

**THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY  
OF SAINT MATTHIAS  
SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY**

**SCHOOL HANDBOOK  
September 2019**



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## SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

Saint Matthias School, in partnership with the Catholic Community of Saint Matthias, provides an educational foundation that celebrates diversity and nurtures students to develop moral values and life skills. “We strive to engage each student spiritually and academically in a Christ-centered environment, to prepare them to live as disciples and citizens.”

## SCHOOL SYMBOL



The **School Emblem** reminds us that we are dedicated to Faith, Caring and Excellence. The **Cross** symbolizes that Christ is the center of the life and activity of our school. We are a people desiring to follow Jesus. The **Book** symbolizes learning and our quest for truth. The **Ax** symbolizes Saint Matthias, the apostle through whose intercession we pray that all we teach will enable our students to be who God calls us to be.

The school mascot is the **Mustang**. Our school colors are **Hunter Green** and **White**.

## PHILOSOPHY OF THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF ST. MATTHIAS

The primary and ultimate purpose for the existence of the Catholic Community of Saint Matthias is to assist parents in fulfilling their role of educating their children with a quality Catholic education. The school is a Catholic learning community organized to foster the spiritual, moral, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth of its members in a spirit of dedication, freedom and love that is based on the gospel message.

## FACULTY MISSION STATEMENT

Dedicated to Faith, Caring and Excellence, we prepare our students to live productive lives as self-directed, life-long learners by providing quality instruction in a loving, caring environment.

## FAMILY SPIRITUALITY COMMITMENT

As members of the Catholic Community of Saint Matthias, we, the parents and guardians, believe that Catholic Education is an integral extension of Christ's mission to proclaim the Good News. By enrolling our children in St. Matthias School, we affirm the threefold purpose of Catholic Education: to teach, to build community, and to serve. Faithful in this educational mission, parents of students at the school commit to actively support a model following the spirituality commitment:

As God's children, we recognize all that we are and all that we have are gifts from God, our Creator, and that we are called to continually deepen our relationship with our God.

As primary educators of our children, we are responsible for the spiritual formation of our children.

As a family, we participate regularly in the weekly celebration of the Eucharist, break open the Word, receive the Sacrament and live God's message. As fully responsible parishioners, we made a commitment to faithfully participate in the sacrificial giving program. As members of this faith community, we volunteer our time and talent in support of the ministries of the parish.

Worshipping as active members of the Catholic Community of Saint Matthias provides ongoing opportunities for spiritual development for each member of each family. As parents of children enrolled in the school, it is the clear expectation that regular participation in Sunday liturgy is the means for spiritual nourishment, growth and renewal. Empowered by the Spirit, we are disciples rooted in God's Word and Sacrament.

## **PARENTS' ROLE IN EDUCATION**

We at the Catholic Community of Saint Matthias consider it a privilege to work with parents because we believe parents are the primary educators of their children. Therefore, it is your right and your duty to become role models for the development of your child's life physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically. Your choice of our school involves a cooperative spirit and commitment.

## **ADMISSION POLICIES**

### Non-Discrimination Policy

St. Matthias 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. The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarships and loan programs, including athletic and other school administered programs.

## **FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS**

### Tuition Tiers

1. Participating Parishioners:

To be eligible for the Parishioner rate a family must be deemed an active member of St. Matthias Church or another Catholic Church in the Diocese of Metuchen.

An active member of St. Matthias Church attends Mass regularly and participates in sacrificial giving during the calendar year prior to registration. Families will receive a statement of current commitment in November.

Families of another parish in the Diocese of Metuchen must return a Pastor's letter of recommendation with registration.

Tuition is based on a per student rate with a discount given for multiple children.

2. Non-Participating or Non-Parishioners:

Tuition is based on a per student rate with no discount for multiple children

### Schedule

- A nonrefundable deposit is required at registration/re-registration, which takes place during Catholic Schools Week.
- The balance of tuition is paid either in full, by May 31 of the current year or through FACTS, a tuition

collection service. Tuition payments are collected semi-annually, quarterly or monthly. If a family chooses the installment plan, all payments must begin in June and be completed by March.

### Home School Association (HSA) Fees

- Annual dues are required per family to be paid to the HSA at the time of registration/re-registration.
- In addition to annual dues, a fundraising commitment is required of each family. This is treated like a bond. It must be paid prior to the start of the school year. It may be paid in full by May 31, or through the FACTS payment plan. Families who fulfill their fundraising commitment during the school year will be reimbursed the amount paid in advance.

### Lost or Damaged Library Books/Textbooks

A fee will be charged for any library book or textbook that is lost or damaged.

### Lunch Charges

A child who forgets lunch has the option to charge lunch and pay the next school day.

### NSF Checks and Fee

If a check submitted to St. Matthias School is returned by the bank, the family is charged a \$25.00 fee. If a family has two separate checks returned by the bank, all future payments must be made by cash or money order.

### Consequences for Failure to Pay the Above School Fees

In order to be fair to the families who do pay school fees and/or tuition, the families that do not meet their financial obligation will incur the following consequences:

- Re-registration packet will be held until financial obligation are current

### SCHOOL HOURS

School hours are from 8:00 AM until 2:30 PM on regular dismissal days and 12:30 PM on early dismissal days. The school's responsibility for students begins at 7:45 AM and ends at 2:45PM (or 12:45 PM). If you arrive before 7:45 AM please remain outside the area of the parking lot reserved for the student morning assembly.

For the safety of the children, parents must follow the traffic patterns for arrivals and dismissals as directed by the supervising school personnel and safety patrol. Buses drop off and pick up the children in the parking lot behind the building.

Children who are driven to school by parents are to be dropped off in front of the building. Parents are required to follow the instructions of the safety patrol and other personnel who are there to guide traffic. For your child's safety, parents are to remain in their vehicle as traffic must be kept moving.

All students assemble in line by grade in the parking lot behind school by 7:55 AM, indicated by the ringing of the school bell. At 8:00 AM the bell will ring a second time and students will enter the building with their class. Any student who is not in line at 8:00 AM will be considered late and will be directed to the office for a late slip. During inclement, rainy or exceptionally cold weather, the children go directly to the cafeteria or the classroom where teachers are on hand to supervise them. Parents are not to walk the children into the building.

### Lunch

PreK – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade children have lunch at 11:00 AM, grades 3-8 at 11:40 AM. Students are supervised at lunchtime

by teachers and volunteers both in the cafeteria and on the playground.

## **Dismissal**

A full school day ends at 2:30 PM, while an early dismissal day ends at 12:30 PM. Parents are expected to pick up their children promptly. Any student not picked up by 2:45 PM on regular dismissal days or 12:45 PM on early dismissal days will be sent to the After School Program and parents will be charged accordingly.

## **Release from School**

If a child's dismissal time changes, advanced written notice should be submitted to the homeroom teacher. Otherwise, the Office must be contacted by phone as soon as possible and no later than 2:00 PM. The school will permit only the parent or her/his designee (designated in writing), to pick up the child during or at the end of the school day.

## **Delayed Opening/Emergency Closings**

The school usually follows the decision of the Franklin Township School District regarding school closing and delayed opening due to inclement weather. Announcements can be made as early as 5:30 AM.

Once the decision has been made, the information will be communicated via:

- Honeywell Alert recorded phone message
- Eblast (email) from Saint Matthias School
- Posting on school website homepage: [www.stmatthias.info](http://www.stmatthias.info)

## **Delayed Openings**

If the school has a 2 hour delay, St. Matthias will begin at 10:00AM for all students. Student supervision will begin at 9:45 AM. The Before School Program (BSP) will not be provided if there is a delayed opening.

## **Emergency Closings**

After the school day begins, an emergency closing due to inclement weather may be possible. Be aware of the weather predictions for the day, so that you and your child are prepared for such a decision. In the event that an emergency weather closing or other emergency situation is necessary, we will communicate the information as stated above in "Delayed Openings/Emergency Closings".

There is no After School Program (ASP) when there is an emergency closing.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Prompt, regular attendance is essential to academic success. The parent/guardian models and fosters these good habits in the child for the benefit of the child's overall academic achievement and to encourage mature adult behavior in the future.

A parent/guardian must call the school no later than 9:00 AM to report a student's absence and the reason for the absence. Notification by a brother/sister is not acceptable. **Communication by email is not acceptable.** If no call has been received by 9:00AM the school secretary will make a reasonable effort to reach a parent/guardian by phone

to verify the absence. These procedures represent a mutual effort to insure the safety of the child and account for the presence of the student during school hours.

### **Absence due to Illness**

A student who is absent must bring a written letter of explanation when s/he returns to school. The letter requires a parents' signature; therefore, communication by email is not acceptable. The letter must state the student's name, the date(s) and reason for the absence. An absence of five or more consecutive days for illness requires a doctor's note.

Parents can request books for the day of the absence and pick the books up at the school office after the dismissal bell. Parents can check the school's website for the homework assignments. On the second day of an extended absence for illness or injury, parents may request missed class work assignments. Teachers have 24 hours to respond to the parent's request.

When the student returns, the teacher will provide the other missed assignments. Teachers will use discretion on what work the student is responsible to complete.

### **Absence other than Illness**

The scheduling of doctor/dental appointments during the school day is not appropriate and disrupts the child's learning. Should an unavoidable situation or an emergency arise, the parent needs to:

- send a note to the homeroom teacher and the school office - if possible, the note should be sent to the teacher/school office one day prior to the appointment
- come into the school office to sign out the child
- come into the school office with the child to sign him/her back into school

### **Vacations**

Family vacations are not excused absences during the school year. In the event that a family needs to travel during the school year, circumstances should be discussed with the administration and assignments will be provided upon a student's return. Students are responsible for the make-up work.

### **Absence and Participation in Activities**

If a student is absent from school because of illness or disciplinary action, s/he will not be permitted to participate in any school-related or co-curricular event, social or athletic, that afternoon or evening. If a student is absent from school for a reason other than illness or disciplinary action, the school reserves the right to make an individual judgment regarding same day co-curricular and athletic participation.

### **Lateness/Tardiness**

A child is considered late when he/she is not with his/her class at 8:00 AM when the bell rings. Late students must report to the office for a late slip to be admitted into class.

The parents of a student, who has been late more than 3 times per quarter, will be notified by the Vice Principal. Extenuating circumstances should be discussed with the administration.

## **HOME AND SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS**

The school will communicate with parents/guardians via the electronic and/or online Wednesday Envelope. Parents are asked to read all communications and respond as needed.

Parents are welcomed to email teachers or school staff. Email links are located on the website. All communications and correspondence should be mutually respectful at all times. Please allow teachers at least 24 hours to respond to

any communication. Any emergency or time sensitive communication must be via telephone to the Main Office or a written note. Medical emergencies must be communicated via telephone or written note to the Main Office, nurse and teacher.

Parents, visitors and volunteers must register in the Main Office on arrival to receive an ID badge. Before leaving the school building, be sure to return the ID badge to the office.

### **Appointments with School Personnel**

Parents who wish to meet with the Principal, Vice Principal, or teacher are asked to arrange a mutually convenient meeting time. Please contact the teacher first when there is a concern about your child. The school administration will become involved only after this initial consultation. For the good order of the school, please refrain from approaching staff members at arrival time in the morning, at dismissal time, and during the school day (7:45 AM – 2:45 PM), without arranging an appointment beforehand. Both the parent and the staff member need to know the purpose of the conference, so that all concerned may be appropriately prepared.

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

A Parent-Teacher conference is an invaluable aid in bringing about a closer relationship between the home and school. It gives parent and teacher an opportunity to pool their observations and plan and work together. The school offers two formal opportunities during the first and second marking periods.

Additional conferences may be necessary when a student's work and/or behavior deviates from the norm. Both parents and the staff member should be aware of the purpose of the conference so that all concerned may be appropriately prepared.

### **Cell Phones and Electronic Devices**

If students bring a cell phone and other electronic devices from home, they must remain powered off in his/her backpack during school hours. The school is not responsible for any loss or damage to such devices.

If a student uses an electronic device while in school, it will be turned into the Vice Principal's office and a parent must pick up the device.

### **Children Bringing Cash to School**

All monetary payment requested from parents should be submitted in check form only. Please make all checks payable to Saint Matthias School. Money sent to school for a specific event or purpose should be placed in an envelope and identified with the child's name, grade section, the amount enclosed and its purpose. Cash can be used for lunch money, mission money, incidental school supplies, dress down days and other specified events as determined by the Principal. The school is not responsible for cash lost by a student.

### **Home School Association (HSA)**

Every family who has children enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten-Grade 8 becomes a member of the Home School Association. The faculty and administration are included in the membership. The HSA provides a channel of communication and creates better parental awareness by encouraging parental involvement. The HSA is not a board of education. Questions relating to school policies and procedures should be directed to faculty and/or administration.

HSA meetings are announced at the beginning of the year, and parents should make every effort to attend and support the activities and projects of this organization. The annual dues are payable at the time of registration and are non-refundable. All families are required to meet a minimum financial commitment to be paid and included along with tuition. The per family commitment can be earned back and refunded at the end of the school year

through SCRIP and other fundraising programs. Family participation in the HSA fundraisers is vital, as all efforts and proceeds provide for the educational programs at St. Matthias, especially for Spanish, Art, Music, Physical Education and the Media Center.

## **School Records**

Only the information about students that is essential to promoting their welfare and accomplishing the educational objectives of the school shall be collected and maintained under the general supervision of the school administration. The school maintains a cumulative record for each student from entrance into the school through eighth grade. No records are released to anyone or any school without written authorization from the parent.

## **Child Custody**

It is extremely important for the protection of students and parents that the terms of legal separation regarding the custody of children, dissemination of school information and visitation privileges are known to the school administration. Parents, who are divorced, separated, or never married, must provide a copy of an existing court order to the Principal. The court order/custodial agreement is placed in a confidential file. Custodial parents have an obligation to provide the copies of a student's report card, progress reports, notices of parent/teacher conferences and other relevant material to the non-custodial parent. In the absence of access to these court records, the school must presume that both parents have equal access to the child and all school information.

## **CURRICULUM**

### **Faith Formation/Religious Education**

The moral and religious formation/education of a student has its roots in the home. The purpose of the Catholic School is to build on the Christian home life by giving formal religious instruction in school.

As a Catholic School, we are committed to the spiritual growth and religious development of each child. Our purpose is not only to teach Catholic doctrine, but also to help our students learn to live it. Students, parents, and guardians understand and agree that the school exists to educate in the framework of Catholic values. All students, regardless of their religious affiliation, participate in Religion classes and liturgical services during the school year.

To accomplish this, the students have classroom instruction given by certified catechists, preparation for the Liturgy, and active participation in the celebrations. In addition, all students are encouraged to live out what they have learned and celebrated by participating in various service projects during the school year.

### **Sacramental Preparation at the Catholic Community of Saint Matthias**

St. Matthias School is an integral part of the Catholic Community of St. Matthias. The school follows the guidelines for sacramental preparation, as outlined in the National Directory for Catechesis and mandated by the Diocese of Metuchen.

The Liturgical life of the Church revolves around the sacraments, with the Eucharist at the center. The Church celebrates seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony.

The National Directory for Catechesis explicitly states that sacramental catechesis:

- is intended for all members of the Christian Community, takes place within the community and involves the whole community of faith
- involves parents in the preparation of their children for the sacraments

In compliance with these two mandates, sacramental preparation is not a part of the academic religion curriculum in St. Matthias School. Our second grades do receive instruction on Penance and Eucharist but the primary formation

is presented to all second graders, those in St. Matthias School as well as those attending other schools and their parents.

Although our seventh and eighth graders participate in religious instruction here at school, a comprehensive sacramental formation program has been developed for Confirmation for all the young people in these grade levels within our parish community.

For a more detailed explanation, please refer to our school webpage under the Parents Life tab and then “Sacramental Preparation”

## **Academic Curriculum**

The school provides a comprehensive and rigorous academic program for its students. The curriculum is based on Diocesan and New Jersey Core Content Curriculum Standards emphasizing the quality of learning.

Our programs promote continuity, creativity and challenge for our students so that they can live as disciples and citizens of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Quality instruction in Religion, Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Health/Physical Education, World Language, Music, Art and Technology prepares them to succeed in a global and technological community.

Field trips and other academic experiences within the school day support this curriculum. These co-curricular activities include archery, flag football, soccer, boys and girls basketball, cheerleading, boys and girls cross country, junior high baseball, junior high softball, band, chess club, drama club, choir, prayer group, etc.

## **Support Services**

In accordance with the New Jersey State Laws of 1977: Chapters 192 and 193, the Educational Services Commission of New Jersey provides services to students attending St. Matthias School that meet the eligibility requirements set by the New Jersey Department of Education.

Programs and services to students who meet state criteria include:

- Compensatory Education
- English as Second Language
- Homebound Instruction
- Child Study Team Services
- Speech/Language
- Supplemental Instruction

Support services provided by the school include:

- Full-time Guidance Counselor
- Full-time Support Teacher

## **Assessment**

Teachers use a wide variety of assessment tools to monitor and measure student progress. These include: tests, quizzes, oral and written reports, independent classroom work, activities, individual and/or group reports/projects, presentations, portfolios, performance assessment, and standardized tests. Completion of homework and active participation in class are essential for student success.

Students in grades 6-8 take Mid-term (January) and Final Examinations (May/June). These exams are comprehensive reviews of the subject matter covered during the term. Exam schedules will be posted on the homework website, giving the student time to prepare for exams. Students need to be involved in on-going preparation throughout the year. Results of the examinations are factored in the grade averages at the end of the second and fourth quarters.

## ACADEMIC POLICIES

### PowerSchool

Good schooling depends on good communication. The school uses PowerSchool, an online grade book to track students' progress. Parents will be given a password which will enable them to access their child's grades. One of the advantages of having this program is that parents and students have ready access to their grades.

Communication among parent, student and teacher is both timely and efficient. As a result, if there is an area of deficiency, than appropriate steps can be taken to make improvements.

It is the parent's responsibility to check their child's grades regularly. Parents should keep abreast of their child's academic progress and work with their child and the faculty to promote academic excellence. Since PowerSchool provides parents daily access to their child's progress, interim progress reports will not be issued.

Report cards can be viewed quarterly for students in grade 1 to 8. Kindergarten children have three formal reporting times, beginning in January. Parent-Teacher conferences are held at the end of the first and second quarters.

### Grading System

The following grading was determined by the Diocese of Metuchen Office of Schools and implemented by all schools in 2013 and amended in 2016.

#### Kindergarten

C	Consistently observed
S	Sometimes observe
X	Practice and Support Needed
N/A	Not assessed during this marking period

#### Grades 1 and 2 - Major and Ancillary Subjects

O	Outstanding
VG	Very Good
G	Good
S	Satisfactory
N	Needs Improvement
U	Unsatisfactory

#### Grades 3 through 8 – Major and Ancillary Subjects

A+	97-100	C+	80-84
A	93-96	C	75-79
B+	89-92	D	70-74
B	85-88	F	69 and below

### Honor Roll

Students in grades 5-8 are recognized each quarter for academic achievement. The Honor Roll is determined by Grade Point Average (GPA). The breakdown is as follows:

89% to 92.9% = Honors

93% to 96.9% = High Honors

97% or higher = Principal's List

Furthermore, a student must be in good standing behaviorally with no X's in the first six areas of the Personal and Social Growth section on his/her report card.

## **Homework**

Students are expected to do their own homework. Home assignments supplement and reinforce the daily work in the classroom as well as developing life skill habits and techniques of independent study.

Parents play an important part in their child's home study. It is expected that parents:

- cooperate with the school in making home study effective by providing suitable conditions (workspace, light, supplies, etc.)
- encourage their child, but avoid undue pressure

Students are expected to complete all assignments in a clear, accurate and intelligent manner. Parents are requested to check the work their child is doing at home. This is a positive way to keep abreast of what is being taught. Some assignments are long-range and require planned study for their completion.

Each student must come to realize that homework is her/his responsibility. The primary source for all homework assignments is the assignment notebook. Students are to use the student planner daily to write down their homework assignments. Parents should regularly check the planner as well as the class website [www.stmatthias.info](http://www.stmatthias.info). The website is meant for points of clarification.

The following is a minimum amount of time for daily assignments.

Grades 1-2: 20-30 minutes

Grades 3-5: 30-60 minutes

Grades 6-8: 60-90 minutes

When absence is necessary, it is the responsibility of the parent/student to find out from the teacher/teachers what assignments and assessments have been missed during the absence. The teacher's requirements must be met and it is the student's and parent's responsibility to ensure that students make up all the work missed while away.

## **Forgotten Materials**

Students need to develop personal responsibility. Any forgotten materials such as textbooks, homework/projects, forms, or gym attire will not be delivered to students during the school day. The only exception will be eyeglasses, lunches, or lunch money. A student may return to the classroom after dismissal for a forgotten item until 3 PM on regular dismissal days and until 1 PM on early dismissal days.

## **Promotion / Retention**

A student advancing to the next grade is based on a number of factors. This includes daily performance, test results, recommendations of teachers, and the student's ability to complete work successfully on a more advanced level. Students must pass all major subjects (minimum 70% average) in order to be promoted to the next grade.

Retention should be very rare, and only when it is evident that the student will benefit from repeating the year. At the end of the first marking period, the parent/guardian is informed of the student's academic, social and emotional progress. At the parent-teacher conference, concerns and action steps will be discussed and documented. By the end of the second marking period, the teacher will contact the parent/guardian of a student who continues to experience difficulty to discuss the possibility of support services and/or retention.

Before the end of the third marking period, the teacher(s) will schedule a follow-up meeting with the parent/guardian. A decision will be made about retention in consultation with the Vice Principal and Principal.

A student who has a failing average in a major subject at the end of the year must attend summer school and/or receive tutoring approved by the administration in order to earn a passing grade. The paperwork and grade must be submitted to the school office before the student is admitted to the next grade.

A student who fails two or more major subjects for the year will not be promoted to the next grade.

Eighth grade students must pass all subjects in order to receive a diploma at graduation. If the student fails one

subject, s/he will receive a diploma only after successfully completing the subject in summer school. In this circumstance, the student may not participate in graduation activities.

### **Presidential Award**

To earn a Presidential Award at graduation, a student must have attained a composite score of the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile on the Iowa Standardized Test from either grade 6 or 7 and a cumulative average of 93% in grades 6 and 7, as well as the first semester of 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

### **Graduation**

St. Matthias School is an integral part of the Catholic Community of St. Matthias. The Community is vested in our school's success and offers immeasurable support to each student. It is only fitting that we join, as a community, in prayer at Sunday Mass. All students are expected to gather for the celebration of the Baccalaureate Mass. Please contact the Principal or Vice Principal if there is a conflict.

### **Physical Education**

All students are required to participate in weekly Physical Education classes. The required gym wear is to be worn for all PE classes. Should a student need to be excused from a class, a written request from the parent/guardian stating the reason must be presented to the teacher. Notes are filed for a one-year period. To be excused from two or more classes a note from the physician stating the reason is required. Students who are unprepared for gym class will have the "lack of preparation" reflected in their grade. Students excused for injury are also not permitted to participate in recess activities.

### **Participation in Co-Curricular Programs**

The school offers many co-curricular activities throughout the school year. Students must be in satisfactory standing academically and/or behaviorally to participate. A student who has an X in the first six areas of Personal and Social Growth is not behaviorally in good standing. Students' progress will be reviewed each quarter and at mid quarter. If the student is not in good standing at the time of review, the student will be placed on probation and be expected to make immediate improvement. Lack of positive progress in academics and/or behavior, will result in suspension from co-curricular activities until the end of the quarter or at mid quarter. The administration will notify coaches and moderators of the suspension. Furthermore, when a student's behavior is grievous to self and/or others, s/he will be immediately suspended from participating in all co-curricular activities until the time established by the school administration.

If a student is absent from school because of illness or disciplinary action, s/he will not be permitted to participate in any school-related or co-curricular event (social or athletic), that afternoon or evening. If a student is absent from school for a reason other than illness or disciplinary action, the school reserves the right to make an individual judgment regarding same day co-curricular and athletic participation.

### **Ethical Use of Technology Policy**

The purpose of school-provided technology, including Internet access and electronic mail, is to facilitate legitimate educational endeavors. Such resources are used to enrich and enhance the learning experience and environment for students. Use of these resources must always be in conformity with the religious mission of the school and the law. No student is permitted to use technology to access or send inappropriate information or materials.

In agreeing to the articles in this Handbook, parents acknowledge they have read the following policies below on technology and have discussed them with their children and know that they are bound by the policies. The policy covers every grade level.

If the student does not adhere to these policies, the student could lose computer privileges or have these privileges restricted. If deemed necessary, the student could also be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

## Technology Policies

- the student will use the school's technological resources for educational purposes, and only under adult supervision
- students are prepared for class by having their student login and password
- the student will not disclose to other students their assigned personal login and password, nor use any other person's login and password
- the student will exercise care and respect in the use of all school computer hardware and software
- the students will not reveal addresses or phone numbers, photographs or other personal information to individuals whom they contact through the school's technological resources
- any attempt to circumvent system security, guess passwords, or in any way gain access to secured resources is forbidden
- the student will make responsible use of school supplies such as paper, electronic media, printer ink and toner
- no unauthorized student will alter, install, modify, upgrade, repair or remove any school software or hardware, including but not limited to computers, interface cards, monitors, printers, scanners, modems, wiring or cabling, mouse or other accessories
- students must not make deliberate attempts to disrupt computer systems or destroy data by spreading computer viruses or by other means - these actions are illegal
- students who damage any hardware or software will be responsible for replacing the damaged articles at their own expense
- the student will not develop, acquire, display or transmit any material by electronic means or hardcopy that is considered by the school policy as obscene, racist, abusive, degrading, or demonic. Intolerance, prejudice, harassment, or insult toward any individual or group will not be tolerated
- the student will not trespass in another's folders, sub-directories, work or files
- the student will not use school technological resources to support candidates for public or elected office, nor use the network for commercial purposes
- the student will not violate any copyright laws regarding print, electronic or visual information
- students must not plagiarize works they find on the Internet. Plagiarism is taking the ideas or writing of another and presenting them as if they were one's own
- the student will not meet in person any individual whom s/he may contact through the school's technological resources without first informing the adult supervisor in charge, the school administration, and the child's parents, or legal guardian
- students will report any message received through the school's technological resources which makes them nervous or uncomfortable to the teacher in charge and the school administration
- students cannot access their own email accounts while on the Internet
- school issued iPads and/or electronic equipment are not to leave the school building for any reason since they are for in school use only

- the teacher has the right to monitor all student computer activity without prior notice to the user
- the school may impose additional computer/technology rules and restrictions at any time
- use of the school's computer resources requires that the student and his/her parents(s)/guardian(s) sign the Ethical Use of Technology Policy Agreement from of the Diocese of Metuchen

## **Library Policy**

The Library provides great resources that are shared among students and faculty. The following is a list of policies to be followed by students:

- all materials taken from the library must be checked out at the circulation desk
- all library materials are due one week after check out unless otherwise noted by the Librarian
- library materials may be renewed up to two times as long as there are no holds placed on them, and students must have the material(s) they wish to renew in hand at the circulation desk in order to renew
- if the student has overdue library material, s/he may not check out any other library materials until the outstanding library materials are returned
- when library materials are overdue, parents may receive library system generated notification via email or hardcopy as a reminder that the material needs to be returned
- when a book is lost, the student will be charged for material replacement
- if the book is found and returned within 90 days after payment is made, the payment will be refunded

## **Academic Records**

A parent/guardian has the right to view her/his student's official academic record. A parent must call the school to request an appointment with the Principal to review a child's records.

Records attached to publicly funded services provided through the Educational Services Commission of New Jersey such as Child Study Team Reviews, Comp Ed and Speech are the property of the Commission. A parent who wishes to examine or procure additional copies of these records must apply to the Commission. It is the parent's responsibility to contact the Commission and request that their child's ISP records be sent to a new school.

## **Transcripts/Transfers**

Transcripts of academic and health records are not given directly to the parent/guardian in the event of a transfer. A request for transfer must be submitted in writing by a parent/guardian. Transcripts will be sent directly from school to school when the sending school receives an official written request from the receiving school. If the parent/guardian does not submit a request for transfer that includes an authorization to send a transcript, the receiving school must secure permission from the parent/guardian to request the transcripts from the sending school.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

On occasion, the school will sponsor and conduct field trips for the educational/cultural enrichment of the students. Students need a signed permission slip in order to participate in a field trip. Parents will be informed of the cost, transportation arrangements and all pertinent details. All students shall be accompanied by the teachers and additional adult chaperones. Field trips are a school sponsored activity and all students are expected to participate. These trips are not optional.

### **School Trips – Re: MEDICATION**

If a student requires medication, the following procedure will be applied:

Students in grades 3-8 can self-carry if proper documentation on record pertains to emergency medication only (e.g.

Asthma inhalers, EPI-pens).

Students in grades PreK through 2<sup>nd</sup> with emergency medications prescribed to be taken during the usual school day must be accompanied by a parent.

## **CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT**

Character development enables the students to handle problems in a peaceful and Christ-like manner. We encourage our students to use “I messages” when conflicts arise. We have established and continue to work on the pillars of respect, responsibility, caring, honest, and patience. We use these pillars as a bridge to tolerance both for ourselves and others. As a faith-filled community we want the students to see the face of Christ in everyone.

Parents are expected to:

- guide their child in developing these positive character traits and skills for maintaining positive relations
- listen objectively to hear what their child is saying
- encourage their child to stand up for her/himself and tell the other person to stop teasing, calling names or excluding the child
- help their children know when to walk away and still feel good about themselves
- help their child differentiate between unkind words or inappropriate actions that hurt their feelings

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Home and School will work together to help students to learn and live the qualities of responsible behavior and the elements of good citizenship. Everything we do is based on our Mission Statement, “We strive to engage each student spiritually and academically in a Christ-centered environment, to prepare them to live as disciples and citizens.” A spirit of Christ-like charity, respect for authority and mutual cooperation are essential elements of the learning environment at the school. Students are expected to act with courtesy and respect toward one another, toward all members of the faculty and staff, and toward school property. Students must take seriously their obligation to develop lifetime habits of self-control and concern for the well-being of others.

Saint Matthias School strives to provide a safe, supportive, and respectful environment so that learning occurs freely. Improper conduct including threats, intimidation, hostility, unwanted verbal or physical contact, verbal or written derogatory or discriminatory statements, and other inappropriate behaviors are not conducive to the educational and Christian mission of the school and will not be tolerated. The school will determine what behaviors are inappropriate. The Code of Conduct applies during school hours or anytime while on school grounds, buses, and during any school sponsored event either on school grounds or elsewhere.

A student who chooses to disrupt the good order of the school or to violate a policy or regulation must accept the consequences of those choices. Accountability for uncooperative, disruptive or unsafe behavior may take any of the following forms: misconduct referrals or warnings, appropriate consequences, denial of privileges, detention, counseling, in-school suspension, out- of- school suspension, or expulsion.

Appropriate discipline is within the discretion of the administration following the guidelines of the Diocese of Metuchen. The teacher who is immediately and primarily responsible for the discipline in a particular situation, such as classroom, playground, etc., handles ordinary disciplinary infractions. This discipline requires a student-teacher understanding and appropriate remediation. Discipline problems that cannot be solved between the student, parents and teacher, will be referred to the Vice Principal. The Vice Principal confers with the student, teacher and parent then takes action in accordance with her/his judgment. The actions may include a second parent conference, after school detention (upon parent notification), suspension from co-curricular activities, or similar recommended action.

While suspended, a student will not attend classes or co-curricular activities and will complete required class assignments. The students will return to school only upon parent interview with the teacher, Vice Principal, and or Principal.

NOTE: The discipline code applies to students and parents/guardians, both in school and at school-sponsored events, as well as in the school/parish community and outside the school/parish community where the behavior is contrary to Catholic teachings or could bring disrepute or embarrassment to Saint Matthias School. Civil authorities will be called when warranted.

## **Infractions to the Code of Conduct**

### **Infractions**

The following breaches of conduct may result in a warning, denial of privileges, time-out/reflection or detention:

- Disturbing the privacy of another's desk
- Failure to return a signed detention slip
- Gum chewing/eating in class
- Non-compliance with rules, procedures, or school dress code

### **Serious Infractions**

Serious infraction to the Code of Conduct may result in an immediate detention, suspension, or expulsion:

- Abusive or obscene language or gestures
- Bullying and harassment
- Cheating/plagiarism
- Disrespect – any improper attitude displayed towards a teacher, staff member, volunteer, parent administrator or fellow student
- Forgery – handing in any paper signed by anyone other than a parent or guardian or handing in a paper written by someone else
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Leaving class, area of supervision and/or school property during school or school-sponsored event without permission
- Possession of any item which may present danger to others
- Possession and/or use of drugs, tobacco or alcoholic beverages on school property, buses, or at any school sponsored event
- Stealing
- Triggering false alarms
- Vandalism – damaging any property belonging to the school, church, or another individual
- Violating the Technology Acceptable Use Policy
- Violent behavior – any fighting or behavior that may cause physical injury

The possession of weapons or explosive/destructive devices is an extremely serious offense which will be grounds for immediate expulsion and possible criminal prosecution. Weapons or explosive/destructive devices of any kind are prohibited on school grounds, school transportation, or during any school activities. A student who accidentally brings to school any item that could be considered dangerous or unacceptable (i.e. plastic knife, play gun, etc.) must at its finding immediately turn it in to the teacher who will take the item to the office until a parent can retrieve it.

Weapons will be defined in a very broad sense. The final determination as to what constitutes a weapon or explosive/destructive device shall rest with the administration. Seizures of weapons and explosive/destructive devices shall be immediately reported and turned over to the Franklin Township Police Department and reported to the Diocesan Bureau of Child Protection.

## **Bullying and Harassment**

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both students who are bullied and those who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

### **An Imbalance of Power**

Children who bully use their power-such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.

### **Repetition**

Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

There are three types of bullying:

- A) Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying includes teasing, name-calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting, threatening to cause harm.
- B) Social bullying, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes leaving someone out on purpose, telling other children not to be friends with someone, spreading rumors about someone, or embarrassing someone in public.
- C) Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes: Hitting/kicking/pinching, spitting, tripping/pushing, taking or breaking someone's things, making mean or rude hand gestures.

### **Procedure for Bullying and Harassment**

1. Students will meet with the Vice Principal and teacher to discuss the behavior. Parents of students involved will be contacted immediately. A written report from the students involved will be required by the school administration. Parent/Student meeting with each family involved will be arranged by the school. If it is determined to be a case of bullying, the student (bully) will be required to make amends for her/his actions and accept appropriate consequences. Parents will be required to work on improving and changing the behavior of their child. Formal written documentation will be kept on file in the Vice Principal's office for the entire time the student (bully) remains in the school.
2. Parents of the victim will be informed of their right to file a formal police report. Ongoing counseling of the bully will be required as well as a formal notice from the school counselor that the bully is attending sessions. The bully will receive a two-day at home suspension.
3. If at any time the same behavior persists with the same victim or another victim, a second parent meeting will be held with the administration. The Diocesan Representative from the Office of Child and Youth Protection will be contacted.
4. If the same behavior persists, the complaint will be handed over to the Franklin Township Police Department. The bully will be expelled from the school.

### **Conflict vs. Bullying**

Conflict is different than bullying. Not all disagreements and fights are bullying. Conflict is a normal part of human interaction and arises frequently in our day to day lives. Part of learning to be independent and grown up is learning how to deal with and respond appropriately to conflict at home, at school, and in your community. Recognizing the difference between conflict and bullying will help students, parents and teachers know how to respond.

**Conflict is:**

- A disagreement
- All parties have equal power to solve the problem
- All parties have an equal interest in the outcome

- All parties are of relatively equal size, age or status
- A conflict can be resolved by talking or working things out together or with help from an adult.

### **Bullying is:**

- Not a disagreement
- A repeated form of mistreatment where the victim cannot defend him/herself
- An imbalance of power – usually one person is either bigger or older than the other or has a higher social standing (is more popular) and uses this against the other person
- Usually involves repeated acts of harassment, harm or humiliation

### Differences in Addressing Conflict and Bullying

Conflict is an important part of growing up but bullying is not. Conflict teaches kids how to give and take, how to come to an agreement and how to solve problems. When it comes to conflict, it's good for kids to learn conflict resolution and resiliency skills. These skills promote listening and working together to come to an agreement or plan to move forward. Conflict resolution works based on the assumption that both people are in part responsible for the current problem and need to work it out. In this situation, both kids make compromises and the conflict is resolved.

Bullying is different. It is about the bully making a choice to intentionally hurt another person. There is nothing to work out. When bullying occurs, the bully is fully responsible for the situation. And the bully bears all the responsibility for change. Bullies usually do not negotiate with others. They want power and they blame others for their actions. Even if an adult can get them to apologize, bullies will often retaliate when no one else is around. As a result, it is crucial to recognize the difference between conflict and bullying.

### **Sexting Policy**

**The mission of all Catholic schools is to bring students closer to Jesus Christ by teaching and living the gospel message in an environment where the unique value of each person is recognized, protected and respected. Certainly, issues of morality demand a strong partnership between the school and the family to protect students from dangers they do not foresee. The Catholic Church believes and teaches that human bodies are gifts from God and temples of the Holy Spirit. The Church defines chastity as “the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being.” (CCC2337)**

**Educators, when teaching the first, sixth, eighth, and ninth commandments, are called upon to include the use of social media as a significant part of the instruction they give. As our schools partner with families to model Catholic Social Teachings emphasizing the dignity of the human person takes on a new and different meaning while discussing sexting and related issues. In teaching our children about human sexuality within the framework of God’s plan, we provide opportunities for moral decision making based on solid Catholic teachings.**

**The Diocese of Metuchen prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation or exploitation of all students. Each school must insure a safe environment that reflects the gospel and is conducive to student learning. With more students having access to phones and social media accounts, it is becoming easier for them to send and receive explicit messages and images. All students are expected to refrain from any and all conduct involving sexting. They are to respect the dignity of others and of themselves at all times. Sexting shall not be tolerated on school property, on the school bus, at any school sponsored function or off school grounds.**

In complying with this Policy, the following must be considered:

- Sexting is the production, possession or dissemination of sexual materials, including sexually suggestive text messages, nude/semi-nude photographs, or videos of themselves or others via cellular telephone or the internet by students on school property or at any school sponsored function. Sexting does not fuel committed, eternal love as God desires for us. It stands in opposition to God’s plan for us, and for that reason it is wrong.

- Pornography consists in removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties. It offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other. It does grave injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others. It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world. It is a grave offense. (CCC 2354)
- Creating or sharing explicit images of a child is illegal, even if the person doing it is a child. A young person is breaking the law when they take an explicit photo or video of themselves or a friend; share an explicit image or video of a child, even if it is shared between children of the same age; or, possess, download or store an explicit image or video of a child, even if the child gave his/her permission for it to be created. Images covered under the law include, but are not limited to, naked pictures, photos of intimate body parts, including topless photos of girls, any sex act and any sexually suggestive image, which includes photos of a person in undergarments/underwear. If it is found that a child under the age of 18 is in possession of any of these, has been sending them or taking these types of photos, the police can record it as a crime and the offender may be prosecuted.

In complying with the Policy, the following procedures must be observed:

- All reported incidents of sexting shall be dealt with immediately.
- The school will take immediate measures to protect the victim and others involved in the incident.
- Report to the Diocese of Metuchen Diocesan Response Officer
- Report immediately to the Office of Schools, either the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent
- Report immediately to the local Police Department.
- Secure all cell phones, computers or other electronic devices that may contain or have disseminated sexual materials, including sexually suggestive text messages and nude or semi-nude photographs. Cell phones should be placed in Airplane mode to preserve the evidence.
- Secure all potential witnesses.
- Contact the parents of all students involved in the reported incident.
- Students involved in possession or transmission of inappropriate photos on their cell phones or other electronic devices may face some or all of the listed consequences:
  1. Temporary removal from the classroom
  2. In-school or out-of-school suspension
  3. Parent conference
  4. Deprivation of privileges
  5. Suspension from sports participation
  6. Removal from After-School programs
  7. Counseling
  8. Therapy
  9. Expulsion

### **Student Reporting System**

**The Diocese of Metuchen has required a system for students to use in the schools that will enable them to anonymously report to the administration incidents of: bullying, harassment, cyberbullying, violence, threats, weapons possession, alcohol or drug related issues, hazing, discrimination, ethics violations such as cheating or plagiarism, or other harmful or inappropriate conduct.**

In complying with this Policy, the following Procedures shall be observed:

- StopIt is the mobile and web reporting tool selected by the Diocese of Metuchen to be implemented in each school.
- Administrators are to establish protocols on monitoring the system and responding to the information received.

## **Procedure for Detention, Suspension, Expulsion**

### **Detention**

Parents/guardians will receive notification of detention in writing the day it is issued. The notification must be signed and returned the next day to the teacher issuing the detention. A parent/guardian's signature indicates that the parent/guardian is aware that the detention has been assigned and will make the necessary arrangements to comply. The Vice Principal will determine when and where the detention will be held.

### **Suspension**

The Principal and/or Vice Principal will discuss the seriousness of the infraction that leads to the suspension with the student and the parent/guardian. Where possible, a corrective program will be assigned to help the suspended student make better choices. Cooperation from the parent/guardian is expected.

Parents/guardians will be informed of the suspension immediately by telephone and in writing as soon as possible. The type of suspension (in-school or out-of-school) will be determined by the administration. Parents/guardians will meet with the administration following a suspension. A student may not be readmitted before a parental meeting has occurred and any other conditions for re-admittance have been satisfied. Parent/guardians and student will sign an agreement to signify their understanding of the suspension conditions for re-admittance, and the assumption of responsibility for future behavior. This document, along with notification of the suspension, will be kept in a confidential file. If necessary, the student will be referred to counseling.

### **Expulsion**

Expulsion from St. Matthias School can be recommended for grave academic or behavioral concerns, repeated suspensions, and/or single action deemed most serious by the Principal in consultation with the Vice Principal. In all disciplinary situations, the Principal is the final recourse and may waive all disciplinary regulation for any reasonable just cause at her/his discretion.

Saint Matthias School does not take the dismissal of students lightly. However, if it is determined that after remediation the students' conduct is still in conflict with the school's Mission, the student will be dismissed.

In certain instances a conduct breach may warrant immediate dismissal. The school reserves the right to dismiss any student at any time if the school determines the conduct of the student or parent/guardian to be inconsistent with school policy, the good of the school community, and Catholic teachings.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

A registered fulltime School Nurse is provided to Saint Matthias School by the Educational Services Commission of New Jersey. The Nurse is responsible for checking height, weight, hearing, and vision of every child and for making referrals to parents when problems are found. All health records are maintained by the Nurse. Care provided in the school is limited to first aid in accidents or illness until the parents can be reached to take the student home, to the doctor, or to the hospital. In an emergency, the Nurse will arrange to have the student transported to the hospital.

Health services provided by the school include the following:

- height/weight screening (grades K-8)
- hearing screening (grades K-4, 6 & 8)
- scoliosis screening (grades 5 & 7)
- vision screening (grades K-2, 4, 6 & 8)
- blood pressure screening (grades K-8)

If your child has a specific medical condition/program, please notify the homeroom teacher and the Nurse of the problem. Medic-Alert bracelets are strongly recommended for any child with a medical issue. Emergency cards are kept on file for each student. Please be sure the school has an up-to-date emergency number on file in case of an emergency involving your child.

## **Physical Examinations**

The NJ Department of Health requires that all new students and those entering Kindergarten submit documentation of an up-to-date physical examination.

## **Immunization Requirements**

**Immunizations are required in the Diocese of Metuchen and students cannot be present in a school in the Diocese unless immunized.**

In complying with this Policy, the following Procedures will be observed:

- Schools will comply with and enforce Chapter 14 of the *New Jersey Sanitary Code, Immunization of Pupils in Schools*.
- Chicken Pox immunization is required for admittance to a Catholic school in the Diocese of Metuchen. [NJAC 8:57-4.4(b) allows religious and affiliated schools to grant or withhold enrollment to non-immunized students without challenge by a secular health authority.]

A student shall not be required to have any immunizations which are medically contraindicated.

- A written statement must be provided by the child's physician (M.D. or D.O.), who is duly registered and licensed to practice medicine in the United States. The statement must declare that the required vaccine is injurious to the child's health or poses a significant risk to the health and well-being of the child.
- The exemption statement is valid for only one academic year from the date signed by the physician; it must be submitted to the principal prior to the child attending school. It will be reviewed annually.

Catholic Schools will grant religious exemptions from immunization if the parents state that it is a matter of conscience for them.

- Requests for religious exemptions which are not based on religious beliefs and practices shall be denied. The New Jersey legislation and regulations have never recognized nor permitted philosophical or moral objections as reasons for securing a religious exemption. Except for medical and religious exemptions, all children are expected to comply with the school immunization regulations.
- A parent/guardian may request a religious exemption to the New Jersey mandatory immunization regulations by submitting a written statement to the school which explains how the administration of immunizing agents conflicts with the student's exercise of religious tenets and practices. The pastor will make the final determination on the validity of the request.
- The request for a religious exemption from immunization will be honored as long as the language mentions the specific religious belief (normally the conscience of the parent) in the letter.
- Non-immunized students may be excluded from the school, for their own protection, if there is an epidemic situation. The exclusion will be based on the judgement of the principal.
- Non-immunized students may be excluded from the school if there are concerns about the safety of the pregnancy of a teacher or health issues of staff members.

Principals who have questions about specific required immunizations should call the local Department of Health or the local Board of Education offices for details and updates.

## Medication

If it is absolutely essential that a student receive medication while under school supervision, the following procedures apply:

- A parent/guardian may come to school and personally administer the medication

If this arrangement is not possible, the school nurse or her/his designee will administer the medication under the following conditions:

- The medication must be given to the School Nurse by the parent/guardian
- The medication must be in the original pharmacy labeled container and the parent/guardian and the student's physician must complete and sign an "Authorization to Administer Medication in School" form. This form is available from the School Nurse.

For the purpose of this policy, "medication" means any prescription drug or prescribed over-the-counter medicine or nutritional supplement and includes, but is not limited to, aspirin, cough drops, lip balm or any ointments, lotions, etc.

Students will be permitted to self-administer medication only for life threatening illnesses or conditions. The parent/guardian must schedule a conference with the School Nurse to discuss in detail the need for the medication. The parent/guardian and the student's physician must complete and sign as "Authorization for Self-Administration of Medication in School" form. This form is available from the School Nurse.

Children are not permitted to carry any medicine, even aspirin, and take it themselves or give it to others. **All medicines must be kept in the school health office.**

## Illness and Injury

If a child becomes ill or injured, every effort will be made to notify parents immediately. The child will remain in the health office until the parent/guardian arrives to pick up the child. It is expected that the child will be picked up as soon as possible. Sick children must be picked up at school via the procedures noted on the emergency form. **Please do not send your child to school if you believe s/he is not well.** This often necessitates our calling the parent for pick up shortly after the child arrives at school. **CHILDREN MUST BE FEVER-FREE FOR 24 HOURS WITHOUT FEVER REDUCING MEDICATION BEFORE RETURNING TO SCHOOL.** Please use this same guideline regarding vomiting and diarrhea.

## Food Choices and Food Allergies

In order to maintain optimal health of the student, lunch and snack choices must be healthy and nutritious. Candies, soda, and fast food of any kind are not permitted.

If your child has food allergies, it is the parents' responsibility to provide a snack. Snacks should also be sent in with the student when birthdays are celebrated in class.

When it comes to food allergies, student safety is the primary concern for all faculty and support staff at Saint Matthias School. There are two classifications in the Diocese pertaining to allergies: peanut-free and peanut-safe. "Peanut free" means that no snacks of any kind would be permissible because it poses a health hazard to one or more students.

The designation for our school is "peanut safe". This means that snacks sent in for birthday parties, holiday parties, or any other time when food is shared with other students are allowed to come into the classroom with the following provisions:

- Any student that has an allergy will be noted on the "A-Typical List". The Nurse compiles this list which is given to the teachers who are responsible for this child.

- Any product, liquid or solid, that does not clearly have a label on the container stating all the ingredients as well as how and where the product was made will not be permitted in the school.
- All the ingredients contained in the product must be labeled and clearly identified.

Any product made at home, regardless if there is a label or not, will not be permitted in the school. There are two reasons for this policy: first, there is no guarantee if the home-made product was produced in a peanut-safe environment; and second there may be ingredients in the product that can potentially cause an allergic reaction that was not written on the label.

When celebrating a birthday or special event, it is always best to provide a **HEALTHY SNACK** or a **NON-FOOD ITEM** (like a pen, pencil, or other school supply) as an alternative to food.

## **DRESS CODE**

We encourage students to take pride in their appearance and uniform, since they are a reflection of the Community of Saint Matthias. Neatness and cleanliness in personal attire are part of a child's education and the responsibility of the parents. When a child looks and feels good, s/he acts and works accordingly. If a situation arises where a student will not be in full uniform, parents are asked to communicate this by way of a note to the homeroom teacher. Unexcused violation of the dress code will result in parent notification and detention.

### **Uniform**

For students in K-8, uniforms are purchased from FlynnO'Hara Company (1-800-441-4122). Substitutions are not permitted. Uniforms may be ordered online or purchased at a FOH store. Unless excused by the Principal, students wear uniforms on all school days. The prescribed uniform will be worn at all times. Uniform details and dress code can be found on the school website: [www.stmatthias.info](http://www.stmatthias.info)

**PLEASE NOTE:** Shorts may be worn from September 1 to October 31; and from April 15 to the end of school year. Jumpers, skorts, walking shorts, and gym shorts should be worn slightly above the knee (no shorter than 3 inches above the knee). This same policy is in effect on dress-down days and pertains to any item of clothing worn to school on these days.

### **Gym Wear**

Students must wear sneakers that fit securely. Students are to wear the SMS gray t-shirt, SMS gym sweatshirt, SMS gym sweatpants with black or white crew socks during PE. Spiritwear shirts may be worn. The SMS dark green gym shorts may be worn when summer uniform is in effect.

### **Shoes**

Shoes are to be sturdy oxfords or flats with straps. Brown, black, dark green or tan are acceptable colors. The shoes are to have rubber soles. Canvas flats, sandals, clogs, ballet-type, boots, sneakers, moccasins or embellished shoes are not compliant with the dress code. Other styles and colors of footwear are not permissible.

### **Hair**

Student's hair must be clean, neatly groomed and her/his natural color. A neat hairstyle of reasonable length; bangs at or above the eyebrows for both girls and boys and above the collar in back for the boys is required. No eccentric styles, shavings, colorings, cuts, tails, etc. are permitted. Hair violations should be corrected immediately. Students may not return to school until hair violations have been corrected. Girls may wear headbands and hair fasteners, however, the headbands may not have fabric tails or feathers and the hair fasteners must be neat and age appropriate.

### **Jewelry/Cosmetics**

A wristwatch, religious bracelet, a ring, post earrings or hoops no bigger than dimes (one in each ear) and a necklace with a religious medal/cross may be worn. Long or dangling earrings are in violation of the dress code. Boys are not permitted to wear earrings. Students are not permitted to wear nail polish or make-up. Body spray and perfume are not to be brought to school.

## **SAFETY DRILLS**

The safety and welfare of students and staff are the primary concern of the school. Our school's Crisis Management Plan complies with both Diocesan policy and New Jersey Statute 18A:41-1. This law states that every school have at least one fire drill and one school security drill each month within school hours. The objective of these drills is to ensure the safety of our children in case of an actual emergency. Fire equipment is inspected in accordance with state law requirements.

## **STUDENT ACCIDENT INSURANCE**

The school provides an insurance program for all children. This plan protects the child during school hours and during participation in school activities. This insurance is not the primary plan but is used along with the family insurance plan.

## **SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

New Jersey State law requires that any person who has reasonable cause to believe that a child may have been subjected to abuse or neglect must make a report to the New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency.

## **PHOTO RELEASE INFORMATION**

Saint Matthias School uses multiple sources, such as media, website and yearbook to promote its name and image. Parents are asked permission to photograph or interview their child by signing a "Waiver for Photo Release Form" at the beginning of each school year.

## **ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The school's Asbestos Management Plan is on file in the parish office as required by the federal Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA). This document is available for examination upon request.

## **BEFORE SCHOOL PROGRAM (BSP) / AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM (ASP)**

In an effort to respond to the needs of parents and students, the school offers two extended day programs: the Before School program (BSP) and the After School Program (ASP).

The Before School Program (BSP) is available to parents from 6:45am-7:45am for grades PreK through Grade 8. BSP will not be held on delayed opening days. It is open to all students.

The After School Program serves school families with children in PreK through Grade 8 from 2:30pm until 6:00pm. ASP does not operate on emergency closing days.

Specific fees are charged for the use of both programs. Late fees are incurred when payments are past due or when children are picked up past 6:00pm.

All families using the program must have on file a BSP/ASP Emergency Information Form and a Pick-Up Authorization Form. They are available on the school website and should be kept updated throughout the year, as needed. All children must be signed out by an individual specifically named on the Pick-Up Authorization Form.

Children will not be released to anyone not authorized in writing by the parents.

If a parent/guardian needs to reach the BSP or the ASP, please call: (908-745-1844). A detailed BSP/ASP Handbook is available online at the SMS website.

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE SCHOOL HANDBOOK**

The school administration reserves the right in writing to amend this parent/student handbook. Parents/guardians will be notified if changes are made.