



**Parent - Student
Handbook
2023-24**

Changes from the 2022-23 handbook are noted in red.

Dear Parents of St. Matthew Students,

Welcome to the 2023-24 school year! The purpose of this handbook is to familiarize you with our philosophy and procedures. I hope that by sharing this information both you and your child will enjoy a happy and productive year. Please sign and return the acknowledgment sheet at the end of this handbook after you have read it.

May God bless us as we work together with your children.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kevin O'Herron". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Mr. Kevin O'Herron

Principal

DIOCESE OF CHARLOTTE MISSION STATEMENT FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

In communion with our families and parishes, and rooted in Scripture, Tradition and the defined teachings of the Catholic Church, we form students to be virtuous disciples of Jesus Christ, who pursue excellence of intellect, heart and soul with salvation as the ultimate goal.

DIOCESE OF CHARLOTTE VISION STATEMENT FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

To provide an immersive, accessible and authentic Catholic environment where every student can respond to their vocation to holiness and pursue excellence—spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, physically and socially—as fully alive disciples of Christ who transform the world. The clarity of this purpose finds full expression in a robust Catholic identity, holistic educational formation, committed operational vitality and effective governance and leadership.

**SAINT MATTHEW CATHOLIC SCHOOL
MISSION STATEMENT**

It is the mission of St. Matthew Catholic School to provide an atmosphere of faith and love where Jesus is alive and where students will be able to develop spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, physically, and socially. Through our quality academic program and Christian partnership between faculty, staff, and parents, students will recognize their individual value and the responsibility they have as models of Catholic Faith, to God, the Catholic Church, family, community, and the world both now and in the future.

PHILOSOPHY

The Administration, Faculty, and staff of St. Matthew Catholic School are committed to the total Christian development of each student through religious and academic instruction within a faith community. They are striving to meet the intellectual, spiritual, social, emotional, and physical needs of each student by providing such learning experiences.

The Administration and Faculty are continuously evaluating and seeking new ways to prepare students for their places in society with its demands and changes, while using the resources within the local community. The four-fold purpose of Catholic Education, to teach the message of Jesus, to build community, to serve, and to worship is incorporated into the total educational program.

Children and young people must be helped to develop harmoniously their physical, moral, and intellectual endowments so that they may gradually acquire a mature sense of responsibility in striving endlessly to form their own lives properly and in pursuing true freedom as they surmount the vicissitudes of life with courage and constancy. (Declaration on Christian Education I)

OBJECTIVES

To provide for the Catholic development of the student through formal religious education classes, student-faculty planned liturgies, and prayer services which are incorporated within the daily schedule.

To provide an environment in which each student can grow and mature as a child of God according to his intellectual, spiritual, and personal gifts.

To provide group experience outside the formal classroom setting that allows for interaction of students with peers, family, faculty, and local community.

To provide an awareness of the needs of the local and wider communities through participation in various service projects, both on and off campus.

ACCREDITATION

The schools of the Diocese of Charlotte, which includes St. Matthew Catholic School, have received District Accreditation from Cognia (formerly AdvanceEd), the governing body of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS/CASI).

ADMISSION POLICY

All Mecklenburg Area Catholic Schools admit students of any race, color, sex, religion, national and ethnic origin to all the programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at these schools. Students entering transitional kindergarten must be 5 on or before October 15th. Kindergarten applicants must be 5 years old on or before August 31st. No exemptions will be made within the Catholic Schools. The child's age must be verified by a birth certificate. If a child has been attending school in another state in accordance with the laws or regulations of school authorities of such state before becoming a resident of North Carolina, the child is eligible for enrollment in school regardless of whether or not he/she has passed the fifth anniversary of birth by August 31st.

GENERAL SCHOOL PROCEDURES

ANIMALS IN SCHOOL

Household pets are not permitted in the school building or on the school property at any time. If pets are brought in the car during carpool, please make sure these pets stay in the car at all times.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Each morning will begin with prayer, the pledge to the flag, pledge of respect and announcements. During this time students should stand quietly in respect for God and country. If you are in the hallways, **stop** immediately and wait until prayer and the pledges are completed.

ARRIVAL

School doors are open to students at 7:00 AM. Students may be dropped off and picked up at the front of the building. Those who arrive before 7:30AM will go to the gym. Classrooms will be open at 7:30 AM. Students must walk to their classrooms when released from the gym.

ASBESTOS

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), pursuant to the Federal Asbestos Hazard Emergency Act (AHERA), requires all schools in the United States to annually report the status of asbestos containing material within our buildings. We're happy to report that our school is free of asbestos as cited by the original architect and by a Certified Asbestos Management Planner approved by the State of North Carolina.

ASSIGNMENTS MISSED

Assignments may be completed and returned with the student upon his/her return to school. Failure to complete assignments can result in loss of credit. There is no need to request to pick up assignments if your child is just out for the day. **Assignments will be given to students upon their return.** For extended illnesses, please contact the teacher. (Please see "attendance, #5, on the following page.)

ATTENDANCE

When a student must leave school before dismissal, a written note from a parent or guardian stating the reason must be presented to the teacher. No verbal requests from the student will be honored. Students who come to school after 11:00am or who leave before 11:00am will be marked absent for the day. Parents or guardians must come to the office and sign a release for their child's early dismissal. Please refrain from picking your child up between 2:00-2:30pm. Dismissing during this time causes a disruption to the end-of-the-day routines of the classes. If you are picking up your child before 2:00 (due to a doctor's appointment, sickness, etc) please park in the visitor parking area. This way you will not be blocked in by the carpool. The school staff will call the student to the office. Please do not go directly to the classroom.

The educational program at St. Matthew Catholic School depends heavily upon the content of each school day, and all areas of the curriculum are considered valuable. Regular attendance is vitally important to each student as it directly affects his/her progress academically and his/her development of attitudes and habits for later life. Studies of student progress in school show a high correlation between attendance and success or absence and failure. For this reason, every student is required to attend every class, except when excused for illness, or other reasons deemed acceptable by the school. (Please note acceptable reasons listed below.) Vacations and holidays are planned to provide both maximum convenience in observing traditional holidays and maximum benefits to the educational process. When considering removing children from scheduled classes, parents are urged to weigh carefully five important factors:

1. School represents a commitment to intellectual and personal discipline. Unnecessary absences may weaken that commitment. While such absences may be highly educational and beneficial to the child, they are not to be regarded lightly.
2. It should be recognized that absences and disruptions of schedules (tardies) and procedures affect others in the class and the faculty.
3. In the primary grades in particular, instruction is so often teacher directed and activity-directed, it is not usually possible to duplicate the experiences outside the classroom setting.
4. There is almost a month of free time within the school year calendar, published well in advance, in addition to the summer months, in which trips can take place.
5. The teacher is not obliged to plan special work or to spend extra time on work that was missed by the student. Work will not be given in advance.

Absences from school will be excused for the following reasons:

1. Personal illness
2. Illness in the immediate family requiring the student to be at home
3. Death in the family
4. Family emergency

If your child will be absent from school, **you do not need to call the school** to report your child absent unless he/she will be missing more than one day or unless they have a contagious disease, i.e. strep throat, conjunctivitis, etc. When your child returns to school following an absence, please remember to send a note to the teacher stating the reason for the absence. **Students who have an excused tardy or absence are still marked tardy or absent.**

BEFORE SCHOOL CARE

Students may be dropped off at school at 7:00 a.m. where they are supervised by St. Matthew staff. There is no charge for this service. However, in order to participate, all students must bring a book to read while they wait to be dismissed to their classrooms.

BIRTHDAYS

Recognition and celebration of a student's birthday is seen to be an important aspect of that student's development. To assist in this, parents may send to school or drop off in the office, cup cakes, cookies, brownies, or doughnuts for the class. The teacher will then distribute the items for celebration at a time that is determined best for the whole class. There are no class parties for birthdays. The delivery of balloons, limousines, flowers, etc. should be reserved for celebrations at home. **Invitations to private birthday parties may not be distributed at school unless the entire class is invited.** The teacher will return the invitations to the student to be distributed from home should the entire class not be invited.

BULLYING

St. Matthew has established an anti-bullying policy. We believe that everyone should enjoy our school and feel safe, secure and accepted. It does not matter what color, race, gender, or nationality we are. It also does not matter how popular we are; how much athletic ability we have; how smart we are; or what religion we practice. We are all equal in God's eyes.

What is Bullying?

Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose and the person being bullied has a hard time defending himself or herself. Bullying happens when certain behaviors occur **OVER AND OVER.**

- Punching, shoving and other acts that hurt people physically
- Spreading rumors about people
- Keeping certain people out of a "group"
- Teasing people in a mean way
- Getting certain people to "gang up" on others

Bullying also can happen online or electronically. Cyberbullying is when children or teens bully each other using the internet, mobile phones, or other cyber technology. This can include:

- Sending mean text, email, or instant messages
- Posting nasty pictures or messages about others in blogs or on websites
- Using someone else's username to spread rumors or lies about someone else

*Bullying is **NOT**...*

Normal conflict can occur any time or place and is generally accidental and resolved by the parties in conflict. Bullying behaviors occur where the person bullying feels safe engaging in power seeking behavior which is intentionally harmful and directed at someone who is considered weak or vulnerable and generally is resolved by third party intervention.

A certain level of conflict between kids is normal, even healthy, and teaching your child how to handle everyday difficulties will prepare him or her for life. The problem begins when it surpasses normal childhood conflict and meets the three common markers for bullying: an imbalance of power, intent to harm, and threat of future harm.

Once a conflict between one or more kids has escalated into a cycle of bullying, employing conflict resolution to solve the problem is no longer appropriate. The word "conflict" assumes that both kids are in part responsible for the current problem and need to work it out. In the process of working it out, both kids make compromises and the conflict is resolved.

Tattling versus Reporting/Telling

Tattling is when someone is trying to get someone else in trouble. Reporting or Telling is when someone is trying to get help so as to resolve a problem.

“Are you telling me to be harmful (tattling) or helpful (reporting)?”

“Are you trying to get someone in trouble?” (tattling)

“Are you trying to help discipline my students?” (tattling)

“Are you having a problem with bullying?” (reporting)

“Are you helping a friend who is hurt?” (reporting)

At St. Matthew Catholic School, we agree to work together to stop bullying. Students, parents, and St. Matthew School staff will sign an anti-bullying pledge annually to show support and affirm the St. Matthew Anti-Bullying Policy.

If it is determined that a child is bullying another student, the following actions will take place:

First report to a teacher: The situation will be handled by the child’s classroom teacher with a note sent home explaining the incident and the actions taken.

Second report to a teacher: A referral will be made to the school counselor with a note sent home.

Third report to a teacher: A referral will be made to the administration. Administration will evoke appropriate consequences.

Depending on the nature and severity of the offense, first and second reports may be handled directly by administration who would then determine the appropriate course of action.

CARPOOL – Please refer to the Carpool Procedures found on the FACTS Family Portal for specific directions. The "rule of thumb" is: *If the cars are moving, the children are not.* Please do not motion to your children to come to your car if cars are moving in the parking lot. This is an extremely dangerous situation.

Students are expected to display good behavior to make dismissal safe for everyone. No food or drinks or family pets during carpool. Please do not leave the motor running in an unattended car. **Please do not park by the church, on the Elm Lane side of the field or at any other place besides the Carpool line.**

CAFETERIA RULES

1. All students will enter the cafeteria through the left set of doors and walk through the center aisle to get to the food counter.
2. All students will gather everything they need before sitting down at their place (food, napkins, utensils, etc.)
3. All students must raise hands and ask permission if they want to get out of their seats after gathering items. No students may return to their classrooms after entering the cafeteria.
4. The last 5 minutes of lunch will be silent with the lights off.
5. Teacher assistants will give permission, one class at a time, to throw away trash.
6. After throwing away trash, students will return to their seats and sit silently until dismissed by teachers.
7. No birthday treats allowed in the cafeteria. Birthday treats must be brought to and consumed in the classroom.
8. When a parent or visitor comes for lunch, only one student may sit with that visitor. No friends are permitted to move from the assigned class table to join the student and visitor for lunch.

Consequences for not following Cafeteria Rules:

1. A warning will be given to the student.
2. The student will be asked to move to the "time out" table.
3. 5 minutes of recess will be lost.
4. Teacher will be summoned.
5. Student will go to the principal.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR PHONE NUMBER

It is important that the school has an up-to-date phone number and address, as well as emergency numbers. If these facts change during the year, please send this information to the school office via a note. Please also inform the MACS business office of these changes, (704) 370-3265.

CONCERNS

Complaints from individuals concerning **educational programs or facilities** should be directed to their lowest possible level for an equitable solution according to the following sequence:

1. Student/Parent
2. Teacher
3. Principal
4. MACS Board of Education
5. Superintendent of schools
6. Diocesan Board of Education
7. Chancellor
8. Bishop

Complaints from individuals concerning **personnel** should be directed to their lowest possible level for an equitable solution according to the following sequence:

1. Student/Parent
2. Teacher
3. Principal
4. Superintendent of Schools
5. Chancellor
6. Bishop

Social media in any form, including mass snail mail, email, or texting is not an appropriate forum to discuss complaints & grievances about St. Matthew Catholic School. Parents are reminded to use these existing structures when making any complaint about the school's educational programs, facilities, or personnel. We also recommend that all parents refrain from using social media to discuss sensitive issues about the school. Failure to follow this policy could result in the immediate dismissal of your children from St. Matthew Catholic School.

DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

Discipline at St. Matthew Catholic School is centered around the need for respect. Students are expected to respect teachers and fellow students. Respect will be shared by teachers and students.

Each student is responsible for his or her own actions. If the conduct of a student jeopardizes the welfare of other students or the learning process, appropriate action will be provided, first by the classroom teacher, and secondly by the principal or assistant principal. If these steps do not rectify the student's behavior, a conference with the student, the student's parent(s), teacher and principal will be held to determine the student's suitability for St. Matthew School.

We hope that in knowing and respecting limits of behavior, our students will learn what is acceptable in society, as well as in the classroom. We believe that discipline starts at home. It is our goal to maintain the respect that parents have taught their children in their own homes.

The main attributes we are attempting to instill in our students are in keeping with the Gospel values. The attributes are KINDNESS, RESPONSIBILITY, AND RESPECT. We have developed the following pledge of respect to help our students in achieving these attributes.

ST. MATTHEW SCHOOL PLEDGE OF RESPECT

I WILL be courteous.

- I will say please and thank you.
- I will clean up after myself.
- I will hold the door for someone.
- I will help another student.

I WILL be a great student.

- I will do my best in class.
- I will do my homework.
- I will avoid interrupting others.
- I will not be disruptive in class or the hallways.

I WILL be a good Christian.

- I will have respect for myself.
- I will have respect for others.
- I will be a caring person.
- I will be kind to others.

With God's help, **I WILL** be the best person I can possibly be.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are privileges afforded to students. Students can be denied participation if they fail to meet academic or behavioral requirements. All field trips will be instructional in nature and related to the curriculum being taught. Students will not be allowed to participate in a field trip without a **school issued** permission form completely filled out and signed by a parent or guardian. Telephone calls will not be accepted in lieu of the signed form. Parents who drive for field trips must attend a Protecting God's Children workshop, have a completed and turned in to the office the Diocesan Background Check, Sexual Misconduct Policy form, Diocesan Code of Ethics, Volunteer Profile form, and Volunteer Driver Information Form. Parents who drive their car for field trips are legally liable for the safety of the children they are transporting. Each child in the car must be fitted with a seat belt and remain in the seat belt until the end of the trip. No student is permitted to ride in the front seat of the car. Drivers are not permitted to make additional stops for food, drinks, etc. The role of parent chaperone is a very serious one. The total attention of the chaperone is needed for the children. For this reason, siblings are not permitted on field trips.

NO MEDICATION WILL BE GIVEN TO A STUDENT ON A FIELD TRIP IF THE MEDICATION PORTION OF THE FIELD TRIP FORM IS NOT FILLED OUT.

FOOD ALLERGIES

Mecklenburg Area Catholic Schools (MACS) recognizes that it is not possible to totally eliminate the risk of exposure of students with life-threatening allergies to foods that trigger allergic reactions but takes seriously the responsibility to take reasonable steps to protect the safety of its students. While MACS will not attempt to create a school environment guaranteed to be free from the risk of contact with trigger foods (i.e. "peanut free school" or "peanut free classroom"), every effort will be made to identify students with food allergies, initiate safety precautions to avoid allergic reactions and prepare school staff to deal with such allergic reactions should they occur.

Please refer to FACTS Family Portal for further details on School, Parent and Student responsibilities for allergies.

GRADING SCALE

The Mecklenburg Area Catholic Schools grading scale is as follows:

Grades K - 2

VG - Very Good Progress
G - Good Progress
S - Satisfactory Progress
N - Needs Improvement

Grades 3 - 5

A 90 - 100
B 80 - 89
C 70 - 79
D 65 - 69
F 64 and below

Grades for the primary students **are not** equivalent to the A, B, C grades of students in grades 3 – 5, example: VG is not an A, G is not a B, and a grade of C is average.

GUM

No gum will be allowed on school grounds.

HAIR

- Boys – Hair should not touch the shirt collar nor fall into the student's eyes and face. Neither coloring of the hair nor radical hairstyles, including shaved designs, are permitted.
- Girls – Hair must be off their face. Neither coloring of the hair nor radical hairstyles are permitted.

HEALTH ROOM

St. Matthew is staffed with a full-time or part-time registered nurse. In addition to the school nurse there is a trained First Responder Team that can assist with school emergencies.

It is vital that the school nurse/school personnel have accurate contact information and up to date health information for your student(s). Please make sure you provide this at the start of the school year and as applicable during the school year.

- **Vision Screening**

Vision Screening will be performed for grades 1, 3, 5 and 7. Parents will be notified if the student does not pass or struggles with the exam. Any student may have a vision screening upon request, either by the teacher or the parent. Please contact your school nurse to request a vision screen for your student and/or to update your student's eye exam results.

- **Health Education**

School Nurses assist the teachers in presenting age-appropriate health lessons for your student. Topics include (but are not limited to): nutrition, exercise and rest, proper handwashing, basic first aid, water and bike safety, dental hygiene, and drug/alcohol awareness.

- **Illness Guidelines and Protocols**

Please notify the school nurse if your student has been diagnosed with a communicable illness such as strep throat, pink eye, hand/foot/mouth, norovirus, chickenpox, etc. This is very helpful in decreasing the spread of illness.

- **Fever-** Parents will be contacted to pick up a student with a temperature of 100 degrees or higher, or at the nurse's discretion. Please do not send your child to school with a fever. If your child requires fever-reducing medicine such as Tylenol or Motrin to maintain a normal temperature, they should not be at school. Please do not send your child to school until they have been fever free for 24 hours (without the use of medicine).
- **Vomiting/Diarrhea-** If a student has had vomiting and/or diarrhea in the past 24 hours, please keep them home. Their resistance may be low, making them more susceptible to a secondary illness. Vomiting and diarrhea can be very contagious.
- **Strep Throat-** If your student has a positive strep screen or culture, please keep them home for 12-24 hours after starting antibiotics.
- **Red, Swollen, Inflamed Eyes-** If your child wakes up with crusted, matted eye lids or if they are red, swollen, burning, itching, please keep your child home and consult with your physician. Conjunctivitis (pink eye) is highly contagious, especially in the elementary school setting. They may return to school after 24 hours of antibiotic treatment for bacterial conjunctivitis.
- **Head Lice-** Students identified with live lice will be sent home and should be treated with an OTC treatment (Rid, Nix, etc.), prescription medication or lice treatment company. Please consult with your physician for questions regarding best treatment option for your student. Once treated the student may return the next day and should be seen in the health room by the nurse, before going to class. MACS schools follow the guidelines outlined by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control, and the National Association of School Nurses for the management of head lice in the school setting. A student does not have to be "nit free" to attend school.

The school nurse delivers care to students and is available to administer medication, first aid and emergency care when necessary. The school nurse also acts as a liaison among the student, teacher, parent, and physician.

After evaluating a student, the nurse will contact the parent/guardian if the nurse has determined that the student should go home. Please come promptly for your student. Continuous care for long periods of time is not suitable in a school setting; therefore, prompt retrieval of your student is greatly appreciated.

- **Policy for Administration of Medication**

The MACS policy for medication administration applies to all prescription and non-prescription (OTC) medications. This policy will be followed by school personnel during the school day, after care programs and on school sponsored field trips. This is a NO exception policy that is in place to protect the student and ensuring the safest possible care for your student.

If your child must receive any type of medication during the school day, including over the counter (OTC) medications, the following regulations MUST be followed:

1. All medication to be given at school must accompany a **Medication Authorization Form** detailing the medication, reason, dosage, and administration times. This form must be completed in full by your physician AND signed by a parent/guardian. A completed Medication Authorization Form is valid for 1 school year only and does not carry over to the next school year.
2. All prescription medication must be brought into school by the parent/guardian and must be properly labeled in the original prescription container with identifying information including the student's name, medication name, dosage, and times to be given.
3. All OTC medication must be brought into school in the original manufacturer's container and clearly labeled.
4. If your student requires emergency medication such as an epi-pen, Auvi-Q, inhaler, Glucagon or seizure medication, the health room must have an emergency **Action Plan** completed and on file in addition to the Medication Authorization Form.
5. It is preferred for all emergency medications to be given in the health room (especially in grades TK-5) however if it is determined that your student should self-carry their emergency medication, a **Self-Medication Student/Parent/Physician Agreement** form must also be completed and on file in the health room.
6. Medications should be provided at the start of the school year. It is especially important that emergency medications are brought in at the start of the school year for the safety of your child.
7. All medication should be picked up by a parent/guardian at the end of the school year. All medication not picked up will be properly disposed of.

If you do not wish to follow the above regulations, you may come to school to administer the medication for your child. School nurses/school personnel will not administer any medication to students unless the proper forms are completed in full, and medications are in properly labeled containers.

- **Field Trips**

Field trip permission slips include a section for authorizing administration of medication while on a school sponsored field trip.

It is the responsibility of the parent to complete the permission slip in full, including the medication section, and return to school on the date provided. To leave campus for field trips, a student must have their emergency medication available.

The school nurse/designated school personnel must have advance notice to prepare medications for school field trips, therefore no medications will be accepted and prepared on the day of the field trip.

During a school sponsored overnight field trip, all prescription, and over-the-counter medication(s) your student may need during the trip **MUST** be administered by school personnel, even if a student is over the age of 18. The only exception to this policy would be emergency medications such as epi-pens, inhalers, insulin, etc. All necessary forms must also be complete and on file in the health room, including the Self-Medication Agreement, if your student requires such medication.

HOMEWORK

Homework is an extension of the learning process, intended to help children learn self-discipline, accept responsibilities for him or herself, and to reinforce objectives taught during the school day. The best way for parents to help their child with homework is to provide an organized routine at home. The child will benefit from a planned time (perhaps after dinner) and a planned location (a good working area, such as a table or desk with little or no distraction). Children will appreciate parental support in the way of a good, positive attitude about homework shown by all.

Special projects: Teachers often assign special projects to be done at home. Parents should only *assist* children and refrain from *doing* their child's work for the project. The learning experience is in the *doing*; not necessarily in the end product. Grades are given for effort as well as presentation.

HONOR CODE

It is a fundamental assumption at Saint Matthew Catholic School that any work presented by students will be their own. In a Catholic, faith-filled academic community, a violation of this tenet is an extremely serious offense. The principal or the assistant principal will determine the consequence for such a violation.

INSURANCE

The School-Time Student/Athletic Accident Program through the school covers all students during school hours or school-sponsored activities. This is **secondary** insurance to your personal health insurance.

INTERRUPTIONS

In order to alleviate the disruptions to the classrooms, the following policies are in place:

- Homework – Any work brought to the school by parents will be placed in your mailbox. It can be picked up during morning break or lunch.
- Lunches – Lunches brought to the office will be sent to the cafeteria.
- Band Instruments – Instruments brought to school by a parent will be left in the office. Students may pick it up before his or her lesson.
- Requests for Assignments – If a parent requests work for their child who has been out a few days, that work can be sent to the office for the parent to pick up after 2:00. Parents are required to call the office by 9:00am with their request.

INTERNET USAGE

The use of technology and, in particular, the Internet, in education has grown by leaps and bounds. Technology tools are now as common a tool textbooks. St. Matthew offers Internet access for students, teachers and staff. The Internet offers information and resources otherwise unavailable to our school. Because the Internet is a necessity in supporting our curriculum goals, it has become an integral part of our instructional program for all teachers and students.

The goals of the Internet access are:

1. To support curriculum standards.
2. To enhance learning opportunities and instructional resources
3. To promote life-long learning.

Students will be monitored when the Internet is used during class. Under the direction of the Diocesan IT Department, St. Matthew will continue to utilize filtering software to block students' access to inappropriate websites.

Acceptable Use of the Internet: It is the expectation of St. Matthew Catholic School that the Internet is used in a responsible, efficient, ethical and legal manner by all members of the St. Matthew community, and is used in support of the educational objectives and the student behavior guidelines of St. Matthew. Transmission of any material in violation of any federal or state regulation is prohibited. Unacceptable uses include, but are not limited to, the following: violating copyright laws, reposting (forwarding) a person's communications without the author's prior consent, and using threatening or inappropriate language.

Netiquette Rules: Users must abide by network etiquette rules. These rules include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Be polite; rudeness is never acceptable.
2. Use appropriate language.
3. Do not reveal your personal address or telephone number or those of anyone else.

LIBRARY

All books withdrawn from the library must be returned on the specific date. Overdue charges will be determined by the media specialist. A lost book must be replaced. Any student who has not returned books or paid the replacement cost at the end of each quarter will not receive his/her report card.

LUNCH

Students may bring lunch from home or purchase from the cafeteria. A lunch order form is posted on FACTS Family Portal on **Thursdays** to be completed by the following **Monday**. The lunch order form is dated with the week your child's lunch will be purchased – a full 10 days after you have received the order form. **Please note what and when your child ordered.** If students do not order lunch at this time they will be unable to purchase lunch. Students will not be allowed to call home if they have forgotten their lunch. They will be provided with a peanut butter and jelly sandwich unless allergic.

NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

St. Matthew abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, a school will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the academic records and to other school-related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the school with an official copy of the court order.

NUTS DAYS

No Uniform To School days are scheduled monthly through our Student Council. The dates are sent home in the Thursday Packet. Students may “dress down” if they bring \$1.00 to school. The money collected is give to a worthy cause such as Catholic Relief Services. Students will still be required to dress appropriately and neatly within the conservative standards of a Catholic school. Hats, headbands, sunglasses, visors, etc. are not allowed unless a specific day is set aside. Dresses, skirts, jeans, and shorts should be of conservative length and not be such that sitting, bending, or kneeling could cause embarrassment to the student or others around her. If leggings are worn, the child’s bottom must be completely covered by a shirt or dress. Strapless dresses, "spaghetti" straps, and tank tops, are not appropriate for school. Any article which advertises alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or displays violence, satanic symbols, or suggestive words are also prohibited. The boys should wear shorts, pants, or jeans that are neat with no holes, cuts or tears. Tank tops, muscle shirts, midriff jerseys, see-through mesh jerseys, and torn clothing are not acceptable wear for school. If a student comes to school in clothing which is considered inappropriate by the school staff, he or she will be asked to call a parent to bring something more acceptable.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Conferences are held once a year. Please see the school-year calendar posted on FACTS Family Portal for the current school year’s dates. All other conferences are scheduled by teachers and/or parents on an as-needed basis. When scheduling a conference with a teacher, either send a note with the child to the teacher requesting a conference or call the office and a message will be given to the teacher. Do not call teachers at home. Parents are expected to discuss any problems with the teacher before talking with the principal.

PARENT-TEACHER ORGANIZATION

The parents' organization is a vital part of our school community. Parent committees work in many different areas ranging from academics to social activities. Parent involvement and support of the efforts of the school are essential to each student's progress. St. Matthew has developed a tradition of outstanding support through its PTO.

PERFORMANCES AND OTHER SPECIAL CLASS EVENTS

Siblings who attend St. Matthew are not permitted to be dismissed from class to see a brother or sister’s class performance or special event. This includes class plays and the Kindergarten Graduation. An exception to this policy is the 5th Grade Closing Mass. Siblings are permitted to attend this Mass if a note is sent to the teacher and the parent comes to the school to pick the sibling up.

PERSONAL PROPERTY

The school does not accept responsibility for lost or misplaced items. All articles should be marked with the student's name so they can be returned to the student. Unclaimed items with no identification will be given to Crisis Assistance Ministry or Goodwill. Electronic devices, including e-readers and games, should not be brought to school.

PRAYER

We join together in prayer at school at the beginning of our day and at its closing. At this time, we ask the children to keep in their prayers their own needs, the needs of their families, and any special intentions that they may have - or that we have been asked to remember in prayers. When prayers are being said over the PA all movement and discussions in the halls must stop out of respect for God, our loving Father.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Progress Reports will be sent home to all students in grades K-5 in the middle of each trimester.

REPORT CARDS

Report cards are issued three times a year for students in K - 5. Report Cards are issued on a trimester basis. Students are to return their report card envelope on the following day after it is issued. There is a \$1.00 charge for lost or defaced report card envelopes. Please note the dates for distribution of Report Cards and Progress Reports for the current year on the calendar in the front of this handbook.

RESPONSIBILITY OF SCHOOL

With the rise in text-messaging, e-mails, cell phones, and parties at individual homes, it is necessary to clarify the responsibility of the school with regard to discipline associated with any problems.

St. Matthew Catholic School is responsible for the safety of your child while he/she is in school or at a school-sponsored event. If there is an incident involving a threat, danger or illegal activity involving your child outside of the school or a school-sponsored event, it is the responsibility of the parent to bring the threat, danger or illegal activity to the attention of the parents of the child involved and also to report it to the proper legal authority.

The school and/or employees are not responsible or liable for any issues or problems that occur outside of the school and/or school-sponsored events.

SAFETY PATROL

The purpose of the Safety Patrol is to provide the students with an awareness of the rights and responsibilities one must develop for the safety and welfare of others. Students in 5th grade are eligible to serve their school in this manner. They are on duty mornings from 7:15 to 7:45am. Students and parents should please follow the directions of the Safety Patrol.

SNOW DELAY/SCHOOL CLOSINGS

In case of snow, St. Matthew Catholic School **WILL NOT** automatically follow the policy of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public School System. The decision to close school or to open on a delay will be made by the MACS Office. In case of storms or other emergencies, there will be an announcement on the local radio or television stations concerning **MECKLENBURG AREA CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**. Please listen for the school closing or a delayed opening. Do not call the school office. If inclement weather develops during the day and it becomes necessary to close school, please listen to local radio or television stations for an announcement. Please watch/listen for Mecklenburg Area Catholic Schools, Charlotte Catholic Schools, or St. Matthew Catholic School on the announcements. We will also send out email, text and phone blasts relaying the message of the closing. You will not receive text and phone blast messages unless you set up your FACTS Family Portal account accordingly. Follow the FACTS Family Portal instructions found in the Resource Documents to set up your account.

If school should have a delay, school will open according to the delay. For example, a two hour delay would indicate that the school will open at 9:45am, two hours after our normal 7:45am opening time. Before school care would then begin at 9:00am. ***For a delayed opening, no hot lunch will be served.*** All students must bring a bag lunch. Staff will report one-half hour earlier than the opening time noted communicated.

After school care is cancelled on days when students are dismissed early due to emergency situations or inclement weather.

SPIRIT WEAR

Spirit wear may not be worn during the school day as part of the school uniform. An exception to this is on Fridays, when students may wear the Holy Trinity or Charlotte Catholic spirit wear sweatshirts.

SPORTS

Basketball and cheerleading are coordinated by the St. Matthew Catholic Church Athletic Association.

STUDENT COUNCIL

The purpose of the Student Council is to give the students an opportunity to learn responsible governmental procedures, encourage school spirit, and to foster a faith community with an emphasis on outreach through service.

STUDENT RECORDS

It is important that you keep your child's records up-to-date. Changes in address, home and work telephone numbers and work schedules need to be reported to the office, particularly for the emergency card. This is to facilitate our contacting you concerning your child(ren). Parents and Legal guardians have the right to review their child's official cumulative records. Requests should be made in writing to the principal 24 hours prior to reviewing the records.

TARDIES

Arriving at school on time to begin class is critical toward a child's successful, productive day. Students who arrive at school after 7:45am are marked tardy. Students who are late must come into the office with a parent to sign him/her in for the day. Illness, medical appointments, and family emergencies are excused tardies. Tardies are disruptive to the students and to the entire school community. At the 6th tardy a letter will be mailed to the parents requesting attention to this habit. At the 10th tardy a telephone discussion will take place between principal and parents. At the 15th tardy a parent conference will take place. If parent refuses to come in for the conference the student will be suspended from school until the conference takes place.

TELEPHONE

In case of an emergency, with permission, students may use the office telephone or the phone in his/her teacher's office. Students are expected to come to school with necessary supplies, books, homework and lunch. **Students will not be allowed to call home if they have forgotten something at home.** Important messages for students and teachers will be delivered at an acceptable time. Only emergency messages will be given to students. Please do not expect office staff to deliver messages regarding carpools or after school activities. These arrangements should be made in advance.

TEXTBOOKS

Learning support students who may need additional work in the summer for the following school year may borrow textbooks at the end of the school year. However, parents must sign the form, provided by the learning support teacher, indicating their responsibility for the textbooks borrowed.

“THURSDAY PACKETS”

Each Thursday, a compilation of information regarding school activities is emailed home and posted on FACTS Family Portal. This is the **primary means of weekly communication between school and parent.** Please read all information. If you do not have access to the Internet and need a hard copy of the packet, please make this request to the school office.

TUITION AND FEES

Tuition payments that are in arrears will result in the holding of the report card. Any questions concerning tuition or fees should be directed to the business office at the Mecklenburg Area Catholic Schools – 704-370-3265.

UNIFORM POLICY

In the Catholic school tradition, students at St. Matthew are expected to be neatly dressed and well groomed in the accepted uniform each day. Students arriving at school out of uniform will receive a written or email notice that will be sent home to parents. Repeated violation of the dress code may result in the need for an extra set of uniform clothing to be kept at school for the student. Additional disciplinary action may be taken at the discretion of the principal or assistant principal.

On the two days that your child attends physical education classes they will wear their PE uniform to school for the whole day. The PE uniforms are available for purchase from Flynn & O'Hara.

Please refer to the Uniform Policy posted on FACTS Family Portal for specific requirements and ordering information.

VISITORS

All visitors, including parents, are to check in at the school office before going anywhere in the building. Please use the main entrance, sign the visitors' book in the office, and wear a visitor sticker. While we welcome parental involvement, parents are not to go to the classrooms at any time during the day, unless previous arrangements have been made with the teacher. Lunches, books, and other forgotten articles are to be brought to the office marked with the student's name and grade, and the office staff will see that the student received his/her items.

VOLUNTEERS

St. Matthew relies on the volunteer efforts of parents and grandparents. The staff is most appreciative of the volunteer time given to St. Matthew. When arriving at school to help, volunteers must sign in at the school office. Visitor stickers are provided to identify volunteers while at school. Please remember to sign out when you are leaving.

All volunteers who will regularly work with children must complete a (1) Volunteer Profile, (2) Background Check, (3) read and sign the Diocesan Sexual Misconduct Policy, (4) read and sign the Diocesan Code of Ethics and (5) attend a session of the Protecting God's Children. These requirements must be met if you plan on helping in the cafeteria, chaperoning a field trip, coaching a sport, assisting with an extra-curricular club, helping in art classes, helping in computer classes, or tutoring small groups of children, to name a few. These requirements do not need to be met in order to visit for lunch.

DIOCESAN BOARD POLICIES

Policies on the following subjects have been adopted by the Diocesan Board.

- Disciplinary Probation, Suspension, and/or Expulsion
- Search and Seizure
- Weapons
- Home Schooling and Dual Enrollment
- Complaints

These policies are on file in the school office.

SERVICES AVAILABLE

AFTER SCHOOL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

St. Matthew's (in conjunction with Mecklenburg Area Catholic Schools) After School Enrichment Program (ASEP) is available from 2:45 until 6:00pm on full school days. Registration forms can be obtained from the office or the After School Care director.

BEFORE SCHOOL CARE PROGRAM

There is supervision provided in the school gym for students arriving at school from 7:00-7:30 AM. This service is provided free of charge. Students are required to bring a book to read and must be quiet, courteous, and respectful during this time.

COUNSELING PROGRAM

Our counseling program is geared for students and their families who desire or need to talk to someone who is trained in this helping profession. Counseling is a helping relationship which focuses upon assisting the individual's growth and adjustment as well as problem-solving and decision-making needs. The school counselors provide limited individual and small group sessions for students as needed. Students may self-refer by dropping a note in the boxes provided by our school. Teachers and parents may also refer a child. Please contact the counselor for an appointment either through an email, a phone call or a meeting.

In accordance with the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) code of ethics, students and parents interactions with the school counselor are considered confidential. However, the counselor may share relevant information with the school staff directly working with the student or family in order to ensure the best interests of a student. The school counselors work with the students, families and staff to enhance the academic, social and emotional lives of a student. In addition, no one has the right to keep confidential information that may affect the health and safety of that individual person or others. If a student shares information with the counselors that may affect his or her own health or safety or that of another, the counselor receiving that information has a legal obligation to act by sharing the information with the parents and other appropriate persons.

Due to the nature of school counseling, school counselors are unable to provide testimony in custody matters and intensive long-term counseling services. School counselors are equipped to make referrals for families and students in need of long-term counseling, psycho-educational assessment and family support.

LEAP (Learning Enrichment Activity Program)

LEAP is a program designed to enrich all students in the school in grades 1-5, with kindergarten students being served on an “as needed” basis. Whole group lessons focusing on problem-solving strategies are conducted in each class throughout the year. In addition, small groups and individuals are served when the need for further enrichment is established. A student’s participation in this program is determined by teacher recommendations, classroom observations, as well as testing results.

LEARNING SUPPORT

The Learning Support Program is available to all students in grades TK-5. The purpose of this program is to enhance the classroom program by focusing on individual skills and learning abilities. We strive to accomplish this by assisting the student in an inclusive setting whenever possible. The Learning Support is offered in three different modes to the student, the teacher, and the parent. By designing a collaborative program or team approach to achieve student success, support for persons involved with the student is a built-in mechanism. The team consists of the parents, teachers, a school administrator, Learning Support Teacher, and often the school counselor. This affords an effective and efficient means of goal sharing, exchange of ideas, and exchange of methods and/or approaches. Students in TK-2 have Mrs. Lisa Modzelewski as a contact person. Students in grades 3-5 have Mrs. Laurie Dettinger as a contact person. If you, as parents of Learning Support students, must contact your respective Learning Support Teacher, please do so by sending in a note or calling the office requesting that she call you. Because of their work with the children, the Learning Support Teacher is unavailable for unscheduled appointments at any time of the day.

THE PRINCIPAL RETAINS THE RIGHT TO AMEND THE HANDBOOK FOR JUST CAUSE AND PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN PROMPT NOTIFICATION IF CHANGES ARE MADE.

**PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT
2023-24**

(A Parent/Student Handbook Acknowledgement form must be turned in to the homeroom teacher for each of the children in your family)

The undersigned has received, read, and discussed the Parent-Student Handbook with my child(ren). I agree to support the provisions of this handbook.

Please Print Child's Name

Parent Signature

Date

Please return by the first day of school.