**Matthews Elementary**

**Parent - Student Handbook**



Matthews Elementary School

200 McDowell Street Matthews, NC 28105

(980) 343-3940

<https://www.cmsk12.org/Page/506>

Penni Beth Crisp, Principal

*The purpose of the Matthews Elementary Parent -Student Handbook is to assist families in learning policies, rules, and procedures to keep a safe and orderly environment. We request that families follow all*

*policies, rules, and procedures to ensure high levels of learning, and a safe and orderly*

*environment are afforded to each student.*

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**Absences and Attendance**

 According to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education policy and the North Carolina Compulsory Attendance Law (GS- 115C-378), Families and guardians are responsible for seeing that their children attend school each day it is in session unless ill or unable to attend due to an unavoidable circumstance. Studies show that students who have a high rate of absenteeism do not perform well in class or on tests. We urge students and Families to make school a priority and to schedule vacations, family visits, etc. around the school calendar. A student must be in attendance for at least half of the school day (210 minutes) in order to be counted present.

In order to code an absence as excused, the parent/guardian is required to submit an excuse note (either sent to the front office, online on the homepage, or an email to Katie Kline, katherinea.kline@cms.k12.nc.us) within two days of the child's return to school. The note should contain the following: date(s) of absence(s) and the reason for absence, signature of the parent/guardian, student and teacher name. A written note from a parent does not automatically result in an excused absence. The reason code for the absence must be one of those determined by Public School Law. The absences listed below are considered **excused** once school personnel have received verification:

* Illness of student (A doctor’s note will be required after 3 consecutive absences.)
* Death in the immediate family
* Quarantine due to positive COVID test
* Observance of a religious holiday (The following form must be completed in advance for the absence to be excused: [Absence for Religious Obligation Form.pdf](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AO522iGuMOmrKzujcUy-P_wKdrBBrhjL/view))
* Court or administrative proceedings

Families can complete **a form to request absence for a valid educational opportunity**. Please contact the front office if you feel that your child’s absence will be due to a valid educational opportunity. The form must be completed and approved at least five days before the opportunity. The following will not be approved as educational opportunities: trips to Disneyworld, sporting events (attending or participation in), general family vacations even if out of the country, trips to Washington, DC, etc. This list is not exhaustive, but are some examples of trips that would not be approved.

Absences for reasons other than those listed above are deemed **unexcused.** Unexcused absences include, but are not limited to: missing the bus, oversleeping, car trouble, lack of heat, water, or electricity, inclement weather, babysitting, or vacations.

When a child returns to school following an absence, the student will be provided with the opportunity to make up missed work. If the work is satisfactory, credit will be given for the completed work depending on the status of the absence. After three absences, the teacher will report the absence to the attendance official/principal. Letters are sent to Families after 3, 6, and 10 unexcused absences. A home visit will occur to hand deliver the 10 day letter which delineates the legal repercussions involved when a student has accumulated 10 unexcused absences and the student will automatically be placed in the category of "violation."

After five absences, excused or unexcused, a doctor’s note is required-a handwritten note will not be accepted. If unexcused absences continue, a team meeting with your child’s teacher, school counselor and administrators will take place as well as a home visit. The school will be required to seek legal action if excessive unexcused absences continue.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education believes that regular and punctual attendance at school is imperative for educational success. The Board further believes that there is no substitute for the uninterrupted personal contact between teachers and students in the classroom environment where learning experiences are carefully planned and taught by teachers. The primary responsibility for school attendance rests with the students and Families. Schools, however, have the responsibility for properly recording absenteeism and tardiness, notifying Families when needed, and discouraging excessive absences in accordance with state law. We seek the full cooperation from Families in promoting good attendance and punctuality. If your child begins to accumulate excessive tardies (greater than three), you will be notified and invited for a meeting with school staff.

In particular,

1. Medical and dental appointments should be scheduled after school hours except in cases of emergency.

2. Family vacations should be taken during school vacation periods (Workdays, Winter Break, Spring Break, Summer Break).

3. No student will be excused from regular schoolwork to take private lessons in music, art, dance, or any other area without prior approval from the principal's office.

**Accidents**

Families will be notified of accidents needing medical or immediate attention. Families must ensure that teachers and the office always have current emergency telephone numbers.

**After-School Enrichment Program**

[**School Programs / Before and After School Enrichment**](https://www.cmsk12.org/Page/41)

The After School Enrichment Program (ASEP) provides programming for kindergarten through fifth grade students after the instructional day. ASEP offers a safe, nurturing, and enriching environment with a relaxed atmosphere and activity choices. Programming is designed to further the growth of children's social skills and to support academic achievement. Curriculum-correlated activities are planned daily to reinforce reading and math skills. There is time for talking with friends, playing games of strategy, physical and recreational activities, and reading. Homework sessions are supervised and a snack is provided. CMS does not provide transportation home from ASEP. ASEP is open from 2:45-6:00 PM on all school days and all day on teacher workdays. ASEP also offers optional programming, for an additional fee, on early release days and days that are not school holidays during winter and spring break. Registration is required yearly.

**Arrival Procedures**

Families are strongly encouraged to use the school bus transportation provided by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. If you do provide transportation in the morning, please remain in your car and let your child out of the car at the designated student drop off site to the right entrance of the school. Student drop-off should NOT occur on the McDowell Street side of the building or in the back parking lot for the safety of our students. The arrival procedure will keep the traffic flowing in the morning. Staff members will be on duty to assist with the arrival procedures to ensure the safety of all students. Students may begin arriving at school at 7:15 AM. The tardy bell rings at 7:45 AM. A warning bell rings at 7:43 AM. Students arriving after the tardy bell will need to be escorted into the school by an adult.

**Assignment Books (Student Agendas)**

All third, fourth, and fifth grade students are required to use a school assignment book to record daily homework assignments. Families are asked to check assignment books nightly and provide a signature to indicate that all assigned work was completed. Teacher/Family communication will be utilized through the student agenda. An agenda can be purchased at the school store from 7:15-7:45 AM on the assigned grade level day or at <https://www.pay4schoolstuff.com/>. If a family purchased a supply pack, the agenda was included.

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**Birthday Celebrations**

Birthday snacks or treats are permitted during your child's lunch period. No birthday candles, balloons, etc. should be brought into the school. Any treats must be store-bought and in the original store container with a label listing ingredients. Birthday treats cannot compete with cafeteria sales (students must go through the line before treats are provided). The school reserves the right to limit outside treats to protect our students with food allergies. Please check with your child’s teacher regarding allergies before sending a treat to school. The cafeteria will also provide birthday treats at a nominal fee. Check the Matthews website for more information. We realize that social occasions occur and students want to extend invitations to their friends; however, party invitations cannot be distributed during the school day.

**Bus Conduct**

Riding the school bus is a privilege. We know you share our concern for the safety of every student who rides a school bus.

The staff at Matthews Elementary School strongly urges families to review these rules with their children to ensure the safety of all passengers. Students who fail to observe these rules are subject to immediate disciplinary action since their failure to do so may affect the safety of themselves and others. The bus driver will report a student who misbehaves to a school administrator. Disciplinary actions may include suspensions from the bus. If a student is suspended from the bus, the parent is responsible for providing transportation to and from school during the duration of the suspension. The parent should observe established arrival and dismissal schedules. Students that do not attend school during a bus suspension will be marked with an **unexcused** absence. Students suspended from the bus are not permitted to be at any Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District bus stop or ride any school bus during their suspension.

Families can help to support their child's appropriate behavior on the school bus by reviewing the following bus expectations with their child on a regular basis:

* Students may only exit the bus at their designated stop.
* Children may not ride on the school bus with a friend for an after-school playdate.
* The privilege of riding the school bus will be revoked for any child who interferes with the rights of other children to have a safe bus ride.
* CMS policy requires students to sit in assigned seats throughout the year, as assigned by the bus driver.
* Students and Families are advised that video cameras may be used to monitor behavior on the bus.
* Students are to sit in their assigned seats and are to remain seated until the bus comes to a complete stop at their bus stop or at the school.
* Students are permitted to talk quietly.
* Students are to obey the instructions of the bus driver promptly and consistently.
* Students are to refrain from eating, drinking, or chewing gum on the bus.
* Students are not permitted to use profane or inappropriate language while riding the bus.
* Students are not permitted to tamper with the emergency door, emergency windows, fire extinguishers, or first aid supplies.
* Students are not to deface the bus in any way.
* Students are not permitted to take pets or other animals on the bus.
* **Students are not permitted to use personal technology devices such as cell phones, laptops, video games, tablets etc. on the bus.** All electronic devices must remain off and put away (stored in a backpack) while on the bus. If students do not follow these expectations, the bus driver may take their phone and return the phone to the school.
* Families/guardians are not permitted to board CMS buses.

**Bus Schedules and Stops**

* Bus schedules, routes, and stops are determined by the CMS Transportation Department in accordance with North Carolina State Law.
* The CMS Transportation Call Center can be reached at 980-343-6715.
* School buses will come to a complete stop at each bus stop. If no student is in sight, the bus will continue on its route immediately.
* Students should arrive at the bus stop at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled pickup time. To allow for uncontrollable incidents, such as traffic delays, students should wait for the bus for at least 15 minutes after the scheduled pick up time before leaving the bus stop.
* **Families are able to track the bus using the app, *Here Comes the Bus****.* Find information at the following link: [Transportation Services / Here Comes the Bus App](https://www.cmsk12.org/Page/186)
* Families are responsible for student safety at bus stops. If you have concerns regarding your child’s bus route or stop, please complete an alternate bus stop form on the CMS website. [Transportation Services / Forms and Resources](https://www.cmsk12.org/Page/195)
* Families are responsible for registering for alternate stops (daycares, after school locations). **Students who are not registered for bus stops to daycare facilities will not be permitted to ride the school bus there until they are approved riders.**
	+ Directions to request an alternate stop:
* Visit: [Transportation Services / Forms and Resources](https://www.cmsk12.org/Page/195)
* Scroll down and click on Alternate Stop Request Form
* Enter your child’s ID number and last name. You will need to do a form for each child if you have more than one child.
* Enter the requested information regarding the alternate stop.
* **The alternate stop must be in the Matthews attendance area**. Please note that daycares in the attendance boundaries for the new Mint Hill Elementary School will not be considered for alternate stops.



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**Car-Rider Traffic**

* All car-rider traffic enters and exits on the west side of the school next to the school marquee. ONLY BUSES WILL BE PERMITTED TO TURN ONTO McDOWELL STREET between the church and the school. No student drop off or pick up will be permitted in this area.
* The cut-through sidewalk, driveway sidewalk and drive behind the First Baptist Church off Sadie Drive is closed to all car and pedestrian traffic during arrival and dismissal; please do not use this as a means of access to the school.
* Car rider traffic will enter the driveway beside the school sign and travel around the staff parking area to let out or pick up students at designated points along the sidewalks. No U-turns are permitted by the canopy section. Please drive around the staff parking area.
* For the safety of your child and all others, please turn off your cell phone when you approach the student drop-off/pick­ up zone.
* Please do not drop off students in the line; wait until your vehicle is stopped at a sidewalk before allowing students to exit the vehicle.
* Families will register for a car rider sign and be provided with a place card. The place card must be displayed in the front or side window so that it is easily read by the car line supervisors at dismissal.
* Students must be let out and picked up only from the right (passenger) side of the car when the car is parallel to the sidewalk in front of the 2nd and 4th grade wing with black railing and the main building (under the canopy).
* Cars cannot pass once they are in line in the drive and parking lot area.
* The drop off/pick-up area is quite lengthy. To assist in drop-off, please look for staff on duty at these drop-off points: 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade drop off is at the black railing outside the 2nd and 4th grade hall; Kindergarten and first grade should continue to the canopy next to the main building. Pick-up will be along the sidewalk for all grade levels. Please pull all the way up when picking up your child.

**Cell Phones/Smartwatches**

All cell phones should be turned off upon entering the school building or classrooms. We ask that everyone be respectful of instructional time. Children may bring cellphones to school, but they must remain off at all times, including on the bus, and in their bookbag. They will be confiscated if seen or heard by a staff member. Families can refer to the *Code of Student Conduct* for further details. An adult will have to come to school to get the device if the device is confiscated.

Smartwatches may not be utilized during the school day for texting, calling, playing games, or communicating with anyone in any manner. If the watch is being used to locate a student by families for safety, the watch may remain on, but the watch should be placed in the child’s bookbag. If a child is observed utilizing a smartwatch other than to tell time, the smartwatch may be confiscated. Smartwatches cannot be worn during any state testing activity.

**Change of Address or Phone**

Please notify the office and your child's teacher if you change your address due to a move or change your telephone number. It is imperative that we always have current phone numbers and the correct address. Please note that any student who resides/moves outside of the Matthews Elementary School attendance boundaries will need to enroll at their home school assigned to the current residence. Residency verification forms may be required at any point during the school year. If your change of address occurs before the school choice lottery period, you may enter the lottery for a seat at a magnet school.

**Character**

All adults and children are expected to demonstrate good character within our school, as well as when representing Matthews Elementary School in our community. Above all, it is expected that respect be held in the highest regard. Inappropriate language, threats, or bullying by children or adults will not be tolerated.

**Checking Students In and Out**

It is very important that each student remains in class for a full daily schedule. Tardiness and early dismissals interrupt the instructional time of all our students. A student is tardy if not in their classroom at 7:45 AM. At that time, a parent or guardian MUST accompany the child to the office to sign in for the day and obtain a tardy slip. Early dismissals will not be permitted after 2:00 PM. Students will be released early only by written notification sent to the child’s teacher at the beginning of the school day. Written notifications must include the date/time for release and the name of the person who will pick up the student. If a student must check out during the day, a parent or guardian must come to the school office to sign out the child. Students will not be called to the office until the parent/guardian arrives at school. Families/guardians picking up students must speak with the office staff, present a photo ID, and sign out in the appropriate log book. The adult must be on the blue card as being able to get the student. Students will not be released to the adult from the classroom. Children will only be released to the individuals who are listed on the emergency locator card. Please be sure to list the names of all relatives or friends who have permission to pick up your child. Any person picking up a child MUST present picture identification. If a child arrives late or leaves early, the family will receive an attendance call even if the late arrival/early dismissal is excused.

**Child Custody**

If there are special custody agreements for a child, the parent(s) should provide the school office a copy of the official court documentation. The documentation must be the most current court agreement. Otherwise, the school considers both parents who are listed on the birth certificate to have equal access to the child.

**Child Nutrition Services**

[**About School Nutrition Services**](https://www.cmsk12.org/Domain/96)

It is the goal of *Child Nutrition Services* to provide a healthy and nutritious breakfast and lunch daily, while allowing students to choose from foods they enjoy eating.

**Breakfast Program:** Free breakfast is offered daily before the start of the instructional day from 7:15-7:45 AM. Students may select from a variety of hot items or cereals, fruit or juice, and milk to make a complete nutritious breakfast. A healthy school breakfast jump starts the mind and body. In order to participate in the breakfast program, car riders/walkers must arrive prior to 7:40 AM so that the student can quickly eat lunch and arrive at class by 7:45 AM.

**Free/Reduced Meal Applications:** The meal application is a multi-child, family application. Only one application needs to be completed for each household. Applications are available online at [School Nutrition Services / Apply for Free or Reduced Price Lunch](https://www.cmsk12.org/Page/887) or in the main office at school. A new application must be completed every year.

**Purchasing Meals in Advance:** Each child will be assigned a lunch account number (PIN number) that will be used throughout the school year to make purchases. A computer-based PIN number system keeps a record of all transactions for each account. Families may choose to prepay accounts to eliminate the need to send money daily. Families can also make payments online, view account balances, and view student purchases at [www.paypams.com](http://www.paypams.com). Although we encourage students to make selections from all the basic food groups, we cannot demand that they do so. Information regarding payment for school meals and lunch menus can be found at the link above.

**Students with Lunchboxes:** No soft drinks in cans or bottles will be permitted at school. Teachers and instructional assistants are not permitted to warm or refrigerate students’ foods for them.

**Parent Visitation at Lunch:** Please utilize the LobbyGuard system in the lobby to sign in and meet your child’s class at the cafeteria entrance at their scheduled lunch time. You must have a picture ID. Our cafeteria staff works hard to provide nutritious and appetizing meals. We ask that families who choose to bring in commercial food during lunch only bring it for their own children.

**Students Without Meal Money:** All students must have an approved meal application, cash, or money on account to make meal purchases. Procedures are in place for students in elementary schools who do not have money to purchase a meal until a parent can be contacted.

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| Daily Student Breakfast | Free |  | Daily Lunch | K-5 $2.75 |
| Adult Breakfast | A la carte |  | Reduced Lunch | $0.40 |
| Milk | $.75 |  | Adult Lunch | A la carte |

**Conferences**

All families are invited to attend a pre-arranged parent-teacher conference at the end of the first quarter. These conferences provide a planned opportunity for families and teachers to discuss a child's achievement and to plan cooperatively for continued student progress. Please contact your child's teacher to schedule additional conferences as needed. Please refrain from walking to classrooms for unscheduled conferences, as this impacts the instructional time and the ability of the teachers to monitor the safety of our students during the school day. As a professional courtesy, please schedule conferences in advance with your child's teacher. Schedules will be offered virtually and in person for the convenience of families.

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**Daily Dismissal Changes**

Daily dismissal changes are only permitted with a written note, with parent signature, to your child's teacher on the day of the event. Without a note, students will be sent home their regular way. Telephone requests cannot be accepted to ensure the safety of your child. Even with a note, students are not permitted to change buses to go home with a friend or for a play date. **This policy also applies to Early Release Days for students** (9/20, 10/18, 2/14, 3/13).

**Delayed Opening** **(Early Dismissal or Cancellation of School)**

The Superintendent and/or the Board of Education may suspend the operation of any school(s) for particular days or portions of days in the event of an emergency, hazardous weather conditions, or other conditions requiring the cancellation of classes. Notification is typically made available by 5:00 AM via media announcements - television and radio stations, Connect-Ed, Parent Square, and the CMS website:[Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools](https://www.cmsk12.org/districthome). Families are encouraged to listen to the television and radio reports if they anticipate the closing of school. In the event of cancellation, all CMS-sponsored activities for students will be canceled. If weather conditions worsen during the day after children have arrived at school, local radio stations will make an announcement regarding early dismissal. Please do not call the school or your child's teacher. Please be sure the school always has your most updated phone numbers in case of emergency, early dismissal, or late arrival. Also be sure that your emergency dismissal plan is updated with your child’s teacher.

**Discipline**

The Matthews Elementary School Staff is committed to creating a positive school climate that is conducive to effective teaching and learning. Behavior and discipline are shared responsibilities of the home and the school. In addition, consequences for inappropriate behavior are clearly spelled out in the *Code of Student Conduct.* All students and Families should read this handbook, sign the pledge form in the back of the handbook agreeing to adhere to the guidelines established, and return the form to the classroom teacher the first week of school. The handbook is available online: [Handbooks & Forms / CMS Parent-Student Handbooks](https://www.cmsk12.org/domain/36)

**Dress Code**

Students are expected to adhere to the standards of cleanliness and dress that are compatible with the requirements of a productive and safe school environment. A student's appearance, mode of dress, or condition of personal hygiene will not be permitted to disrupt the educational process or constitute a threat to the health or safety of others. Therefore, the following is included in our student dress policy:

* The shoulder width of shirts or blouses must completely cover undergarments.
* Spaghetti strap tops and tube tops are not allowed.
* Net shirts, bare midriffs, or other revealing attire are not acceptable.
* Short dresses, short skirts, or short shorts will not be allowed.
* Pants or shorts must be worn at the waistline. No underwear shall be revealed.
* Headgear, hoods, hats, or sunglasses are not to be worn on campus except for medical, religious, and/or safety reasons.
* No clothing, jewelry, or buttons with letters, initials, symbols, or wording that is obscene, offensive, inflammatory, or detrimental to the instructional process are allowed.
* All students are encouraged to wear tennis shoes/closed-toed shoes, as they will be outside every day for physical activity. Tennis shoes with wheels are not permitted. While students love wearing Crocs, they can be dangerous when students are playing outside and in PE.

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**Emergency Drills**

**Fire Drill:** Fire evacuation drills are conducted once a month to provide building evacuation practice. Students are expected to follow the teacher's directions and quietly exit the building. Detailed exit directions are posted in every classroom.

**Lockdown Drill:** Lockdown drills are held several times throughout the year as practice for emergency conditions. Children are instructed to maintain an orderly environment in the event of a security threat.

**Tornado Drill:** All students are instructed in tornado evacuation procedures. A drill is typically conducted in March although procedures are reviewed at the start of the school year.

**Emergency Locator Cards (Blue Cards)**

The school annually updates all contact information on the emergency locator cards. It is important that the information be accurate since, in medical emergencies, time and accuracy are essential. Please be sure to complete all information on the front and back of the blue card. The school can only release a student to individuals authorized by the parent/guardian on the emergency card. Please list multiple names so that in the event of an emergency, you have choices as to who can pick up your child. Please notify the front office staff of any changes that need to be made to the information provided on the blue emergency card as necessary.

**End-of- Grade (EOG) Tests**

EOGs are state standardized tests administered to third, fourth, and fifth graders in May. The tests provide information on students' progress in meeting the objectives of the Common Core State Standards and Essential Standards (Science-5th grade only). The state defines promotion standards, called gateways, in third grade. Students in 3rd grade who do not pass the Reading EOG are permitted to take an additional assessment (Read to Achieve) with parent opt-in selection.

#### **Exceptional** **Children's (EC) Services**

The purpose of the EC program is to ensure that students with disabilities develop academically, mentally, physically, and emotionally through the provision of an appropriate and individualized education in the least restrictive environment. Students with disabilities receive specially designed instruction from certified special education teachers and related service providers, based on educational needs. Services are provided in varying amounts of time and may range from consultative to full-time services. The need for special education is determined through a comprehensive evaluation process.

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#### **Field Trips**

Field trips are a direct outgrowth of the instructional program. Written parental permission is required for students participating in each field trip. Telephone calls are not acceptable. A fee may be charged for non-required trips to offset the cost of buses and admission fees. All students are required to travel and remain with their class on field trips. Appropriate arrangements for instruction will be made for students whose families choose for them not to attend the field trip. The classroom teacher will notify families when chaperones are needed for field trips. Families serving as chaperones must be registered CMS volunteers and may have to provide their own transportation, however students are required to ride CMS-provided buses (to and from) on the day of the field trip. Younger siblings may not accompany parent chaperones on field trips. Please complete the volunteer registration process at the beginning of the school year as the process does include a background check which can take up to 48 hours.

**Food Policy**

Recent changes in society and our environment necessitate that we use foods in the classroom with a measure of caution. Increases in food-borne pathogens that can cause severe illness and a great increase in the number of children with potentially lethal food allergies dictate that care be taken with foods brought from home and eaten in school. The following cautions are to be followed in all schools in order to protect the health and safety of children and staff:

* Any food shared in school **must be from an inspected commercial facility** and must be labeled with its contents (Ex: Harris Teeter cupcakes, with a printed list of ingredients from the HT bakery).
* Avoid using a knife to cut anything else that has been used to cut other items containing peanut butter, cheese, or meat.

Cross contamination could lead to allergic reactions or food poisoning.

An individual diet plan will be developed for those students with severe food allergies. Please complete a diet order form which may be found at the following web address: [Health & Wellness / School Health and Nursing](https://www.cmsk12.org/Page/708) and return the completed form to the school.

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**Grades**

Grades are given by general education classroom teachers. Report cards are sent home quarterly, at the end of each grading period. Progress reports are shared halfway through each quarter.

 **K-2:** Students will receive grades according to individual standards and performance goals.

Grades are given using the following system:

 Developing, Progressing, Mastering, Exemplary, N/I (no indicator)

**3-5:** Students will receive letter grades according to Formal and Informal Assessments. Formal assessments (Perform Grades) account for 60% of a student’s overall grade; informal assessments (Prepare/Rehearse Grades) account for 40% of a student’s overall grade. Families can see updated grades/assignments via the Parent Assist Portal of PowerSchool (visit link in “Parent Assist” section below for more information).

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| **Mastery Level** | **Scale** |
| Well Above Standard | A = 90 - 100 |
| Above Standard | B = 80 - 89 |
| Meets Standard | C = 70 - 79 |
| Below Standard | D = 60 - 69 |
| Well Below Standard | F = 59 and below |

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##### Health

A child who is sick will be sent to the school health room where the school nurse, office staff, or parent volunteer will assess the child, contact the parent or guardian, and send the child home if necessary. If your child has a chronic health problem (i.e. diabetes, seizures, asthma, allergies, etc.), be sure to make the teacher, school nurse, and office staff aware of his/her special needs. Families will be contacted if there is an accident resulting in significant injury at school, a child has an elevated temperature, has diarrhea, or is vomiting. If for medical reasons, it is inadvisable for a student to take part in physical education classes, games, or play outside during physical activity, written notification should be sent to the nurse. As a general rule, we assume if students are well enough to attend school, they are well enough to participate in the total program. If your child is diagnosed with COVID, call the front office for directions regarding school attendance. ***Your child must be free of fever, diarrhea, or vomiting (without the assistance of medication) for 24 hours before they are permitted to return to school.***

**Homework Policy**

**Average Homework Time:** Average homework times are recommendations only and are not meant to be minimum or maximum times. The time varies with the subject area, content matter, teacher, the student's ability, and the complexity of the assigned task. The time allotted to homework should increase gradually from grade to grade and may vary due to student needs. If your child has made consistent effort and has not completed the homework in the allotted time, you are asked to stop your child and write a note to the teacher concerning the amount of time spent and the assignments that were not completed. When enough time has been allotted in school for class work, and that work has not been completed, it may be assigned as homework, thereby exceeding the recommended daily time allotted to homework.

* Grades K - 2 10-20\* minutes per night + 30 minutes of reading
* Grades 3 - 5 30-60\* minutes per night + 30 minutes of reading

\*Occasionally, special projects may require some home study over several evenings.

**Responsibilities of Student:**

1. A student should ask questions in class if unsure of an assignment.
2. A student should complete homework as neatly and accurately as possible.
3. A student should schedule study time so that projects and long-term assignments are planned and completed over a period of time.
4. A student should copy and take home assignments as well as resources needed to complete assignments.

**Responsibilities of Families:** Families are encouraged to assist their child with homework. If a child's homework is consistently too difficult or exceeding the recommended time allotment, the child's teacher should be notified. While the student should assume the major responsibility for completing homework assignments, Families are encouraged to take an active interest in the child's homework by doing the following:

1. Promoting a positive attitude toward homework.
2. Providing a consistent time and a suitable place for study.
3. Making resource materials available whenever possible.
4. Communicating to the teacher special circumstances that may affect the child's ability to complete assignments.

A student who misses homework assignments or due dates because of absences, whether excused or unexcused, will be allowed to make up the work. Arrangements for completing the work must be made within five school days of the student's return to school. Arrangements should include a schedule for completion of the work. In all circumstances, homework and other assignments will be accepted, even when turned in after the designated due date.

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**Instructional Schedule**

Assessment information is consistently used to make instructional decisions in order to provide a curriculum that is academically challenging and appropriate for each student. A variety of instructional strategies are utilized by teachers to enhance the overall quality of instruction while challenging students at appropriate levels. Students receive direct instruction in art, music, physical education, learning lab, media, and social/emotional growth from special area teachers or instructional assistants on a weekly basis, according to our master schedule. Your child's teacher will share the daily classroom schedule with you at the beginning of the school year.

## **Internet Access Policy**

CMS requires that each school keep on file an *Acceptable Use* form signed by each student and his/her parent or guardian if they choose not to use the internet at school. Teachers will review the policy at the beginning of each year and send home the *Acceptable Use Policy* for any student that wishes not to have access.

## **Intervention Team (Multi-tiered System of Supports-MTSS)**

The mission of Matthews Elementary School's Multi-Tiered System of Supports Team is to identify and implement strategies to enhance the learning and achievement of individual students. The MTSS team is composed of a combination of the following: classroom teacher, school administrator, school counselor, academic facilitator and school psychologist. If your child is experiencing difficulty in school, a referral may be requested through your child's teacher or school counselor. This request will lead to a team meeting to review student data and information. This may lead to the development of an intervention plan with strategies for support and tools for progress monitoring. Students who require intervention support, will receive this support during the daily MTSS time block already implemented in the instructional schedule so they will not miss any new instruction.

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**Kids**

Kids are our first consideration in ALL decisions. We explore all options to determine the impact on our students.

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###### **Lost and Found**

The lost and found area is located at the top of the ramp before you turn toward the media center. Please clearly write your child's name on all personal belongings. Items not claimed are donated to a charitable organization each month.

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**Medication Policy**

As a general policy, the school recommends that children receive medication at home whenever possible. If your child must have medication of any type given during school hours, including over-the-counter medication, you have the following choices:

* 1. You may come to school and give the medication to your child at the appropriate time. Your child will be called to the office for administration of the medication.
1. You may discuss with your doctor the possibility of giving your child the medication outside of school hours (before or after school).
2. You may take a *Medication Authorization* form,[Handbooks & Forms / CMS Parent-Student Handbooks](https://www.cmsk12.org/domain/36), to your child's doctor and have him/her complete the form. The doctor and the parent must sign it. The form must be completed by the physician for both prescription and over-the-counter medications. Prescription medicines must be brought to the school office in a pharmacy-labeled bottle which contains instructions on how and when the medication is to be given. When dosage or times change, a new pharmacy-labeled bottle must be obtained and a new medication authorization form must be submitted (with doctor and parent signature). Over-the-counter medications must be received in the original container and will be administered according to the doctor's written instructions. We cannot administer on an "as needed" basis. Please instruct your child regarding his/her responsibility in taking medication at school. All medications must be brought in by the parent. Students may not bring in their own medication to school.
3. Inhalers must be received in the original box, labeled by the pharmacy with the student name and instructions on how and when the medication is to be given.
4. To ensure that medications are given to students in the safest and most effective manner, there will be no exceptions to this policy.

**Mid-Quarter Progress Reports**

Students are on a nine-week grading schedule. *Mid-Quarter Progress Reports* are issued midway through each nine-week grading period to inform families of their child's academic progress before final grades are issued. We encourage you to talk with your child and the teacher if problems are indicated on the report. Progress reports are to be signed and returned promptly. Students in grades 3-5 will receive a slip to indicate that grades were reviewed in PowerSchool. Students served in our Exceptional Children's program will also receive progress reports from the special education teachers.

**Money Collection**

Families may pay for field trips or fees using the online payment system only.The online payment system can be accessed at the following link: <https://osp.osmsinc.com/CMS/Default.aspx>. No cash, checks or money orders will be accepted. Families will be given deadlines for payment online.

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**Nurse**

Our school nurse, Nurse Surelle, is employed by the Mecklenburg County Health Department and is typically at Matthews three days a week. Katie Kline, secretary, serves as our “nurse” on days when Nurse Surelle is at another school.Nursing services include identification of health problems, referrals to community resources, and consultation with families and physicians about health problems. Teaching and counseling students concerning health issues and consulting with administrators and staff are part of the nurse's responsibilities while on campus. The school nurse also attends to health room issues, medication administration, and communication on communicable diseases. Our school nurse can be reached at evelyn.holmes@mecklenburgcountync.gov.

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**Observations**

At times, families may request to observe in their child's classroom. We ask that you notify the teacher of your request at least five days in advance. A member of the administrative team or designee will also be present during the observation to answer any questions or to provide clarification for families or the teacher.

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#### **Parent Portal: Powerschool**

Families are able to track their child's homework assignments in grades 3-5 through PowerSchool. You can also get your son/daughter’s grades from this program. Visit the CMS website at [PowerSchool / Overview](https://www.cmsk12.org/domain/29) to get more information on this program.

#### **Parent-Teacher Organization**

The Matthews Elementary School Parent-Teacher Organization (MPTO) is an organized partnership of teachers, families, and community members dedicated to providing students with the best education possible. All families are invited to join by paying a small membership fee. A MPTO Executive Board is elected and meets monthly to plan activities that support programs and student achievement. Our PTO President is Sara Luketich. Dates for events sponsored by our PTO have been added to the calendar on the Matthews website: [Matthews Elementary School / Homepage](https://www.cmsk12.org/matthewsES)

**Parking for School Functions**

We regret that we do not have campus parking for families and visitors during arrival and dismissal times (7:00-8:00 AM and 2:00-3:00 PM). The only parking during those times is located on Trade Street in front of the church, on McDowell Avenue across from the school (north side of Trade) or at Stumptown Park. Matthews United Methodist Church does allow families of walkers to utilize their parking lot in the morning and afternoon during arrival and dismissal. Families walk their students to school from this area. For the safety of students, families are required to cross the street with their students when crossing both Trade Street or McDowell Street. There is limited parking between 8:00 AM and 2:00 PM in the parking lot to the east of the school, next to the Baptist Church. PARKING IS NOT PERMITTED AT ANY TIME DURING THE SCHOOL DAY BEHIND THE COMMUNITY CENTER OR ON THE BUS PARKING LOT. Matthews Police Officer assistance for traffic control is provided at the parent drive on the west side of the school at Trade Street. **Matthews' staff will no longer provide crossing assistance at McDowell Avenue on the school side of Trade Street.** Families who park on the north side of McDowell must cross at the crosswalk where the Matthews Police Officer is located. Families ARE ASKED NOT TO USE THE CROSSWALK ACROSS TRADE STREET AT MCDOWELL AVENUE.

#### **Psychologist/School Counselors**

Matthews Elementary School employs a full time school psychologist, Amanda Malley. Primary areas of training include child growth and development, psychological and educational assessment, learning and teaching strategies, counseling, and behavior management. Two school counselors are also on staff full time (Mrs. Kromer-K, 2nd, 4th; Mrs. Lefko-1st, 3rd, and 5th).

#### **Physical Activity**

Students will go outside (weather permitting) every day for physical activity time. It is important for the children to get this time to exercise and play games. We ask that your children wear tennis shoes. Slip-ons, heels, boots, and sandals are not safe. Classes will stay together and play in their designated area.

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**Questions**

There is no such thing as an unnecessary question. Our front office team can answer most questions or direct you to the proper person. Please do not hesitate to ask. In addition, your first point of contact should always be your child’s classroom teacher when you have questions regarding instruction or classroom issues. All emails and phone calls should be returned within 24 hours, with the exception of weekends and holidays.

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**Report Cards**

Report cards are issued at the end of each quarter, four times during the school year. You are encouraged to attend a fall conference to meet with your child's teacher at the end of the first quarter. Families are asked to sign and return the cream colored card in the report card envelope. The actual grade report is for your records.

**Restrictive Diet**

Child Nutrition Services accommodates any special diet for medical reasons. Please pick up a diet order form from the CMS website or nurse. Please be sure the nurse is aware of your child’s needs. Note: Part B is to be completed by your child’s physician and faxed/mailed directly to CMS Child Nutrition Services. Information regarding the Diet Order Form can be found at the following link: [Handbooks & Forms / CMS Parent-Student Handbooks](https://www.cmsk12.org/domain/36)

[](https://legacy.cms.k12.nc.us/owa/redir.aspx?C=iyY_F5gUHUqTqcqJ8feKo2ikYTlYltJIkWw8kR19mMyB_HxUNQedyPFQf9N3mz2KFCkqqgFXB50.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.cms.k12.nc.us%2fcmsdepartments%2fcns%2fDocuments%2f2014-2015%2520Diet%2520Order%2520Form.pdf) ...

**School Improvement Plan**

Each school is required by state law to develop a School Improvement Plan. At Matthews Elementary School, we strive for continuous improvement and set goals based on data. The School Improvement Team (SIT), consisting of staff and parent representatives, monitors the improvement process. Our School Improvement Plan is updated at least quarterly and can be accessed at: [Indistar](https://www.indistar.org/). The login for this site is as follows: GuestS16788 for username and password

**School Improvement Team-SIT**

Each school has a team charged with setting the school's mission and goals and monitoring student achievement. The School Improvement Team (SIT) meets once a month and is responsible for monitoring the School Improvement Plan, which provides strategies for creating school and student success. SIT meetings are open to the public, with the exception of meetings regarding safety and security. Elections are held at the start of the school year or in the spring for any vacant positions. Questions regarding this team can be directed to Mrs. Cathy Bish, Assistant Principal, catherine.bish@cms.k12.nc.us.

##### Safe and Orderly Environment

Safety is given top priority in our school. All visitors are required to sign in and out through our LobbyGuard machine located in the lobby with each visit, which requires valid photo identification. The office will notify the classroom of your arrival. The school safety plan is communicated to students, staff, and families. Fire drills, severe weather drills, and lockdown procedures are practiced regularly.

##### School Pictures

##### Individual pictures are taken in the fall and spring of each year. Classic Photography is the company we will utilize this school year. Class pictures are taken in the winter. Fifty percent of the proceeds from picture sales directly benefit our school. This money is used to purchase additional materials such as novels, manipulatives, and instructional materials to support the state standards, our students, and staff.

##### School Supplies

A list of required student supplies is available on the school website. Families are encouraged to replenish school supplies as needed to ensure that students are prepared for class. You can access a copy of grade level supplies from our school's website:

[Matthews Elementary School / Homepage](https://www.cmsk12.org/matthewsES)

**Social Media**

CMS has adopted a new social media policy. School employees may no longer communicate with students through any social media platform (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Gaming platforms, etc.). While this practice was not encouraged prior to this policy being approved this summer, some teachers did interact with students through social media. This practice will no longer be allowed. Board policy related to social media can be found at the following link: <http://go.boarddocs.com/nc/cmsnc/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=CFXQ8D680E73>

##### Student Transfer

Please notify office personnel as soon as possible if your child will be transferring to another school. The teacher needs at least one

day’s notice to prepare transfer papers. All books and materials owned by the school should be returned. Cafeteria and library fees must be paid in full.

Due to current Matthews Elementary School enrollment, we are closed to transfers into Matthews ES. Please note that any student who resides or moves outside of the Matthews Elementary School attendance boundaries will need to enroll at their home school assigned to the current residence or enter the school choice lottery for a magnet school. Residency verification forms may be required at any point during the school year.

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# Talent Development Catalyst Program

The goal of the Talent Development (TD) Catalyst Program ([Advanced Studies / Talent Development Catalyst Model](https://www.cmsk12.org/Page/3607)) is to provide rigorous curriculum and academic opportunities, whereby each student may demonstrate performance consistent with his/her intellectual ability. The implementation of the program at Matthews Elementary is a joint effort by classroom teachers and the talent development teacher who use the techniques of consultation and collaboration as they develop curriculum. Identification begins at the end of first grade, followed by testing in second grade to determine placement. You will be notified if your child is to be assessed. Any questions regarding TD or identification processes should be directed to Melissa Williams, TD Teacher, melissa.williams@cms.k12.nc.us.

# Tardy Policy

Students are tardy if they are not in their classroom and ready to learn at 7:45 AM. Families are strongly encouraged to make sure their children arrive at schoolon time and are prepared for the day. By making sure your child arrives promptly for school, you are helping your child to develop a future work ethic that is also important in the workplace. Matthews Elementary **requires**an adult to accompany children who arrive after 7:45 AM to the office to sign in. The front office will call the classroom to make the teacher aware that the student will be arriving. Students who arrive late due to a delayed bus will not be marked tardy. Teachers are required to keep a record of tardiness. Consistent tardiness will be referred to the school counselors and the administrative team for interventions. Guidelines for monitoring tardiness are aligned with the attendance policy. Families will receive an attendance phone call if a student is tardy.

# Technology

The most current technology and software are available for student use in developing word processing skills, research skills, internet use, and multimedia presentations. Our goal is to integrate technology into the curriculum to provide authentic learning experiences for all students. Every student in grades K-2 will have access to an iPad to use daily. Students in grades 3-5 will utilize a chromebook. Devices will not be sent home with students unless there is an extreme circumstance.

## **Testing Information**

We like to inform students and families about district-wide and state-mandated tests that students take during the school year. Additional testing may be required by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Our testing coordinator is Romana McEwan, dean of students, romana1.mcewan@cms.k12.nc.us.

**Grades K-2:** Students are assessed using the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Language Skills) and MAP (Measures of Academic Performance) three times a year by the classroom teacher & school staff. Students are also administered benchmark assessments for our EL program in order to place them correctly on a learning continuum (microphase) for early reading skills. In addition, end of unit assessments are given in reading, writing, and math. Teachers will notify families if their child is not performing at grade level and a plan will be developed for the student. Families are included in the development, implementation, and ongoing review of this plan.

**Grade 3:** Students in third grade also take the Beginning-of-Grade (BOG3) test in reading, End-of-Grade (EOG) test in reading and math, DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Language Skills) and MAP (Measures of Academic Performance) three times per year, and some may take the Read-to-Achieve test in reading. Students will also be administered benchmark assessments for our EL program to place them correctly on a learning continuum (microphase) for early reading skills.

**Grade 4:** Students in grade four take the End-of-Grade (EOG) test in reading and math. Some students in grade 4 are randomly chosen to take the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) tests. The information from these tests is used to make national comparisons among states and large urban school districts. Students are also given the MAP (Measures of Academic Performance) three times throughout the year. Fourth grade students who did not pass the 3rd Grade Reading EOG or Read to Achieve test may take the test again in late October/early November.

**Grade 5:** Students in grade five take the (EOG) End-Of-Grade test in reading, math, and science. Students are also given the MAP (Measures of Academic Performance) three times throughout the year and administered benchmark assessments for our EL program as well as end of unit assessments for math.

\*WIDA Screener and ACCESS Testing is administered to eligible Multi-Language Learners (ML learners).

\*Other assessments may be given during the school year. Families will be informed of any additional state testing requirements with a family notification.

**Textbooks**

All CMS schools provide textbooks and/or workbooks for some subjects. Textbooks/workbooks are issued to students at the beginning of the year. Students are expected to return textbooks in good condition, allowing for wear occurring from normal use. Students who lose or damage textbooks will be required to pay a fee for damages or replacement.

**Twentieth Day of School**

Student enrollment and staff allocations in each school are monitored by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District. Adjustments in class sizes, student assignments, and teacher assignments are carefully reviewed and adjustments are made if necessary to comply with state guidelines. Families and students will be notified of any changes after the twentieth day of school. We ask for your patience and understanding if transitions are required by the state to keep our school in compliance.

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**Vaccines & Physical Exam (Health Assessments)**

Vaccination & Health Assessment documentation is due within the first 30 days of the first day of school to the school nurse. If documentation of required health assessment or immunizations is not presented by the date above, the student shall be excluded from school until proof is presented. Vaccination requirements can be accessed at the following link: [Health & Wellness / Immunizations and Health Assessments](https://www.cmsk12.org/Page/714) Requirements for physical exams/health assessments can also be accessed at this link for kindergarten students and students new to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

**\*EACH CHILD NEW TO CMS MUST RECEIVE A HEALTH ASSESSMENT: The health assessment must have been completed within 12 months prior to the date the child was eligible to enroll. (General Statute 130A-440; 10A NCAC09.3005)**

**Visitors**

Visitors are always welcome at Matthews Elementary School. All visitors must sign in using the LobbyGuard system in the lobby to sign in and obtain a visitor’s badge. **Photo identification will be needed to sign-in the building or check out a student from school. No exceptions will be made to this rule.** Exterior doors are to remain closed and locked to the public. Even if you see a child or adult through a door window, the person will not allow you to enter the building. All visitors must come through the front door and utilize the LobbyGuard system.

**Volunteers**

Volunteers are an invaluable component to our overall school success. To be a volunteer, the district requires all volunteers to register as an “unsupervised” volunteer. You can register at [CMS Volunteer Registration](https://www.cmsvolunteers.com). Volunteer registration must be updated every year. If you want to chaperone a field trip as a volunteer, please register at the beginning of the school year as this process does take at least 48 hours.

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**Web Page**

Our web page includes current events, announcements, calendars, relevant links, MPTO information, staff information, student resources and accomplishments, and other useful resources. The link is as follows: [Matthews Elementary School / Homepage](https://www.cmsk12.org/matthewsES)

**Weekly Updates**

A phone and email message will be sent weekly to the main contact number and email in PowerSchool. We will also utilize Parent Square this school year. Messages are sent each Sunday afternoon at 5:30 PM. Information for the upcoming week and dates for the next month of events are included in the message. Other messages may be necessary during the week if special events are occurring. If you are not receiving the messages, please contact the front office to check your phone number and/or email address.

 and 

**Yearbooks**

All students will have an opportunity to purchase a soft cover school yearbook through MPTO during the school year. Yearbooks will arrive by the end of the school year. *Classic Photography* assists with our yearbook. The yearbook will cost $20.00 and will be purchased online.

**Updated 7/19/23 PBC**