



Parent Handbook

3 year-old Preschool



We Play! We Learn! We Grow!

Welcome to St. Matthew Preschool!

WE LOVE OUR LITTLE JAGUARS



Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide a Christian environment in which each child can grow spiritually, emotionally, physically, and intellectually through age-appropriate activities. We are committed, in collaboration with families, to enhance each child's character development and nurture the individual strengths and talents that allow each child to reach their potential.

Department of Human Services

St. Matthew Preschool is licensed by the Iowa Department of Human Services and operates in compliance with all regulations and procedures.

Board of Education

St. Matthew Preschool functions under the jurisdiction of the St. Matthew Board of Education. This Board consists of nine elected members of the parish and the pastor. The membership meets monthly with the exception of July. All St. Matthew Board of Education Meetings are open to the public. Anyone wishing to have an item included on the agenda may do so by contacting the Board Chairperson, Principal, or the Preschool Director at least seven days prior to the meeting.

Our Preschool Goals

In order to provide a developmentally appropriate preschool experience, we will:

- ♥ Accept children and their families at their individual levels, value their uniqueness and encourage them to progress at their own pace.
- ♥ Develop a multi-cultural, non-sexist curriculum and environment.
- ♥ Provide a stimulating child-centered environment which recognizes play as a viable means for learning about self, others, and the world.
- ♥ Encourage children's learning through play by providing activities which enable children to plan, observe, explore, pretend, question, and evaluate.
- ♥ Provide a nurturing environment, that fosters:
 - A positive self-image
 - A sense of trust in adults and the environment
 - Self-reliance
 - Self-confidence
 - Appreciation of others
- ♥ Provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum that promotes cognitive, language, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual growth in an integrated format.

- ♥ Provide a balance of:
 - Child and teacher initiated activities
 - Individual and group activities
 - Structured and unstructured play
 - Active and quiet times
- ♥ Encourage language and literacy development through daily exposure to activities such as stories, poems, functional uses of print, dramatic play, and dramatization.
- ♥ Encourage math and problem solving skills through manipulation of objects.
- ♥ Help each child grow in large and small motor ability.
- ♥ Provide health education for children and families which encourages preventive health practices and offers guidelines for understanding growth and development.
- ♥ Collaborate with community agencies to meet the unique needs of children and families.
- ♥ Emphasize family participation through:
 - Family activities and socials
 - Volunteerism
- ♥ Use evaluation of children's progress and achievement to plan curriculum, meet individual needs, communicate with parents, and evaluate the program's effectiveness.

Admission and Attendance Policies

Admission

St. Matthew Preschool is required to enroll only students who will be three on or before September 15th. All children who participate in our three year-old Preschool Program MUST be potty-trained.

Enrollment

You may call at any time to schedule a tour, or place your child on our waiting list for the next school year. Priority enrollment is given to St. Matthew parishioners; first to those with children already enrolled in our programs. We are also proud to enroll the parishioners of Immaculate Conception. Finally, we welcome all families in our Cedar Rapids and surrounding community.

- **Pre-Registration takes place in December/January** for the next school year. Paperwork must be completed in a timely manner, along with a small, non-refundable supply fee/deposit. This Pre-Registration process confirms your Preschooler's enrollment in our program for the next school year.
- **Registration takes place in May.** There is additional paperwork that will need to be completed, along with a **physical and immunization form**. These items MUST be received by the first day of Preschool in order for your child to attend.

It is very important that our office be notified of any changes on these forms at any time while your child remains enrolled in our program. The forms are also updated on an annual basis as required by the Department of Human Services.

Tuition Payment

There are a few options for payment of tuition.

- Payment in full (August)
- Two semester payments (August and January)

- ACH payments (monthly or bi-monthly for 10 months)

You will choose a payment option when you complete your registration paperwork.

Confidentiality of Files

All information concerning an individual child, including his/her activities at the center, are confidential. We do not share information on file with anyone other than the child's parent, guardian, and Preschool staff without written permission from a parent or guardian. However, we are required to share all child file information with the Department of Human Services Licensing Consultant.

Hours and attendance

- **2 day Preschool:** Tuesday and Thursday 8:30-11:20 a.m.
- **3 day Preschool:** Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 8:30-11:20

Teachers will open their doors for drop off beginning at 8:15 a.m. Pick up is 11:20 a.m. sharp, unless your child is enrolled in our care program. Please know that the teachers have meetings and other responsibilities following Preschool hours, and appreciate a timely dismissal.

Absences and Tardies

It is very important your child attend Preschool daily. Establishing a routine early and emphasizing the importance of regular attendance sets your child up for future success. Being on time each morning discourages disruption in the classroom, and allows the teacher to begin the day on time. **Please notify your teacher or the Preschool office (319-731-3722) when your child will not be at Preschool.**

Dropping Off and Picking Up Children

Parents or authorized persons are required to walk their children into their classrooms each morning. This is for the safety and well-being of your child.

We will release your child only to parents/guardians with legal custody or persons designated by you on the Emergency Contact and Pick-up Authorization form. Authorized persons will also be required to show the proper I.D.

In compliance with DHS rules and regulations, St. Matthew Preschool has a policy for parents/legal guardians who attempt to pick up a child while appearing to be intoxicated. (See safety policies)

General Policies & Procedures

Activities

Each classroom establishes and follows a consistent, yet flexible, daily routine based on developmentally appropriate practices and the individual needs of each child in the group. Daily schedules and weekly lesson plans are visibly posed in each classroom. Please take the opportunity to become familiar with your child's routine and activities and enjoy discussing your child's experiences with him or her daily.

Accidents

Three-year old Preschoolers must be potty-trained. We understand a child may have an accident now and then. However, if a child has more than one accident a week, or one accident a week for several weeks, we may ask for the child to refrain from coming to Preschool until they are fully potty-trained. We will hold your child's spot while you work on the potty-training at home, and they are welcome to return once they are no longer having accidents.

Support Services

Support services are available to assist teachers when concerns arise with their children. These services include St. Matthew staff and Grant Wood Area Education Agency staff such as psychologist, social worker, speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist and others. Teachers and families may use input on an informal basis or request formal assistance identifying strategies to address a concern.

Communication

Teachers will communicate with parents in several ways. Each classroom sends a weekly email with a newsletter outlining the classroom events, themes, special dates, and other important information. Written notes and other information will also be sent home. Teachers will make phone calls, if needed.

Make sure to check your Preschooler's back pack each evening!

Please feel free to contact your child's teacher **before or after** Preschool hours or by email.

Snacks

Each Preschooler will have a few turns during the school year to be the "Snack Helper" and provide snack for the class. Low-fat milk will be provided through the school cafeteria. (There will be a milk fee paid by each family at the beginning of the school year.)

Snack Guidelines

St. Matthew Preschool encourages and promotes healthy and natural snacks. We believe that children form their eating habits early, and by helping them learn to eat well now, we are helping them to grow up strong and healthy for their entire lives. Research shows a direct link between good health and academic achievement! We encourage you to use your child's snack day as a powerful opportunity for you and your child to explore healthy snacks. They typically love helping pick out a snack for their snack day! We hope this is a fun and beneficial experience for you and your child.

St. Matthew Preschool also follows the guidelines suggested by the USDA Child and Adult Food Program.

- Fresh fruit & Veggie are preferred choices. (Please wash and cut if needed.)
- Preference for whole-grain products
- Calories around 200 is ideal
- Look for low sugar, low sodium, high fiber, 0 trans-fat ☺

Transportation

Daily transportation for your preschool child to and from school is the responsibility of the Parent. We do not have bussing available for daily transportation.

Clothing

Your Preschooler will have active days and do messy activities as part of their hands-on learning. Please send your child in play clothes that wash easily and fit comfortably. Please also send a marked change of clothes to leave at Preschool. Be sure to change these clothes for the season. We recommend shoes and socks that are safe for running and jumping rather than sandals, flip-flops, or other open-toe shoes.

We will go outside when weather permits. Please dress your child appropriately for the season. Labeling your child's belongings will help in returning lost items to you.

Health and Safety Policies

Smoke Free Campus

Smoking and the use of tobacco products are prohibited at all times on the St. Matthew campus.

Sickness & Exclusion

Parents or guardians will be notified when your child has a symptom that requires exclusion from the center. A quiet area will be provided for a child who appears to be sick or injured. You, or your emergency contact, will be required to pick up your child immediately upon notification of your child's condition. Reasons for exclusion are described below.

Fever:

A child with a fever of 100° F or more is to be sent home. She/he may return when fever-free (less than 100° F) for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication.

Vomiting:

If a child is acting ill and has vomited 1-2 times, she/he is to be sent home. The child may return if there has been no vomiting for 24 hours and she/he is tolerating bland foods.

Diarrhea:

A child having uncontrolled diarrhea will be sent home. The child may return to Preschool when normal stools are present for 24 hours.

Eye Infection:

Parents will be notified if child has signs and symptoms of conjunctivitis/pink eye. The child will be sent home with recommendations to see a physician. She/he may return after 24 hours of antibiotic therapy or sooner if we receive a written statement from the physician that your child does not have a communicable disease.

Chicken Pox:

A child will be sent home when chicken pox lesions are detected. She/he may return when all chicken pox lesions have dried and crusted. Parents will be notified when a case of chicken pox occurs.

Head Lice:

A child with head lice can attend Preschool only after the first treatment is given.

Skin Outbreak:

If a child develops a rash, (this includes ringworm, impetigo, hives, and any other undiagnosed rash), parents will be notified to remove the child from Preschool and see a physician. The child may return after 24 hours of medication or written clearance from a physician that states that the child does not have a communicable disease.

Other Illnesses or Conditions

A child will be excluded from Preschool if she/he has an illness or condition that

- Prevents the child from participating comfortably in center activities and/or
- Results in greater care needs than the Preschool staff can provide, without compromising the health and safety of other children

The child may return to Preschool when the symptoms or conditions causing exclusion have subsided.

A child that is too sick to go outdoors is considered too sick to be at Preschool. We will expect all children in attendance to go outdoors if the class is going out. There will be exceptions to this rule.

Notification of Communicable Disease/Illness

If your child comes down with a communicable disease/infection or condition, it is important to let the Preschool staff know of the details. We will notify you if your child may have been exposed to any communicable disease or condition by posting any information in your child's classroom and outside the Preschool office.

Medication Administration

St. Matthew Preschool will ONLY dispense medication upon proper written permission from a parent or authorized guardian. If your child will need medication while attending the center, please notify your child's teacher and complete, sign, and date the Permission to Medicate form with the following information:

- Name of medication
- Physician's name (if prescribed)
- Dosage
- Number of days to be dispensed
- Time(s) to be dispensed
- Method of administration (oral, topical, etc.)

Be sure that the teacher understands the directions and knows if the medication needs to be refrigerated. Each time a medication is dispensed or applied to your child, the administering staff will document the date, time, and dosage on the authorization form.

Over the Counter Medication:

It is a parent's responsibility to consult with their doctor to determine which over-the-counter-medications are appropriate and the correct dosage. Written documentation from the doctor must accompany the over-the-counter medication to be given to the child. The child's first and last name must be written on the label. The label must be intact and legible. The medication must not exceed the manufacturer's expiration date.

Prescription Medications:

Prescription medication must be in its original container from the pharmacy or doctor's office. Your pharmacist will divide your prescription into a separate bottle for the center if you ask. The container must be clearly marked with the child's name, date, name of medication, doctor's name, and the frequency and amount to be given. The medication must not exceed the expiration date.

On-Going Medications:

Conditions or illnesses that require medication on an on-going or "as needed" basis must have a medication permission form filled out monthly for use at the center. Expiration dates for these "long term" medications will be observed. If a medication expires, a new prescription must be obtained before the child will receive the medication.

Mandatory Reporting

The Iowa Code requires that every employee of a licensed child care or preschool facility who, in the course of employment, reasonably believes a child has suffered sexual abuse, physical abuse, mental injury, child prostitution, denial of critical care, the presence of illegal drug in the child or the person responsible for the care of a child and in the presence of the child, or is in possession of a dangerous substance shall immediately report the suspected abuse directly to the Department of Human Services.

Emergencies

Parents are required to complete an authorization form that would give medical or dental personnel the authority to treat children in an emergency situation. St. Matthew Preschool will notify parents or guardians in the event of any kind of emergency involving their child as soon as it is possible after emergency personnel are notified. If a parent or guardian is unable to be reached, we will

try to notify the emergency contacts provided by the parents or authorized guardians. It is the parent's responsibility to keep this information current at all times.

Biting Policy

Unfortunately, it sometimes happens. We are always upset when children are bitten in our program, and recognize how upsetting it is for parents as well. We cannot predict when or why this happens, but we are ready to help those who do bite. We are also ready to give treatment, sympathy, and advice to children who are bitten.

Here are ways we work to prevent biting and how we respond to it when it does happen:

First, we try to arrange the day to avoid boredom, frustration, or overstimulation. The teachers also work with children to model acceptable and appropriate behaviors, explain how to express their feelings, and give them the tools to resolve conflicts with our help.

Second, if a child is bitten, we help the child with the bite first. We comfort the child and care for the bite. If the skin is not broken, we wash the area with soap and water, and then apply an ice pack. If the skin is broken, we wash the area with soap and water. We will then apply a bandage in order to keep the area clean. If your child is bitten, we will call you to let you know about the bite. The teacher will also fill out an incident report. The incident report will inform you of where the bite was located, the first aid that was applied, and the circumstances that led up to the biting incident. The child who did the biting will not be identified on the report due to regulations regarding confidentiality. We also respond to the child who did the biting, and work on more appropriate behavior.

Third, the teachers and administration will analyze the cause of ongoing biting. We develop a plan to address the cause of the biting, focusing on keeping children safe and helping those who are in a biting pattern.

Radon Testing

According to the Department of Human Services codes for licensed child care centers, it states that centers operating in facilities that are at ground level, use a basement area as program space, or have a basement beneath the program

area shall have a radon test performed as prescribed by the state Department of Public Health. Testing shall be done every two years from the date of the initial measurement. If testing determines confirmed radon gas levels in excess of 4.0 Pico curies per liter, a plan using radon mitigation procedures established by the state Department of Public Health shall be developed with and approved by the state Department of Public Health.

Fire & Tornado Drills

By order of the Department of Human Services all Child Care Centers and Preschools are to conduct a fire and tornado drill once a month. Records of the drills are kept in the Preschool Office.

Recording of Incidents

Incidents involving injury to a child will be reported to the parent in writing. A copy of the incident report is available to parents and will be maintained in the child's file. Incidents involving minor changes in health status will be reported to the parents that day. Significant changes in health status will be reported immediately to the parents. A written report shall be provided to the parent or person authorized to remove the child from the center and a copy shall be retained in the child's file.

Weapons/Guns

It shall be the policy of the St. Matthew Board of Education that weapons and other dangerous objects will be taken from students and others who bring them on to the school premises. Parents of students found in possession a weapon or dangerous object shall be notified. Confiscation of weapons or dangerous objects will be reported to law enforcement officials and the student will be subject to disciplinary action.

Guidance & Discipline

We believe that all people, adults and children, deserve love and respect. Our discipline policy is positive, consistent, and emphasizes the teaching of new skills to reduce and/or replace unwanted behavior through a variety of

techniques including: preventative strategies, choices, redirection, and natural & logical consequences.

If a child is exhibiting unacceptable behavior the child will be asked to correct the behavior and/or be redirected to another activity, which will help the child to perform within acceptable guidelines. If the child cannot correct the behavior, he/she will be given a time-out or time away from the group to think.

Time-out procedure: The child will speak with the teacher regarding why they are in time out and what they could have done to make better choices. The child will sit in a spot away from the other children for a total time of one minute for each year of age. During the time-out the child will be asked to think about what they did, why it was unacceptable, and what they should have done. At the end of their time out the child will again discuss with the teacher what the acceptable behavior would have been and what they should do next time. Sometimes it may be helpful for the child to leave their classroom for a break, and the time-out process can also take place in the Preschool Director or Principal's office.

If necessary, your teacher may send home a Discipline Policy Reporting Form. Please see the attached sample.

If the teacher is unable to resolve a continuing problem with a child, the parents will be contacted and possible solutions will be discussed.

Physical Aggression

Physical aggression that causes harm to a child or to an adult is not allowed at St. Matthew Preschool. This would result in a time-out and removal from the classroom. Depending on the severity of the aggression, parents would be contacted. If an act of physical aggression occurs regularly, it could also result in removal from the St. Matthew Preschool Program.

Discharge for the Preschool Program

Parents may be required to remove their child(ren) from Preschool for a designated amount of time because of noncompliance with any of our program polities or in cases of extreme developmental or behavioral concerns in which the safety of the child and others is at risk.

In cases of extreme development or behavior concerns, all efforts will be made by the St. Matthew Preschool to meet a child's individual needs. However, if a child's needs become greater than the abilities of our Preschool, or a parent is unwilling to work with St. Matthew Preschool and support our efforts, we reserve the right to determine if our program is appropriate for the child. If determined that our program is not appropriate for the child, parents will be required to find alternative arrangements.

St. Matthew Preschool does consult with Grant Wood AEA staff to determine how to best meet the needs of children with developmental or behavioral concerns. Grant Wood AEA staff can come and observe our program and provide information and suggestions to staff regarding ongoing practices and programs. If the staff have a concern with a child, parents will be notified prior to any observations specific to the child.

Parent and Family Involvement

We believe that parents are their children's first teachers. We encourage all parents to take an active role in their child's Preschool experience at St. Matthew School. You will have numerous opportunities to participate in the classroom, as well as special family activities/socials. St. Matthew Three-Year Old Preschool is a collaborative effort of home, school, and community agencies.

Unlimited Access

We are very proud of our program at St. Matthew and encourage all parents to visit our center at any time. By visiting during the day, you can get a better picture of what your child's day is like.

Parents are afforded unlimited access to their children at any time during the Preschool day, unless parental contact is prohibited by court order.

Virtus Training

Any parent who chooses to volunteer in their child's classroom must complete Virtus training. (Virtus.org) This training is required by the Archdiocese and a certificate of completion must be presented in order for any parent to volunteer in a classroom, accompany on a field trip, etc.

"VIRTUS is the brand name that identifies best practices programs designed to help prevent wrongdoing and promote "rightdoing" within religious organizations. The VIRTUS programs empower organizations and people to better control risk and improve the lives of all those who interact with the Church."

"The word virtus derives from Latin, and means valor, moral strength, excellence, and worth. In ancient times, virtus denoted a way of life and manner of behavior that always aspired to the highest, most positive attributes of people and aspects of human interaction."

(Virtus.org)

Volunteers/Visitors

We value the unique contributions individuals have to offer our programs and we welcome all persons to visit our center and/or volunteer their services. To ensure the safety of our children and the quality of our programs, ALL volunteers must receive prior approval from a member of administration, schedule their services in advance, and will be required to fill out several volunteer forms such as the following:

1. Confidentiality Statement
2. Communicable Disease Statement
3. Federal Criminal Background Check including FBI Fingerprinting
4. State of Iowa Criminal Background Check
5. Virtus Training

Any individual that places the safety of our children at risk will NOT be allowed to participate in our programs. All volunteers, including parents, guardians, persons with custodial care, and other relatives must speak with the administration prior to their desired date of volunteering.

Any person who has been convicted of a sex offense upon a minor who is required to register with the Iowa sex offender registry shall NOT be permitted on the property of St. Matthews without written permission of the center director, except for the time reasonably necessary to transport the offender's own minor child or ward to and from the center.

Written permission shall include the following conditions under which the sex offender may be present, including:

- The precise location in the center where the sex offender may be present;
- The reason for the sex offender's presence at the facility
- The duration of the sex offender's presence
- Description of the supervision that the center staff will provide the sex offender to ensure that no child is alone with the sex offender.

Before giving written permission, the center director shall consult with the center licensing consultant. The written permission shall be signed and dated by the center director and the sex offender and kept on file for review by the center licensing consultant. The St. Matthew Early Childhood Center director is not OBLIGATED to provide written permission. This will be completed on a case by case basis.

Progress Report

There are two scheduled conferences with your child's teacher to discuss progress reports and on-going assessments of your child's development and needs. We are always interested in your input regarding your child's development so that we can work together to plan a program that best meets the needs of your child.

Add emergency procedure page