



St. Matthew's School
Teaching from the Heart

Parent Handbook

2440 Conestoga Road
Chester Springs, PA 19425
610-458-3381
www.stmatthews-school.org

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the St. Matthew's family. Our goal is to provide children with a preschool and Kindergarten experience that is developmentally enriching in a safe and nurturing Christian environment predominated by love and sharing. We respect each child as a unique individual with unique needs and experiences while striving to create new experiences that allow each child to learn, explore and grow in all areas of development. St. Matthew's School is a caring Christian community that

- Fosters positive relationships between teachers and families, adults and children, and among children
- Provides a challenging, interesting and developmentally appropriate curriculum
- Provides opportunities for creative and imaginative interactions
- Values each child and respects their individuality
- Instills a life-long love of learning

We believe that each of our families will have a rewarding experience at St. Matthew's. The early years of education lay a foundation for future learning. Together we will provide a positive experience for our children that will last a lifetime. If you have any questions as we progress and learn throughout this year, please contact me. On behalf of the entire staff, welcome and thank you.

Sincerely,

Sandy Elkins
Director

This handbook was last updated on January 2017

Age Requirements

Children entering 2-year-old programs must be two by May 31. Children entering 3, 4 and 5-year-old programs must be of age by October 31. Children entering Kindergarten must be 5 by September 1.

Attendance / Absences

If an absence is planned in advance, please inform the school in writing. If the absence is unplanned, please call the school prior to the start of class. A message can be left on the school office voice mail. If a child becomes ill during the day, the emergency contact(s) will be notified and asked to pick up the sick child. In the event that a Kindergarten student will be absent from school, a phone call or prior written approval is mandatory. School age children who cannot be accounted for may be considered truant.

Birthdays / Celebrations

Birthday and holiday celebrations are welcome at school. Please keep the special snack as simple as possible. Invitations to birthday parties must be distributed to all class members.

Class Size

Class sizes and ratios are as follows:

Two-year-olds	10 children / 2 adults	ratio:	1:5
Three-year-olds	12 children / 2 adults	ratio:	1:6
Four/Five-year-olds	14 children / 2 adults	ratio:	1:7
Kindergarten	18 children / 2 adults	ratio:	1:9

Clothing

Please dress children in comfortable, practical, weather appropriate play clothes with closed toe shoes. (Weather permitting, we will go outside to play on a daily basis.) Please label items that can be removed. In addition, a complete change of seasonally appropriate clothes needs to be kept in the child's backpack or provided to the teacher at all times.

Confidentiality

St. Matthew's staff respects and safeguards the privacy of our families by using information in a confidential, professional and responsible way. Staff members are never to discuss or share information about a student with non-staff members.

Custody Agreements

Any family with legal documentation regarding custody agreements is to submit paperwork to the school office.

Discipline Policy

If a child is having difficulty following directions or treating others with respect, then the following developmentally appropriate techniques may be used:

1. **Positive Reinforcement** –praising a child when he / she exhibit appropriate behavior.
2. **Redirection** –redirecting a child to a different task while emphasizing the appropriate behavior expected.
3. **“When...then”** statements simply help the child to understand that “when” he displays a behavior, “then” something will happen. For example, “When you pick up the toys, then we can go out to play.”
4. **Time Out / Take a Break** will be used when the above techniques are ineffective. This technique is not punishment, but rather an opportunity for a child to regroup and think about his or her behavior.

In the event that a discipline issue cannot be corrected with the above techniques, the parent(s) or guardian(s) will be notified and a behavior modification conference may need to be scheduled. If this becomes necessary, the following steps will be taken:

1. The behavior will be documented for a minimum of one week.
2. A meeting will be scheduled with parents/guardian of child to discuss a behavior plan. The teacher(s), parents/guardian and director should be present for this meeting. The behavior plan will include specific behaviors to be addressed and strategies for overcoming the behavior.
3. The parents and staff will implement the plan for two weeks.
4. At the end of two weeks, the behavior will be reevaluated.
5. After reevaluation, the Director / Schoolboard will review each incident on a case by case basis in order to determine further action.

Discounts

Discounts will be given for multiple children from the same family. The highest tuition will be full price. Additional tuition will receive a 5% discount. This will be reflected on monthly tuition coupons.

Drop Off / Pickup Policies

When dropping off and picking up children, promptness is appreciated. Please arrive between five minutes prior to and five minutes after your start / end times. Park in the lower lot at all times and enter building by the playground. Do not leave children in the car unattended. Finally, please sign your child in and out each day at the classroom.

No child will be released to anyone other than those listed in the pick up authorization form or with prior written permission. Anyone other than the regular pick up person may be required to show picture identification and / or know the “code” word supplied by each family on their emergency contact form.

Kindergarten students who ride the school bus will use the district transportation unless written communication is provided to the Kindergarten staff. In the event of a last minute change, a message can be left on the voice-mail at the school.

Any child picked up more than ten minutes late will be charged a \$25.00 late fee on the third, and subsequent, occurrences.

Field Trips

Field trips are planned to enrich the experiences of the classroom. Permission slips will be sent home prior to the trip and must be returned by the due date. Preschool trips will require parents to drop off and pick up at the event location. Kindergarten parent volunteers may be needed to chaperone and drive for such trips. Drivers must have a current driver’s license, registration and insurance. Sibling attendance is determined by the facility we are visiting. **Note:** 2’s classes do not attend field trips as it is not developmentally appropriate for this age group.

Food Allergy Policy

Children with food allergies will be required to complete a Release of Liability Waiver along with an Authorization for Emergency Care listing the specific allergies, symptoms, treatment procedures and recreational limitations (if any). If medications are required, they will need to be provided by the parents along with physician directions for usage. All medications / instructions will be placed in an allergy pack with the child’s name clearly visible. Also included in the pack will be a copy of the signed Authorization form and Emergency Contact form. This pack is

to be stored in the classroom and will travel with the child when necessary. Children with allergies may be asked to supply a daily snack.

Health Policy

The health and safety of our staff and children are very important to us. Therefore we use the following guidelines.

Hand washing is required before snack and after bathroom use.

Fire drills and Lock Downs will occur throughout the year.

Accidents and Injuries will be treated with administering of Standard First Aid Procedures. An incident report will be completed. In the event of a more serious accident, parents or emergency contacts will be notified.

First Aid / CPR Trained individuals will be on staff at all times.

Immunizations need to be kept current and a copy of current immunizations is to be kept on file in the school office.

Medication: It is St. Matthew's School's policy not to administer medication to students (excluding EPI pens). All requests for administration of medication will be reviewed by the school board on a case by case basis.

Inclement Weather / Emergencies

If Downingtown School District closes due to weather, School will also close. There may be times St. Matthew's Closes even if the district remains open. Whenever there is inclement weather, please use the following to determine if we are closed:

- Check the home page of the website www.stmatthews-school.org
- Call the voice mail at school 610-458-3381
- All parents who provide an email to the Director will receive an email alert

In the event of a **two hour delay**:

Morning session – 11:00 to 12:30

Lunch Bunch – 12:30 to 1:30

Afternoon session - 1:30 to 3:00

Kindergarten – 11:00 to 3:00

Kindergarten Enrichment AM – 11:00 – 1:30 / PM – 12:30 – 3:00

Late Fees

A late fee of \$15.00 will be charged to each account if payment is not received within five days of the due date and will be due with the next payment. Any payment not received within thirty days will result in St. Matthew's School requesting that the child be withdrawn from school. In the event of financial emergency, please discuss payment options with the Director.

Lunch Bunch

Lunch Bunch offers families of three to five-year-olds the opportunity to extend the school day by one hour. Lunch Bunch hours are from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. During this hour, children eat a lunch sent from home, take part in free play with their peers, and go outside for exercise (weather permitting). Advanced registration is required and can be completed by signing up on the Bulletin Board in the education hallway. The cost for this service is \$7.00 per session. Coupons are available for your convenience. We ask that children who have life threatening allergies not attend Lunch Bunch.

Non Discrimination Policy

St. Matthew's School admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Outdoor Play

Whenever possible all children will go outside on a daily basis. Please dress your child appropriately each day.

Parent Communication

Memos / Letters and other communication will come home in children's backpacks or via email. Please empty backpacks daily.

Newsletters and Calendars will be sent home periodically.

Bulletin Boards should be checked daily for updates.

Conferences will be scheduled to discuss the development and progress of your child. Additional conferences can be scheduled if the parents or staff feels it is necessary.

“Teacher Talks” are the conversations that occur on a daily basis between the staff and the parents. These talks are a valuable form of communication for both teachers and parents.

“Daily or Weekly Updates” are sent home listing the activities which were planned for the school day. This can act as a starting point for conversations at home.

Email Addresses have been established for each teacher. This email address will be used as part of our communication process.

Website page have been developed for each teacher. Class calendars and announcements are available on-line.

Email Alerts will be used to keep parents informed of school wide events, deadlines and reminders.

Payment Arrangements

Tuition can be paid either annually or monthly. Monthly installments are to be received at the School by the 5th of each month beginning in July, then continuing from September through April. Tuition is always paid one month in advance. An automatic withdrawal program is available for your convenience. Please contact the School Director for more information.

Potty Training

Students entering our 3, 4 and 5 year old programs must be potty trained. In the event a child experiences chronic accidents, the director and School Board will review each case on an individual basis.

Programs

St. Matthew’s School offers a variety of programs for children age two through Kindergarten age. Both morning and afternoon sessions are available.

Morning Session: 9:00 – 11:30

Lunch Bunch: 11:30 – 12:30

Afternoon Session: 12:30 – 3:00

Full Day Kindergarten 9:00 – 3:00

Four-year-old Enrichment is available Friday morning or Tuesday afternoon

Our two-year-old program offers parents the opportunity to socialize their youngest preschoolers two days per week. At this age there is a focus on social behaviors and separation adjustment.

Our three-year-old program offers two and three day classes. There is a focus at this age on basic social skills and an increase of independent behavior.

Our four-year-old program offers three, four and five day classes. These self sufficient, independent preschoolers are focusing on activities and lessons that will help prepare them for Kindergarten.

Our Kindergarten program has been designed to meet state and local curriculum guides and standards. Our small class size allows for one on one interaction between teacher and child. Our full day program gives sufficient time to master social, emotional and academic skills.

Enrichment class is designed to enhance the daily preschool learning experience for our four-year-olds. These classes focus on science, literacy and math in a play based environment. The small class sizes allow for extended one-on-one interactions with the teaching staff.

Kindergarten Enrichment class is designed to take a Kindergartener on a more in-depth exploration of thematic subjects through individualized and group projects. Our experienced staff will provide lessons with a focus on literacy, science, math, critical thinking and problem solving skills in a play based and caring environment. This allows students to learn and grow beyond what a half day Kindergarten can offer. We offer five different and exciting themes during the school year.

Registration

Registration opens on December 1 beginning to St. Matthew’s congregation members, then to existing School families, school alumni and finally the community. Registration will be on a first come, first serve basis. As classes become full, registrants will be notified and placed on a waiting list. A non-refundable registration fee for each child must accompany all registration requests. If a child is placed on a waiting list, the check will be returned until that child is accepted into the School.

Returned Check Fee

All checks returned by the bank will result in a \$30.00 fee added to the account and will be due with the next payment.

Sickness

To help prevent the spread of colds and other communicable diseases we advise keeping a child home if he / she show the following symptoms:

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|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Thick runny nose | Persistent cough |
| Fever of 99 degrees or more | Swollen glands |
| Diarrhea or Vomiting | Chills |
| Skin rash with open sores | Drainage from the eye |

Children must be symptom free for 24 hours before returning to school. Proof of a doctor’s treatment will be needed for in the event of the following illnesses:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Impetigo | Mumps | Chicken Pox |
| Strep Infection | Measles | German Measles |
| Whooping Cough | Mononucleosis | Conjunctivitis |
| Pediculosis (head lice) | | |

Children with Pediculosis (head lice) must have been treated and be nit free to return to school.

Kindergarten children absent for three or more consecutive days for illness must provide a doctors note prior to returning to school.

Snacks

In an effort to keep all students safe from allergens and prevent any foodborne illnesses, St. Matthew’s requests that all shared snack foods be purchased from a store or bakery. This is just an added precaution we want to take for the safety of all our students. We understand that this modification will bring some changes to birthday celebrations and special events within the classrooms, but it is essential to provide a safe environment for all students. All classrooms (with the exception of Lunch Bunch) are nut free, so please avoid foods with peanuts or tree nuts listed as an ingredient.

*Parents may still provide homemade or home-baked foods for their own child’s snack or lunch. However, those items may not be shared with other students.

Student Supplies

Students will have a cubby for use at school. Please provide a full size backpack for carrying items to and from school

Toys from Home

Except for Show and Tell items, all toys are to be left at home or in the car. Toys from home can be disruptive to the flow of the classroom. In addition, we cannot be responsible for items brought from home. Please do not send guns, knives or toys that promote violence for “Show and Tell”. Any item that comes to school should be clearly labeled with the child’s name.

Vacations

Families who will be vacationing for extended periods of time are required to pay tuition for the time they are away. Families who do not wish to pay for the vacation time may withdraw their child and re-enroll upon returning. There is no guarantee a spot will be available upon return or the same classroom placement will be available.

Visitations

Parent visitations are welcomed. Involvement in the classroom experience is important for everyone. Please discuss visits with individual teachers prior to arrival.

Withdrawing

If a child needs to be withdrawn from Preschool, a 30-day notice must be given. No refunds will be given for monthly installment families. Any family whose account is paid in full will be refunded any unused tuition minus 30 days.

If a child is withdrawn from Kindergarten prior to the start of school, the first month’s tuition will not be refunded. The first month’s payment is considered a non-refundable deposit. All other withdraws will follow the policy set forth for a Preschool withdraw.

Worship

Visits to St. Matthew’s sanctuary with our Pastors will occur monthly and are noted on the monthly calendar. Families are welcome to participate in these events. Chapel Notes will be sent home after each visit, enabling parents to better understand the message being delivered by the Pastor.