

Parent Handbook

ST. MATTHEW'S WEEKDAY SCHOOL SCHOOL YEAR 2022-2023

Please direct all comments, concerns, ideas, and/or questions to the Director of St. Matthew's Weekday School and/or the Chairman of the WDS Board. Comments and constructive criticism make us more aware of our school's service and help us continuously improve our program for our primary customers — YOUR CHILDREN. We look forward to an exciting and rewarding year with your child at St. Matthew's Weekday School. Thank you in advance for all your caring, cooperation, and support.

(703) 978-6242

<http://www.stmatthewsumc.org/wds/>

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WELCOME

WELCOME FROM THE PASTOR

Welcome to St. Matthew's United Methodist Church Weekday School. We are thrilled that you have chosen our school and entrusted your children to our care and we promise to help your child have a wonderful preschool experience and grow as a whole person. The St. Matthew's Church family is committed to being a welcoming community that nurtures and serves all of God's children and we offer the highest quality programs for children of all ages. We invite you and your family to attend any of our church services or activities, including worship, Sunday School, faith formation, music ministry, and mission projects. Information about these programs, and more, is available at www.stmatthewsumc.org. Feel free to contact me or any member of our church staff if there is anything we can do support you and your family on your life's journey.

Mike Plasters

Senior Pastor

WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to St. Matthew's Weekday School. It is my pleasure to welcome you to our preschool family and we look forward to partnering with you in the early stages of your child's development. Preschool is an exciting time filled with memorable moments and exploration. The WDS provides a quality, developmentally appropriate learning environment for each child. We are committed to providing dedicated, trained, qualified staff members who bring years of experience and education to the classroom. Each day will be filled with fun and exciting opportunities to help your child develop spiritually, cognitively, socially, and emotionally. We look forward to all that God will do this year as we work together in building a foundation for your child's future.

Nicole Page

HISTORY

Our preschool was established in 1961 as a kindergarten program. Over the years, the school adapted and became a preschool. During the Vietnam era, a Mother's Day Out program was added to address the needs of families with loved ones serving in the conflict. The Mother's Day Out/Children's Day Out Program was incorporated as part of the Weekday School in August 2005. We are a non-profit, equal opportunity, ecumenical program operated by St. Matthew's United Methodist Church.

MISSION

St. Matthew's Weekday School is an outreach ministry of St. Matthew's United Methodist Church to provide a part-day educational program with extended day options that cultivates school readiness, social and emotional development, and Christian faith enrichment for children ages 2 to 5 years old. St. Matthew's UMC Weekday School believes that children of all backgrounds and faith are precious to God, and as such all children deserve a stimulating environment in which to learn and grow.

STAFF

The majority of our classes are staffed by two teachers, a lead and an assistant. Additional staff include two support teachers and a music and/or movement resource teacher. Quality of staff is especially important in providing exceptional education and care for preschool aged children. Teachers are hired on the basis of educational background or appropriate experience and demonstrated skill in working with young children. Above all, each staff member is a warm and caring professional who is committed to providing the best possible preschool experience for young children.

All staff members are required to attend 16 hours of professional development per year to ensure that they are well informed with the most up-to-date knowledge for best practices of early childhood education.

NOTE: Whenever a lead teacher is absent, the assistant teacher conducts class in her/his place to ensure continuity. We call in a qualified substitute teacher to serve as the assistant. All substitute teachers undergo the same background checks and hiring process as permanent staff.

Staff members are required to have a current Pediatric CPR and First Aid certificate. Additionally, each staff member has received training that enables her or him to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect as required by Section 63.2-100 of the Code.

An annual health exam form stating that each staff member is free from any disability that would prevent her/him from caring for children must also be on file with the Director. A qualified physician or certified nurse practitioner must sign the form.

Each staff member must provide a negative PPD skin test for tuberculosis. If an employee is unable or refuses to provide skin testing results, then she/he must provide a chest x-ray report as proof of a negative tuberculosis status.

During the hiring process, a Criminal Record Check (Federal Fingerprint Check) and a Central Registry Search (child abuse and neglect) are completed for each staff member.

DAYS AND HOURS OF OPERATION

Office Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM, August through June

2-Day classes: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

3-Day classes: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

4-day classes: Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 AM -- 1:00 PM

5-day classes: Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Before & After Care: Monday through Friday, 7:00AM – 9:00AM, 1:00 – 6:00PM

Kindergarten: Monday through Friday, 8:30AM-3:30PM

Dual Enrollment is allowed based on class availability.

DESCRIPTION OF FACILITIES

The Weekday School is located at 8617 Little River Turnpike Annandale, VA 22003. The size of the building is 42,000 square feet. The Weekday School utilizes a total of 11 rooms to support its day-to-day operations. Kitchen facilities are not available for use by the Weekday School. Play equipment consists of a fenced-in playground comprised of swings, a sand box, climbing equipment, and slides. In compliance with the Code of Virginia, Section 63.2-1716, the Weekday School is religiously exempt from licensure and is classified as a “religiously exempt child day center.”

GENERAL CALENDAR

The Weekday School operates from September through May. Exact dates vary depending on Labor Day, Memorial Day, and the Fairfax County Public School schedule. We follow Fairfax County’s schedule regarding federal holidays, and weather-related closings. We offer a twelve-week summer camp starting in June for 2-12-year-old children. (Must be 2 by September 30, 2022)

Teachers start work the last week in August and our school year officially begins in September. We hold a Student and Parent Orientation prior to the start of the school year. This provides an opportunity for you to meet your child’s teachers, see the classroom, and ask questions. Please refer to the web site, <http://www.stmatthewsumc.org/preschool-wds/> for a more complete calendar of important dates and activities (subject to change as the year progresses).

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURE

St. Matthew’s Weekday School is an equal opportunity school and admits children regardless of race, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, and religious affiliation to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to the children in the school. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, and religious affiliation in administration of our educational policies, admissions, or other school administrations programs.

In-House Registration for the upcoming school year begins in January for all children of current and past Weekday School families, as well as children of people who attend St. Matthew’s United Methodist

Church. Failure to sign-up during the In-House registration puts the family into the Open Registration pool. Open Registration begins following the close of In-House Registration.

The maximum enrollment capacity is 104 children. The maximum number of children to be in care at any one time, as dictated by the local building inspector, is 99.

Children are accepted into our program on a first come, first served basis, as openings become available. Upon acceptance, a child is scheduled for the upcoming full year from September through May, subject to payment of all required deposits and tuition. All toddlers must be 18 months by the time of their enrollment and all 3 and 4-year-old children are to be of age by September 30, 2022. Children do not transition to new age groups after celebrating their birthdays.

Items required at the time of registration are:

- completed registration form
- non-refundable registration fee
- non-refundable activity fee

Items required prior to the first day of school are:

- the child's original birth certificate (to be viewed, copied, and returned to the parent)
- Commonwealth of Virginia School Entrance Health Form verifying the child's immunization status

WITHDRAWAL

A **written notice is required 30 days in advance** to withdraw a child from the Weekday School. Upon receipt of the **written notice** (e-mails are acceptable), the prepaid tuition payment will be applied to the child's final month of attendance.

PROBATIONARY ENROLLMENT PERIOD

For all children, there is a thirty-day probationary period of enrollment. This is to ensure that children are properly placed in their school environment. If a child continues to be distraught after our staff members in the classroom have made every effort to help the child acclimate to the group setting, it may be that the child is not ready for the program at that particular time. After observation by the Director, if a large proportion of any staff member's time is spent attending to the needs of one child so that it is unsafe or disruptive to the other class members, a child may be asked to leave the program. The Director will contact parents with any major concerns about a child. After careful consideration, and consultation with parents, the Director will make the final determination regarding continued enrollment.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

While St. Matthew's WDS aspires to be an inclusive setting, our teachers are not formally trained in providing special education. Parents of a child with identified special needs will meet with the Director to determine how the necessary accommodations can be provided.

If, during the course of the school year, teachers or parents have concerns about a child's development, they will meet with the Director to determine the best course of action for the child. The Director will provide information about resources available in the community, and will work with the family to access additional resources as needed.

Parents are asked to notify the Director if their child has been evaluated and/or is receiving services from outside professional source(s). The Director will work with the parents to coordinate services received within the classroom as needed.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is taken on a daily basis, and the Assistant Director maintains a master record. Please report student absences to the office by leaving a message on the answering machine (703-978-6242) or by emailing the Director & Assistant Director. In addition, please notify the Assistant Director if your child's arrival or departure will not take place at the expected time.

TUITION

Yearly tuition is divided into nine equal payments. St. Matthew's WDS requires one month's prepaid tuition, which is due in the month of May prior to the start of the school year. This payment is non-refundable but will be applied to your tuition expense for the last month your child attends school. If you withdraw your child prior to the beginning of the school year, the prepaid tuition will be applied to your September tuition commitment. With the exception of the September payment that is due on or before the first day of school, the remaining payments are due the first of each month. Tuition is considered late after the 10th of the month.

Tuition is not negotiable and is not refundable because of illness, family vacations, weather conditions, or health precaution closures beyond the school's control. Families with more than one child registered in the Weekday School are given a 10% discount off the lower tuition. St. Matthew's is a non-profit school and we depend on prompt payment of your tuition each month to meet our expenses. We solicit your attention and support in this critical area to keep our program solvent through the entire school year and beyond.

Payment methods include paying by Credit Card, ACH Payment through our Brightwheel system or by check in person. Fees and prepaid tuition deposit are paid via-Brightwheel or via-check and made payable to SMUMC.

SCHOLARSHIP

The St. Matthew's United Methodist Church Weekday School (WDS) offers a limited number of partial, need-based scholarships to families of WDS students demonstrating a financial need. The amount and availability of need-based scholarships is based on funds available.

In order to receive scholarship funding, a family must complete the WDS Scholarship Application form. This form will be reviewed by a small subcommittee including the WDS Board Chair and Director.

When possible, applications for scholarship assistance shall be submitted at registration. The WDS will endeavor to consider applications within 30 days of receipt and will provide a decision no later than prior to the start of the school year for which the scholarship has been requested. However, when difficult times present themselves, please do not hesitate to reach out about scholarship assistance.

The scholarship application can be found on our website www.stmatthewsumc.org/preschool-wds under the enrollment tab.

FEES

Late payment of tuition (received after the 10th of the month): \$35

Returned check fee: \$50

TAX INFORMATION

Families who claim dependent childcare on Federal and State Tax returns may contact the WDS office for documentation. All tuition statements will be available through the Brightwheel software at your leisure.

FUNDRAISING

Though the WDS is an outreach ministry of SMUMC, it is entirely self-supporting, with the exception of insurance. In addition to staff salaries and related expenses, materials, equipment, and playground maintenance, the WDS also contributes financially to SMUMC to help defray costs of bookkeeping, cleaning services, lawn care, parking lot maintenance, and utilities. Fundraising is a great way to build community and offset improvements throughout the Weekday School. We hold several fundraisers throughout the year. Families are under no obligation to participate, but we appreciate any and all extra financial help and we also accept donations.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

- Transportation to and from school is solely the parents' responsibility.
- **CHILDREN WILL BE DISMISSED ONLY TO A PARENT OR PERSON DESIGNATED BY PARENTAL WRITTEN PERMISSION.** If you arrange a play date for your child after school with a schoolmate, both children must send in written notification. An email that contains both families is sufficient. We must have both emails on file.
- **NEVER** leave any child unattended in your vehicle. This constitutes child neglect in the State of Virginia, and WDS staff members are mandated reporters.

TODDLER (2's) CLASSES

The school day begins promptly at 9:00 AM when the doors to the classrooms are unlocked.

School ends at 1:00 PM.

Please follow these guidelines to facilitate drop-off and pick-up:

- Arrive as closely to 9:00 AM and 1:00 PM as possible.
- Parents will walk their children to their designated classrooms and ensure that the teacher acknowledges the child's presence.

PRESCHOOL & PRE-K (3's & 4's) CLASSES

The school day begins promptly at 9:00 AM when the children are escorted into school by their parent or guardian.

Full day students please abide by previous correspondence for pick up and drop off.

LATE PICK UP

Please make every effort to pick up your child on time. We allow a 5-minute grace period and late fees begin accruing at 1:15pm. For preschoolers, late fees begin accruing at 1:15pm. Aftercare for Preschoolers & School Age children late fees begin accruing at 6:05pm.

If you think you might be late, make every effort to contact and ask one of your emergency contacts to pick up your child on time. **Contact the office to inform us that you will be late** and if someone else will be picking up your child. This person must be on your list of authorized drivers in the child's file.

The first time you are late for pick up (up to 15 minutes), you will receive a warning from the Director.

Subsequent late pick up occurrences will be charged a late pick-up fee *for each child*.

1 – 5 minutes	\$10	31 – 40 minutes	\$50
6 – 10 minutes	\$20	41 – 50 minutes	\$60
11 – 20 minutes	\$30	51 – 60 minutes	\$75
21 – 30 minutes	\$40		

- The late fee must be paid immediately or prior to the next time your child comes to school.
- After the fourth late pick up occurrence, your child may be considered for dismissal from the program.

PRAYER AND CHAPEL TIME

St. Matthew's WDS is an outreach ministry of St. Matthew's United Methodist Church. Prayer and Christian values are presented and modeled to our children. Grace is said or sung prior to eating snacks and/or lunch. Once a week, the children will go to the sanctuary for Chapel Time. Chapel Time combines Bible stories and songs that affirm God's unconditional love for each child. Chapel time is led by the Director of Children's Ministries, and the Senior and Associate Pastors of SMUMC. Each session begins with a song, followed by a story, and ends with a prayer. Both New and Old Testament Bible stories are included in the lessons. Parents are always welcome to confer with the WDS Director with any questions about the Chapel Time curriculum. (703-978-6242)

DISCIPLINE

Our approach to discipline complements how young children learn, grow, and develop. Providing a stimulating and loving environment that fully engages the children affords them the rights and abilities to make real choices, thus protecting the rights of each individual child and promoting the development of self-control. When children are placed in a social situation outside their home environment, there may be occasions of hurtful behavior. Social behaviors are learned and must be nurtured and developed. Our policy has a two-faceted approach. One is the 3 R's: REMIND children in positive terms of acceptable behaviors; REDIRECT children's activity to an area that may be calming or engaging; and REMOVE the child briefly until he/she is able to regain a measure of control. At the same time, we help the child develop control by using hand movements: STOP (palm out as if stopping traffic), THINK (point to forehead), and QUESTION if this choice is helpful (thumbs up) or hurtful (thumbs down). If a child doesn't have the ability or the vocabulary to express helpful choices, teachers verbalize one or more of those choices. Occasionally, a brief separation from friends is deemed appropriate for the situation and the child. As much as possible, this is within the classroom; however, in the rare circumstance when a child does not respond or is disruptive to the rest of the class, this calming time may be spent in the Director's office with the Director. If incidents persist, the staff, the parents, and the Director will confer to come up with a plan of action.

In accordance with Virginia State licensing for Religiously Exempt Day Care

- A. Discipline shall be constructive in nature and include techniques such as:
 - 1. Using limits that are fair, consistently applied, appropriate, and understandable for the child's level
 - 2. Providing children with reasonable limits
 - 3. Giving positively worded directions
 - 4. Modeling and redirecting children to acceptable behavior
 - 5. Helping children to constructively express their feelings and frustrations to resolve conflict
 - 6. Arranging equipment, materials, activities, and schedules in a way that promotes desirable behavior

- B. When disciplining child, staff shall not
 - 1. Use physical punishment or disciplinary action
 - 2. Shake a child at any time
 - 3. Be verbally abusive
 - 4. Force, withhold, or substitute food

5. Punish a child for toileting accidents

- C. When separation is used as a disciplinary technique, it will be brief and appropriate to the child's developmental level and circumstances. The child who is separated from the group will be in a safe, lighted, well-ventilated place and will be within hearing and vision of a staff member.

BITING

Biting is a behavior often seen in infants, toddlers, and 2-year-olds. As children mature, gain self-control, and develop problem-solving skills, they usually outgrow this behavior. While not uncommon, biting can be an upsetting and potentially harmful behavior. It's best to discourage it from the very first episode.

When biting occurs, the following steps will be taken:

- The child who is bitten will have the wound attended to immediately. The area will be washed thoroughly with soap and water and examined for skin penetration. First aid will be administered if the skin is broken.
- The child who is biting will be shadowed by a teacher to prevent recurrence of biting and/or redirected to another activity.
- The Director will be notified, and the parents of both children will be informed by phone.
- The incident will be recorded in the First Aid/Accident log.
- For a child who seems to develop a habit of biting, teachers will observe the child and note possible causes that might trigger the biting behavior. If necessary, staff will confer with parents to devise a plan to replace biting with a more appropriate behavior.

Please visit these links for more information about understanding and responding to children who bite:

<http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/child-development/understanding-and-responding-children-who-bite>

<http://ecap.crc.illinois.edu/poptopics/biting.html>

CELEBRATIONS

HOLIDAYS

The Weekday School celebrates Christian religious and American secular holidays that are appropriate for children. All holidays are handled in a manner that is developmentally appropriate for each age group. Celebration days may include Halloween*, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Chinese New Year, Groundhog Day, Valentine's Day, Abraham Lincoln's Birthday, George Washington's Birthday, Dr. Seuss' Birthday, St. Patrick's Day, Mardi Gras, Easter, Earth Day, Mother's Day, and Father's Day. We also welcome families to share their customs, holidays, and/or family traditions with our WDS community. Please let the Director know if you'd like to share a family tradition with your child's class.

**Halloween is presented as an opportunity to develop the concept of real and pretend in a non-threatening manner. The preschool children dress up, parade around the parking lot, and present a short musical program for parents.*

BIRTHDAYS

We enjoy celebrating these special days at school. If you want to send in a birthday treat for the **entire class**, please send a note, or call your child's teacher a week prior to the event. Non-food "treats" are encouraged, such as stickers, pencils, etc. For those children with summer birthdays, we choose a "un-birthday" date in April or May or celebrate a half birthday. Participation is optional. Items must be store bought and NUT Free.

Invitations to birthday parties will NOT be distributed at school unless EVERY child in the class is included. Please be sensitive to the feelings of ALL the children when it comes to such social events.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Special Events will be coordinated within the school year. Exact dates can be found on the General Calendar section of the website.

SHOW AND TELL

These special sharing days will be designated by your child's teacher and marked on the school calendar. When an item is brought in for sharing, it will NOT be played with during the school day, but rather put away until the designated time. Please send the item in your child's bag or in a separate bag. If an item is of high value or sentimental value, the parent should make arrangements to bring the item at the designated time.

Unless it is a show and tell day, we ask that you leave all other toys or special items at home or in the car. If your child has a particular item that helps him/her soothe anxiety, please talk with your child's teacher to determine appropriate guidelines for its use at school.

FIELD TRIPS

The Director and staff schedule field trips during the school year. Transportation will be by school bus. The emergency authorization card gives parental permission for each child to participate in any and all of our trips. No child will be allowed to go on a field trip unless this authorization is signed. When a field trip is scheduled, the school will inform parents and provide details about the field trip. A nominal fee will be assessed to cover transportation costs. Parent chaperones are needed to go on all trips. If not enough parents volunteer to chaperone, the trip will be canceled. All field trips will be confined to the parameters as defined in the newsletter and class calendar/letter.

- When a class is on a field trip, the location and schedule will be posted at the school.
- Teachers will supervise classes on all field trips with help from parent chaperones.
- All children will wear a nametag or vest that notes the school's name and phone number.
- A head count will be taken prior to departure, upon arrival, and frequently during the trip.
- A first aid kit, emergency medication (if needed), emergency cards, and emergency authorization forms will be taken on all field trips.
- If street crossing is necessary, it will be done only at crosswalks.
- The school will provide food and water as necessary.
- Siblings are NOT invited on field trips. When a parent is chaperoning, please understand he/she must give full attention to the children in his/her charge and may not bring a sibling.

COMMUNICATION

We strive to provide information in electronic format as much as possible. Each classroom has a Brightwheel account to keep you well informed and your child prepared. Lesson Plans are posted to the Brightwheel App.

Printed correspondence from the teacher to the parent may also be placed in your child's folder.

You are welcome to contact the Director or your child's teacher by phone or e-mail.

CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled in the fall.

Conferences provide a structured opportunity for the teacher and parents to discuss the child's progress and well-being, and to share successes and challenges at home and in school. Informal conferences when school is in session are not possible, as the teachers are responsible for sight and sound supervision of the children. Conferences are conducted with parents, legal guardians, or a designated representative ONLY. If a child's parents wish to name a designated representative, a Communication Authorization Form must be filled out and will be kept on file in the WDS office.

Any time parents or legal guardians desire a conference with their child's teacher or the Director, one will be arranged at the earliest opportunity.

CONFIDENTIALITY

St. Matthew's Weekday School stresses the importance of protecting the rights of privacy of children, their families, and our staff members. One of the basic policies of our program is to maintain the confidentiality of verbal information and children's records. It is critical that the confidences of children and their parents, as well as staff members, not be repeated to other staff members, friends, or family members. Only in cases of professional necessity, and with written parental permission, will information be shared and then only to the professional having definitive reasons for needing the information for the good of the child and the family concerned. Staff members' rights and/or privacy will be considered as strongly as the rights of the children and their families.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs may be taken during St. Matthew's Weekday School events. These images could be used in publications and multimedia presentations, and included on our web page, St. Matthew's Weekday School Facebook page, on the Brightwheel apps, or stored for the purposes of archiving. Web images will not identify child by name and will not be used for commercial purposes. Parents may provide written notification requesting that their child (ren) not be photographed. A professional photographer will take both individual and group photographs during the school year. Purchase is optional.

TOILETING

2's Classes

All 2's classes are equipped with diaper changing stations. In addition, we will gladly assist parents with the toilet training process once initiated at home. Please discuss your methodology with the teachers when your child is ready to make this transition.

When talking with children about toileting, we use developmentally appropriate vocabulary including *pee*, *poop*, *penis*, *vagina*, and *bottom*. To minimize confusion, please use these same words regarding toileting at home.

With the exception of diapering, we do not wipe bottoms. We will coach children as they learn this skill and become proficient in the bathroom.

3's Classes

Children must be working towards independence in mastering bathroom skills. Initially starting the school year in a pull-up is age appropriate, and potty training will be promoted at the WDS. We require encouragement at home. If a child experiences repeated accidents, the Director will contact the family to discuss solutions.

4's Classes & School Age

Children must be toilet-trained in order to attend any 4's class at WDS. Toilet-trained means the child does not wear diapers, pull-ups, or training pants and does not soil their underwear routinely throughout the day. There are several scheduled bathroom breaks each day, and children may use the bathroom at any time.

If a child has an accident, a staff member will help the child change into clean clothes. If a child experiences repeated accidents, the Director will contact the family to discuss solutions.

CLOTHING

PLEASE LABEL EVERYTHING WITH YOUR CHILD'S FIRST AND LAST NAMES.

- Dress your child appropriately considering the weather forecast each morning. Layering the child's clothes is the best option as the weather often changes over the course of the day.
- Dress your child for comfort. Keep in mind that daily activities involve painting, outdoor play, and active indoor on-the-floor play; therefore, clothing should be durable, casual, and washable.
- Dress your child in shoes that completely enclose their feet and have soles that are safe for climbing. Rubber soled shoes are ideal. Sandals are often uncomfortable on the playground surface since mulch gets inside them.
- During winter months, the children will play outside if the ground is dry and the temperature is above freezing. Appropriate outerwear should be sent, including hats, hooded jackets, and mittens. Children should also be able to dress themselves for outdoor play with as little adult assistance as possible. We encourage you to offer them plenty of practice at home.
- *Since we remain indoors during wet or snowy weather, it is not necessary to send your child wearing snow//rain boots.*

- It is important to your child's sense of independence that he/she can **EASILY** manage their clothing at bathroom time. Overalls, body suits, and clothing with difficult snaps, buckles, or zippers are best saved to wear somewhere else.
- In case of spills or other accidents, we need a complete change of clothes (socks, underwear, shirt and pants/skirt) for each child. Put your child's extra clothes in a plastic bag labeled with your child's name. We will either collect the clothing or leave it in the bottom of the child's bag on their hook.
- We keep a limited supply of extra clothes on hand in case of emergencies. With the exception of underwear, all other borrowed clothing is to be washed and returned the next time the child comes to school.

FOOD

SNACKS

A nutritious snack may be provided for your child each day. Snacks will vary according to the season of the year and the curriculum. **DO NOT** send daily snacks for your child from home unless there is a serious health issue to address that you discuss in advance with the staff. **We are a nut free facility.**

If your child has an identified allergy, please contact the Director to complete an allergy action plan.

LUNCH

Send your child with a nutritious lunch including a drink (no carbonated beverages). We ask that you send lunches in a lunch box rather than a paper or plastic bag. Lunches cannot be refrigerated or heated; please plan accordingly. Clearly label all lunch boxes, thermoses, and other items with your child's name. Please provide all eating utensils from home. **We are a nut free facility.**

HEALTH AND SAFETY

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

The staff assumes responsibility for children when they come to school. During the school day, children are under constant supervision by staff members. Teachers are responsible for the class during music, outdoor and indoor playtime, field trips, and during any special activities. Children must be within sight and sound of the staff at all times. Visitors to the WDS will check in at the office upon their arrival and will interact with children *only* within the supervised classroom setting. The Director must approve of any person, other than the staff, who is working with any of the children.

CLASS SIZE & STUDENT-TO-TEACHER RATIOS

The director sets students-to-teacher ratios in compliance with Virginia State Licensing Standards and classroom occupancy requirements.

- 2's classes – 1 adult with a maximum of five or eight children
- 3's classes - 1 adult with a maximum of ten children
- 4's classes – 1 adult with a maximum of ten children
- School age- 1 adult with a maximum of eighteen children

Each classroom has one lead teacher. Some classrooms depending on the ratio have one assistant teacher, and all classes have one resource teacher for a portion of the day.

CLASSROOM VISITS & SECURITY

All exterior doors of the building are normally locked and are protected by security cameras that are monitored in the church and weekday school offices. Access doors are electronically controlled and audited. Staff members are assigned key fobs to access the building. Also, church members and visitors must use the church access control system (key fob or be “buzzed in”) and check in at the Church office. Any visitor or church member in the weekday school area of the building is always escorted/monitored by a church staff member. They are asked to avoid using the hallways in the Children's Sunday school area during Weekday School hours (Monday through Friday, 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM) whenever possible to provide a safe school environment.

Remember that teachers are responsible for sight and sound supervision of all children, so please refrain from informal conversations with them during your time in the classroom. Parents are encouraged to bring in a story to read or to share a special talent with the class. Let us know if you have a talent to share and call to schedule a time.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

State regulations require monthly fire drills and bi-annual shelter-in-place drills. A record of the practices is kept in a record book located in the Director's office.

Terminology and Procedures for Safety Practices

It is important that all involved, teachers, staff, church administrators, and parents understand and use a common terminology. We are using terminology similar to Fairfax County Public Schools.

LOCKDOWN: used to describe security measures taken to protect against intruders.

- All students stay in place with teachers or staff members.
- Students and teachers remain in locked classrooms, lights off, windows locked, window blinds closed, and door windows covered, and away from potential fire (lined up against the inside wall).
- Students and staff ignore possible fire alarms.
- Under no conditions are the teachers or staff to unlock the door from the inside based on a voice or cry from the hallway (a common trick by intruders).
- Teachers, staff, and students are to be as quiet as possible so the intruder does not know if any occupants are in the room. Staff will silence cell phones.
- No one enters or exits the school/church building except safety personnel.
- Once the incident has been resolved, a public safety official (police or sheriff) or the Director or WDS Assistant Director will unlock the doors from the hallway.

The Lockdown Drill will be coordinated with the church staff.

SECURE THE BUILDING: used if danger is outside the building, e.g., a robbery near school

- No students will be allowed outside the church building.
- All exterior doors are closed and locked (including the front door).
- Teachers, staff, and students are free to move about the building.
- A staff member is posted at the main entrance to control visitors.

SHELTER IN PLACE: used to temporarily separate students and staff from a dangerous situation outdoors. Examples of the need to shelter-in-place include severe weather, tornado, earthquake, riot, civil disturbance, possible toxic substance in the outside air, and possible person in the outside area (notification from the Police Department to secure building). The signal to indicate shelter-in-place outside the classroom is the bullhorn. The signal for returning to normal activity is the all-clear wave or the “all clear” announcement.

- In a shelter-in-place event, teachers and students must leave their location and move to the hallway. Children will sit on the floor. All classroom doors are closed and locked. The teacher checks attendance and/or counts heads to make sure all children are with her. She reports to the Director or Assistant Director.
- A specific time is allowed to elapse before returning to the classroom. The Director waves the all-clear signal or makes the “all clear” announcement.
- Children and teachers return to their classrooms. Children are recounted when they return to the classroom.
- The Director or Assistant Director will close the white doors near the school entrance.
- The Shelter in Place drill will be coordinated with the church staff.
- In the event of an actual tornado, children will be instructed in protective postures: crouch on the floor, face down, hands over back of heads (like turtles).
- The teacher will grab the “Go Bag”

EVACUATE: used when it has been determined it is unsafe to remain in the building. Suggested reasons to evacuate would be fire, flooding, or an unsafe building.

- Fire drills will be practiced once a month.
- At the sound of the alarm, students and staff will leave the building using the closest doors available and according to the evacuation signs located in the classroom.
- Teachers will do a head count.
- When leaving the classroom, teachers will grab the “Go Bag,” turn off lights, and close the doors.
- Once outside, children are recounted.
- Teachers and students will remain outside until the all-clear sign is given.
- The teacher will return the “Go Bag” to the classroom.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

Whenever you are concerned about local or national security and want to pick up your child from school, please do so. Children will be dismissed to parents/guardians UNLESS there is a lock down order issued by the government. Depending on the threat, we will move the children to the classrooms underneath the social hall until we receive further instructions from emergency services officials. In order to provide for your child in the event of a lockdown, we have provisions stored to accommodate your children. We will

notify families in the event of emergencies through our Brightwheel App and our **Facebook page** <https://www.facebook.com/St-Matthews-Weekday-School-197662401212/>.

WEATHER EMERGENCIES

Whenever you feel the road conditions are dangerous and want to pick up your child early, please do so. We follow Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) policy, but you are the best judge of what you think is safe for you and your child. It is your responsibility to know when FCPS will be closed due to inclement weather. Tune to Channel 21 if you have cable television, or radio news stations like WTOP 1500AM/107.7FM as they announce all closing and delayed opening information. If we are at school, you are welcome to call and we will pass the information on to you. We will do our best to change the message on the answering machine. We will notify families in the event of emergencies through our **Brightwheel App and Facebook page**.

Our hours change as follows in case of weather emergencies:

	<u>FAIRFAX COUNTY</u>	<u>ST. MATTHEW'S WDS</u>
Late Openings:	DELAYED opening	8:00AM for Before Care 10:00 AM arrival for part-time, dismiss at normal time
Early Closings:	EARLY closing	12:00 noon dismissal part-time Early release for full day will be based on need.

NOTE: Depending on the number of inclement weather closings that occur during the school year, St. Matthew's Weekday School reserves the right to schedule up to two (2) make-up days on the Tuesday and Wednesday following the Memorial Day holiday. Families will be notified if make-up days are scheduled.

INSURANCE

While your child is at the WDS or involved in an official WDS field trip, accident insurance is provided under the church's umbrella policy.

HEALTH REGULATIONS

According to the State of Virginia and the County of Fairfax, each student must have a current health form on file. This form must prove adequate immunization and certify general good health, and must be signed by a physician. The health form must be on file by the **FIRST** day of school each year. Please double check to make sure the form is complete. Note that the physician must sign in **two** places and that the hepatitis vaccine must also be listed on the form. **According to Virginia State health regulations, a child is not permitted to attend classes until the completed and signed form is on file.**

Each child will have an Authorization Form on file. This form must be signed by a parent/guardian and will be used if a child needs to be transported to the hospital by ambulance in an extreme emergency, to authorize field trips, and to provide information in the event of a local/national security event.

In order to be compliant with state and county codes, the Weekday School has established and implemented procedures for hand washing by staff and children before eating, after toileting and/or diapering, and before preparing and serving food. Hand washing is the most important means of interrupting the transmission of communicable diseases among staff and children.

ALLERGIES

St. Matthew's Methodist Church is NOT a nut-free facility. However, The WDS is a NUT FREE preschool.

Parents are to report any allergies to the teacher, both verbally and in writing, on the appropriate forms. A master list will be kept on file in the Director's office as well as posted in the classroom. If there is a severe food allergy that requires special medication (e.g., EpiPen Jr.), the child will not be given any food that does not come from home without parental authorization. This includes special snacks. Every effort will be made to have the parent provide a special snack for their child when the class is having a special snack.

Seasonal allergies are increasing. Please teach your child to wipe his/her nose, followed **by hand washing at every opportunity**, and to cough and/or sneeze into his/her upper arm or crook of the elbow in order to decrease the incidence of germs being spread by hands or in the air. If a child's allergies require restricting outdoor activities, the parent/guardian is required to provide and/or pay for appropriate supervision during regularly scheduled outdoor experiences or requested to keep the child at home.

MEDICATION

Parents are to report any medication your child is taking. Many medications may affect the child's behavior and it is helpful for all concerned that we be kept informed. **The staff will administer NO MEDICATION.** This includes aspirin, Tylenol, and cough drops. If a child requires medication during the course of the school day, the parent or an authorized designee must come to the school to administer the medication. For life-threatening allergies or other severe health conditions an exception will be made following these guidelines:

- 1.) The child's parent and his/her physician must complete and sign an authorization to administer medication statement;
- 2.) A written record of the administration of said medicine must be maintained;
- 3.) The medication, detailed written instructions, and the record of administration must be kept where access is limited to qualified adult staff members.

INJURIES

Our primary goal is to provide the safest possible environment for your child; however, we understand that accidents will happen. All staff members are trained to treat minor injuries including scraped knees, sand in the eyes, small bruises, etc. Staff members have first aid training and/or CPR and are qualified to administer aid. A report will be recorded in the First Aid/Accident Log, which is kept in the WDS office. For any and all head injuries, as well as insect bites, we notify parents immediately. Otherwise, parents will be informed at dismissal time. For more serious injuries, we first stabilize the situation and then phone parents to explain the situation, listen to your wishes, and give our recommendations. If we are unable to reach parents or their designated emergency contact, we will choose the best course of action for your child based on our assessment of the situation, our experience and training, and information previously provided by the parents. The Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Squad may be called in the case of an emergency. If it becomes necessary to transport a child to an emergency room, the Director or a staff member will accompany the child. Any expenses that may be incurred are the responsibility of the parents.

ILLNESS

Please review procedures and protocols for COVID related symptoms.

In order to limit the spread of illness as much as possible, please cooperate by keeping your child at home. Guidelines for illness include:

- A cold, accompanied by a runny nose, coughing, and sneezing *that inhibits the child from regular activity levels and/or requires one-on-one care.*
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea. Your child may not return to school until 24 hours AFTER the last episode.
- Fever over 100.4 of unknown origin. **Keep your child home until he/she has been fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.**
- An undiagnosed rash on the upper chest or torso.
- If your child is prescribed an antibiotic, he or she may **return to school after 24 hours of taking the first dose**, OR when your doctor recommends resuming school.
- In the case of lice, students may return to school when nits are no longer present.

All children are expected to participate daily in outdoor play, weather permitting. Outdoor play is necessary for good physical development and general health. Do not send your child to school if she/he is not well enough to participate in outdoor activities. We cannot arrange for an adult to watch a child inside during this period as both teachers are required to supervise their class outdoors.

In order to be compliant with state and county code, the Weekday School has established and implemented procedures for a daily simple health screening and exclusion of sick children by a person trained to perform such screenings whereby illness and other conditions can be identified.

In the event that a child becomes ill at school, parents will be notified. If a parent cannot be reached, we will contact the person(s) listed on the emergency contact card. The sick child will rest in the Director's office until picked up. Parents are expected to arrive within 30 minutes of notification.

You must notify the office if your child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease. Therefore if any child has a fever or suspected communicable disease they must have a return to school plan provided by a physician. We will notify all parents of possible exposure to communicable illnesses.

POLICY FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

The legal definition of child abuse and neglect is:

- The creating or inflicting by a parent or responsible caretaker of a non-accidental physical or mental injury upon a child under 18 years of age or permitting the inflicting of such injury;
- The creating by a parent or responsible caretaker of a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment of bodily or mental functions of a child;
- Neglect or refusal by a parent or responsible caretaker to provide care necessary for the child's health;
- Abandonment of a child by a parent or other person responsible for his/her care;
- The committing upon a child of any sexual act in violation of law, or permitting the commission of such acts.

Teachers and school employees, including SMUMC personnel, are required by law to report suspected child neglect or abuse. If a teacher suspect's abuse or neglect has taken place, a report will be made to the Department of Social Services and the Director will be notified simultaneously. A report will be filed including whatever support documents and observations that are available. If such a report is made, the Director will advise the Senior Pastor of the situation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT

I acknowledge that I have received and carefully read the St. Matthew's Weekday School Parent Handbook for the 2022-23 school year. I understand that policies may change at the discretion of the Weekday School Board, and that parents will be notified in writing regarding any changes that occur during the school year.

I agree to abide by the policies, practices, and procedures as outlined in the Parent Handbook. Failure to abide by the Parent Handbook could result in my child's dismissal from the Weekday School.

I understand that it is my responsibility to contact the Director of the Weekday School should I have questions or need clarification regarding any policies, practices, and procedures contained in the Parent Handbook.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Child(ren) Name/Class

Printed Name of Parent/Guardian

Date