St. Matthew's Catholic School
Middle School
Student and Parent Handbook
2026-2027

(Updated 8.26)

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Middle School Philosophy of Learning

In St. Matthew's Middle School, we believe our mission is to create a Christ-centered environment where students, families, and the community work together. We aim to inspire a love of learning that lasts a lifetime through spiritual, academic, and physical education. We therefore commit to the following:

- Build a school community grounded in respect and Gospel teachings.
- Help students grow in faith, moral character, responsibility, and self-discipline.
- Offer a curriculum that is challenging, diverse, and integrated.
- Connect classroom learning to real-life experiences.
- Encourage students to reach their full learning potential now and in the future.
- Equip students with the skills to become vital, contributing members of the faith community.

St. Matthew's School promises to work together with families and the community to pursue educational excellence in an atmosphere of Gospel values.

Academics

Books and Backpacks

All textbooks are rented to the students who are to keep them covered and in good condition. Torn covers must be replaced in order to maintain the best condition of the book. Contact paper or any other type of adhesive materials may NOT be used as a book cover.

Students will need TWO bags.

- **ONE** bag is for during school hours. Students will use a small clear on-the-shoulder bag or clear tote bag to carry, at most, two classes worth of books, materials and supplies. These small bags should measure no more than 15 inches by 15 inches. These bags may stay at school labeled with the student's name. Students will be permitted to visit lockers after every two classes or individual homeroom teacher's discretion.
- A **SECOND** book bag must be used for carrying books to and from school. Roller backpacks may only be used to transport books and supplies to and from school.

Clear bags are available on Amazon, Target, Walmart, etc.

Conduct Grades

Middle School Conduct grades are determined as follows:

- Each student begins the grading period with a 100% grade in conduct.
- Each Check that a student receives will result in a loss of four points from the Conduct grade.
- A conduct notice (except for excessive Checks) results in 12 points deducted from the Conduct grade.

During a quarter, the Conduct grade is reset at the mid-way point and the grades are averaged to determine the grade for the quarter. (**For example:** During the first 4 ½ weeks of a quarter, the student receives four checks which results in a grade of 84. During the second 4 ½ weeks of a quarter, the student receives one check which results in a grade of 96. The 84 and the 96 are averaged together giving a grade of 90 for the quarter).

FACTS Family Portal; *Habit 1: Be Proactive*

Both parents and students have FACTS Family Portal accounts. Student accounts are created at school. Both parents and students must check FACTS Family Portal accounts regularly for updated grades, homework assignments, projects and upcoming events. FACTS Family Portal helps to ensure open and regular communication. If you have a question regarding grades or assignments that your child cannot answer, have the child seek assistance from the teacher as soon as possible. Homework, tests, and projects are posted on FACTS Family Portal. Grades are updated regularly. If absent or anticipating an absence, students must check FACTS Family Portal for any homework assignments and have follow up communication with teachers.

Attendance

Absence

To ensure the safety of all students, parents are asked either to call or email (office@smsvb.net) between 8:30 AM and 9:00 AM to report your child's absence.

When returning to school, a written excuse (or email to the homeroom teacher), explaining the reason for absence and signed by the parent, must be presented upon return to school. We follow this mandate of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Absence from school does not exempt a student from having all class work and homework assignments completed. A Notice of Absences will be issued when students accumulate five absences and every five absences thereafter. If a student misses more than 30 days of school (or 30 meetings in a same subject area class), he/she may not be eligible for promotion.

Too many absences can cause children to fall behind in school. Missing 10% (about 18 days) can make it harder to learn to read. Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school and themselves. Start building this habit in preschool so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day, is important. Good attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work.

Attendance Notice Sequence:

- 5 Absences - Send Attendance Notice
- 10 Absences - Parent conference with administrator
- 15 Absences - Student may be removed from all Specials Classes and/or recess until all missed assignments are completed
- 20 Absences - May impact promotion to the next grade/course

Absences incurred in individual classes due to tardiness will be subject to the guidelines above.

Immediately upon returning to school from an absence, the student shall coordinate with his/her teacher(s) to complete all missed assignments, tests and quizzes.

Generally (with individual teacher discretion), a student has three days to make up missed classwork and homework after an absence. Consult individual teachers for their subject policy. In coordination with the teacher, a student may use recess time to make up work.

Students should coordinate with teachers in anticipation of a vacation. Teachers are not required to provide assignments in anticipation of the vacation.

If a student must leave school early, a note (or an email-please cc: attendance@smsvb.net) must be given/sent to the homeroom teacher when the student comes to school. The student is to be picked up at the school office by the person designated in the note. Students will not be dismissed early between 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM.
When teachers have been notified that a student will be leaving early on Mass Days, the student will be packed, ready for pick up, and seated in the back of the church. After the parent has signed out the student in the Main Office, the parent may come to the church and pick up their student.

Tardiness
When a student is late for school (i.e. after 8:15 AM), he/she will report to the office to receive a pass before proceeding to the classroom. Please make every effort to have your child at school on time. Tardies cause a disruption in the classroom. Excessive tardies will be addressed by the principal with a student's parents. If a student accumulates five or more tardies during the year, the student will not be awarded perfect attendance. Tardiness is disruptive to the morning routine for the whole classroom. Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school and themselves. Good attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work. Five tardies in a year will make a student ineligible for Perfect Attendance. Please make every effort to arrive on time.

Attendance is mandatory for all middle school classes. Students receive a Check (see Disciplinary Action) for every class for which they are tardy. Five tardies result in an Attendance Violation Slip to be brought home and signed by the parent/guardian and returned.

Cafeteria Information

Bringing Lunches & Forgotten Lunches
Glass bottles, soft drinks or excessive amounts of candy are not permitted. Parents should refrain from bringing forgotten lunches to school. This creates a disruption to the learning process as class time is lost when a student is called out of class. Any student forgetting a lunch from home will be provided a lunch and billed through FACTS. It is important that children eat lunch during the day.

- Food deliveries of any kind (GrubHub, UberEats, etc.) are not permitted. Children have the option of bringing lunch or buying from the school cafeteria.
- Pre-ordered lunches need to be made by 8:00 AM for the same day.
- If you have not provided lunch for your child that day, you need to call the office by 8:00 AM, and we will work out a solution.
- If your child will be absent from school, please ensure that you cancel their lunch order by 8:00 AM.

Cafeteria Etiquette
Students are expected to use the same manners required in the classroom during lunch. Courtesy toward other students and cooperation with lunch monitors are in order at all times.

Sharing food is discouraged due to possible food allergies. Each grade sits together. Students are expected to sit while eating.

Ordering Lunch, Beverages, Pretzels, and Ice Cream

Students may order lunch, snacks, pretzels and ice cream during morning homeroom. Students who forget to order lunch or lose their lunch ticket, will go to the end of the pick up line.
Students are encouraged to order lunch, beverages, and ice cream through FACTS; however, they may order in the morning during homeroom.

Students are limited to one ice cream per day. Families will be billed through FACTS for

- provided lunches when a student forgets their lunch,
- lost lunch tickets, and/or
- ice cream or snacks not ordered through FACTS during homeroom.

Snacks & Water Bottles

Students are permitted to bring snacks from home. Snacks should be eaten only during lunch or if the classroom teacher allows. Eating snacks in the hallways are not permitted.

Personal water bottles are permitted. Water bottles must be water tight containers. For example, if the bottle were to be turned upside down, the liquid should not leak. There are several water bottle refilling stations around the school. Students may only refill water bottles with water from a water bottle station. Water should be consumed only during lunch or if the classroom teacher allows. Energy drinks, coffee, and soda are not permitted.

Students should never consume food or drinks in the halls or on route to a location. Sharing food or water is discouraged due to possible food allergies and germs.

Discipline Policies

Catholic education can only exist in an atmosphere of respect and obedience. Parents, teachers, and administration must support each other in this endeavor. Parents will be notified whenever there is a serious infraction, and suitable disciplinary measures will be taken.

Types of disciplinary actions which may be taken when rules are broken are shown on the following pages. The principal determines the type of action to take, depending on the seriousness of the violation. In most cases, steps such as letters, telephone calls, and conferences involving teachers, principal, students and parents or guardians have been taken beforehand to correct the student's behavior. (Exception: Any child who intentionally bites another student or a staff member will be sent home for the remainder of the day.)

In addition to the official disciplinary actions outlined here, a student may be required to repair, clean up, or paint any area damage caused by their actions. A student may lose the privilege of participation in school activities. Court action may be taken when local, state or federal laws have been broken. Please note that an accumulation of conduct notices and/or suspensions, especially for repeat offenses, may result in expulsion.

Conduct by students or parents, including social media posts, which is disruptive to the learning atmosphere, contrary to Catholic principles, or detrimental to the welfare of the school is justification for dismissal.

Middle school teachers set up a behavioral management system in their classrooms.

The most important factor is the **respect for the dignity of all members of the school community. Every rule and regulation is grounded in this respect**.

Checks

Checks are issued by the middle school teachers as a consequence for student behavior. Checks accumulate over the course of a week; however, each new week brings a clean slate. Checks are issued for the following infractions, but are not limited to:

- Not having necessary supplies
- Disruptive or inappropriate behavior
- Tardiness to class
- Not following directions
- Leaving designated area

When a Check is issued, the student is given a check notification slip to fill out with his/her name, the date, and the infraction. The teacher signs the slip and retains the duplicate copy, sending the original home with the student. ***It is the student's responsibility to notify his/her parents when he/she receives a check. When a student receives a third check within a week, a conduct notice is issued.***

Middle School Conduct grade is determined as follows:

Each student begins the grading period with a 100% grade in conduct. Each check that a student receives will result in a loss of 4 points from the conduct grade. A conduct notice (except for excessive checks) results in 12 points deducted from the conduct grade. During a quarter, the conduct grade will be reset at the mid-way point and the grades averaged to determine the grade for the quarter. (For example: During the first 4 ½ weeks of a quarter, the student receives 4 checks which results in a grade of 84. During the second 4 ½ weeks of a quarter, the student receives 1 check which results in a grade of 96. The 84 and the 96 are averaged together giving a grade of 90 for the quarter).

Discipline (Conduct Notices)

To inform parents/guardians about behavioral concerns or problems, teachers send home a conduct notice. These are issued for more severe infractions of the conduct code and for accumulation of minor infractions (Dress Code Violation Notices, Academic Progress Reports, or Check Notifications). Copies of conduct notices are retained in the main office and the original will be issued to the student to take home to his/her parent/guardian. These are to be signed and returned to the school the next school day.

- After the third conduct notice in a semester, the student will meet with Administration to create an action plan, and parental notification letters are sent home describing the student's action plan.
- After the fifth conduct notice in a semester, Administration conference with both student and parent to reassess and reevaluate the action plan. Also, students receive an In-School Suspension (ISS).
- After the seventh conduct notice in a semester, the student receives an Out of School Suspension (OSS).

- Accumulated conduct notices are reset at the beginning of each semester.
- Repeated OSS may result in expulsion.

Discipline (Conduct) Notices or harsher consequences may be issued for violations including, but not limited to:

- three checks within a week or 7 in 9 weeks
- after 3 negative academic notices in same subject have been issued in a semester
- unauthorized use of cell phones or electronic devices (may result in loss of privilege)
- after 3 dress code violation slips have been issued in a semester
- possession or consumption of unauthorized food/beverages
- misbehavior or disruptions
- using racially offensive language or gestures
- disrespect towards staff/students
- fighting
- rough housing or placing hands on another student (rough, boisterous, or rowdy play, play-fighting, etc.)
- possession or consumption of prescription or over the counter medications
- bullying (see bullying policy)
- stealing
- cheating and/or plagiarism (which includes giving as well as receiving information, using AI such as ChatGPT)
- profanity/obscenity
- forgery
- threats of any kind (to include online threats, verbal, non-verbal, written, etc.)
- physical or psychological harassment of others
- behavior that brings discredit to St. Matthew's School on or off the premises, including online behavior
- possession of sexually explicit material
- possession and/or use of dangerous or unsafe materials
- vandalism/destruction of property
- chewing gum or having chewing gum in one's mouth is not permitted on school property or church grounds at all times
- Energy drinks, coffee, and soda are not permitted.
- leaving class without permission
- disrespect or irreverence in Mass or religious services

Dismissal from School

Per Diocesan policy, "Conduct by a student or parent which is disruptive to the learning atmosphere and/or contrary to Catholic principles is justification for the Principal to dismiss a student at any time."

Expulsion

Expulsion may be considered if a grave infraction of school rules occurs, a student demonstrates continuing disregard for school policies, or a student's continued presence in school has the probability of being a serious hindrance to the safety or welfare of the school community.

THE PRINCIPAL RESERVES THE RIGHT TO AUTOMATICALLY SUSPEND STUDENTS AS DEEMED APPROPRIATE AT ANY TIME DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR.

In-School Suspension:

- In-school Suspension (ISS) removes a student from his/her regular class schedule for an entire day.
- The student is restricted from participating in any school activities, including athletic practices and games for seven calendar days.
- Students will spend their ISS in a supervised area of the school.
- Students will complete class work assigned by teachers and any additional tasks deemed appropriate, if time permits.
- Students must wear school uniforms.
- Students must bring lunch.
- Students may not be tardy.
- A grade in conduct no higher than a "C" will be recorded in any quarter in which an in-school suspension has been served.
- After three In-School Suspensions, an Out of School Suspension (OSS) may be issued.

Out-Of-School Suspension:

- Out of School Suspension (OSS) removes a student from school for a predetermined amount of time.
- The student is restricted from participating in any school activities, including athletic practices, dances, socials, and games for fourteen calendar days.
- Students are not permitted in school or on the school grounds.
- Before normal student activities may resume, parents/guardians must meet with Administration and teacher(s) on the day following the end of the suspension period.
- A conduct grade of "F" will be recorded in any quarter in which an out-of-school suspension has been served.
- Court actions may be taken when local, state, or federal laws have been broken.

Off-Campus Conduct

The administration of St. Matthew's School reserves the right to discipline its students for off-campus behavior that is not in line with behavior expectations of its students during the school day. This off-campus behavior includes, but is not limited to, cyber-bullying.

A student enrolled at St. Matthew's School is a St. Matthew's student at all times. A student who engages in conduct, whether inside or outside the school, that is detrimental to the reputation of the school, may be disciplined by school officials.

School Rights Prior to Parent Notification

Discipline is an educational service to which all children are legally entitled.

Parents will be notified of serious disciplinary problems. The school maintains the following rights prior to parent notification to include: Observe, Discipline, Detain, Advise/Warn, Question, Search, Seize, Restrain, and Educate.

Dress Code

Uniform

The purpose of the school uniform is to minimize distractions and direct students' efforts toward who they are and the important business of their education. Students shall present a neat, clean, professional personal image. Uniforms and all clothing should be clean and fitting properly.

- Wrinkled or soiled uniforms, or clothes with holes or missing buttons are not permitted.
- Proper hem length must be maintained (fingertip length).
- All uniforms must be sized to fit and be worn properly. They should be neither too small nor too large, too long nor too short.
- Uniform pants of all types are to be worn at the waist, not on the hips.
- Shirts and blouses must be tucked in properly.
- Only one necklace depicting Christian symbols may be worn.
- One modest bracelet or one band supporting a meaningful cause may be worn if it does not cause a distraction.
- Hair bands, bows, barrettes, etc. must be modest and be school colors or neutral colors.
- No bandanas, large bows, neon colors, etc.
- No tattoos, permanent or temporary, are allowed.
- No altering of natural hair color.
- Makeup is not permitted except for what is outlined below.

It is the parents' responsibility to guarantee that the dress code is enforced.

Middle School students wear navy blue shirts with khaki shorts, pants or skorts. Shirts must have the updated logo. Uniforms may be purchased through Flynn and O'Hara Uniform Company. Gently used uniform items are available through the SMS Spirit Shop. These school uniforms may be worn on any school day.

Fingertip length is defined as: a student stands with arms straight by their side, and fingertips do not reach past their hemline for both boys and girls.

	Grade 6 – 8 Girls	Grade 6 – 8 Boys
Jumper/Pants/Slacks	No embellishments on belts	Khaki pants, worn with navy St. Matthew's new logo shirt, long or short sleeves, belt, and uniform school shoes. Belts should be black, brown or navy blue and complement the uniform. No embellishments on belts.
Shorts	Khaki, at least finger-tip length, worn with navy blue short sleeve St. Matthew's new logo shirt and a plain belt. No embellishments on belts.	Khaki, at least finger-tip length, worn with a belt, navy short sleeve St. Matthew's new logo shirt, white crew socks, and solid navy or white

		sneakers, canvas or leather. Belts should be black, brown or navy blue and complement the uniform. No embellishments on belts.
Skort	Khaki, at least finger-tip length, worn with navy blue short sleeve St. Matthew's new logo shirt. Crew socks or navy blue knee socks.	N/A
Clothing over School Uniform	Navy blue cardigan or St. Matthew's pullover fleece. On Fridays, a navy blue SMS spirit sweatshirt or hoodie may be worn.	Navy blue cardigan or St. Matthew's pullover fleece. On Fridays, a navy blue SMS spirit sweatshirt or hoodie may be worn.

Additional Notes (Girls):

Hair:

- shall be clean, neat, well groomed (combed)
- of modest style
- stay out of eyes

Not permitted:

- distracting haircuts/styles
- altering natural hair color
- unnatural hair coloring
- designs cut or braided into hair
- foreign material (i.e., beads, decorative items) braided into hair
- lopsided and extremely asymmetrical styles

Fingernails:

- Nail polish with nude or neutral tones are permitted, but without designs or embellishments. (ex: no bright colors, no black, glitter, multicolor)
- No stones, studs, or rings shall be attached to the fingernails.

Make up: The only authorized makeup is for girls in grades 6-8 who may wear a foundation or cover-up for blemishes. No mascara, eyeliner, lipstick, blush, or eye shadow.

Jewelry:

- Small in size & one pair only, one earring can be worn on each ear lobe. No longer than pinky width. No cartilage piercings.
- No more than one necklace, one modest bracelet, (medic alert exempt) or ring on each hand shall be permitted to be worn.
- Necklaces & bracelets must support a meaningful cause or Christian symbol and may not cause a distraction.

Spirit sweatshirts and spirit hoodies: A navy blue cardigan or St. Matthew's fleece are the only permissible items to be worn over the school uniform. Spirit sweatshirts or hoodies may be worn on Fridays. On warmer weather days, for the health of the students, they may be asked to remove the heavier clothing.

Additional Notes (Boys):

Hair:

- Must remain short and combed.
- Haircuts shall be of a modest style.
- Distracting haircuts/styles (mullets, mohawks, faux hawk, disconnected, line up, pompadour, flat tops, broccoli, middle part/e-boy) are not permitted.
- It must stay out of the eyes.
- It may not touch the collar of the shirt and cannot be more than the length of the ears.
- Bangs must be cut above the eyebrows.
- Do not alter natural hair color.
- Hair fads of any kind are not permitted.
- Plaits and man-buns are not allowed.

Facial Hair: not permitted. Boys are expected to shave if facial hair becomes visible.

Earrings, Nail Polish, and Make Up: not permitted

Necklaces: only one necklace depicting Christian symbols may be worn.

Bracelets: one modest bracelet or one band supporting a meaningful cause may be worn if it does not cause a distraction.

Spirit sweatshirts and spirit hoodies: A navy blue cardigan or St. Matthew's fleece are the only permissible items to be worn over the school uniform. Spirit sweatshirts or hoodies may be worn on Fridays. On warmer weather days, for the health of the students, they may be asked to remove the heavier clothing.

Both Boys and Girls

Grades 6-8:

- Khaki uniform type, free from any brand names, with a belt (plain blue, black or brown - no embellishments).
- Please do not buy Docker, or other 100% cotton slacks. They will fade too quickly to a color that is not uniform.
- Logos and brand names also defeat the purpose of a uniform code.

Shoes:

We want the students to wear comfortable shoes. Sneakers or dress shoes may be worn with the following guidelines:

- No hiking boots
- Dress shoe coloring should complement the uniform (black, brown, navy, saddle shoes, etc.)
- Sneaker coloring shall be white, navy blue, or black or navy blue [shoe logo should be white, navy blue, black or the same color as the shoe
- Shoe heels shall be no higher than one inch.
- Shoe laces shall complement the shoe (white/blue/black/brown).
- No “bling,” shoe charms or added shoe accessories.

- Sole color complements the shoe (no bright, distracting colors)
- No shoes with wheels
- No high-tops
- No crocs, sandals, slides, or other non-protective shoes.

All parts of student's uniforms are to be marked with your child's name.

Optional/Other Uniforms

Mass Day Uniform (highly encouraged for Mass leaders & middle school students):

Boys and Girls:
- white Oxford, button-down, collared shirt with solid white undershirt
- black or brown dress shoes

Boys:
- solid navy blue tie or bow tie must be worn with button-down shirt (optional for girls)
- uniform pants with belt and dress shoes

Girls:
- uniform pants/slacks or skort
- dress shoes must be black or brown flats

Scout Uniforms: May be worn on meeting days.

School Spirit Fridays

Students may wear St. Matthew's t-shirts (Carnival, Chorus, Math-a-thon, etc.) or polo shirts with uniform bottoms on Fridays during the school year, unless otherwise directed. A navy blue SMS spirit sweatshirt or hoodie may be worn.

P.E. Uniforms

Boys and Girls

P.E. shorts with St. Matthew's logo, St. Matthew's P.E. T-shirt, white socks, and sneakers. "No show" socks are not allowed. Crew-length socks (for both girls and boys) must be worn. During cold weather, St. Matthew's sweatshirt with the school logo and sweatpants are required.

Girls' hair must be pulled away from the face.

Middle school students change for PE in the locker rooms. Teachers may require a school uniform on special occasions. P.E. uniforms can be purchased at St. Matthew's School Spirit Shop.

Dress Up Days

Students should come to school dressed in their "Sunday Best".

Boys No Jeans
No Sweatpants or Sweatshirts
No skate shoes, tennis socks, or "no show" socks
No Flip-flops, sport sandals, sandals designed with a divider between the toes, slides, or other

non-protective shoes
Shorts must be "dress" shorts (i.e, khaki, plaid, etc.) and at least fingertip length (sneakers or tennis shoes may be worn with dress shorts)
Student's shirt must have a collar (ties are optional) and must be tucked in properly.

Girls No Jeans
No skate shoes, no tennis socks, or "no show" socks
No Flip-flops, sport sandals, slides, or other non-protective shoes
Sandals must be secured around the ankle
Shorts must be "dress" shorts (i.e, khaki, plaid, etc.) at least fingertip length (sneakers or tennis shoes may be worn with dress shorts)
All dresses (**whether worn with tights or not**) must be at least fingertip length
Slacks /shorts must fit appropriately
No Sweatpants or Sweatshirts
A cover-up must be worn at all times on top of a "Spaghetti Strap" or sleeveless blouse or dress
Sweaters (with or without collar) or cardigans are permissible
Heels on shoes must be no more than one inch.
Tasteful colored nail polish and hanging earrings, one pair, no longer than pinky width, are permissible on dress up days
At no time are bare shoulders, bare backs, bare midriffs, or low-cut necklines acceptable (no cleavage)

Dress Down Days
On designated dress down days or with a dress-down pass, students are permitted to wear casual clothes; however, please adhere to the following guidelines:

All Students
No sleeveless t-shirts
Shorts must be at least fingertip length
Slacks or jeans must be loose fitting, but not baggy (clothes must fit appropriately).
No bathing suits or board shorts
No Flip-flops. Sandals must be secured around the ankle.
Pajama pants are not acceptable
T-Shirts & attire must not be offensive, inappropriate, suggestive or graphic in nature
At no time are bare shoulders, bare backs, bare midriffs, or low-cut necklines acceptable.
No crop tops, no cold-shoulder shirts, and no distressed jeans or shorts.
No torn jeans, pants or shorts
Jeans, pants, and shorts must be worn up around the waist.
Leggings or yoga pants are prohibited.

Girls –
All dresses (whether worn with tights or not) must be at least fingertip length.
A sweater must be worn at all times on top of a "Spaghetti Strap" or sleeveless blouse or dress

Tasteful colored nail polish is permissible on dress down days (Gel, acrylic, dip polish, and other long lasting types of polish shall be removed following the dress down day)

No strapless dresses or tops – even if worn with a sweater.

The administration maintains the final say on what is considered proper length and proper sizing of all attire. If it is determined that something does not fit a student properly, the parents/guardians will be notified and expected to correct the problem promptly. Please call the school office if you have any questions.

Dress Code Violations

will be issued when students are not dressed in compliance with the school's dress code, including dress up and dress down days. Three dress code violations within a grading period will result in a conduct notice.

***Parents may be contacted to bring a change of clothes when students are dressed inappropriately.**

Hygiene and Appearance

The uniform should be clean, wrinkle and stain-free with all buttons attached and hem intact. Shirttails should be tucked in while a student is on school grounds.

Grading Scale

A+	97 - 100	A	93 - 96	A-	90 - 92
B+	87 - 89	B	83 - 87	B-	80 - 82
C+	77 - 79	C	73 - 76	C-	70 - 72
D+	67 - 69	D	63 - 66	D-	60 - 62
F	59 & below			I	incomplete

Homework

Homework assignments are given to reinforce and/or supplement concepts covered during the day. All homework is posted live to FACTS every night.

Since each student has different capabilities and interests, it would be difficult to denote the specific amount of time to be spent on an assignment. If a problem arises, the teacher should be contacted.

Middle School classes may require additional time. Homework should be done independently without assistance from parents. If a child is spending too much time or requires too much help, this could mean the student needs additional assistance from the teacher. Do not allow your child to become frustrated or confused.

Absence from school does not exempt a student from having all class work and homework assignments completed. Students should be prepared to complete all assignments that were scheduled prior to the absence upon their return. This includes tests/quizzes, projects, classwork, homework, etc.. Students should seek teacher assistance with any concerns.

Late classwork and/or homework assignments are subject to reduction of points, in grade, per day. Teachers establish individual policies regarding homework and classwork. Please refer to the teacher's syllabi for detailed policy.

Homework Room

The Homework Room is a part of the Afterschool Program. Tutors include adults and Middle School student volunteers who help students from kindergarten through eighth grade with homework, studying, and any other area in which they need assistance. It is offered Monday through Thursday from 3:30 PM to 4:30 PM. The Homework Room is part of Afterschool and included in the Afterschool fee.

Honor Roll

Principal's List "A" level work in all subjects, including conduct,
First Honors "A" level work in most areas, allowing for a maximum of two "B" level grades.
Second Honors No grade lower than "B" in any area.
Middle school mathematics classes that are two grade levels above are weighted for honor roll purposes only.

Items Brought To School

St. Matthew's School is not responsible for loss or damage to any items brought to school by a student. This includes, but is not limited to, all electronic devices (including cell phones and smartwatches), trading cards, toys, etc.. St. Matthew's School reserves the right to search any items brought to school including the contents of all electronic devices & bags).

Morning Routine

Fourth through eighth grade students wait in the small cafeteria until 7:50 AM. At 7:50 AM, 4th-8th grade students leave the small cafeteria and gather in the gym. This is a time to socialize with peers. Electronic devices are not permitted during this time. All 4th through 8th grade students and teachers should stay or return to the gym by 8:00 AM to prepare for morning prayers. At 8:05 AM, our day begins with prayers and pledge of allegiance. Students dismiss to their homerooms immediately following.

Parties

Classes are permitted (not required) three class parties a year: Halloween, Christmas, and End of the year. Room parents may assist the classroom teacher with these three parties. We request that treats be already prepared into individual servings and include ingredient labeling.

Invitations for personal slumber parties or birthday parties should be sent to the homes of students via the U.S. Mail unless an invitation is being given to every student in the entire grade.

Prayer

Prayer is an integral part of the St. Matthew's community. Aside from the start of the day, before lunch, and concluding the day, prayer is also said through various religious services, at faculty and staff meetings, and numerous parent and community events.

Before classes begin each morning, grades four through eight gather in the gym.

Following Morning prayer is the Pledge of Allegiance, the Leader in Me Pledge, and the school's mission statement.

Report Cards/Progress Reports

Progress reports are available on FACTS Family Portal. These reports help parents track the progress of their children during a marking period between report cards, which are issued quarterly. Grades are live when posted.

Safety

Bullying Policy

St. Matthew's School is committed to the well-being and safety of all our students. As a result, we take bullying behavior very seriously because it undermines our community as a whole. "Bullying" means any aggressive and unwanted behavior that is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim; involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor and victim and is repeated over time or causes severe emotional trauma. "Bullying" includes cyber-bullying. "Bullying" does not include ordinary teasing, horse play, arguing, drama, or peer conflict.

When a bullying incident is brought to administration, a thorough investigation will be conducted immediately. Students may report bullying incidents to any staff member or may utilize the anonymous bullying report forms through FACTS Family Portal - Silence Hurts & See Something Say Something Concerns. Verbal or written threats made against the physical or emotional well-being of any individual are taken very seriously. Students making such threats (seriously or in jest or online) may be in violation of the bullying policy.

If a student is found to be in violation of the bullying policy, a letter from the Principal will be sent to the parents documenting the incident, along with a principal referral.

If a student is found to be in violation of the bullying policy for a second time, the student will be expelled from St. Matthew's School.

Harassment

Harassment of any type is not tolerated. The Principal investigates all complaints of harassment. Students involved in harassing behavior face consequences.

> *Harassment is ongoing demeaning treatment of one who does not consent to the treatment. The student who makes fun of another student's appearance, weight, nationality or disability is guilty of harassment. … The most common form of harassment is bullying. The most common form of bullying is exclusion.* (Shaughnessy 61)
>
> *All persons have a right to be treated with dignity. All demeaning behavior is prohibited.*

According to the federal law, sexual harassment includes but is not limited to the following: verbal, visual, physical, threats and demands, and retaliation. (Shaughnessy 92-93)

Shaughnessy, Mary Angela, SCN, JD, PhD. "Faculty Handbooks." School Handbooks: Legal Considerations, Third Edition, National Catholic Educational Association, Arlington, VA 22201, 2017, pp 61, 92-93

Threats of Violence

Threats of violence at school will be taken seriously, regardless of the age of the student involved. To that end, if a school becomes aware that a student has threatened violence at the school, or toward other students or staff, the school principal or designated school official will contact law enforcement, the Office of Catholic Schools, and the parents of the student making the threat. The student will be immediately suspended. The student will not be allowed to return to school until the school is satisfied with the assessment by law enforcement and the student has undergone a threat assessment by a licensed mental health professional which confirms the student does not pose a threat to school safety or to themselves. The school principal, or designated official, has the right to inspect and search a student's person, the student's locker(s) or desk(s), and/or the student's personal property located on school property or at school activities if the school has reason to suspect the student poses a threat to the health, welfare and safety of students and staff. Unless the safety of other students requires prompt removal of dangerous items, law enforcement should be advised so they can arrange for removal.

School Hours

Regular School Hours		Mass Day Schedule	
7:30 AM	Doors Open	7:30 AM	Doors Open
8:05 AM	Prayers	8:05 AM	Prayers
8:15 AM	Tardy Bell Rings	8:15 AM	Tardy Bell Rings
8:15 AM - 8:25 AM	Homeroom	8:15 AM - 8:25	Homeroom
8:30 AM - 9:15 AM	1st Period	8:30 AM - 8:50 AM	Leader in Me
9:20 AM - 10:05 AM	2nd Period	8:55 AM - 9:45 AM	Mass
10:10 AM - 10:55 AM	3rd Period	9:50 AM - 10:25 AM	1st Period
11:00 AM - 11:45 AM	4th Period	10:30 AM - 11:05 AM	2nd Period
		11:10 AM - 11:45 AM	3rd Period
11:45 AM - 12:35 PM	Recess/Lunch	11:45 AM - 12:35 PM	Recess/Lunch
12:40 PM - 1:25 PM	5th Period	12:40 PM - 1:12 PM	4th Period
1:30 PM - 2:15 PM	6th Period	1:17 PM - 1:49 PM	5th Period
2:20 PM - 3:03 PM	7th Period	1:54 PM - 2:26 PM	6th Period
		2:31 PM - 3:03 PM	7th Period
3:03 PM - 3:15 PM	Homeroom	3:03 PM - 3:15 PM	Homeroom

Lunch Times

6th	12:10 PM	7th	12:10 PM	8th	12:10 PM

Technology

Artificial Intelligence Guidelines

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the ability to reshape education. When used properly, AI can be used to help jumpstart a project or idea, enhance a student's skill set, and help analyze information. However, it is crucial to recognize that along with these potential benefits, there are also risks associated with AI. These risks include privacy and security issues, bias in algorithms and relying too heavily on these tools. Students may become overly dependent on AI, potentially hindering their ability to develop essential critical thinking, analytical, and problem-solving skills. Therefore, students should not use Artificial Intelligence unless specifically allowed by the teacher. We feel that using AI requires instruction and balance so as to enhance the learning experience and not replace it.

Bring Your Own Device

Students in fifth grade and above MUST bring an approved device to school to be used in class with the teacher's permission.

Students are permitted to bring Electronic Book Readers (e-Readers) to school. Teachers establish policies in their classrooms for use of e-Readers.

Students wishing to use their devices should never be in motion.

Cell Phone/SmartWatch Policy

The practice of students bringing cell phones/SmartWatches to school is strongly discouraged. However, if a student needs a cell phone/SmartWatch for medical purposes [with doctor's orders], students may bring the cell phone/SmartWatch to school. **SmartWatches capable of making/receiving calls/text messages, shall not be worn during school hours.**

Phones must be turned off when students enter the building in the morning. Students shall keep their cell phone in their locker. Phones may not be used at all during school time.

After 4:30 PM, cell phones may be used in the Afterschool program. When connecting to our wireless network, students MUST connect to the open network SMS WiFi using their St. Matthew's computer credentials on the browser splash page. Students may seek help from the IT staff, if needed. Students are not allowed to connect to SMS Guest for wireless access and will be in violation of our cell phone, device, SmartWatch, etc. policy if they do so. Students are not allowed to access cellular data plans or Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) on any device at any time to circumvent St. Matthew's filters and policies. Students using cellphones in Afterschool are expected to follow all St. Matthew's policies, including those concerning social media, unauthorized pictures, videos, etc.

With a parent's written permission, cell phones may be used on the school bus traveling to and from school, as there is no content filtering on the bus. Students doing so are expected to abide by the Acceptable Use Policy, as the bus is school property. This applies to students of all ages. Students on a field trip are not allowed to use their cell phones.

Any violations of the rules regarding cell phones/smartwatches may result in:

1st offense

- phone/smartwatch is confiscated and sent to the office to be picked up by student and parent
- Cell Phone/SmartWatch Policy is reviewed

2nd offense

- phone/smartwatch is confiscated and sent to the office to be picked up by parent or guardian
- student receives a Conduct Notice
- lost privilege of bringing a phone to school

3rd offense

- phone/smartwatch is confiscated and sent to the office to be picked up by parent or guardian
- student receives a principal referral
- loss cell phone privilege
- a day of In School Suspension.

4th offense

- phone/smartwatch is confiscated and sent to the office to be picked up by parent or guardian
- student and parents meet with principal to discuss further consequences

The school is not responsible for lost or damaged phones or smartwatches.

Chromebook Use

All students are permitted to borrow St. Matthew's Chromebooks. Students may only check out a St. Matthew's chromebook during the open computer lab times. (see Computer Lab)

Students may return Chromebooks at any time throughout the day outside class times (between classes, recess, after school). However, Chromebooks must be returned to the computer lab (at the very latest) before dismissal prayers). Failure to do so, may result in no longer being permitted to borrow a Chromebook.

Computer Lab

During the school day, sixth grade students will have Technology class in the Computer Lab twice a week, either first and third quarter or second and fourth quarter. Seventh grade students will have Technology class in the Computer Lab four times a week, either first and third quarter or second and fourth quarter. The quarter that students are not in Technology class, is the quarter those students have Art class.

There are designated times when the Computer Lab is open for student use outside of normal Technology class time.

Open Hours

0730 - 0750 by appointment only

0750 - 0800
0810 - 0820
1240 - 1310
1503 - 1525 by appointment only

During Open Lab Hours, students may work on school related assignments, researching, projects, and/or printing. St. Matthew's desktop computers, laptops, chromebooks, and other devices are for school use only. Accessing personal accounts (whether it's email or internet-based apps) are not permitted on school computers or devices at any time. Attaching any personal peripherals are also not permitted unless otherwise directed.

Headphones/Music
Like cell phones, headphone use will be limited to only in Afterschool. Students wishing to use their devices should not be in motion. For the safety of all students, faculty, and staff, students may only use one headphone/earbud at a time and should never use personal devices when in motion as all students should have full focus on their surroundings.

Online Instruction Behavior Guidelines

- In the event that instruction should be online students should:
- Be respectful of the teacher and other students
- Use their correct names
- Be seated in a chair or at a desk – not in bed
- Not use cell phones during instruction
- Be dressed appropriately – follow Dress Drown Policy
- Understand that the session may be recorded
- Never share log-in information
- No eating during instruction
- Pets should not be in the learning session
- Due to confidentiality guidelines, only the student enrolled in the class should be present in the session.

Students involved in inappropriate online behavior may be separated from the session and not allowed to return until a conference has been held with the student and the parent/guardian to review policy.

Photography
The taking of photographs and video on school grounds on personal or school-issued devices without administrative permission is prohibited. Transmitting, forwarding, sharing or posting inappropriate photos or videos using cell phones, computers, or other technology (whether on or off school premises), is forbidden. Students and/or Parents/Guardians may not record another student, parent, or teacher without the express written permission of the individual being recorded. Failure to comply with this policy may result in the student/family being involuntarily separated from the school.

School Computers
St. Matthew’s provides students access to a computer lab for instruction, research, reports, and/or independent work. St. Matthew’s also has Chromebooks that elementary teachers may “check out” to help enhance

classroom lessons. Prior to being given access to the School's computers and Internet, students and their parent(s) must sign the online ***Technology and Internet Acceptable Use Agreement***. Students using removable storage without authorization or wastefully using resources will be in violation of this policy.

Social Networking Guidelines

Social networking has revolutionized the way we communicate and share information with one another. The term social networking includes, but is not confined to the use of blogs/wikis, message boards/forums, FaceBook, Pinterest, Reddit, Instagram, Snapchat, Vine, Twitter, Threads, LinkedIn and other posting technologies such as YouTube, TikTok, Tumblr, WhatsApp, etc.

Below are guidelines for social media networking. They should not be considered all-inclusive, but serve as guidance.

1. An expectation of students' conduct encompasses online activity. It extends to the use of social networking sites and covers issues such as bullying, harassing and defaming that might occur online.
2. Please be aware that words and images posted online may be available for years, even if deleted.
3. Personal profiles should not indicate personal information such as full name, address, phone number, and planned personal activities.
4. Anything posted online is available to the world. Therefore, students should take care when posting online comments and information. Profiles may be viewed by future employers, high school, and college admissions officials, as well as identity thieves, spammers and stalkers.
5. Do not post information about others, including all cautions noted above. Pictures, images, and recorded videos of other students should not be posted or tagged without their permission.
6. Be cautious when friending someone online. Friends online should be friends in person.
7. Students should check what friends are posting. Information posted by others can still put the student at risk.
8. Be wary if a new online contact wants to meet in person. Always discuss a potential meeting with parents first.
9. Students who feel threatened by someone or uncomfortable because of something online should confide in an adult.
10. Bullying, harassment and defamation are unacceptable. Reporting this type of conduct could prevent someone else from becoming a victim.
11. Students should abide by age restrictions on social networking sites.
12. Emails: emailing a teacher or SMS staff member outside of official business is prohibited. Students shall refrain from contacting staff members with any issues outside of school; IE homework, absences, or questions about assignments.

Bottom line: As a student, only post what your parents, grandparents, teachers, friends, principal, and neighbors can read/see.

Student Accounts

All first through eighth grade students utilized various student accounts to enhance learning.

Student Account Do's and Don'ts

Do's:

- use accounts in and out of school as instructed to do so (if not instructed, always ask)
- use Google email accounts predominantly for teacher communication

- check email often, especially after emailing a teacher
- use email for communicating with teachers about homework, absences, questions or concerns about assignments
- use accounts for educational purposes only to enhance class instruction

Don'ts:

- use accounts for personal play
- log in or attempt to log in another student's account
- use accounts to play games
- change profile picture to anything other than the default Google settings or your own school picture (In other words, profile pictures should be an image of the student for whom the account belongs to, or the default colored circle with the first letter of the student's first name.)
- use email to chat, spam, cyberbully anyone in the St. Matthew's community (teachers or other students)

St. Matthew's Google Workspace for Education

St. Matthew's uses Google Workspace for Education. We provide and manage a Google Workspace for Education account for your student. Google Workspace for Education is a set of education productivity tools from Google including Gmail (students can only receive email from St. Matthew's accounts). Calendar, Docs, Classroom and more. Students will use their Google accounts to complete assignments, communicate with teachers, sign into chromebooks and learn 21st century digital citizenship skills. Further, we allow students to access teacher-approved third-party services with their SMS Google accounts. Our school administrator enables access to these third-party services with your student's Google Workspace for Education account, and authorizes the disclosure of data, as requested by the third party services. The only personal information St. Matthew's shares with Google is the student's name. You can learn more about Google's Workspace for Education Privacy Notice here. Please bring any concerns to Mr. Goldberg (or Mrs. Olivar).

Technology and Internet Acceptable Use Policy

Catholic Diocese of Richmond

St. Matthew's School

Technology is an essential educational tool whose use must be grounded in the values and mission of Catholic education. All users, faculty, staff, administrators, and students are expected to exhibit high standards of behavior at all times when using the Internet, email, and other technology.

The use of the School's network and the Internet is a privilege, not a right. The use of computer systems and the Internet at School must be in support of the educational mission and objectives of the Diocese of Richmond and of the School. Inappropriate use may result in cancellation of those privileges. Based upon the Acceptable Use Policy guidelines in this document, the Principal will deem what is inappropriate use and his/her decision is final. In addition, the Principal has the right to close an account at any time. School authorities may take other disciplinary actions for any unacceptable behavior. The administration, faculty and staff may request that the Principal deny or revoke specific user access. Additionally, the cost of any repairs caused by inappropriate behavior will be the responsibility of the student and his/her family.

Prior to being given access to the School's computers and Internet, students and their parent(s) (when a student is under the age of 18), must return the signed Technology and Internet Acceptable Use Contract.

System users at School have no right to privacy and should have no expectation of privacy in materials sent, received, or stored in School-owned computers or on the School network. All communications (including email) and information accessible via the network is School property. Messages relating to or in support of illegal activities may be reported to authorities. The technology coordinator/system administrator supervises the use of the network by students and school personnel. He/she has access to all files and email and may authorize access, as necessary.

Security on our computer system is a high priority. Anyone with reason to suspect a security problem on the School network must notify an appropriate authority.

At School, the faculty and staff blend thoughtful use of computers and the Internet throughout the curriculum and provide guidance and instruction to students in their use. The School provides controls and filtering protection on the School's network. Outside of School, families bear responsibility for the education and monitoring of their students in Internet and computer usage much as they do with television, telephones, radio, movies, and other media. The School may not be held responsible for users' intentional misuse of the Internet or equipment.

Acceptable Computer and/or Internet Use

1. The School's technology is meant for educational purposes: classroom instruction, research, and/or approved projects. To accomplish these goals, the School's computers may be used for accessing research databases and libraries of information in the form of text, graphics, photographs, video, and sound, as well as for interacting and collaborating with others.

2. Users are expected to abide by the generally accepted rules of network etiquette. These include (but are not limited to) being polite, using appropriate language, properly citing and/or obtaining permission for all information from research sources when the information used from those sources is included in a work as a direct quote or paraphrase.

Unacceptable Behaviors must be promptly reported to the Principal or his/her designee includes, but not limited to the following:

1. Refusing to abide by the generally accepted rules of network etiquette as mentioned above.
2. Attempting to log on to the School network or the Internet using a user ID/password other than his/her own. Sharing passwords or trespassing in other folders, work, or files.
3. Sending any written comment or picture that is malicious regarding another student or individual. All forms of e-communication harassment of any kind, unfounded accusations, derogatory remarks, confidential information, or promotion of illegal or immoral behavior.
4. Sending and receiving of any material in violation of any national, state, or local regulation. This includes, but is not limited to, copyrighted, threatening or obscene material.
5. Using School name or logo on personal websites. The School discourages revealing personal information on the Internet and can make no guarantees of privacy or security when the user shares personal information on non-secure websites.
6. Publishing information on the Internet, such as blogging, that brings discredit to the School (whether on or off School premises).
7. Non-School related social contacts between faculty/staff and students.
8. Any access to inappropriate materials that are offensive graphically or display unlawful messages, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, threatening, and/or illegal content or downloading/installing unapproved software.
9. Damaging/vandalizing computers (including the uploading or creation of viruses), systems, networks, or any peripherals, attempting to gain access to unauthorized sources, attempting to harm or destroy data of another user, or attempting to circumvent protective security software.
10. Using network in any way that will limit or disrupt network use or attempting to alter School system settings or data.
11. Using the network for political or commercial purposes such as endorsing political candidates or selling items or services.
12. Assisting others in violating any of these policies. 13. Abuse or fraudulent use of the computer system, network or Internet not specifically mentioned.

Prohibited unless authorized by the Administration:

1. Access to personal email, chatting, instant messaging, or discussion boards

Any user identified as a security risk or having a history of problems with other computer systems may be denied access to the computers and Internet.

Bring Your Own Device Policy

Our middle school and fifth grade programs incorporate technology into the classroom instruction, now more than ever. For this school year, we are requiring all students, fifth grade and up, to bring a chromebook from home, which is the only approved device. Students in second through fourth grade are encouraged to bring a personal chromebook, but it is not required at that age. A school chromebook can be checked out when necessary.

Similar to other personally owned items, St. Matthew's School is not liable for the loss, damage, misuse, or theft of personally owned devices brought to school. St. Matthew's School will not provide technical support for personally owned devices. Students should bring their devices to each class throughout the day. We believe that utilizing these devices will result in numerous benefits to instruction, resources, completion of assignments and personal organization.

Parents are encouraged to provide the student with a case or protective sleeve for the device.

Expectations:

1. Students will only use appropriate technology at the teachers' discretion.
2. Students will only use appropriate educational applications on their device (i.e. not games and/or non-school related tasks and functions.)
3. Students are not to call, text message, email, or electronically communicate with others from their personal device, including other students, parents, guardians, friends, and family during the school day unless otherwise directed.
4. Understand that when using personal devices at St. Matthew's, students should always connect to the wireless network SMS WiFi using SMS computer credentials, when using the internet. This applies twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Students are not to connect to our guest network and will be given aid connecting to the student network. Students who use private networks (3G, 4G, hotspot, etc.) or the guest network at school to access information will be subject to disciplinary and legal action, resulting in the loss of the privilege of bringing the device to school which may have adverse effects on the learning experience.
5. Due to limited desk space and for the safety of the device, any device brought to school must have a screen size less than 12".
6. Students will not necessarily be allowed to charge their devices at school. Battery life varies by device, so please keep this in mind when choosing a device. Most devices should last a full school day. You can purchase spare batteries for some devices, as well as portable battery-powered chargers.
7. Students should label their devices with their names for easy recognition. If it is possible to name the device itself, it should include the student's first and last name.

Students will be required to install an extension on their devices that allows teachers to instruct and visually/audibly monitor, as well as interact with their students, individually, as a pre-defined group or to the whole class. This helps to improve student engagement, provide teachers with real-time feedback, and help to ensure that all students are on the same page.

Students not following expectations for use of personal devices will face school disciplinary measures and lose the privilege to utilize personal devices in school for a period of time commensurate with the infraction.
We are excited about the educational opportunities this brings to our students and staff and understand that there are some challenges as technology constantly changes. Thank you for your understanding and reinforcement of these procedures and expectations for this initiative.

Right to Amend

St. Matthew's School reserves the right to amend this Handbook. Notice of amendments will be communicated to parents.

***Any issue not covered in this Parent/Student Middle School Handbook is addressed on an individual basis.