

# **SCHOOL HANDBOOK**

## **2024-25**



## SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

### MISSION STATEMENT

Aquinas Academy is a small private, co-educational day school and home school support program that is operated by Catholic laymen dedicated to promoting academic excellence and the tradition of a Catholic liberal arts education. Aquinas Academy offers personalized instruction, regarding each child as being of infinite value in the sight of God.



***“CRUSADERS FOR CHRIST”***

### SCHOOL MOTTO

***“Consecrate them in truth.”***

(John 17:17).

Aquinas Academy is a small independent day school and homeschool support program for students in grades K through 12 providing the foundation for Catholic liberal arts education.

The foundation itself is Catholic because the Faith, mediated by the Magisterium of the Church, gives light, direction and meaning to all that men do. True liberal arts education gives the shape and form to this foundation. Liberal arts education is simply the cultivation of the intellect, cultivation of both true knowledge and sound habits of mind. The foundation, then, will be characterized by three essential parts of all education: ordered basic knowledge, basic skills or tools of learning, and the habitual vision of greatness.

Ordered basic knowledge is the knowledge most worth having. It is the knowledge of God and His revelation (theology), what He has made and holds in His material creation (natural sciences and mathematics), and knowledge of God’s special creation, man, in his love for the truth (philosophy) and achievements (history and culture).

Basic skills of learning are necessary to enable students to learn efficiently while in school, but perhaps more important, to continue to educate themselves throughout life. These include the ability to listen attentively, to speak clearly, to stick to the point cogently, to write effectively, and to read perceptively and critically. In addition, they include competency in straight thinking, in mathematical computation, and in a working knowledge of at least one language other than English. These basic skills will include some proficiency in the making of beautiful things (fine arts: drawing, painting, music and drama). Finally, they will encompass a developing proficiency in the reflective habits of mind necessary for considered judgment and charitable behavior in a civilizing community.

The habitual vision of greatness, a third essential of learning, is the constant vision of what with the grace of God is possible not only in this life but also in the next. This entails the development of the moral imagination, of worthy hopes, of ideals and character. It is the development of personal norms derived from familiarity with the very best in what is good, true and beautiful. This vision of greatness is, of course, first personified in Christ and his Great Action celebrated in the Divine Liturgy and the life of the Sacraments. It is then mirrored and exemplified in the noble thoughts, words, deeds and very lives of the great men and women who love God and neighbor.

The Academy acknowledges that parents with their special grace of state are the first and foremost educators of their own children. They work mutually to support and complement this solemn privilege. Families are invited to participate however they can in activities and lectures, as well as in occasional conferences at the school.

Aquinas Academy methodology is modeled after its patron saints, St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John Bosco. St. Thomas, Angelic Doctor and one of the greatest intellectual figures in the history of the world and the Church, taught concepts that are accurate, using methods that are simple and language that is readily understandable, and present catechetical instruction that is clear and timeless. St. John Bosco’s educational methods regard students as children of God and having infinite value. The student’s educational and character formation must be personalized using charity and love.

It is the deliberate intention of the Academy to teach the faith not as an independent course within the school day, but as the Vatican II councilor document on Christian Education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, states: “to relate all of human culture to the good news of salvation so that the light of the faith will illumine everything that the students will gradually come to learn about the world, about life, and about the human person.”

# SCHOOL HANDBOOK

## CAFETERIA

At lunch time, every student is expected to go to St. Joseph's Hall. All lunch periods begin with a prayer. Each student is required to clean up his place at the table and dispose of his trash. No food or drink is to be taken out of the cafeteria or classroom area. Receptacles for trash are provided around the school. Students are expected to clean up after themselves out of common courtesy. Students are to bring bag lunches unless hot lunch is being offered, in which case parents will be notified, and pizza is available on Fridays. We prefer that the younger children do not have metal lunchboxes.

## FIRE DRILL INSTRUCTIONS

Fire drills will occur monthly to train students in the proper evacuation in the event of a fire. Evacuation routes are prominently displayed next to the doorway in every classroom.

### LEAVING THE BUILDING

- a. Rise, leave the room in single file.
- b. Move rapidly (don't run) and silently to the appointed exit.
- c. Once outside, move to the designated area and stay with the class group with whom you evacuated or assigned.

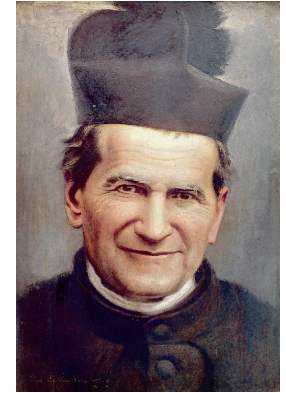
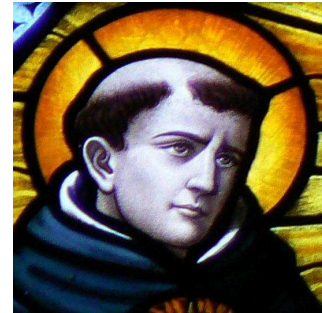
OUTSIDE: Remain standing until directed to return to the building.

RETURN TO THE BUILDING: With speed and in silence.

## CELL PHONES/DEVICES

Cell phones, smart watches and any other communication devices may not be used while on campus. Cell phones and smart watches will be collected every morning upon entering the building and placed in an envelope with your child's name on it. It will be held by our staff until the end of the school day.

Aquinas Academy adopts a liberal arts education, in which one of the main goals is to liberate from earthly desires. The use of cellphones and/or smartwatches during the school day directly contradict this.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Credit for the success of Aquinas Academy most assuredly must be given to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to the inspiration of all the saints especially our patron St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John Bosco for providing us with models of authentic Catholic education.

One of the most exciting signs of hope that the Holy Spirit is inspiring in the Catholic Church today is the growing number of small schools teaching the Catholic faith. We are inspired by their success and ask you to continue praying for us, as well as for all schools teaching the Catholic faith.

## **TODAY'S CATHOLIC YOUTH**

The academic program of Aquinas Academy is designed to prepare the student to enter the adult working community as a “true Christian”.

Aquinas Academy was created to introduce children to the opportunity to make the church present in the “spiritual, economic and cultural progress” of the world, as a means to achieving their potential as children of God created to pursue everlasting life.



### **EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES**

The answer to the crisis of Faith and the crisis in education all across America is a school that uses the methods and objectives of great educators: St. Ignatius, St. Francis de Sales, St. John Bosco and Father Louis Brisson.

Aquinas Academy has dedicated itself to the spiritual and intellectual formation of today's youth to produce Christian leaders of tomorrow's Church and society.

What Aquinas Academy is doing is much like what St. Ignatius did with eight men (the nucleus of the Jesuits) at the University of Paris in 1534. He trained them to be courteous, resourceful, prudent and learned men. He knew that was the only way they would attract and evangelize. These were the marks of St. Ignatius's men when they turned back the Protestant Revolution in Europe. Like St. Ignatius in 1534, the Church needs men and women who are trained to defend their Faith with intelligence and prudence.

### **SPIRITUAL AND INTELLECTUAL FORMATION**

Every aspect of the academic experience is given over to development of the whole man: the man who speaks, writes and acts in the context of the Ignatian concept of “eloquentia perfecta” (perfect eloquence).

## **STUDENT GRADES**

Students receive report cards quarterly. Students in grades 3 and up receive letter grades. Students in Kindergarten through second grades are graded on a mastery scale.

### **HOMEWORK**

The amount of homework will be assigned keeping in mind the students' need for leisure and family activities. Meaningful assignments to reinforce material taught or to provide background information on material to be taught are given as work to be done outside of school. These assignments should be given on a consistent basis, especially starting at grade 4. They should be coordinated among teachers and should be within the limit of expected probability for accomplishment by the norm of class.

The following is the recommended time for out of school assignments:

Grade K -	- None
Grade 1-3	- 0 - 20 minutes
Grade 4-8	- 20 - 60 minutes
Grade 9-12	- 30 - 90 minutes

### **GRADES ONLINE**

For grades 6-12, parents can access their student's current grade and be notified of major class assignments. In order for this to occur, parents and students must notify the school office of their current email address.

### **MEDICATIONS**

All legitimate medications (prescription and over-the-counter) are to be given to the school office for dispensation. The manner and schedule of dispensation are to be given by the student's parents in written form or doctor's note. School staff will not dispense medications without a note from the parents with clear directions of the amount and scheduled time for dispensing.

### **TEXTBOOKS**

It is important that students learn responsibility and one way is through the care of their possessions. Care for books and supplies are important whether or not the student borrows or owns them. Teachers will request that certain books have book covers. When books are lost or destroyed, contact the school office immediately. Parents may be responsible for replacing them or reimbursing the school.

## **ABSENTEEISM**

In the event of absence, parents are asked to call the school office before the start of the school day to notify the school of your child's absence. It is each student's responsibility to make up his/her school work. **The student is the one who must take the initiative to complete a missed assignment or to make up a missed test.** If a student is to be absent more than one week because of illness, his/her parents are asked to arrange for assignments to be given and returned.

According to Delaware state law, high school students may not be promoted if they have more than 25 absences for the year. This averages to 6 absences per quarter. This does not include pre-planned absences or long-term health absences where the classwork and homework is completed.

Additionally, schools may not give students high school credits if they are absent more than 90% of the school days. Therefore, if a high school student is absent more than 6 days in a marking period, we are unable to grant credit for that quarter unless arrangements are made otherwise.

## **EARLY DISMISSALS**

In exceptional circumstances (e.g., a medical appointment), a student may be excused from classes, provided a parent calls or sends in a written note to the school office on the day of the late arrival or early dismissal. Students must sign in and out in the school office. For early dismissals, parents must report to the office and staff will get their child out of their assigned class. No pupil may leave the school grounds for any reason including illness without permission.

## **EMERGENCY WEATHER INFORMATION**

Information regarding a delayed opening or the cancellation of school will be announced by 7:15 am using the following methods: school answering machine message and school web page. Due to the distances and various locations from which our families have to travel, it is difficult to make a decision concerning school opening that applies to everyone. Therefore, if you do not feel conditions are safe to travel to school from your area and the school is open, please do not travel. We only ask that you call the school office and notify us. We understand that each area and situation is different. Your child will be given ample opportunity to make up the schoolwork. When the school is canceled due to inclement weather, all after school activities, practices and rehearsals are canceled for that day.

## **NORMS OF BEHAVIOR**

It is the desire of this school to promote the principles of the kingdom of God: to enable each individual, staff member or student, to grow as a son or daughter of God. It is not intended to be a code of judgment; rather it is an ideal, which serves to point the way to a fuller relationship with Him through these three areas.

- ❖ **Respect/Honor** - "Love your neighbor as yourself." Matt. 19:19
- ❖ **Speech** - "Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say may do good to those who hear you." Eph. 4:29
- ❖ **Integrity** - "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Matt. 5:8

## **STUDENT EXPECTATIONS**

As members of a Catholic educational community, we are all called to model confident and joyful public witness in both word and deed and to live by the moral demands of the Gospel in order to model for students the integration of faith and life and to assist in the development of virtues characteristic of the Catholic Christian. We do this by living in communion with the Church and its teachings. Believing in the mercy and forgiveness of Christ, we acknowledge our sinful and fallen nature and look to Christ and to the Sacraments He has given us as sources of grace and strength, particularly when striving to live according to the Ten Commandments given to us in the Old Testament and the Beatitudes given to us by Christ in the New.

**Formal Titles and Names** Students will address all adults by their proper titles as based on school employment documents (Mr., Mrs., Miss, etc.) and surname (last name). School personnel will address students by the original name with which the student was registered (or its common derivative) and correlating pronouns.

**Gender Identity** The school will interact with students according to their biological sex as based upon physical differences at birth.

**Mission Integrity** The school joyfully exercises its responsibility to teach Catholic faith and morals in all fullness and especially as expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Parents or guardians and non-Catholics whose religious practices and beliefs run counter to Church teaching might experience possible conflicts as we maintain mission integrity. Sincere questioning of the practices of the Catholic faith in order to more deeply understand them are welcome, but openly hostile, public defiance and challenge of Catholic truths or morality, are signs that a student, parent, staff or faculty member may not be a fit for our school's primary evangelical mission and, thus, may be denied admission or may be asked to leave the school.

## **STUDENT EXPECTATIONS**

The student should:

1. Grow in the knowledge and understanding of their Catholic Faith;
2. Become strengthened in and participate in the practice of their Faith;
3. Develop and educate their religious and moral natures as well as their intellectual, physical, social, and emotional natures;
4. Train in the virtues that will prepare them for their role in a Christian family and as a citizen in a secular society.
5. Give serious and prayerful thought to their future life work.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

An individual ordinarily develops best within a community. To guide the individual in this development, certain guidelines are established as standards of acceptable behavior. The individual, by accepting membership in this community, agrees to abide by the rules established. Aquinas Academy is such a community, and each student by becoming a member of the student body accepts the rules governing this membership. Mere acceptance of these rules, however, is not the goal of Aquinas Academy. It is our hope that the values and goals established by the community will become internalized by each student, helping him/her become responsible for his/her actions.

The rules established by Aquinas Academy concerning student behavior are intended to aid the student in developing a respect for him/herself, his/her fellow students and the entire community. These rules and expectations are based on the foundation of the School which is the Catholic faith.

## **INTERNET USE**

Students in the Aquinas Academy have access to the school's electronic resources for the purpose of enhancing learning. Students may access the school's electronic resources for educational purposes only. Acceptable use includes classroom activities and curriculum driven research and may involve electronic communication, as designated by the school. Students are expected to follow the rules of personal conduct outlined in the Acceptable Use form. Parents/guardians are warned that some material accessible via the Internet, through the school's electronic resources, may contain items that are illegal, defamatory, inaccurate or potentially offensive to some people. While it is the school's intent to provide appropriate electronic resources to enhance the curriculum, students may find ways to access other materials as well.

## **DRESS CODE**

General appearance should be neat, clean, and appropriate for school attendance. Students are required to wear the Aquinas Academy school uniform. Compliance with the dress code is a way in which we acknowledge that self-promotion and vanity are characteristic of our culture, but not of the Christian community. **The uniform symbolizes the truth that we are all equal in God's eyes.** It also symbolizes to the students that our school is most concerned with their interior development as opposed to their outward appearance. Therefore, students are not to draw an inordinate amount of attention to themselves through their appearance. Staff reserves the right to use their discretion when they deem necessary. Preschool and Kindergarteners are not required to wear the school uniform, though most enjoy looking like the older children. Preschool or Kindergarteners should not have tie shoes, sandals or crocs.

### **Boys Uniform-**

- Shirt: White dress shirt. During spring and fall (Sept., Oct., April, May and June), optional white Polo shirt with school logo. White undershirt only.
- Pants/Shorts: Navy blue dress pants or shorts with dark solid colored belt.
- Tie: Solid navy blue tie.
- Sweater/Sweatshirt: Red school sweater/sweatshirt with logo.
- Shoes: Solid black or dark brown shoes (including soles). No boots.
- Hair: Must be kept neat and above the collar. No facial hair.
- Jewelry: No earrings permitted. A single religious necklace and/or bracelet.
- No tattoos. If you have one, it must be concealed.

### **Girls Uniform-**

- Shirt: Gr. 1-6, White blouse with Peter Pan collar. Gr. 7-12, White oxford blouse. During spring and fall (Sept., Oct., April, May and June), optional white Polo shirt with school logo. White undershirt only. One button open at top.
- Sweater/ Sweatshirt: Red school sweater/sweatshirt with logo
- Skirt/ Jumper: Gr. 1-6 school jumper Gr. 7-12 school skirt Length: No more than 1in. above the knee
- Socks: Navy school socks, navy tights
- Shoes: Solid black or dark brown closed-back shoes (including soles). Heels no higher than 1 1/2 in. No sandals, boots or clogs.
- Hair: Should be well-kept. Hair accessories in good taste and match school uniform. If dyed, color must be a single, natural hair color.
- Jewelry: One pair of stud earrings of a natural gem or element on lobe only. One religious necklace and/or bracelet only. No rings, bracelets or other jewelry.
- Makeup: Clear nail polish only. Foundation enough to cover acne and light mascara are permitted. No other eye makeup, lip color or gloss or glitter.
- No tattoos. If you have one, it must be concealed.