

St. Matthias School Preschool

Pre-Kindergarten 3 & 4



Handbook 2019-2020

Saint Matthias School

170 JFK Boulevard
Somerset, NJ 08873
Phone: 732-828-1402

Three and Four Year Old Pre-Kindergarten

Administrator

Rev. Abraham Orapankal

Principal

Ms. Eileen Brett

Vice Principal

Mr. Joseph Gidaro

Teachers

Mrs. Christine Taylor Pre-K 4
Mrs. Ellie Miller Pre-K 4 Assistant
Mrs. Jessica Tharp Pre-K 3
Mrs. Angela Williams Pre-K 3 Assistant

UNITY

I dreamed I stood in a studio
And watched two sculptors there.
The clay they used was a young child's mind,
And they fashioned it with care.
One was a teacher; the tools he used
Were books and music and art.
One was a parent with a guiding hand
And a gentle, loving heart.
Day after day the teacher toiled
With touch that was deft and sure.
While the parent labored by his side
And polished and smoothed it o'er.
And when at last their task was done,
They were proud of what they had wrought,
For the things they had molded into the child
Could neither be sold nor bought.
And each agreed he would have failed
If he had worked alone,
For behind the parent stood the school
And behind the teacher, the home.

WELCOME!

Saint Matthias Pre-Kindergarten is located in Somerset, New Jersey. Our early childhood programs are for children age three/four (before Oct.31). We are pleased to offer a high quality program with a skilled teaching staff. Our classroom teachers are degreed and are experienced in early childhood education. Qualified teacher assistants are present each day in the classrooms. Our program provides an up-to-date, imaginative and stimulating learning environment for your child in a well-equipped, child-centered school setting. The religious atmosphere provides value-guided interaction and modeling for the younger child. Our early childhood program is designed to develop children's knowledge and skills in all developmental areas -- physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual.

Our first and most important goal at Saint Matthias is for your child to feel good about him/her self and secure within our school environment. This will be the first school experience for many of the children. In the beginning of the year, we will concentrate on helping the children get comfortable with their new environment, make new friends, and learn a new routine.

Although the schedules and ability levels will vary, each class will spend part of their day in supervised free choice (learning centers) time. This fosters independence in children, as they are able to choose from many centers. The centers will vary according to ability level, and the weekly theme, and includes: art, home living, blocks, easel, manipulative, writing center, puzzles, books, listening centers, and games. These learning centers are fun for the children and provide one on one contact with the teacher as it reinforces specific skills.

Another important part of each day will be spent in large group activities. This time will include stories, finger plays, songs, movement activities, listening games, calendar activities, as well as lessons on specific topics or themes. Emphasis will be on balancing activities to help the child's active interest. Large motor time with physical activities will be provided either indoor or outside.

We are excited about a new school year and are looking forward to meeting our new students.

Thank you for choosing Saint Matthias School.

Saint Matthias Pre-Kindergarten

School Mission Statement

“Saint Matthias School, in partnership with the Catholic Community of Saint Matthias and our school families, 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.”

Philosophy

At Saint Matthias Pre-Kindergarten we encourage and support the development of each child. It is our goal to provide an atmosphere that stimulates Christian attitudes and values. We also believe it is important to help children have fun as they play, since play is a young child's natural way of working and learning. The overall development (religious, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical) of the child is encouraged for each individual. Development of the child's positive self-image is also of prime importance in our program.

Focus

Religious - To assist parents in guiding children in Christian faith formation and values which reflect the Gospel teachings of Christ and to provide an atmosphere of love and care that helps children understand their responsibilities to the Church, their families, themselves, and their community

Physical - To develop large and small motor skills, as well as enhance over-all physical coordination and identify the need for good health habits.

Social - To instill in each child a concept of self as a worthy individual, a good friend of his/her classmates, a good learner, and an eager participant in school activities

Intellectual - To promote pre-reading, pre-math and pre-writing skills, such as: listening and following directions, increasing attention, problem solving, and language enrichment

Emotional - To establish a positive self-image within each child and to help them achieve self-confidence and self-control.

Goals for the Pre-K 3/4 year old Students

The main focus of the Pre-K programs at St. Matthias School is to enrich the child spiritually and socially. Academic skills are secondary.

Our Pre-K program strives to help your child:

1. Foster a relationship with God.
2. Develop social skills. Namely:
 - share with others
 - respect teachers and fellow classmates
 - respect for our classroom rules and space
 - follow 3 step verbal directions
 - communicate in complete sentences
 - exhibit independence in the bathroom
 - make eye contact

Academically, the St. Matthias Pre-K program hopes to prepare your child for the school's Kindergarten program. Specifically, at the end of the school year your child should:

1. Identify and print his/her name in upper and lower case letters
2. Draw a simple picture of his/herself
3. Use scissors, pencil, glue and crayons with control
4. Exhibit knowledge of letter sounds (should be able to name every letter of the alphabet)
5. Identify colors and shapes
6. Verbally count 20 objects and identify the numbers 1-20
7. Have knowledge of age appropriate vocabulary
8. Have knowledge of their full name, address, telephone number & birthday
9. Have knowledge of position words; i.e.: on, off, above, below
10. Have the ability to independently enter the classroom & begin the class day
11. Have knowledge of math skills, such as patterning, sorting, & matching

Pre-Kindergarten Expectations

Before entering our Pre-K program at St. Matthias:

- Children must be completely toilet trained. **Wearing diapers, pull-ups or similar type undergarments is not permitted.** Children must be able to take care of their bathroom needs with minimal assistance with clothing. A change of clothes will be kept at school for occasional bathroom accidents and spills.
- Children must be cooperative toward teachers and classmates. Children must comply with teacher's requests. Children must also behave in a manner that is not disruptive or difficult to manage in a group setting.
- Children must be able to function without security items during school time including pacifiers, blankets, sippy cups, stuffed animals, etc.

- Children should be able to separate from parents after a short adjustment period.
- Children must be able to follow simple classroom rules and routines.
- Children must be able to sit in a chair and eat a snack.
- Children must be past the stage of putting non-food items in their mouths.
- Children must be able to use a tissue properly and wash their hands on their own.
- Children must show respect toward classmates and classroom materials.

- At the Conclusion of Pre-K 3 children should be able to listen to a story and stay with an activity for approximately ten minutes. They should also be able to wait their turn.
- Pre-K 4 children should be able to identify the eight basic colors, some shapes and some letters. They should be able to recite their name, recognize their own printed name, print some letters in their name, recognize numbers 1 through 5, count to ten, and recite or sing the alphabet. We suggest that you invest in Flash Cards to enforce letter recognition.

First week of school

In order to warmly welcome our new Pre-Kindergarten children and give them the proper attention they deserve, the first few days of school will be days of orientation.

For the first week of school children should be escorted to their classroom in the Pre-K building at 8:00AM. All parents should park in the back parking lot. At dismissal time, the parents should pick up their child in the back of the school.

Arrival Procedures

All parents or guardians should arrive with their children no sooner than 7:50AM. Students will gather in the back parking lot and bring their children to the designated parking lines in front of the Pre-K/Kindergarten entrance. Safety patrols will be present to assist students.

The teachers and/or assistants are responsible for guiding children to the classrooms. Please be sure your child is ready to enter the building. Take care of all your good-byes, hugs, and kisses before your child is in the designated class area. Some mornings, when your child is reluctant to enter the building it is best to let a teacher or assistant help your child to the classroom. Please note that for safety reasons, drop off time is NOT the appropriate time for a conference with your child's teacher.

It is extremely important to try to bring your child to class by 8:00AM. Our morning class activities, which include roll call, picking classroom helpers, and class count, take place at this time and we do not want your child to miss out. PLEASE, never drop your child off outside unassisted. Please be sure your child has enough time to eat a good breakfast before coming to school.

Should you arrive after your child's class has entered the school building (8:00AM), **you must go to the school office.**

Dismissal for the Full Day Session

Parents/guardians picking up children from Pre-Kindergarten classes should arrive no sooner than 2:20PM. Dismissal is promptly at 2:30PM. Vehicles must park in the **back school yard**. Teachers/assistants will escort students to the school yard parking lot via PreK/KG doors. Older siblings will assist.

In the event of a change of plans regarding a child's means of transportation home from school, **please send a note to your child's teacher**. For safety reasons, we will release your child only to those you have designated and we may ask for identification; if we do not recognize the person picking up your child from school. Please contact the office for unexpected change of plans.

Teacher In-Service Days & Early Dismissal Days

During the school year teachers will spend time in professional development, faculty meetings, conferences and or planning activities. This will require either no school or an early dismissal day. **On an early dismissal day your child will be dismissed in the usual manner but at 12:30, unless they are attending ASP. On an early dismissal day your child will need to bring a lunch and a drink to school. Should your child be attending the after school program, it is required that they also bring two snacks and two drinks. Please check the ASP calendar to confirm the program is available.**

Code of Conduct

Everyone in the St. Matthias Community is called to treat one another with dignity and love that reflects the life of Jesus. When approached in a positive manner, discipline makes it clear to the child that one behavior is chosen over another. Students at different ages are expected to assume appropriate degrees of responsibilities for their actions. Children are expected to be kind, respectful, and courteous. To maintain good behavior in the Pre-K classrooms, teachers will use positive reinforcement, redirection, and the *Good Bee-Bavior* reward system.

If a discipline problem persists with a child, parents will be notified by the teacher through a note, a phone call, or in person. At this time, possible solutions to the problem and suggestions will be discussed. The parents, child and teacher will work together to resolve the problem. If the problem still continues, a conference will need to be scheduled. During this conference, a plan will be put in place with timely expectations. Local support services may be suggested as a means to help the child and/or family. *Please understand serious behavior problems, which may include biting, kicking, hitting, scratching, or throwing could result in the child's dismissal from our school program.*

After the above procedure has been followed, a child may be dismissed from our school program if:

- The child poses a threat to him/herself, other children or teachers
- The child behaves in a manner that is disruptive and difficult to manage in a large group
- The child or family continues to act out against the program's policies

Should a serious situation occur that jeopardizes the welfare of the children and/or teachers, the school principal reserves the right to dismiss a child immediately.

Supplies

Pre-Kindergarten children will be asked to send in particular items such as, paper towels, facial tissues, and wet wipes. A list of requested supplies will be provided by your child's teacher as needed. All students will also need the following items:

- One complete change of clothes for spills or other accidents. This should include long pants, shorts, underpants, shirt, and socks. Please send these to school in a name labeled Ziploc or plastic bag.
- PreK 3 and PreK 4 students will need to bring in a crib sheet with your child's name **boldly** written across the middle of the sheet with a permanent marker. Fridays, the sheet will be sent home to be laundered. The sheet will be used to cover your child's mat at rest time. A small blanket for your child's comfort may also be included and a soft, quiet rest time friend.
- One backpack (no wheels) - Each child needs to have a normal size backpack with his/her name clearly marked to take home his/her crafts, special papers, sheets, blanket and library books. We suggest a standard size bag that your child can easily open so their precious 'works of art' do not get crushed. Please remember to empty it each day.
- PreK 4 only: One 2-pocket folder labeled with your child's name clearly written on the front should also be included in the backpack.

The folder will be checked by the classroom assistant or teacher everyday for notes or other information. All notes to the teachers or office should be placed in the folder and clearly marked in an envelope with your child's name. Please be sure to empty your child's bag each day. Discuss and review activities your child brings home and read any notes that may come from the office or teacher. Children should not bring any unnecessary school supplies, toys, clothes, snacks, blankets or papers to school in their bags.

Lunch

PreK will eat their lunch at 11:00AM. Parents are welcome to come in and help out at lunch/recess time once you have completed the Diocese of Metuchen's volunteer process. Please check with the Volunteer section of the handbook for more details.

PreK 3 eats lunch in the classroom and does not buy from the cafeteria.

PreK 4 students may buy a lunch from the cafeteria. Please put the money in the lunch envelope that was given to you. On a piece of paper, please write what they are buying, put the paper in the lunch envelope with the money and then place the envelope in their school folder. **No money is to be put in their lunch boxes.** Hot Lunch tickets are sold for your convenience. If you wish to buy them, send a check in an envelope marked "LUNCH TICKETS". You will need to do this one day in advance of using them. This is processed through the school office and cannot be used for the same day lunch. This is for hot lunch only. There is no change on a lunch ticket. We suggest you do not use lunch tickets for Friday, pizza day. One slice of pizza and a drink is cheaper than the price of a lunch ticket.

If your child is bringing lunch, please be sure their name is on the outside of their lunch box.

Snack

Depending on the class and day, students may need to bring a snack to school. PreK 3 students need 2 snacks. All students with food allergies must bring a snack, unless otherwise determined.

Clothing

Pre-K 3/4 are to wear the school gym uniform each day. Please visit the school website for details regarding the uniform dress code.

Website/Pre-K Calendar/Class News

In Pre-Kindergarten, we will cover a wide variety of themes according to the children's interests and ability levels. The website will indicate the topic, skills and activities that will be covered in class. We hope you will refer to this calendar/website and discuss with your child the week's activities. Please refer to your school calendar for school holidays, days off, lunch menus and general school information and activities. Please refer to the class website for the class calendar and additional information. The school website is www.stmatthias.info and the teachers' web pages can be found under *Teacher Sites*.

Communication

All notes must be delivered to school in the morning. Any changes to dismissal must come via a written note, unless of emergency situations in which case the school office must be called. If you need to speak to the teacher to discuss your child, then a conference should be scheduled. Please contact the teacher and set a mutually agreeable time. This is necessary so that proper attention can be given to the children during school time, both parties can have a more focused discussion, and other little ears don't hear. If your child is out of school, a note must be sent in the first day they return to school. The school Absentee Form can be found on the school website under the tab *Community*, then *Forms & Information*.

Show and Tell

Show and Tell is a valuable part of our Pre-Kindergarten program. Show and Tell helps children build self-confidence as well as providing them an opportunity to share information about special items from home. Days for Show and Tell will be indicated on website. Please encourage your child to choose different and interesting items for Show and Tell. Items related to the weekly topic or nature items are always welcome. Often we will ask for specific items. Items brought in for Show and Tell will not be played with during the rest of the school day. Please, no guns, swords, knives, toys of destruction, or pets (due to allergies) should be brought to school. The start of Show and Tell will be posted on the calendar.

Field Trips

Field Trips will be announced by the teachers. Chaperones will be needed and selected by lottery.

Birthday Treats

If your child has a birthday during the school year, he/she is welcome to bring in a special treat to share with his/her classmates. **The school food policy requires all food items served to children to be purchased from a store, ingredients listed and attached to the package, and be in the original packaging or wrapping; there will be NO exceptions.** Please understand that homemade treats cannot be served to the children. Cookies, brownies, Rice Krispie treats, ice cream cups, and doughnuts are favorites among the children. **Please do not send cakes, or items which need to be cut and served** as these are usually wasted, messy, or difficult to manage. Treats should be sent in before school starts. Please be sure to send a note at least two days in advance to allow for planning. **Birthday cups, plates, and treat bags may be sent to school and parents may attend.** No candles may be used. There will be a special celebration toward the end of the school year for children with summer birthdays.

Delivery of gifts or balloons to individual students will not be accepted at school and invitations cannot and will not be distributed at school, unless the entire class is invited.

Volunteers

Volunteers are often needed at St. Matthias School. Volunteers should enter through the main doors and sign in at the office. It is the teacher's discretion as to the appropriateness of volunteers in the classroom during school class time. Persons volunteering regularly are required to submit a New Jersey State Criminal Records check, fingerprinting and attend the Protecting All God's Children training program. Please check with the Volunteer section of the school's website or the Parish office for details.

Because this is a special time for students enrolled in our programs, siblings may not accompany their parent(s) when they volunteer their time and talent in the classroom.

Emergency Information

Please advise your child's teacher and the school office in writing of any changes in your address or telephone numbers (home or work). Every family will receive an Emergency Information form to be completed and kept in the school office as well in the classroom.

Delayed Openings/Emergency School Closings

The school usually follows the decision of the Franklin Township School District regarding school closings and delayed openings 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 / text message / e-mail
- <http://www.stmatthias.info>

1. Should we be on a delayed schedule Pre-Kindergarten will begin at 9:30AM; unless otherwise notified. Dismissal will be at the regular time.

2. In the event that St. Matthias will be dismissing early due to inclement weather, you will be notified by Honeywell Instant Alert System.

3. In the event that evacuation of St. Matthias School is necessary, parents will be notified by Honeywell Instant Alert System.

Safety Drills

Safety drills are conducted throughout the year according to state guidelines. They include: fire drills, evacuation drills, and security drills. Teachers prepare the children for all drills.

Health

Maintaining a healthy and safe environment is everyone's responsibility. Your child needs to stay home if he/she has a fever, diarrhea, vomiting, pink eye, impetigo, other communicable illnesses, or a contagious rash. **Children are to be fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medicine), and free from other illnesses, ailments and symptoms (vomiting, diarrhea. . .) for at least 24 hours before returning to school.**

Should a child become ill during the day, you will be notified to come and pick up your child or make arrangements for someone to pick up your child promptly. Please make sure we always have up-to-date emergency phone numbers so you or a guardian can be contacted. Our ultimate goal is to keep all of our students healthy!

If your child is out of school, a note must be sent in the first day they return to school. The school Absentee Form can be found on the school website under the tab Parents, then Forms & Information.

Head Lice -- A general screening of all students is conducted at various times throughout the year and after a report of head lice in the school. Any student found to be infested is sent home to prevent spreading. All cases of head lice should be reported to the school immediately.

Food Allergies -- If your child has any food allergies, please send a note on the first day of school to your child's teacher stating his/her particular allergies. All students enrolled in St. Matthias School will be required to complete an Allergy Form provided by the nurse.

Medicine -- In the event your child must receive medication during the day, a Medication Authorization Form, must be completed with all necessary signatures (parent and physician). The form and medication are to be handed to the school nurse. The medication must be brought in its original container and children are NEVER allowed to carry medications with them in their backpack to the classroom.

First Aid -- When a child is injured, care will be given and if the situation warrants, a parent will be contacted to discuss appropriate action. For minor injuries, a report will be given to parents. In the event of a serious emergency, EMS will be contacted at once so immediate medical care can be given.

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.

Conferences

Parent-teacher-student conferences are usually held in November and February for three and four year olds and on an individual basis, as needed. The teacher and/or parents may request conferences at any time. Parents wishing to schedule a conference should send a note or email to their child's teacher stating their concerns and a mutually agreeable time will be set.

Promotion/Retention

Occasions may arise when a teacher must determine the best course of instruction for some children they believe may need additional time to develop the necessary readiness skills, social skills, or academic skills for the next grade level. It may be recommended that the child be given the opportunity to attain these skills by remaining in the same grade level. Another year of Pre-K is a special gift of time that you can give your child. Teachers and parents want children to be successful, confident, and happy at school. St. Matthias School reserves judgment as how to best meet the educational needs of the child.

Handwriting

During the first few weeks of school, we will work on a number of school readiness skills. Among these skills is name recognition. The children will begin to recognize their name by learning where their cubby is located and where their place is on the carpet for circle time. We will then begin working on helping the children print their names. A few of the children will be able to write their names already, some will need help and practice, and others will not have acquired the needed skills to write yet...so be patient! Some four-year-old children may need extra time to develop fine motor skills to begin writing letters. Some may need help in gripping the pencil properly. Other children will come to school writing their name using all capital letters and even though it may be a difficult habit to break, we will teach them to use a capital letter for the first letter and lowercase letters for the rest of their name. We will work on one letter at a time if necessary. Please reinforce the printing of your child's name at home but do not force your child to print perfectly. **Note: If you are encouraging your child to print his/her name, please use a capital letter for the first letter and lower case for the rest.**

Thank you for choosing Saint Matthias for your child!

Handbook Agreement

Please sign and return completed page to school by September 5th

I have carefully read the 2019-2020 St. Matthias Pre-Kindergarten Handbook and agree to abide by the handbook. We understand fully the regulations contained herein and recognize the right the school has to establish rules and provide for their enforcement.

It is understood the Principal reserves the right to amend the handbook for just causes. Parents will be notified of any changes.

By signature, I indicate that I have read and agree to the guidelines and regulations within the 2019-2020 St. Matthias Pre-Kindergarten Handbook.

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____

Pre-K Child's Name _____ Class _____

Pre-K Child's Name _____ Class _____

