nurse Paraprofessional who is a RN will work closely with the certified school nurse of the New Kensington-Arnold School District

Health Records

- o School health records MUST be kept current and include immunization records.

Illness

- o Please inform the office if your child has been exposed to a contagious disease.
- o Parents are asked to respond promptly and meet the child at the office if their child becomes ill.

Medicine Policy

- o When a child's health demands medication during the school day, the medicine must be brought to the school office along with a Medication Permission Form as soon as the child arrives at school. The medication will be kept in the locked medicine cabinet at each site.
- o Teachers do not assume the responsibility for any medication.
- o Medicines will not be administered without the following information as indicated on the form:
 - The medicine to be taken.
 - The parent or guardian's signature.
 - The proper daily dosage marked with the child's name and the time it is to be administered.
 - The original container or package of the medication.
- o Prescription medication must be accompanied with the original order by the physician.

- o *Over the counter medication (OTC) must also have a physician order to administer to all elementary students.*
 - o *The nurse paraprofessional will call the parent to administer if the guidelines are not maintained.*
- *See Administration of Medication Permission Form*

Inspection Notice

NOTICE TO ALL PARENTS, LEGAL GUARDIANS, TEACHERS, AND STAFF MEMBERS
Pursuant to the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), our school was inspected by a certified AHERA Inspector. A Management Plan was developed and submitted to the State of Pennsylvania Department of Education.

- o A copy of our Asbestos Inspection Report and Management Plan is on file in the administration office of our school.
- o Our school is re-inspected by a certified AHERA Inspector twice a year.

Parties

Classroom parties are a part of the school experience. Parents may volunteer to be a party coordinator by signing up for a party at the beginning of the year. Parties are one and half hours in length and begin an hour after start of the session. *Siblings are not permitted so the adult's attention remains on the tasks at hand and the children.*

- o Only the volunteer parents provide the snack, craft, game, and story for the party.
- o Snacks are to be healthy and simple.
- o Other families are not permitted to send in additional items.
- o All party plans are to be reviewed with and approved by the teacher.

Birthdays are special days that should be recognized at home and school. If you would like to send in a simple birthday snack that is acceptable to the teacher and conforms to the Wellness Policy, please contact the teacher to make arrangements prior to the birthday. If a child's birthday falls in the summer months, contact the teacher to make special arrangements to celebrate during the school year.

Invitations for home parties will only be distributed in school if they are going to every child in the class.

Public Relations

- o Students may be photographed for brochures, newsletters, and/or news reporting during the course of the year. Permission forms for such public relations pieces are kept on file in the school office.
- o Students participating in special events will have their photo and information sent to the local and diocesan papers and the parish bulletins.
- o Students may also be photographed or captured on video for the Diocese of Greensburg.

**The Public Relations/Press Release Permission Form*

Application and Admission

Application for the fall term begins in January for the 3-Year and 4-Year Preschool, and Kindergarten. For families with a child entering kindergarten, a K-8 Application Form will need to be completed. Preschool age children will need to file a Preschool Application Form for each level of preschool. Forms are sent home with the children in February of each year and are available online. A \$50.00 application fee per family is to accompany the form.

Safety Drills

- o The law requires a Fire Drill once a month in order to instruct and train the students how to exit the school building quickly and quietly without confusion or panic to a safe area.
- o A Severe Weather Drill is conducted in the spring for the same reason with the children moving to the hallway of the lower floor.
- o Crisis Drills are conducted three times a year as proactive measures so that children and their safety will always be the first priority in any situation.

Schedule and Calendar

The preschool schedule with times and activities is provided each year. A basic school calendar is emailed to families. General information is found at the end of the calendar. The Mary Queen of Apostles School main calendar can be found online on the school's web site.

Snacks

At the start of each month your child is asked to bring in one non-perishable food item (such as a box of cereal, a box of crackers, cookies, raisins, etc.) to be shared during snack time. **Please put your child's name on the item.** You also have the option of sending in a "fresh" snack such as apple slices, bananas, etc. Simply notify the teacher of your intentions and the day that you will be sending your fresh snack. The drink is provided by the school. It is imperative that you alert the teacher and principal to any food allergies.

School Community Group

The School Community Group (SCG) is an organization to which all parents/guardians belong. Its function is to promote the school and to provide opportunities for school families and those interested in MQA a chance to get acquainted, be informed, and work for the school's success and viability. It is a volunteer group.

Student Services

Services to preschool students can be arranged with the Westmoreland Intermediate Unit. This is done by a parent contacting the Preschool Desk. Services include Speech and Language Services, Psychological Testing Services

Tuition

- o Parents choose a Catholic education for their child(ren) and therefore, choose the financial responsibility that accompanies that choice.
- o A limited amount of Pre-Kindergarten Tax Credit money is available as financial aid. A F.A.C.T.S. Financial Aid application must be filed. Additional tuition assistance is available to families through local sources. Please contact the school office at 724.339.4411 for more information.
- o Payment of tuition must be submitted in accordance with the payment schedule chosen by parents. A Tuition Payment Agreement is due to the office July 1. The options available include a full tuition payment made by July 1, two semi-annual payments, or monthly payments/multiple-payment options through F.A.C.T.S. Tuition Management program. The F.A.C.T.S. form is due to the office July 1. Information on F.A.C.T.S. is available in the school office.
- o If a payment is not made, for whatever reason, the following process will be followed:
 - The parents/guardians will be notified in writing of the payment not being received.

- The parents/guardians will be given 20 calendar days to bring the account to current status or meet with school administration to have an adjusted payment contract approved (not a guarantee).
- If the account is not brought to current status, and an adjusted payment contract is not agreed upon and approved by school administration, the student enrollment will cease after the 20th day.

Visiting

- o Visitors, even parents, sign in and wear a badge for their visit.
- o Classes are not to be interrupted with visiting.
- o No parent may go directly to a classroom, speak with a teacher, or see a child without making his/her presence known at the office, signing in, and receiving a Visitor's badge. This is a part of our safety plan.
- o Visiting during teacher preparation periods, including the morning arrival period and/or lunch period, is not permitted unless prior arrangements have been made. Conferences can easily be scheduled, even at a days notice, and is the preferred way to speak with a teacher.
- o A child is never permitted to let anyone into the building by opening a secured door. Please do not ask a child to do so even if they know you personally.
- o No adult volunteer on site is permitted to give entrance to another adult. All people are to enter the site through the main door with the knowledge of the secretary or principal.

Volunteers

- o Parents are welcome in the school as volunteers. All volunteers sign in at the office and wear an identification badge.
- o Volunteers are to be mindful of their job when supervising children. Talking to teachers, other adults rather than attending to groups of children limits the effectiveness of the volunteer.
- o Volunteers are not permitted to visit another classroom without permission of the principal and without alerting the office to their location.
- o Volunteers who come on a regular basis to supervise children need to:
 - Apply for Act 34 and Act 151 clearances. These forms are available in the school office. Copies, made by the office from the originals are kept on file in the office.
 - Take the Virtus Training "Protecting God's Children" provided by the Diocese of Greensburg and complete one year of online training updates.
- o The Volunteer Form describes ways in which parents can volunteer through the school or the School Community Group, or SCG.

**See Volunteer Form*

Web Site

All information, including this handbook, can be found on the school web site. The site is found at www.mqaschool.org.

Understanding of Parent Handbook

Please review this handbook. Each family is to sign the Understanding of Parent Handbook Form annually. Please return the signed form to your child(ren)'s teacher. The form is filed in the office.

**The Understanding of Parent-Student Handbook Form*

List of Forms Provided at Parent Orientation

These forms and informational pieces are provided at the parent meeting.

Preschool Schedule

Public Relations/Press Release Permission Form

Preschool Parent Guardian Permission for World Wide Web Publishing of Student Work and Student Photograph

Preschool Opt-Out Form

Understanding of Parent Handbook Form

These items are available online at www.mqaschool.org at Parents & Guardians

Administration of Medication Permission Form (if needed)

Preschool Arrival Map

Preschool Dismissal Map

School Calendar

Volunteer Signup