



**STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK
2023-2024**

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FORWARD

We thank you for choosing Saint Matthew's Episcopal School. We, the faculty, staff, administration, school board, and church vestry of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church and School are committed to making your experience with our school community as positive and productive as possible.

Saint Matthew's Episcopal School is a private, educational institution operated as a ministry of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas. Its policies and procedures are determined by the St. Matthew's School Board and the St. Matthew's Church Vestry. The School Principal and the staff are responsible for implementing the school policies and guidelines.

VISION STATEMENT

St. Matthew's Episcopal School is a Christian community committed to academic excellence and spiritual growth for our children today.

MISSION STATEMENT/COVENANT

Believing that, "You will be blessed when you walk in, you will be blessed when you walk out, St. Matthew's respects and encourages the individual spiritual beliefs of each member of their community by:

- Giving thanks to God in our prayers
- Taking responsibility for our actions and "doing our best" in everything we do
- Working with students today in a safe and loving community to better our future
- Passionately cultivating the Fruits of the Spirit in our students and families (Love, Joy, Peace, Forbearance, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-Control)
- Being servant leaders
- Trusting in God's plan for us
- Believing all things are possible through Christ

PHILOSOPHY

All students deserve the encouragement and opportunity to gain the skills and values that will enable them to become responsible, caring, and trustworthy citizens.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Saint Matthew's Episcopal School accepts students of any gender, race, color, nationality, ethnic origin, or religious affiliation. Rights, privileges, programs, and activities are afforded to all students. The school does not discriminate in any of its admission or educational programs.

ADMISSIONS

AGE REQUIREMENTS

- Pre-Kindergarten 1 year old program- Child needs to be 18 months old at the time of enrollment.
- Pre-Kindergarten 2 year old program- Child needs to be 24 months old at the time of enrollment.
- Pre- Kindergarten 3 year old program – Child needs to be 3 years old as of September 1 of the year to be enrolled and be toilet trained.
- Pre- Kindergarten 4 year old program- Child needs to be 4 years old as of September 1 of the year to be enrolled.
- Kindergarten 5 year old program- Child needs to be 5 years old as of September 1 of the year to be enrolled.
- Children entering a grade level with a birthday later than September 1 will first need authorization from the head of school.

ADMISSION AND ENROLLMENT POLICY

All students enrolling at St. Matthew's Episcopal School for the first time and all returning students must have a completed registration packet on file, a copy of their birth certificate, Social Security Number, and an updated immunization form. An extended day form must also be completed and on file for all students enrolling in the extended day program. All fees/tuition must be current at the time of registration. Returning students will not be eligible to enroll for the new school year if there are outstanding fees from the previous year. All students must reapply for admission annually. St. Matthew's Episcopal School will request school information from students transferring from another school. All official school records are transferred through the schools.

There will be a six-week probationary period for each new student. At the end of this six-week period, a conference may be held with the parents, the teacher, and the head of school if deemed necessary. If after review, the student or parents have not been able to adjust to the academic or social environment of our school, St. Matthew's School reserves the right to ask the parents to withdraw the student at that time.

Any student seeking admission to St. Matthew's, who for any reason was suspended or expelled from another school, may not be admitted.

ST. MATTHEW'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL VALUES AND EXPECTATIONS

St. Matthew's Episcopal School depends on the parents and family members, who are at the forefront of the educational partnership, to instill considerate values and engage in behavior reflecting courtesy especially while on the school grounds. St. Matthew's Episcopal School reserves the right to have a parent or family member removed from the school grounds or from any school sponsored event should these values be compromised or not reflected.

SERVING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

St. Matthew's is committed to serving a dynamic student body in the general education classroom. Following a pre-enrollment interview with prospective families, individual cases will be evaluated by the head of school. If it's believed to be in the best interest of the prospective student and the school, St. Matthew's will do its best to make accommodations and differentiate instruction as needed. If the head of school thinks that the school's resources are not enough to successfully meet the needs of the prospective student, this will be conveyed to the family.

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

English proficiency is required for admission into our Kindergarten – Fifth grade classes.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Any currently outstanding tuition, extended day fees, and any other fees must be paid in full prior to registration.

The following records/ forms for each student must be on file in the school office:

1. Copy of the birth certificate
2. Social Security Number
3. Records from the child's previous school (transfer students only)

4. Current immunization records signed by the doctor (Exemptions are not allowed)
5. All results of any educational/ psychological evaluations, whether done by the public school system or from the private sector
6. Emergency information form.
7. Extended day enrollment form (if applicable)
8. FACTS (Fast Automatic Cash Transfer System) tuition payment preference form.

REGISTERING ONCE THE SCHOOL YEAR IS IN SESSION

Please provide St. Matthew's School with a written statement explaining the reason for your request to place your child in the school once the school year has already begun. As stated in the above registration requirements, your child's records from the previous school must be transferred directly from the school to St. Matthew's. Two references will be necessary from among the following: a previous teacher, counselor, principal or another adult that has been involved in your child's academic or extracurricular activities. A conference will be held with the head of school prior to admission.

GUARDIANSHIP

In cases where the child does not live with both parents, proof of legal guardianship must be provided at the time of enrollment.

TEACHER REQUEST

Parents' request for a particular teacher may be considered by the Principal. Students are placed in classrooms based on teacher input, students' compatibility, class make up (boy/girl), and teacher/student ratio. These factors are taken into consideration in order to achieve balance and diversity in the classroom. The head of school will have final authority regarding student placement.

PAYMENTS AND FEES

All payments made to the school should be in the form of credit card, or other electronic transaction (FACTS, PayPal, or Cash App). In the case that the parent prefers to make payment by check, it is the responsibility of the parent to submit the check with the appropriate forms to the school office so that a receipt of payment can promptly be recorded. Payments must include the associated form.

All credit card transactions include a small processing fee.

Money Brought to School

All money requested from teachers for school sponsored events should be submitted to the bookkeeper or administrative assistant in the school office only. **At no time should money be collected by or submitted to the classroom teacher.** The school is not responsible for misplaced or stolen money.

REGISTRATION AND BUILDING USAGE FEES

The Registration and Building Usage fees are due at the time of registration. These fees are non-refundable and non-transferable. All fees are assessed annually per child.

FINANCIAL AID

Financial Aid is offered for qualifying families in 1st– 5th grade classes. The FACTS financial aid application can be found on the school's website: www.stmattschool-rgv.org. There are varying levels of awards available depending on the need.

TUITION DISCOUNT FOR MILITARY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

St. Matthew's Episcopal School appreciates and recognizes the sacrifices and services of our military (retired, reserve, and active duty) and our law enforcement. An annual tuition discount is applied to full-time tuition rates for students whose parents are in this distinguished category of community helpers.

TUITION FEES

Tuition, as set by the St. Matthew's School Board on an annual basis, is to be paid according to one of the listed payment plans. Each family's preferred manner of payment must be submitted each year at the time of registration. You may choose your method of payment from the options below.

- **Payment in Full:** Under this plan, the entire amount of tuition may be made through FACTS or directly to the School's office in the form of an electronic payment, or less desirably, by check or money order by the first day of school.

FACTS Monthly Payments:

- **FACTS** (Fast Automatic Cash Transfer System) is an automatic payment plan made through your checking or Savings account. You must complete a FACTS agreement form upon registration authorizing the automatic monthly payments on either the 5th or the 20th of each month.
- Under this plan, the entire amount of tuition is paid monthly over a 10 or 12 month period, or bi-annually, for the upcoming school year through the FACTS Tuition Management Plan.
 - 10 months is August – May
 - 12 months is June – May (for this plan to be possible, the student must be registered by May 15 of the current school year.)
 - Bi-annual payments are due in August and in January.
- FACTS charges a \$45.00 non-refundable enrollment fee per family.
- For more information on FACTS Tuition Management Company, visit their website at www.factsmgt.com. It is very important that parents understand the company's withdrawal procedures.

TUITION DELIQUENCY

Tuition accounts that are delinquent for two consecutive months will result in the student being withdrawn from school. St. Matthew's Episcopal School will hold all student records until financial obligations are met. If tuition payments are not paid, St. Matthew's will seek payment via the civil court. Liens can be placed on a parent's property.

EARLY WITHDRAWAL

The School Board may consider tuition reimbursement for payments made in advance after review of the circumstances and pending final approval. An additional month's tuition will be drawn by FACTS beyond the date of withdrawal due to the contractual nature of the annual tuition agreement.

LATE REGISTRATION

Tuition for students registering after the first day of school shall be pro-rated over the number of school days they will be in attendance according to a formula established by the St. Matthew's School Board.

FUNDRAISING

15-20 % of our operating income is generated from our three fundraising activities. For this reason, there is required participation in three annual fund-raisers. Parents will be responsible for selling tickets for *FIESTA*, which is held in the fall; and for selling tickets for *HOLY SMOKE BARBEQUE*, which is held in the spring. *GALA*, which is a sole school fundraiser, is typically held in early winter or early spring. The minimum amount will be stated annually in the enrollment contracts. Required fundraising fees must be submitted directly to the office. Fundraising fees may be paid by the following methods: through FACTS, by credit or debit card, or less desirably, by (one) check or (one) money order. Please make a notation in the check's or money order's memo box that denotes your child's name and grade level.

Fundraiser fees are due by the deadline. Any fees submitted 10 days beyond the due date will incur a \$25 late fee.

Any outstanding balances for required fund-raising will necessitate that St. Matthew's School hold all the student's records until financial obligations are met. Payment obligations that are not met are subject to being turned over to a collection agency.

Acts of nature or pandemics do not preclude the payment of fundraising obligations. The obligatory amounts will be recorded as a donation to the school for the benefit of students and staff.

PAYING WITH CHECKS

There will be a \$35.00 fee for any returned check pertaining to any and all school business. Personal checks cannot be accepted after a check has been returned as NSF. Money orders, cash, or debit/credit cards will be the only acceptable payment following a returned check. Postdated checks will not be accepted.

MONETARY EXCHANGES BETWEEN PARENTS

Please do not ask the office staff or teachers to hold and redistribute money for a personal arrangement you made with another parent.

EXTENDED DAY FEES AND POLICIES

ELIGIBILITY

Extended day services are available to all St. Matthew's students.

EXTENDED DAY ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

Extended Day enrollment forms (including an up to date immunization record) are to be filled out and returned to the Director by the first day the student is to be enrolled in the program.

Extended Day is available for full school days until 5:30 P.M.
Extended day is not available for early dismissal days.

EXTENDED DAY FEES

Students enrolled in the extended day program will pay the following monthly rates:

24 months old- Sixth grade	3:30 - 4:30 p.m.	\$120
24 months old- Sixth grade	3:30 -5:30 p.m.	\$160

Extended day payments may be paid through FACTS. The extended day drop-in rate is \$10.00 an hour. Charges for extended day are billed directly from the school office.

EXTENDED DAY LATE PICK-UP FEES

Extended day care ends by the time stated in the student's enrollment contract. A \$25.00 drop-in rate will be charged for any child/ children not picked up by the contractual end-time. A \$25.00 late fee will be charged at 5:31 PM and for each additional 30 minutes a child stays beyond the final pick-up time. This late pick-up fee is assessed per family and paid directly to the teacher for compensation of her after-hours time.

TIMELY PAYMENT OF EXTENDED DAY FEES

Any of the above-mentioned fees relating to extended day are due by the 10th of each month. After the 20th of each month a \$25.00 late fee will be assessed.

SCHOOL HOURS

Supervisor on duty	7:00 AM
Early Morning Care for enrolled students (Fees)	7:00-7:30 AM
Regular Drop-Off of Students	7:30-8:15 AM
School Office Hours	7:45 AM-5:00 PM
Faculty on Duty/In Classrooms	7:45 AM
Classes Begin	8:15 AM
Lunch (PK-2)	11:00 AM
Lunch (PK-3 & PK-4)	11:30 AM
Lunch (Kindergarten -5 th Grade)	12:30 PM
Dismissal (PK-2, PK-3, and PK-4)	3:00 PM
Dismissal (Kinder- 5 th Grade)	3:30 PM
Extended Care (PK2-5 th Grade)	3:30-5:30 PM

STUDENT ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Early Morning Care drop-off, 7:00-7:30 is for PK2-5th Gr. students enrolled and paying for this service. Arrival is at the back parking lot entering from the northbound lane of Crestview Drive.

Regular Morning drop-off, 7:30-8:00, PK students and PK-5th Grade sibling groups at the back parking lot entering from the northbound lane of Crestview Drive.

Regular morning drop-off, 7:30-8:00, K-5th Grade students only at the Canton Road Parking lot in front of the church and school. Students will report to the Parish Hall.

Any of the people designated on the pick-up list to pick up your child must come by the office and show a photo ID for the first pick-up. A copy of the photo ID will be placed in the student's cumulative file.

Please do not hold conversations with teachers as they are loading students into cars. If you have a concern, please make arrangements to discuss the matter with the teacher during her/his conference period by calling the office. PK2 and PK3 students in our half day program are dismissed at 11:45 from the north exit of the school.

Half-Day PK2 and PK3 students not picked up by 12 noon, will have a minimum charge of \$10.00 an hour.

PK2, PK3, and PK4 students will begin dismissal at 3:00 p.m. from the north exit of the school.

Full-Time PK2-PK4 students not picked up by 3:30 p.m. will be taken to the Extended Day classroom. A minimum charge of \$10.00 an hour will be assessed beginning at 3:30.

Kinder- 5th grade students will be dismissed at 3:30 pm from the south parking lot of the school on Canton Road. Students not picked up by 3:45p.m. will be taken to the Extended Day classroom. A minimum charge of \$10.00 an hour will be assessed beginning at 3:45 p.m.

School personnel must exercise caution in allowing students to leave with someone other than persons listed by the parents on the registration form. **A CALL OR NOTE TO THE SCHOOL OFFICE MUST BE MADE PRIOR TO DISMISSAL** if a student is to be picked up by someone other than those listed on the registration form. The person picking up the student must be prepared to present an I.D. for clearance.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is expected barring illness. Students perform much better socially and academically when they attend school regularly. If a student will be out of school due to a planned trip, it is the responsibility of the student and parents to make plans with the teacher for the make-up work. **Absences should not exceed twelve days.** Absences beyond twelve days must be justified by doctor's excuses.

- Expected absences- For example, scheduled appointments, out-of-town trips with the family, extra curricular activities (Religious, FFA, 4-H, Dance, Music, etc.). Parents need to notify the head of school and the teacher(s) of the pending absence one- week in advance. It is the responsibility of the student and the parents to get the appropriate class assignments for the time that the absence will take place and to make sure that completed assignments are turned in on time.
- Unexpected absences- For example, illness of the student, illness of a family member, death in the family or other emergency situations. In the case of an unexpected absence, please notify the school office by 10:00 A.M. the day of the absence. Once the office has been notified, parents may pick up schoolwork from the office after 3:30 that afternoon. It is the responsibility of the student and the parents to get the appropriate class assignments for the time that the absence took place.

RETURN FROM ABSENCES

A note from the parent must be presented to the student's homeroom teacher on the first day back to school. With any illness associated with a fever, a doctor's excuse is required before returning to school. There is no exception to this policy in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents and teachers will

work closely together to assure make up work is submitted by the end of the six-weeks.

TARDY POLICY

St. Matthew's School partners with its parents to fulfill its academic mission for all students. Planning, time management, and punctuality are positive character traits for a productive day. We understand that legitimate things can happen to prevent punctuality. Tardies should be the exception and not become a bad habit. The primary penalty of tardiness is a rough start to the day for the student. Tardies will be recorded in the attendance book. Five tardies equal one absence. Punctuality is applauded and celebrated.

PERFECT ATTENDANCE

At the end of each semester, students and teachers who have been present for all days of instruction will receive special recognition at the discretion of the head of school.

EXCESSIVE ABSENCES

If a lack of regular attendance affects a student's academic progress, it could certainly be in a student's best interest to retain him/her for the current grade level.

EARLY PICK-UP

For your child's attendance to count fully for the school day, please do not pick your child up before 12:30 p.m. if at all possible. Upon your arrival to pick your child up, sign your child out in the front office.

ARRIVAL BACK TO SCHOOL

Any students returning to campus following a doctor's appointment will need to be signed in at the office by the parents.

HEALTH CHECK AND INFORMING THE PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Each morning, the teacher will conduct a visual or physical assessment of a child to identify potential concerns about a child's health, including signs or symptoms of illness and injury, in response to changes in the child's behavior since the last date of attendance. Parents will be contacted by phone by the school office immediately if there is any sign of illness or injury.

If a child has a rash, sore throat, runny nose, fever, cough, or is vomiting, the child must stay at home since these may be signs of a contagious disease. Without fever, your child may come to school if he suffers from allergies. Your child's medical practitioner is the best judge of your child's symptoms. Your child needs to be fever free for 72 hours before returning to school. The school will notify parents if their child becomes ill or injured at school. In case of illness or injury, parents will be asked to come to school and pick up their child. If the school is unable to reach the parent, the person listed as an alternate will be contacted next. In cases where the school is unable to contact anyone and the situation merits emergency medical attention, the child will either be transported to the family doctor's office (if in Edinburg) or the hospital emergency room. Contagious illnesses should be reported to the school office immediately in order for the school to notify staff and parents abiding by privacy laws. It is imperative that parents not send their child to school if they suspect the child has a contagious illness. When returning to school, a physician's release must be brought to the school office.

LICE

Children are advised not to share headbands, caps, or other hair related apparel. When a child is found to have evidence of lice: scratching, eggs, or the actual lice, the parent will be notified to pick their child up and treat them with a pharmacist approved lice treatment. All bedding, stuffed toys, and other pieces of clothing that have come into contact with the child's head should be washed at high temperatures.

PARENTAL NOTIFICATIONS

Teachers will keep regular communication with parents by newsletters, text messaging, phone calls, and/or emails. In the event of emergencies or illness, and if parents cannot be reached, the administration will begin calling the person listed as the emergency contact. In the event of a lockdown, parents will first be notified by the head of school via a text message or phone call from the classroom teacher. An email will be sent out by the head of school as soon as humanly possible following the occurrence of a lockdown.

ACCIDENTS

First Aid will be administered to children who are injured during school hours. In case of apparent serious injury, St. Matthew's will follow the instructions provided on the student's emergency form. In the event that the parent cannot be reached, the school will determine the course of action, such as whether or not to take the child to the doctor (if in Edinburg) or the nearest hospital. Continuous attempts will be made by the administration to notify the parent of the situation.

IMMUNIZATIONS

St. Matthew's School does not accept exemptions to the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended list of immunizations. Immunization records must be current for all new and returning students. A copy of the student's immunization card must be kept in the student's permanent file. The annual flu vaccination is highly recommended for all staff and students. The Whooping Cough (Pertussis) vaccination is also recommended for adults who have not been immunized within the past ten years. This vaccination loses its effectiveness and adults can contract Whooping Cough upon exposure. Teachers and Assistants who are working with the 18 mos. old -PK 4 students are strongly recommended to have a Whooping Cough booster (every ten years) and a flu vaccine (annually). The above are not mandates, but merely recommendations.

INSECT REPELLANT AND SUNSCREEN

At the discretion of the parent, students should bring 2 spray cans of insect repellent, or enough boxes of insect repellent wipes to last the year (10% or less of DEET, or homeopathic option) and 2 containers of sunscreen (50 + SPF) from home. Please ensure that each product's container is labeled with the student's name and the expiration date. Insect repellent will be applied on children before outdoor activities. The insect repellent will be applied in a well ventilated area. Sunscreen will be applied to the skin which is exposed during outdoor activities. Sunscreen does expire, so please be mindful of pending expiration dates. If outdoor activities are taking place under the covered pavilion, or under the shade trees, sunscreen will not be applied. Sunscreen/Insect Repellent will not be applied if a parent chooses not to bring it for use at school.

ABUSE AND NEGLECT

If at any point, you suspect a student at St. Matthew's Episcopal School is being neglected or abused, you must report it to the Abuse and Neglect Hotline. **The phone number is 1-800-252-5400.** Do not delegate this responsibility to another person. Do not delay. Once you have made the call, and completed your documentation, the proper authorities will fully investigate the situation.

ABUSE AND NEGELECT EDUCATION

At the onset of the school year, notifications and information pertaining to the prevention and reporting of abuse and neglect of children will be distributed to the parents. Postings will be placed on bulletin boards in the main hallway and the PK classrooms. Abuse and neglect are preventable. Join us in being a strong community that advocates for the well-being of children.

HEARING AND VISION SCREENING

Parents are required to have a biennial copy of the student's hearing and vision screening on file. Please submit the screening reports to the office at the onset of the school year.

MEDICATION POLICY

- A medication consent form must be filled out and turned into the office when the need arises for your child to receive medication at school.
- Prescription medication must be in the original container labeled with the child's name, directions, and the physician's name.
- Medication will not be administered after it has expired.
- The office personnel will administer all prescription and nonprescription medication. **Medication cannot be kept in the classroom or administered by the teacher.**
- A student on Ritalin, or similar medication, must have their first dose an hour before school starts, and/or as prescribed by the attending physician.
- The principal must approve any exceptions to this policy.

BREASTFEEDING

Mothers desiring to breastfeed their children are welcome to do so during the school day. There is a rocking chair in the PK2 classroom, and one can be found in a more private setting in the Chapel.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The physical education program at St. Matthew's is an active program where children are expected to participate each day; therefore, all students are required to wear tennis shoes on a daily basis. If a child is not able to participate because of illness, a note from the parents requesting the child be excused from P.E. is required. A doctor's excuse is needed for any long-term absence from P.E.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

St. Matthew's School is a Christian school, a ministry of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, and a parish community of the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas. As the school's vision statement proclaims, **St. Matthew's Episcopal School is a Christian community committed to academic excellence and spiritual growth for our children today.** The combination of academics and

study in harmony with spirituality and religion is achieved at St. Matthew's through daily chapel services and religious instruction. A morning Chapel service takes place in the church Monday – Thursday for all students and a Praise and Worship service is held on Fridays during Chapel time. Chapel is generally led by the Parish Administrator, a visiting priest, the Principal, or a teacher. Parents and family members are welcome to attend Chapel. Students sing hymns and songs, learn, and read from the Bible, offer prayers for the community and those in need, say the Pledge of Allegiance, and engage in school service activities to reinforce the Christian values of loving God and our neighbor. Fridays afternoons, a Sacred Studies class will take place for second-fifth graders. The faith traditions and backgrounds of our students and families are always respected.

ACADEMICS

HOMEWORK

Homework is an opportunity for the student to master the skills necessary to achieve success. The homework that will be assigned relates directly to their classroom instruction and is meant to reinforce the daily lessons. The amount of time allotted for homework will generally correlate to the grade level of the student. However, it is to the teacher's discretion to assign more or less homework based on the specific tasks or learning needs of the student. Reading and Math Facts should be part of a student's daily study habits. Homework may be assigned daily.

Homework is expected to be turned in on time. Five points will be deducted from homework that is submitted after the start of class but before the end of the day; ten points will be deducted for each subsequent day it is late

TIME SPENT ON DAILY HOMEWORK

PK4	15 minutes
Kindergarten – 1 st grade:	30 minutes
2 nd -3 rd grade:	30 – 45 minutes
4 th and 5 th grades:	45-60 minutes

Grading Procedures and Retesting

Eight grades per subject should be recorded in the grade books for each six weeks grading period.

Teachers will not permit students to grade each other's work

Projects and/ or reports will be assigned to students with a minimum of two weekends allowed in order for the assignments to be well planned and thorough.

It is left to the teacher's professional opinion and discretion to offer a retest. Retests will only be administered for students who have failed a test and have the parent's signature on the test with the failing grade. The grade resulting from the retest is the grade that will be recorded in the gradebook. Only one retest will be permitted per failing test grade.

PROGRESS REPORTS AND REPORT CARDS

Kindergarten- 5th Grades: Progress reports will be sent home after the first 3 weeks of school and then in the middle of the reporting periods at 3 week intervals.

Kindergarten- 5th Grades: Report cards will be sent home each six- week's period. There are six 6-weeks grading periods in the school year.

PK2, PK3, and PK4 progress cards are sent home every 12 weeks.

ITBS TESTING

First- fifth grade students at St. Matthew's Episcopal School are administered a norm- referenced test in April. ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) is utilized as a tracking device in order to establish academic progress throughout the year. While this administration may indicate strengths and weaknesses in certain areas, it is only one form of a student's progress.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

Each student should arrive to school daily with the necessary school supplies. Students should also be well rested each school day so they can be successful learners.

End-of-the-Year Awards

We will award our students with recognition based on social emotional attributes and academic excellence. We will hold awards assemblies at the end of the year to recognize students. An array of awards will be presented to students for their accomplishments.

DRESS CODE

- Cold weather days (forecasted temperature of 49 degrees or lower for all or part of the school day) Students may wear boots and any cold weather outerwear with their school uniforms. Neutral colored tights or leggings may be worn with Polo dresses, skirts, or jumpers.
- All students will wear their school uniform daily, and tennis shoes are required with the uniform, as students participate in a daily physical education class, and other forms of shoes may pose a threat to their safety.
- Shorts should be a modest length and skirts should have shorts worn underneath.
- Hairstyles need to be modest without any coloring. Students who have longer than shoulder length hair need to pull their hair back in a ponytail or bun for safety reasons during science and PE classes. Hair must be kept out of the student's face to support vision and hassle-free learning.
- A call will be made to the parent if the student is not in compliance with the dress code.
- **Monday:** Formal uniform for K-5 grade students
- **Monday-Thursday:** Navy, hunter green, or grey polo shirts and navy bottoms or polo dresses for PK students
- **Tuesday-Thursday:** Navy, hunter green, or grey polo shirts and navy bottoms or plaid skirts or jumpers for K-5 students
- **Fridays:** St. Matthew's spirit shirt: (The orange Armadillo polo shirt, *Fiesta*, *BBQ*, *Soccer*, or *Track and Field*) with navy bottoms or blue jean bottoms.
- **Field Trips:** Monday through Fridays -Orange Armadillo Polo with navy bottoms or formal uniform attire depending on the venue of the field trip

FIELD TRIPS AND CHAPERONES

St. Matthew's students will have the opportunity to go on field trips that are designed for the education and enrichment of their class. You will be notified in advance about these outings. A permission slip will be sent home with the student pertaining to the details of the outing. **You must sign and return the permission slip to the school in order for your child to be able to attend the outing. If a permission slip is misplaced, a written note from the parent stating that the child has permission to attend the specific event can be sent to school. The written permission slip should be signed by the parent and an emergency phone number should be included as well.** If the signed permission slip is not returned by the date of the trip, the student will not be allowed to leave campus. No phone calls can be made to obtain permission. Verbal permission will not be accepted. We cannot allow any exceptions to this policy.

The teachers are in charge of all field trips. They will establish the itineraries for all trips with prior approval from the head of school. Drivers must present proof of auto insurance to the front office prior to the field trip. Vehicles should travel in a group while adhering to all rules of the road. It is important to exchange cell phone numbers with the other chaperones traveling in the group. Each vehicle must have one seat and one seatbelt per child. No child is to sit in the front seat. We are grateful to the fact that our chaperones are caring for the students as if they were their own.

Pre-K2 Restricted Activities

Pre-K2 students will not be transported by St. Matthew's Episcopal School. The school is not licensed to transport students from its Pre-K2 program. Pre-K2 students will not participate in water activities that would require a lifeguard to be present. Pools of any type are not permitted for use in our Pre-K2 program. At no time will Pre-K2 students take a school field trip away from school. Limiting risks associated with this age group is very important to St. Matthew's Episcopal School.

St. Matthew's School Values and Expectations

St. Matthew's is a Christian school that holds the emotional, psychological, spiritual, and physical well-being of its students in the highest regard. Please

partner with us to educate your sons and daughters about polite and courteous conversation. Students are guided by Christian values and principles while on St. Matthew's campus throughout the day. Using inappropriate, demeaning or profane language will not be tolerated. Please create an environment where your child can bring any topic of discussion to you. In order to guarantee students the excellent educational climate they deserve, no student will be allowed to prevent a teacher from teaching or a classmate from learning. Students will not be allowed to engage in behavior that is not in his/her best interest or the best interest of others. Please ask your child's teacher for a list of the classroom rules.

BITING

St. Matthew's teachers will do their best to provide a stimulating and engaging environment for your child to discourage incidences of biting. There are occasions where students in the early childhood programs respond to situations by biting as they may not yet be able to express themselves by other means. If your child bites, or is bitten, you will be notified on the same day of the occurrence. The bite will be treated. An acceptable form of redirection for the biter will occur following the incident. The incident will be documented as well. In the event that biting becomes routine for the child, it will be recommended that the parents speak with their child's pediatrician to better understand the possible causes. If there is not a resolution to the biting, and all measures have been exhausted, St. Matthew's reserves the right to ask the parents to withdraw their child.

CYBER BULLYING

Text messaging and the utilization of video chatting outside of school **cannot** be monitored by St. Matthew's School. Parents must take responsibility for their children's utilization of their phones and devices. St. Matthew's does its part to educate children about the devastating effects of cyber bullying. Once something has been published, it can follow a person throughout their lifetime. If your child receives a message that can be perceived as bullying or as inappropriate, the parents need to report this offense **immediately** to the appropriate people. If it is determined that your child has been the perpetrator of the bullying, this could result in his/her expulsion from St. Matthew's.

BULLYING

Bullying occurs when a student or group of students directs written or verbal expressions or physical conduct against another student and the behavior results in harm to the student or the student's property, places a student in fear of physical harm or of damage to the student's property, or is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment.

DISCIPLINARY PROTOCOL

Age appropriate redirection, gentle reminders, and praising good behavior are the norm for our behavioral management policy in the younger grades. Our younger children may at times need a chilling out period away from the group to establish refocus. Our older children's behavioral expectations are well established from the onset of the school year. The expectations are clear. Redirection and parent contact are the first steps. In the event it comes to the attention of the adult in charge that the student has violated the established expectations, the reported situation will be investigated. Once investigated, if there is sufficient evidence, and depending on the nature of the incident, such behavior could result in 1) Lunch Detention; 2) In-School Suspension; 3) Suspension; 4) Expulsion. The principal will have the final say as to the manner for which each incident is handled.

PREVENTING SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS

St. Matthew's wants to work with students, parents, and teachers to best address any behavioral challenges and develop a plan to assist the child's growth and development. At the onset of any behavioral concern, the parents will be notified by the teacher and/or principal. A collaborative effort will be developed along with a timeline for expected progress. Communication is key. Suspension and expulsion are only applied to situations where all efforts have been exhausted by St. Matthew's. If there is an immediate concern for the child's safety or the safety of his/her peers, then expulsion could be necessary.

CONFERENCES

If you have a concern or question regarding your child's experience at St. Matthew's, your first point of contact must be the child's teacher. You may ask the principal to join the conference. Conferences must be scheduled in advance. Courtesy and respect are the established guidelines for a successful outcome.

Conferences between students and teachers are also encouraged. A student who does not understand an assignment or is concerned about his/her academic progress should visit with the teacher immediately. Teachers are eager to help in any way possible. Your child's teacher is in the best position to understand the specific area that may be causing concern.

CHAIN-OF-COMMAND

It is your right as a parent to have your concerns addressed. Please do not address another person's child directly. Please follow the chain-of-command and call the school to schedule an appointment:

1. Talk to your child's teacher. If not satisfied,
2. Talk to the Head of School. If not satisfied,
3. Submit a typed document with your concerns to the School Board President, who will convene an executive committee based on the concern. The School Board President will notify you with information pertinent to your concern following the meeting.

SOCIAL MEDIA ETIQUETTE

Please follow the established protocol for handling situations that involve St. Matthew's Episcopal School. At no time is it constructive to take your concerns to social media. The most constructive way to solve a problem is to deal directly with the involved parties. St. Matthew's Episcopal School reserves the right to sever a relationship with parents who relay negatively perceived information using social media.

PARENT VISITS

Parents are discouraged from visiting the campus during instructional time as this can distract from the learning process and place unnecessary burdens

upon faculty and staff. Please call the school office and speak with the head of school concerning any desire to visit the campus.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Parents wishing to assist as volunteers should contact the head of school to discuss this possibility. Parents who are accepted as volunteers will need to complete the required paperwork for a background check.

PARENT DRIVERS

Parents desiring to assist with driving must submit proof of current automobile insurance and a copy of a valid driver's license.

GANG-FREE ZONE

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1,000 feet of St. Matthew's Episcopal School is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to a harsher penalty. Parents will be informed of this law by writing in the school's weekly newsletter.

PERSONAL POSSESSIONS and TOYS

All items of value should be left at home. Fidget spinners are not permitted on campus. If brought to school, they will be confiscated and disposed. Toys are not allowed on campus with the exception being show-and-tell items as instructed by the teacher. **Cell phones are not permitted at school.** The school is not responsible for damaged and/or lost items. Any items brought to school for the student, for example coats, jackets, show-and-tell items, lunchboxes, or backpacks, need to be properly labeled with the student's name. Misplaced items will be placed in the lost and found basket in the staff workroom.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR PHONE NUMBER

It is very important for the school to maintain current addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses for all students. Home and work phone numbers should be updated ASAP whenever a change occurs. It is just as important to update emergency numbers listed for your children.

SNACKS AND LUNCH

Every student should bring breakfast or a small nutritious snack for mid-morning. PK2-Kindergarten students will also need to bring an afternoon snack. Parents are encouraged to use thermoses to keep food warm, or cold packs to keep food cool. Snacks and lunches cannot be warmed up. Children desiring warm food are invited to participate in the catered lunch program.

HOT LUNCH PROGRAM

St. Matthew's Episcopal School offers a catered hot lunch program. Payment and order forms will need to be submitted to the office by the deadline on a monthly basis. The cost per meal is \$5,50. Emergency meals may be ordered by 9:00 AM on the desired day for \$6,50. Payment may be paid by PayPal, Cash App, or credit card (fees apply). A late fee of \$15 will be charged for order forms received after the announced deadline. Default of payment will result in the student not receiving catered lunches.

LUNCH FROM HOME OR RESTAURANTS

St. Matthew's encourages parents to pack nutritious snacks and lunches for their children. Fast food items and soda are discouraged on a daily basis and should be reserved for special occasions. The simple carbohydrates, sugars, sodium, and preservatives found in processed foods have limited nutritional value. Wholesome nutritional food will aid your child's health and learning. Parents may deliver lunch only for their child, and no one else's child, as the school must ensure the timeliness, quality and safety of the food being served.

TREAT SALES

Prepackaged individually wrapped treats may be sold by grade level classes to help raise funds for their classrooms.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE SCHOOL

We work diligently to keep our parents informed and up-to-date. **Most of our communication will be by email.** The school newsletter is emailed at the

beginning of each week and serves as an important tool in keeping you abreast of school functions and deadlines. PK classes will keep pertinent information posted on the hallway bulletin board as well. Please open your weekly email newsletters via Constant Contact. Please read and respond promptly to notes coming from the school. Notes are placed in backpacks, lunch boxes, work folders, or in the mail. We realize that not all notices sent home—**GET Home**, so we urge you to help your child develop a feeling of responsibility for carrying notes to and from school.

EMERGENCY CLOSING

School will be closed on days when weather conditions make traveling extremely hazardous. Power outages and water advisories will also necessitate that the school be closed until deemed safe to return. Announcements regarding the closing of school will be made over local radio or television stations. **ST. MATTHEW'S SCHOOL WILL CLOSE ANY TIME THE EDINBURG PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT CLOSSES DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER.**

SCHOOL PARTIES

Parties celebrated during specific holidays whether at school or another location must first be approved by the head of school. Parents may be asked by the teacher to contribute items relating to the party. **Piñatas are not allowed at any school-organized party.**

BIRTHDAYS

Birthday blessings are given during morning chapel on Wednesdays. Parents wishing to have a birthday party in the student's room need to notify the teacher in advance. Invitations for parties away from school may be distributed at school **provided every student in the class is given one, or the party is for all boys or all girls.**

CHILDCARE'S MOST RECENT INSPECTION AND REPORT

The most recent report from Child Care Licensing will always be posted on the bulletin board on the north end of the school hallway along with other pertinent information. Upon your request, a copy can be made available.

CONTACTING CHILDCARE LICENSING AND TDFPS

Child Care Local Licensing's office can be reached by phone at 956-316-8544. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services website is: dfps.state.tx.us. You can find many resources here along with access to the minimum standards for childcare licensing.

ANIMALS

St. Matthew's does not permit classroom pets in the Pre-K2 through Pre-K4 classrooms due to the possibility of spreading disease between the animal and child. Classroom pets may be part of the learning curriculum for Kindergarten-5th grade classes. Students should always be supervised when handling pets. Extra precaution should be taken with any reptiles and limited only to observation by the students.

BACKGROUND CHECKS AND MANDATORY TRAINING

Background checks are conducted by the Diocese of West Texas for all teachers and staff. FBI and Finger printing background checks are conducted for all teachers and staff who work with the PK students. Teachers and staff must clear their background checks; there are no exceptions to this rule. Our teachers and staff are required to attend a mandatory training titled Safeguarding God's Children every five years. This training instructs individuals how to detect abuse and neglect and how to avoid situations that could be construed as situations of abuse or neglect.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS RESPONSE PLAN

E-Prep Team:

Bob Schmidt, Head of School (956) 383-4202

Tom Buchanan, Vestryman (956) 360-4999

Grace Buchanan, Parish Administrator (956) 566-0333

Hernan Jimenez, Custodian (956) 827-4484

FIRE: 911**(Edinburg Fire Department: 383-7691)**

Fire Drills are held each month of the academic year. **Three brief buzzes are sounded over the intercom system.** Students rehearse the evacuation response and route with their teachers and peers in order to respond calmly and methodically in the event of a fire emergency. The goal is to exit the building and be lined up in the designated location within three minutes.

In the event that a smoke detector responds to a potential fire, the teachers and the students will follow one of two routes posted in the classroom; the primary route, and if not available due to an obstruction, the secondary route. Should both the primary and secondary exits be inaccessible, teachers will assist their students in exiting the classroom via the window. Routes are posted in each classroom.

The gathering place, regardless of weather conditions, will be the east side of the field closest to the fence line with the teachers and the students facing west. Teachers will conduct roll call. Should the building not be habitable following a fire emergency, the parish hall or church is the primary place for relocation. Should those buildings not be habitable, the secondary place of relocation is Robert Vela High School. The teachers and students will walk along the sidewalk to the high school and gather in their library.

Smoke Detectors 2 in the main hallway of the school building. One on the north end and one on the south end. There are smoke detectors in the PK classrooms too.

Fire Extinguisher Locations

3 hallway of the main school building; 2 portable classrooms; 1 church hallway; 1 parish hall kitchen

Fire extinguishers will be checked monthly by a designee. The report will be documented and posted on the PK bulletin board. Fire extinguishers will be inspected annually by a representative from Flame Out (Fire Extinguisher Maintenance Provider).

Medical Emergency: 911

First Aid Kits are located in each classroom and the school office.

First Aid and CPR certified staff:

All PK staff and the Head of School are certified in CPR and First Aid.

SEVERE WEATHER DRILLS AND RESPONSE

Our local weather is monitored by KRGV mobile weather alerts. Edinburg CISD calls the school to make us aware of any pending severe weather.

Pending inclement weather for which we are afforded advanced notice, we will follow the Edinburg CISD's instructions on whether to post an inclement weather day, or not. Protocol for an inclement weather day, such as a hurricane, flooding, or freezing weather conditions, is for the principal to call the teachers and staff, and in return the teachers will notify their classes' parents by text, or phone call.

Severe Weather Drills will be held two times in the fall semester and two times in the spring semester. **A continuous siren is sounded over the intercom.** Students and teachers file into the hallway of the main cinder block building and shut the classroom door behind them. Students and teachers kneel down facing the inside wall and wait for further instruction. Students, teachers, and staff will practice getting into the "turtle position" leaning forward from the kneeling position with their hands covering the backs of their heads.

If a tornado or severe weather is imminent, the siren is sounded and students, teachers, and staff proceed into the hallway, closing the door behind them and getting into the safety positions that have been practiced during the drills. Students and staff will wait for further instructions from the principal or other E-Prep designee.

LOCKDOWN PROCEDURES: 911 (Edinburg Police Department: 383-7411)

Lockdown Drills will be performed twice in the fall semester and twice in the spring semester. The head of school, or a designee of the E-Prep team will announce **"Lockdown, Lockdown"** over the intercom. The teacher is responsible for closing and locking the classroom door, covering the peek-a-

boo window of the door with the pre-fitted cardboard, and turning off the lights. The students are to quietly maneuver to the predetermined area of the classroom, away from windows and doors, and remain quiet and calm while the teacher completes her part. The teacher will remain with the students in the designated safe zone of the classroom.

Edinburg CISD communicates with our school in the event that our neighboring school has placed its campus in lockdown mode. With our school being in the vicinity, we follow their direction.

When there is a potential threat of an intruder making his/her way to our campus, the Head of School, or a designee of the E-Prep team will announce “Shelter in place” over the intercom. Our students, staff, and teachers will remain in the building in which they are located at the time of the announcement. They will be able to move freely among the classrooms and the hallway of the main building.

The Head of School, or E-Prep designee, will lift the lockdown or shelter in place when deemed safe by announcing a predetermined code word or phrase that has been shared with the teachers and staff.

LOCKDOWN PROTOCOL

Our first priority is the safety of the students and staff. All actions are in response to their safety.

Please be aware of the following:

- A lockdown is called by the principal, or her designee, in the event that the Edinburg Police Department alerts the school of a potential threat in the proximity of St. Matthew’s.
- If an imminent threat is known to any of St. Matthew’s staff and personnel, a lockdown will immediately be called by the principal, or her designee.
- If you arrive to school with your child and there is not a response from the office to grant access through the locked gate, and there appears to be no movement on the grounds, assume we are in lockout mode. We insist that you do not stay outside in open view during a lockdown.

- We cannot and will not open the gate, or any door, once we are in lockdown mode.
- If you are already in one of the buildings with us, you must stay with us and follow our lockdown procedures.
- Attempting to enter the grounds or campus during a lockdown could jeopardize the safety of our students, staff, and yourselves. Please ensure that we are handling the situation as we have been trained.
- The principal, or her designee, will be in constant communication with the appropriate authorities or agencies during a lockdown. Please respect that process and do not attempt to interrupt that communication by calling the school. If the phone is not being answered, the most likely reason is that the phone lines are being used to address the situation.
- Once the lockdown has been lifted, you will receive information via text from your child's teacher, and an email response from the principal.

SCHOOL EVACUATION

KRGV News: 631-5555; KGBT News: 366-4444; KURV Public Radio: 992-8895; Hidalgo County Sheriff's Department: 383-8114; Edinburg Police Department: 383-7411

In the event an evacuation of the classrooms and or school buildings is warranted (via contact by local law enforcement authorities, Edinburg CISD, etc.), the head of school or E-Prep designee will inform teachers and students via the intercom.

Students and staff will use the church as its primary shelter and the parish hall as its secondary shelter. The head of school and staff will remain on the campus in the designated shelter with all children until parents and guardians can be reached and the local authorities deem it safe to leave the shelter. There are water fountains and bathrooms in the church. The building is built with concrete cinder blocks and limited windows. Bottled waters will be stored in the storage room of the church in the event that the city's water is found to pose a health risk.

The principal, or other E-Prep team designee, will contact the local authorities and media outlets. Attendance and Grade Record books identifying the students per classroom will be with the teachers during a sheltering in place event. Parents' contact information will be stored in the Record books too. Parents will be notified by the teachers by phone or text.

RELOCATION IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY

KRGV News: 631-5555; KGBT News: 366-4444; KURV Public Radio: 992-8895; Hidalgo County Sheriff's Department: 383-8114; Edinburg Police Department: 383-7411

Attendance and Grade Record books identifying the students per classroom will be with the teachers during a relocation event. Parents' contact information will be stored in the Record books too. Teachers and staff will be relocated to Robert Vela High School in the event of needing immediate relocation. Designated adults will be responsible for walking with the children to the campus located on Canton Rd. Parents will be notified by the teachers by text message or phone call. In the event that longer term relocation is needed, the school's four portable classrooms, the church building, and the parish hall can serve as a place for short-term to mid-term relocation.

Students will always move with their teachers and the classroom aides as one grade level unit. The classroom teacher is responsible for coordinating the uniformity for lining the children up and moving as one unit. The teacher will use the grade and attendance record book to account for each child's presence as they are moving. The primary mode of movement will be by foot. Names of designated pick-up people will be kept in the classroom record book. Identification should also be provided by the person authorized to pick up the child to ensure children's safety.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROCEDURES

Hidalgo County Health Department: 383-6221

Students, teachers, and staff will be trained and reminded to practice strong hygiene habits, primarily handwashing for 20 seconds with basic soap and water. Staff and teachers of the Early Childhood grades will properly sanitize items that are used by the children. Classroom teachers will clean the desk/table tops with a disinfectant at the conclusion of each day. Students will be instructed on how to "cover their coughs" using the Batman pose.

Each morning, teachers will conduct Health Checks of their students. Parents of students appearing to have an illness will be notified immediately. The potentially infected student will be isolated from the other students in the principal's office. If parents and medical physicians have confirmed that the student has a contagious illness, parents are to notify the school. Students that have illnesses that are highly contagious to the school population will be kept at home under the care of their parent/guardian until they are medically released back to school. Parents of students whose children are kept in the same classroom as the infected child will be notified by the classroom teacher via a text message or a phone call. An email message will be delivered by the school to the parent community as well. Privacy laws must be upheld so the name of a sick child will not be disclosed to the community.

Upon receiving written or verbal communication of multiple students diagnosed with a highly contagious illness, St. Matthew's Episcopal School will notify the Hidalgo County Health Department to alert them of a potential outbreak. Once again, St. Matthew's Episcopal School will notify parents via email and the classroom teachers will notify the parents by a text message or a phone call.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES AND THEIR USAGE

I-WYLD (Innovation – With Your Learning Device) is the name of our device usage project. Through this project, students are permitted and highly encouraged to bring their electronic learning devices to their instructional classrooms specifically for the purpose of engaging in a more innovative learning environment.

TECHNOLOGY USE POLICY

Multimedia and Internet Access to the internet enables students to utilize its vast resources to further our educational goals and objectives.

General Information The internet connection used by the school has a secure firewall and filter. Nonetheless, if objectionable material does inadvertently slip through, students must demonstrate responsibility by disengaging from the internet immediately and informing the teacher. Students are as

responsible for appropriate behavior on the schools' computer network as they are in the classroom. Computers and related electronic devices are not to be used in ways that might adversely affect the work, privacy, and access of information related to learning.