**INTRODUCTION**

**Welcome to St. Matthew’s Catholic School!**

To those families entering St. Matthew’s School for the first time, we hope this is the beginning of many enjoyable and successful years in our school community.

To those families returning to St. Matthew’s School, we wish your children continued success and look forward to seeing them grow in maturity and leadership.

Our students are respected and loved as unique children of God. Each has special gifts and talents, as well as special needs. Each requires and obtains personalized attention as he or she grows in the proper relationship to self, God, others, and the world.

**Mission Statement**

St. Matthew’s Catholic School will provide a nurturing and enriching environment that teaches Gospel values and promotes academic excellence in the Catholic tradition.

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

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# History of St. Matthew School

The Sisters of Mercy from the Sacred Heart Convent in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, came to Kalispell to open St. Matthew’s School in 1917. On September 10th of that year, the school was dedicated, with an enrollment of 65 children. The school began as a combination convent and school, with boarders, grades 1-9. Grades 10-12 were added within the first four years.

The high school was discontinued in 1941. St. Matthew’s Parish bought the school and property from the Sisters of Mercy in 1956 and built a new building on the site. In 1958 St. Matthew’s School began in the new building, which still houses the school today. In the 1970’s the seventh and eighth grade closed but were added back in 2001 and 2002. Kindergarten was added in 1976, and preschool classes were added in 1982.

St. Matthew’s School currently includes preschool through eighth grade.

# Purpose of the Handbook

The policies contained in this handbook were written in the interest of the parents, children, teachers, staff, and administration of our school. We hope you find this handbook a useful tool as well as a reference guide during the coming year. As other pertinent policies and programs are formulated and finalized, additional printed material will be sent to you. Please keep this handbook handy for future reference.

Pastoral Care of All Students. St. Matthew’s School ensures that disciplinary measures and sanctions are approached, not merely as punitive actions, but as concerted efforts to foster responsibility for action and to change and heal destructive behavior and breaches of order. At St. Matthew’s, we affirm each other’s worth and dignity within an atmosphere where Gospel values and attitudes are nurtured. We see the implementation of our disciplinary measures as a positive step towards creating this within our school environment.

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# School Personnel

## Administration

| **Fr. Stanislaw Rog** | Pastor |
| --- | --- |
| **Dr. Susy Peterson** | Principal |
| **Mrs. Michelle Ottosen** | School Secretary |
| **Ms. Theresa Surynt** | Registrar |

##  Faculty

|  **Lona Cross** | Kindergarten |
| --- | --- |
| **Susie Rainwater** | 1st Grade |
| **Mary Wagner** | 2nd Grade |
| **Rachel Schaefer** | 3rd Grade |
| **Denise Spiess** | 4th-5th Grade Math and Science |
| **Seth Johnson** | 4th – 5th Grade Language Arts and Social Studies |
| **Sr. Judy Lund, O.P.** | 4th, 5th, and 6th Grade Religion |
| **John Bacon** | 7th - 8th Grade Religion |
| **Loretta Cornish** | 6th - 8th Grade Math |
| **Emmy Hartney** | 6th -8th Science |
| **Loretta Huibregtse** | 6th - 8th Grade Social Studies |
| **Rhonda Hawkins** | 6th - 8th Grade Lang. Arts |
| **Catherine Carter** | K - 8 Music |
| **Phil Jackson** | K- 8th  Grade PEK- 3rd Grade Computers  |
| **Shelby Barron** | Art |
| **Jessica and Leo Chen** | Strings |
| **Jody Eichner** | Library |
| **Andrea Hanson** | PreK Academy, Co-Director |
| **Sarah Baker** | PreK Academy, Co-Director |
| **Korrie Deda** | PreK Academy, Teacher |
| **April Dimeo** | PreK Academy, Teacher |
| **Chaela Manning** | PreK Part Time, Teacher |

## Support Staff

| **Jimmy Smith** | Maintenance |
| --- | --- |
| **Stephanie Hammett** | Kitchen Supervisor |

# The Supporting Catholic Community

## Diocese of Helena

1 (800) 584-8914

* Most Reverend Austin Anthony Vetter, Bishop
* Mr. Jim Carney, Finance Officer
* Sr. Rita McGinnis, Chancery Director
* Fr. John Robertson, Chancellor
* Msgr. Kevin O’Neill, Vicar General

## St. Matthew Parish Office

Phone Number: 752-6788

* Kim Maes, Administrative Assistant and Music Liturgy
* Megan Holt, Bookkeeper
* Jeanne O’Connell, Pastoral Assistant
* Mike Huekhang, Pastoral Assistant
* John Bacon, Director of Religious Education

## FACE Scrip

Phone Number: 752-1040 Phone number : 752-6788

* Dave Hergesheimer, Jordahl & Sliter , Program Director

## Members of the School Advisory Council

* Fr. Stan
* Don Herne
* Chaela Manning
* Mark Cross
* Brian Heino
* Mary Ahner
* Holly Steurer
* Julie Robertson

## Members of the Parish Finance Council

* Fr. Stanislaw Rog
* Mark Cross
* Megan Holt
* Dr. Susy Peterson
* Ellen Reis
* Mark Salansky
* Reed Gunlickson
* Dc. Charlie Harball
* Justin Ahman
* Ken Parker
* John Hamman

## The Role of the Bishop

Appointed by the Holy Father, the bishop is the man to whom the care of a given diocese is entrusted. The bishop is the shepherd or head of the diocese and retains all responsibility and authority of the Catholic institution. Under the Bishop’s leadership and vision, the diocese is divided into parishes - a “certain community of Christ’s faithful stably established within a particular Church, whose pastoral care, under the authority of the diocesan Bishop” (Canon Law Society, 1983).

The bishop has the right and responsibility to watch over and inspect the Catholic schools situated in his territory, and he has the right to issue directives concerning the general regulation of Catholic schools. So that Catholic school is synonymous with educational excellence, those who oversee Catholic schools are to ensure, under the supervision of the local Ordinary, that the formation given in them is, in its academic standards, at least as outstanding as that in other schools in the area (Canon 806 ß 1 & 2).

## The Role of the Pastor

The bishop appoints to each parish a parish priest as its pastor who is responsible for providing the educational, spiritual, and sacramental needs of the parishioners, as well as for administering all of the parish goods in accordance with the law. The pastor has many responsibilities within his parish community that include, but are not limited to, presiding at Mass, administering the sacraments, leading prayer, visiting the sick, conducting funerals, and bringing the gospel to those who no longer practice the faith. In addition, in all juridical matters, the parish priest acts in the person of the parish, in accordance with the law. He is to ensure that the parish goods are administered in accordance with canon 1281-1288” (Canon Law Society, 1983).

The pastor possesses both the responsibility and canonical authority to hire a principal, teachers, and staff to operate the school. The pastor clearly is not only the pastor of the parish but also the pastor of the school. However, when a pastor hires a principal to be the administrator of the school, he is to permit the principal to become the leader of the school and support the principal in this leadership role. The pastor should attempt to be available to the principal and be willing to help the principal with any reasonable requests that the principal may have of him, depending on his specific talents and gifts (Gilbert, 1983).

Aside from the hiring of the principal, one of the most important roles of the pastor in respect to the school is addressing the spiritual and pastoral needs of the school employees, the students, and their families. The pastor is also involved in the school governance, which in most cases he establishes a local parish school boards/council/commission that is advisory or consultative. When it comes to policy development, this body formulates policy that is recommended to the pastor. It is then the pastor’s responsibility to enact the policy; and the principal’s responsibility to implement it (Sheehan, 1990, Geelan, 2000).

Therefore, the pastor’s primary role in the school is to be focused on spiritual and pastoral leadership of the school, hiring and supervising the principal, and overseeing school policies, including those of the financial kind. Furthermore, his role in the Catholic school also includes his presence during school events; his willingness to make certain that the school is integrated into parish life; his desire to ensure that the school has established both short- and long-term plans; and his willingness to share his experience in both life and ministry, as well as provide his insights regarding the parish community’s expectations for the school (Drahmann, 1985, Barrett 1996).

##

## The Role of the School Advisory Council

Since Vatican Council II (1962-1965), the Catholic Church motivates the establishing and fostering of councils for Catholic Schools to:

* Promote the concept of lay ministry and responsibility.
* Develop ownership and stability for the future.
* Offer financial advice.
* Develop and defend policy.
* Serve as a good public relations source.
* Enable the principal to spend adequate time as an educational leader.

Just as a parish council serves with the pastor on behalf of the total parish community, so the School Advisory Council serves with the school administration on behalf of the total school community. Today’s Catholic school administrators, with the many demands that are made, need assistance from a group of people who are committed to Catholic schools and are willing to work for the good of the schools and Catholic community.

The School Advisory Council is a body of dedicated men and women willing to participate in the policy-making process by formulating, adapting, and recommending policy to the person with authority to enact it (school administrator). The council is, by its very nature, advisory to the school administrator and the pastor. As a consultative body, their advice is sought because it is valued yet the school administrator and pastor are not bound by the council's advice.

Ordinarily, the school administrator (and pastor) participates in all regular, special and executive session meetings of the council. They have final approval of all Advisory Council decisions.

The Advisory Council has a unique relationship within the school community. It relates in a formal way, through a liaison, to the local Parish Council(s). It relates to the school faculty and staff through the school administrator. And it represents its constituents: parents, guardians and parishioners. The School Advisory Council members act as members only at official council meetings or when otherwise directed.

The Bishop appoints members of the Advisory Council because he not only values their advice and consultation, he is also aware that leading a Catholic school is a very complicated and arduous task. Hence, the Advisory Council is established to assist the school administrator and pastor in making decisions that affect school operations. In essence, no decision regarding Catholic school operations should be made by the school administrator and/or pastor, until they have solicited and received objective and prudent advice from the school’s Advisory Council.

With this in mind, it is also important to recognize that Catholic schools exist to serve parents and their children, to help parents share their faith heritage with their children as well as provide them with a quality education. The School Advisory Council then, is seen as representative of the parents, a group constituted to reflect parental thought and aspirations, and to marshal parental talent. Members of the School Advisory Council have an obligation of accountability to these constituents. That obligation implies a large measure of open, two-way communication. This does not require that the School Advisory Council does all of its business in a fishbowl but council and/or committee meetings need not be open to the public.

# Student Spiritual Life

## Catholic Students Code of Ethics

### Commitment to the Student

As Catholic school students, we believe that we are pilgrim people, making our journey through this life with a constant focus on the next. As Catholic Christian students, we have a special responsibility to encourage each other to achieve our maximum potential. We work to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge, and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals.

### Commitment to our Family

As Catholic school students, we believe that we are influenced by home, community, and a society in which attitude toward Christian values is often challenged. Our parents, the source from whom we derive our values, entrust us to the Catholic school to instruct, complement, and intensify the education and formation begun at home. We are called to support our parents in fulfilling their obligation for the Christian formation and education of their child.

### Commitment to the Community

As Catholic school students, we believe the school community is both an agent of appropriate change and a preserver of basic tradition. We consider the school community an integral part of the parish whose people it serves, and a vital force for preparing future civic and Church leaders.

### Commitment to Learning

As Catholic school students, we believe that academic excellence in Catholic schools directly influences our Church, country, and world. We strive to create a Christian environment that promotes sound moral and professional judgment. Through our spirit of joy and enthusiasm, we encourage others to join us in our search of the Truth in school.

## Catholic Liturgies and Retreats

All faculty, staff and students shall participate in regularly scheduled, celebrations of Eucharist, Liturgy, and Retreats. Although many students attending St. Matthew may not be Catholic, it is expected that as members of the Catholic school, they attend all liturgies in support of the Catholic Faith, practices, and rituals.

## Daily Prayer

As a Catholic School, basic practices reflect a Christian Orientation to God. Prayer is an essential part of this orientation. Therefore, each school day will begin and end with a prayer in the classroom.

# Daily Schedule

* School begins at 8:15 am and is dismissed at 3:15 pm.
* The school will provide playground supervision beginning at 7:50 am.
* 8:15 First Bell – Students should be in homeroom
* 8:20 – School Wide Prayer and Announcments
* 8:25 School in session

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## Before School Care Schedule (K-8th Grade)

| Monday – Friday (days in which school was in session only) 7:15 – 8:00 am |
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## After School Care Schedule (K-8th Grade)

| Monday – Friday (days in which school was in session only) 3:15 – 5:30 pm |
| --- |

## ½ Day Preschool Schedule (3, 4, and 5 year old children)

Tuesday-Thursday 8:30 – 11:30 am 751-6812

## St. Matthew’s Catholic Pre-K Academy

| Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 5:30 pm 756-6807 |
| --- |

# Academic Achievement

## Midterm Progress Reports

To facilitate effective, home-school communication, a midterm progress report will be provided to parents at the mid-point of each grading term for grades 5-8.

* The midterm progress report needs to be signed by a parent or guardian and returned to school.

## Report Cards

Report Cards will be available at the end of each quarterly grading term for all students in grades 1st - 8th.

Kindergarten students receive report cards second semester.

## Honor Roll

Students in grades 5th-8th may qualify for St. Matthew’s School Honor Roll if their grade point average is 3.33 or higher.

Honor Roll is announced at Mass following the end of the quarter.

## Grading Scale

The following grading scale is applied for letter grades:

A (100-95) A- (94) B+ (93) B (87-92) B- (86) C+ (85) C (79-84) C- (78)

D+ (77) D (69-78) D-(69)

# School Attendance

## Absences

St. Matthew’s School recognizes that school attendance has a direct impact on a student’s level of academic achievement. It is essential that students participate in class activities as fully as possible. In addition, because our curriculum is heavily devoted to hands-on, experiential, and cooperative learning activities, student presence is an essential element of our educational philosophy. Therefore, our absentee procedure strongly supports academic participation.

School attendance, according to the State of Montana, is ultimately the responsibility of the student and his/her family and the responsibility of St. Matthew’s is to provide, monitor, and adjust appropriate attendance procedures to enhance the curriculum and educational opportunities.

When a child is absent, the parent is required to notify the school office that day by 9:30 A.M. This is to be done every day that the student is absent unless the parent states the number of days in advance.

A parent decides when an absence is necessary, but St. Matthew School determines the type of absence that obligates the teacher to assist in make-up work and those for which disciplinary consequences may be appropriate.

* Attendance associated discipline is recorded on an annual basis. In the case of those students who are repeatedly absent and choose to not take school attendance seriously, the school will provide continual consequences that may ultimately end up in a student expulsion.

### Type I Absence

A student is considered to have a Type I Absence when:

* He/she has a medical, dental, and/or counseling appointment that cannot be scheduled outside school hours
* He/she has a serious illness or death in the family
* He/she is dismissed from school for a school sponsored activity
* He/she is in a school counseling meeting
* He/she is on a religious / school retreat
* He/she is meeting requirements to satisfy the law

For planned absences (i.e., family trip) we ask that students obtain the projected missing schoolwork before, if available.

For unplanned absences (i.e., illness), we ask that parents contact the teacher to request the missing schoolwork.

For Type I Absences, the student will have an equal number of days to make up the missing schoolwork, as they were absent from school.

### Type II Absence

Type II Absences are for any reason not specified as Type I.

For example, a student is considered to have a Type II Absence when:

* The parents fail to notify the Office of the absence prior to the start of the school day
* The student overslept or was too tired
* The student stayed home to study
* The student had an avoidable appointment (i.e. haircut)
* The student has a history of missing a particular day (i.e. test day)

For Type II Absences, teachers are not required to assist the student with make-up school work and have the discretion to accept any late assignment.

### Maximum Allowable Absences

In order to receive credit and move to the next grade level, a student shall not miss more than 11% of the academic term (For a school year with 180 instructional days, this would equate to a maximum of 10 missed days per semester or 20 days per year) (Diocesan Policy).

* If a student exceeds the maximum allowable absences for the school year, he/she shall not be allowed to receive credit for having successfully completed / passed the grade level
* The school may deny the student admission into the next grade level.
* The school may require the student to successfully participate in summer school to advance to the next grade level.
* The school may implement other appropriate steps that the circumstance may dictate.
* A mid-semester summary of absences will be sent to parents with midterm grades. It is the family’s responsibility to be aware of the maximum number of absences and possible loss of credit.

### Extension Request

In the rare event when a student has exceeded the maximum allowable number of absences, the student and/or parents/guardians may formally request an extension to this absence policy by contacting the school administration and requesting an extension of the 11% rule.

* Reasons for requesting an extension include extended illness or extenuating medical circumstance and/or extenuating personal or family circumstances.

## Tardies

Students are considered tardy after 8:20 A.M.

* If arriving after 8:25, students must check in with the school office before reporting to class. Excessive tardiness will affect academic standing and may jeopardize the student’s advancement.

## Sign In / Sign Out -

In the interest of providing a safe school environment, only parents/guardians can “Sign Out” or “Sign In” a student from and/or to school.

When parents request an early dismissal, a note must be sent to the school office giving the reason, and the time the student will be picked up and returned to school.

* Before a student may leave the classroom for a parent-requested dismissal, the parent must come to the office and sign him/her out.
* When returning to school, it expected that the parent/guardian “Sign In” the student.

# Student Dress and Personal Appearance

The dress and appearance of students will be neat, clean, and reflect due regard for legitimate sensibilities that support the mission of Catholic education. Proper student attire is clean, neat, practical, and modest. It enhances the learning atmosphere. In cooperation with the parents, Catholic school students will attend school appropriately dressed. School attire should demonstrate that the student has both a sense of personal dignity and a sense of what is appropriate for the Catholic School environment. Appropriate attire takes into consideration Christian modesty, health, comfort, and pride in personal appearance, as well as avoidance of distracting influences. Clothing and physical appearance should be an outward expression of the Catholic community and should exemplify the school’s distinction from other schools while allowing student freedoms as well as corresponding responsibilities (Diocesan Policy).

## St. Matthew Dress Code

In support of the Diocesan policy, St. Matthew’s School believes that a student’s appearance has an impact on his or her attitude and behavior at school. Our Dress Code/Uniform policy has been established to help create a positive school climate. Students are to abide by this policy to emphasize standards of neatness in grooming, uniformity in our school’s image, and pride in our school. Clothes must always conform to rules of modesty, good taste, and appropriateness.

We ask that parents support the school uniform policy, for parental cooperation is necessary to maintain a uniform dress code.

* It is the parent’s responsibility to ensure the uniform regulations are followed.

## Dress Code Guidelines

### Dress

Students are expected to be always in uniform beginning the first day of school unless a special-dress day has been designated (Catholic Schools Week, etc.)

The uniform shall consist of an approved shirt and pants, of an approved color, with an approved school logo on the upper left side.

* Shirts must be tucked in at Mass on Fridays.
* All clothing will be clean and in good repair (no holes, tears, frayed edges, or stains).
* Clothing will not be excessively worn, faded, or patched.
* Clothing should be an appropriate size
* Students grow throughout the school year, so please check periodically that skirts and shorts are still no more than three inches above the knee, and shirts are still long enough that they stay tucked in
* Jackets are not allowed in the classroom.
* For the cold months, the options include long-sleeved shirts, sweatshirts without hoods, and long sleeves under polos.
* Hats, caps, and scarves are only allowed outside school facilities.
* No flip-flops and athletic sandals (slides).
* No jeans/denim material except on Wednesday.
* Label all articles of clothing with the child's name, and regularly check the lost and found box for missing items.
* Unclaimed articles are periodically donated to a second-hand store.

### Grooming

* All students are encouraged to take pride in how they dress by always being neat, clean, and well-groomed.
* Make-up of any kind is not allowed in grades K-5th.
* A modest amount of makeup is permitted in grades 6th - 8th.
* Only ears may be pierced.
* No extreme hairstyles or colors are allowed.

### The administration of St. Matthew’s School is the final interpreter of the dress code and personal appearance.

## Purchasing Uniforms

Uniform shirts may be purchased from Old Navy, Lands’ End, or the school. Shirts with Logos are available at Lands’ End, when ordering from their school uniform catalog. Embroidery can be arranged through Stumptown Stitch in Whitefish, (406) 862-4676.

## Dress Code

### Shirts

* Polo Shirts with short or long-sleeves and approved pullovers.
* Shirts shall be solid colors only: red, navy or white (grades 6 – 8 only)
* Must be embroidered on the upper left side with the Official St. Matthew’s logo
* Sweatshirts (without hoods), sweaters (cardigan or crewneck) and fleece vests may be worn over the uniform shirt.
* These items must have a St. Matthew’s logo and must be one of the above colors.
* Shirts worn under sweatshirts, sweaters, or vests must be one of the approved uniform shirts.

### Jumpers - K - 4th only

* Jumpers may be worn over an approved shirt, as above.
* Jumpers shall be Plaid and from Land’s End.
* Must be embroidered with the Official St. Matthew’s logo.
* Jumper length should not be shorter than three inches above the knee, even if worn with leggings or bike shorts.

### Pants

* Pants must be worn around the waist.
* Pants shall be navy or khaki.
* No sweatpants or athletic pants except during gym class.

### Shorts

* Shorts are allowed from April 1st to November 1st.
* Shorts shall be navy or khaki.

### Skirts and Dresses:

* Skirts and dresses may not be shorter than 3” above the knee, even if leggings or bike shorts are worn underneath.

## Mass / Liturgy Dress

* On Mass days, students should dress in approved navy or khaki pants, skirts, or jumpers and a white dress shirt (not a polo shirt) and necktie or bowtie.
* No athletic sandals (slides) or flip flops
* Students are not expected to remain in Mass dress shirt all day but may change into a school uniform shirt or St. Matthew’s approved spirit shirt or hoodie.

## Game Day Dress Code

* Students participating in St. Matthew’s team sports (basketball, volleyball, track & field, tennis, or football) may wear their team jersey over their uniform on game days.
* A school uniform shirt must be worn under the jersey.
* School issued warm-up shirt may be worn (no uniform shirt necessary).

## Field Trip Dress Code

When on field trips, students are representing St. Matthew’s School and uniforms will be at the discretion of the teacher.

Approved Logo:



## Dress Code Violations

If the Dress Code policy is not followed, the following actions will be taken.

* **1ST Infraction:** Student will be sent home with a “Uniform Slip” explaining the violation, which is to be signed by the parent and returned to the homeroom teacher the next day.
* If the slip is not returned, a phone call will be placed to the parent.
* If warranted, a student will be provided with an appropriate school shirt for the day.
* **2ND** **Infraction**: Student will call the parent at home or work and ask a parent to bring appropriate clothes to school.
* **3RD Infraction:** In a semester student will lose free dress day privileges. At the discretion of the principal.

## A student will receive an after-school detention (5th-8th) or loss of recess (K-4th).

# General School Rules

## Before and After School Protocol

St. Matthew’s School provides playground supervision before school from 7:50 am – 8:15 am. If students need to be dropped off before 7:50 am then they will be checked into the Before School Program. Students are expected to be in their classroom when the bell rings at 8:15 am. Please remember we live in Montana, and kids should be dressed appropriately for the weather. School is dismissed at 3:15 P.M. There is no supervision on the playground after school, so parents must pick up students or plan for after-school care starting at 3:15. Students that are not picked up by 3:30 pm will be checked-in to the After School Program. Parents will be responsible for fees incurred in the Before & After School Programs.

### Pick Up and Drop Off

All pick-up and drop-off of St. Matthew’s School students should be done from the carpool line in the main parking lot on the west side of the building.

* Please enter the parking lot from 7th Street and exit onto 7th Street.
* NO PARKING IS ALLOWED IN THE CARPOOL LINE.
* If you need to park, please use dedicated parking areas.
* Please be patient and wait behind the unloading cars for all of the children to unload or load. It only takes a few moments to be safe!
* DO NOT DROP OFF IN NORTH PARKING LOT

## Bicycles

All bicycles brought to school are to be locked in the bicycle rack during school hours.

## Lunch

Hot lunches with milk and salad bar are prepared every day in the cafeteria. Lunches are free this school year. However, we will need to conduct a count each morning to prepare the correct amount of food each day. Students will let their homeroom teacher know if they will be getting hot lunch and/or milk each day.

* Students wishing to bring their own lunch may get milk.
* Carbonated beverages are not permitted.
* Parents bringing a student their lunch must deliver it to the school office before the lunch period begins.

St. Matthew’s participates in the National School Lunch Program, a subsidized lunch program sponsored by the Federal Government. Free are available to all families. However, we are asking that each family to fill out the free and reduced lunch form.

## Emergency School Closure

When the safety and welfare of students in the school building or on the school campus is subject to compromise, the administration may suspend school operations for the day (Diocesan Policy)

### Weather

When travel is unsafe due to adverse weather, St. Matthew’s will follow School District #5’s decision in determining whether to officially suspend school operations for the day.

* The school office will make efforts to notify parents by phone and through the local media.
* In the event St. Matthew’s closes for the day, the school office will notify the local media (TV and Radio) as well post the closure on the school’s web page.
* If the local public school system (School District #5) closes school for the day due to inclement weather, St. Matthew’s School will also suspend school operations.

## Field Trips

There is a recognizable importance and value of trips for educational field study. Field trips shall include places of cultural or educational significance to further enrich the lessons of the classroom. The principal may approve of field trips during normal school hours on a single school day. All students using school transportation for a school-sponsored activity and/or field trip must return in the same vehicle unless there are signed, and pre-arranged agreements made with the school office, teacher, and parent (Diocesan Policy).

It is expected that all students in the classroom will join the field trip as an extension to the classroom learning environment. When a student is unable to join the class on the field trip, the teacher will leave instruction for the student to meet the educational objectives of the field trip while the class is away. Students who cannot attend the field trip will be responsible for its educational objectives (Diocesan Policy).

St. Matthew’s School supports the Diocesan policy with the understanding that our students do not have an absolute right to participate in a field trip. Teachers or principal may deny this privilege to students who fail to meet the behavioral requirements expected for participating.

* Should a student fail to meet the behavioral expectations of a field trip, the parents will be notified that the student will not be able to participate in the field trip.

Before students may participate in a field trip, they are to submit a completed permission slip form, signed by their parent/guardian.

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## Field Trip Drivers

In the interest of providing safe transportation on all field trips, it is expected that volunteer drivers:

* Have a clean driving record
* Provide evidence of proper insurance
* Obey all traffic laws
* Ensure all passengers are wearing their seat belt whenever the vehicle is in motion
* Drive directly to the destination and directly back to school.

No one under the age of 21 years old is allowed to drive students on field trips. Any deviation from this policy must be approved by the principal.

Children up to 6 years old and under 60 lbs. must provide their own booster seat when traveling by car for field trips.

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## Medication

Normally, Catholic School Employees do not dispense non-prescription or prescription medication to students. When a student attends school and is required to take medication for his/her health and well-being, the school may hold and dispense the medication when a written authorization from the student’s parents and physician is on file (Diocesan Policy).

St. Matthew’s School Office Staff and Principal may dispense medication to a student after the appropriate form has been completed by a child’s parent or guardian and returned to the school office.

* All prescription and over the counter medication must be in the original container, with the original prescription label intact.
* All prescription and over the counter medication must be dropped off by the parent at the beginning of the school year and picked up at the end of the school year.

## Deliveries to School

St. Matthew’s School discourages deliveries (flowers, balloons, etc.) for students during the school day.

* If a delivery arrives at the school for a student, it will be held until the end of the school day for the student to pick up before departing the school.

## Parties and Invitations

All classroom parties and holiday celebrations are to be cleared with the classroom teacher beforehand.

* Please do not send invitations to non-school sponsored parties to the school for distribution. These have a very negative impact on children that are not invited to the gathering.

## Extra-Curricular Activities

Parents are responsible for supervising their children during all extracurricular activities that take place on the St. Matthew’s School campus.

## Cell Phone and Other Electronic Devices

Cell phones and electronic devices (such as iPods, music players, handheld game systems, radios, etc.) are disruptive to the teaching/learning process and should be left at home. If they are brought to school, they must be kept in the student’s locker and not be operational during school hours (8:15 am – 3:15 pm).

We recognize that many parents desire their children have access to cell phones and support this avenue of parent-child communications. Therefore, students may bring their cell phone to school, however, they are to be in the OFF position and in the student’s locker during the school day.

If a cell phone and/or electronic device is used, seen, or heard during school hours it will be taken to the school office and will only be returned to a parent or guardian.

* It is recommended that valuables are checked in at the office for safekeeping.

## Lockers

Personal lockers assigned to students are the property of the school and may be searched when deemed necessary by the principal.

* We recommend that any item of value or importance be stored in the office while school is in session.

## Internet

Internet access at St. Matthew’s School is to be used for educational purposes only. Sharing personal information on the internet can put a student at risk, and parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s internet activities.

Students in 3rd – 8th grade are required to sign a yearly Technology Appropriate Use Policy before they are given access to the computers and internet.

## Telephone

The school telephone system is for school communication purposes and to be used by school personnel. Students wishing to use the school telephones are required to obtain permission from their teacher or the principal and shall only use the phone in the school office.

## Visitor Check-In:

All visitors to St. Matthew’s School must check in with the school office. This policy is for the safety of our children, and to prevent risks associated with unknown visitors in the school.

# Home – School Relations

## Suggestions, Concerns, or Complaints

As people in a Catholic school environment, we have the responsibility to be "Christ-like" with each other, treating all fellow people with dignity, respect, and trust. As people involved in an educational institution, we have an obligation to learn from each other, acknowledging that learning best occurs when people listen and talk with compassion and honesty. To facilitate productive communication and trust among us, when there is a suggestion, concern, or complaint - take it immediately to the person(s) involved. If a concern or complaint has been communicated to the involved person(s) and there is not a satisfactory dialogue or resolution, please present the concern or complaint to the next level of administration.

The levels of Administration are as follows:

* Faculty, School Support Staff, and Other School Employees
* School Building Administrator
* Pastor (for matters concerning the parish, spirituality, Catholic identity, etc.)

A helpful reminder that all communication is best offered and received in the appropriate time and place. Please show courtesy by scheduling a conference and communicate with respect.

## Weekly Communication

The main form of communication between parents and St. Matthew’s School is the emailed White Envelope. Please look for the email and envelope every Wednesday.

## Parent – Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are held in November and April.

* Other conferences may be scheduled by parent and/or teacher upon request.

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## School Website

St. Matthew’s school has our own website: [www.stmattsaints.org](http://www.stmattsaints.org)

Information is posted regularly to provide parents with a direct communication on events at the school. Many necessary forms are also posted and available for printing at home. Parents are encouraged to check the website often for the latest news.

# Parental Involvement

Academic success in school is directly related to parental involvement in the educational process of their child, through helping with homework, extra-curricular activities, participation in parent-teacher conferences, and volunteering in the school.

## Volunteering

Children learn about service when they observe those they love – especially the adults they live with – serving others.

* **All families are expected to assist the school with 30 hours of volunteer service (15 hours for single parent families). The balance will be added to your tuition accounts, AT THE RATE OF $25 AN HOUR, for families who do not meet the required service hours obligation by June 30 each year.**
* **At least 5 of these volunteer hours must be related to a St. Matthew’s fundraising events such as the annual Blue and Gold Auction.**

There are many volunteer opportunities at St. Matthew’s School, including (but not limited to):

| AuctionHoly HoopsChaperone/driver for Field TripsBefore/After School Playground DutyMaintenance ProjectsCampus SecurityLunchroom AideClassroom AideOffice AideSchool Advisory Council | Recess AideLibrary AideCoachFall Carnival/Chili contestLunchroom DishwasherOffice Help/ CopiesContractor Skills (carpenter, plumber, electrician, etc.)Snow Removal |
| --- | --- |

If you have time and talents to share, please contact your child’s teacher, or the school office, 752-6303. Log your hours in the Volunteer Hours Binder, in the school office.

## Parent Visits

Parents wishing to visit their child(ren) or volunteer in the classroom must first sign in with the school office. This policy is for the safety of our children and to prevent risks associated with unknown visitors in the school facility.

# Title Services - School District #5

For students that qualify for Title Services, St. Matthew’s has an agreement with School District #5 for the provision of special education consultation. When a parent or teacher identifies a child for evaluation, a special assessment is activated.

This process involves a pre-referral meeting during which time the persons directly concerned with the student review the situation. If the difficulty is beyond the scope of the regular classroom teacher, a referral is made to the School District #5 for evaluation and assessment of the student.

* The assessment includes a full battery of formal evaluation tools with a number of specialized professionals
* Before any assessment can take place, the parents have to sign the authorization form provided by School District #5.

Once the assessment is completed and the results are available, a Student Intervention Team (SIT) meets to decide on an educational program that best meets the student’s needs

* A SIT includes parents, teacher, administrator and School District #5 Special Education Staff.

# Student Code of Conduct

All students are expected to act with respect and responsibility toward Catholic Schools’ policies, personnel, property, visitors, students, and community (Diocesan Policy).

One of the most important lessons Catholic education teaches is self-discipline. School rules and regulations are no more than basic courtesy, good manners, and the creation of a community where learning can take place.

* This code of conduct extends to all activities of the school, including games, public performances, field trips, and any time students are representing St. Matthew’s School.
* Students are responsible for knowing and complying with rules, regulations, and procedures set forth in the handbook.

## Student Responsibilities

* be honest
* be respectful of self, others, and property always
* be in class on time
* use acceptable language
* follow all classroom rules
* respect all school and other students’ property
* model Christ’s teaching about love for one’s neighbor in all interactions with other students
* abide by the dress code policy
* deliver and return signed papers
* never leave school grounds without permission from the office
* do not bring knives guns or any weapons of any kind (toy or real) on school property

These rules will be interpreted and added to as needed during the school year by the principal.

## Discipline

In the event of disciplinary problems, any or all of the following steps may be taken, at the discretion of the teacher and/or principal. Parent will be contacted for each.

* Call or Send a Note Home
* Lunch Detention
* Principal’s Office
* After-School Detention
* Parent-Teacher Conference
* In-School Suspension
* Out-of-School Suspension
* Expulsion

## Cheating

Cheating is considered a very serious offense. Students caught cheating on an assignment or test will receive a zero on that assignment or test and serve a detention.

If a second offense occurs during the same quarter, the student will receive an F in that subject.

Hazing, Harassment, or Intimidation (Diocesan Policy – unless noted otherwise)

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## General Statement

* Harassment, hazing, or intimidation has no place in the Catholic school experience. It is the antithesis of the purpose and mission of Catholic education where students are called to grow in their commitment to God, one another, the Church and the wider community.
* As a part of the greater Catholic diocese, the Diocesan school is committed to a positive and productive community environment free of harassment, hazing, and intimidation.  It is the explicit policy of the Catholic school to prohibit harassment or intimidation whether committed by a student, employee, volunteer, and/or parent.  The Catholic school will treat allegations of such seriously and will review and investigate such matters in a timely manner.
* The Catholic school is committed to an environment that is free of unsolicited and unwelcome harassment, hazing, or intimidation whether intentional or not, while in school, on school property, and during school-sponsored activities, including transportation to and from.
* Furthermore, the Catholic school prohibits retaliation against any employee, student, or parent who has testified, assisted or participated in the investigation report.  Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, reprisal, or adverse pressure. Retaliation itself is a violation of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, 42 U.S.C. @ 200l.

### **Definitions (From Diocesan policy – unless specifically noted otherwise)**

* Harassment occurs when an individual is subjected to treatment or a school environment which is hostile or intimidating because of the individual’s race, creed, color, national origin, physical abilities, sex, age, or sexual orientation.  Harassment can occur at any time during school hours or during school-related activities.
* Hazing occurs when an individual is subjected to treatment that is intentional or unintentionally meant to induce pain, embarrassment, humiliation, deprivation of rights or that creates physical or mental discomfort, and is directed against a student for the purpose of being initiated into, affiliated with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in any organization, club, athletic team sponsored or supported by the Catholic school.  It does not matter whether such hazing practices were mandatory or voluntarily entered into by any student or organization in question.
* Intimidation occurs when an individual is subject to verbal, physical or psychological action or implied action intended to cause harm or distress.  A person subjected to intimidation has a difficult time defending him or herself.  Intimidation may be carried out directly through physical or verbal means, or indirectly through relational means.  When one person fears another because of real or implied threats or coercion that may result in harm to the individual, intimidation exists. Intimidation can also be called BULLYING.

**St. Matthew’s policy: Bullying is defined as an imbalance of power that is hurtful, threatening, or frightening to another individual or group. These REPEATED behaviors can be verbal, physical, social, psychological, or via social media/internet.**

**Types of bullying may include:**

* **Physical violence such as hitting, pushing, spitting, intimidation, exclusion or verbal threatening of others**
* **Spreading of rumors**
* **Demand for money or possessions**
* **Putting down others and their achievements**
* **Hurtful excluding from the group**
* **Rude gestures**
* **Name calling, teasing, and ridiculing.**
* Harassment, hazing, and intimidation include but are not limited to any of the following:
* **Verbal**:  derogatory comments, jokes, or slurs.  It can include belligerent or threatening words between individuals and may include offensive, negative remarks concerning an individual’s gender, physical abilities, race, creed, and/pr physical appearance.  Also, the willful or unintentional spreading of rumors and gossip is considered a form of harassment.
* **Physical**:  unwanted deliberate touching, pinching, bruising, or patting.  Additionally, any deliberate attempts to impede or block one’s movement (e.g. assaults of any nature), with normal activities will be regarded as harassment
* **Visual**:  derogatory, demeaning, or inflammatory posters, cartoons, written words, drawings, novelties, or gestures
* **Sexual**:  sexually suggestive remarks, gestures, or jokes.  Moreover, any unsolicited verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature (e.g. sexual assaults, etc) will be regarded as harassment.

### Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Catholic school to:

* Implement this policy and ensure that all students, employees, and volunteers understand the policy and its importance.
* Make all school employees, volunteers, students, and parents aware of this policy and the commitment of the school toward its strict enforcement
* Remain watchful for conditions that create or may lead to a hostile school environment
* Establish practices designed to create a school environment free from discrimination, intimidation, or harassment

It is the student’s responsibility to:

* Conduct himself or herself in a manner which contributes to a positive school environment
* Avoid any activity that may be considered discriminatory, intimidating, or harassing.
* Not stand silently if he/she observes harassment, hazing, or intimidation
* Silence condones these activities and may make the observer just as guilty as the offenders
* Report all incidents of harassment to the Principal
* If informed that he or she is perceived as engaging in intimidating, discriminatory, harassing, or unwelcome conduct, to discontinue that conduct immediately

### Reporting Process / Investigation Procedures:

The student should first tell the individual causing the harassment, hazing, or intimidation that his/her conduct is offensive, unwelcome, and must stop.  If the objectionable behavior does not cease immediately, the student shall report the incident to the Principal or to an employee who will report it to the Principal.

### Adult – Student

* Should a report be filed that alleges harassment, hazing, or intimidation by an adult toward a student, the principal will immediately conduct a preliminary investigation of the complaint of harassment, hazing, or intimidation, involving only the necessary parties,
* Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible.
* When there is sufficient evidence that harassment, hazing, or intimidation has occurred, the principal will immediately notify the Diocese of Helena and comply with the procedures as prescribed in the Diocese of Helena Policy Regarding Abuse of Minors, Sexual Misconduct, and Sexual Harassment and Code of Pastoral Conduct.

### Student – Student

* Should a report be filed that alleges harassment, hazing, or intimidation by a student toward another student, the principal will immediately conduct a preliminary investigation of the complaint of harassment, hazing, or intimidation, involving only the necessary parties.
* Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible.
* When there is sufficient evidence that harassment, hazing, or intimidation has occurred, the principal will immediately inform the parents of all involved students and comply with the disciplinary procedures as prescribed in the parent / student handbook.

### Student – Adult

* Should a report be filed that alleges harassment, hazing, or intimidation by a student toward an adult, the principal will immediately conduct a preliminary investigation of the complaint of harassment, hazing, or intimidation, involving only the necessary parties.
* Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible.
* When there is sufficient evidence that harassment, hazing, or intimidation has occurred, the principal will immediately notify the Diocese of Helena and comply with the procedures as prescribed in the Diocese of Helena Policy Regarding Abuse of Minors, Sexual Misconduct, and Sexual Harassment and Code of Pastoral Conduct.

### Corrective Action

* A charge of harassment, hazing, or intimidation shall not, in and of itself, create the presumption of wrongdoing.  However, individuals or groups found with whom substantiated acts of harassment, hazing, or intimidation will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from school.
* Where appropriate, and at the discretion of the principal, the consequences of a violation of this policy may result in, but is not limited to any or all of the following:
* Educational assignment designed to increase awareness and sensitivity to the issue of harassment or intimidation
* Assignment to educate in the areas of impulse control and anger management
* Administrative family consequences
* After school penalty (Detention)
* Referral to an outside agency
* Suspension or expulsion
* Referral to police or other law enforcement agency.

### Prevention

* The Catholic school shall provide regular in-service education about harassment, hazing, and intimidation for employees and students, including:

### False or Frivolous Reports:

* Students found to have filed false or frivolous charges of harassment, hazing, or intimidation will also be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion from school.

We have read and understand St. Matthew’s School’s Parent/Student Handbook:



 Parent or Guardian Signature Print Name Date



Student Signature Grade and Teacher Date



Student Signature Grade and Teacher Date



Student Signature Grade and Teacher Date



Student Signature Grade and Teacher Date



Student Signature Grade and Teacher Date



Student Signature Grade and Teacher Date

(Please sign and return this page to the school by the end of the first quarter.)