

ST. MATTHEWS K-8 SCHOOL



2023-2024

Parent Handbook

Dr. Melissa Peeples, *Principal*
Fred Mack, Ed. S, *Assistant Principal*

135 Saints Avenue

St. Matthews, South Carolina 29135

Telephone: (803) 655-2750

Fax: (803) 874-3273

Empower. Compete. Succeed.

VISION

Our vision is to be the premier, competitive school district recognized globally for embracing the needs of each student.

MISSION

The mission of Calhoun County Public Schools is to empower all students to compete and succeed globally in an ever-changing society.

MOTTO

“Building a Foundation for Academic Success”

TITLE I SCHOOL

C
A
L
H
O
U
N

C
O
U
N
T
Y

S
C
H
O
O
L

D
I
S
T
R
I
C
T

August 14, 2023

Dear Mighty Cardinals,

WELCOME to the 2023-2024 school year. The faculty and staff are elated about the new school year. We are enthusiastic to begin this year with personalized learning opportunities for your child(ren). Additionally, we look forward to communicating and collaborating with our parents/guardians in order to give your child(ren) the best learning opportunities. We will work together to provide children with academic, social and emotional progress.

This handbook is a guide to help you navigate through a successful school year. Please review it as a family, and use it as a reference as often as necessary for “procedures and expectations.” This will help you maximize your educational experience and guarantee a safe learning environment. I want you to remember that each day we are, “Building a Foundation for Academic Success.”

If you have any questions concerning our procedures and expectations, please ask any faculty or staff member at the school. You can also drop by and talk with me. My office is always open.

Sincerest regards,

Melissa Peeples

Melissa Peeples, Ed.D

Principal



CARDINAL CHARACTER COUNTS

St. Matthews K-8 Guidance Department

Dear Parents/Guardians,

When it comes to education and character education in particular, there are many important key players: teachers, parents, and the community at large. Educating youth is a cooperative effort. When schools, parents, and communities deliberately encourage similar values and goals, the opportunities for our children's success and growth become unlimited.

Developing character in a child is overwhelming. Respect, Self-Control, Responsibility, Gratefulness, Kindness, Dependability, Honesty, Cooperation, Diligence and Empathy are just as important as the intellectual gifts we treasure. Like intelligence, instilling character takes years of deeply personal, rigorous cultivation.

Each month St. Matthews K-8 will feature one of the character traits listed above. We encourage all students to exhibit these traits in order to empower, compete, and succeed in school and life. Additionally, the school community will work with students on the top 10 skills identified by business leaders for success in the work place. Please look forward to monthly letters that will identify the character trait, along with family activities to reinforce good character.

Emotional and Social learning will become a daily part of your child's learning. If you notice unwanted changes in your child's behavior and feel he/she would benefit from additional social and emotional services, please contact our department as soon as possible.

Together, we have, can, and will do what's best for our children.

tsimmons@ccpsonline.net

ljenkins@ccpsonline.net

ST. MATTHEWS K-8 SCHOOL ~ DATES TO REMEMBER

Monday, August 14, 2023 First Day of School
August 17, 2023 Open House
May 31, 2024 Last Day of School for **ALL** Students

STUDENT FEES

Montessori and Child Development.....\$25
Kindergarten – 3rd Grade.....\$15
Grades 4th – 8th\$15

DIGITAL DEVICE FEES (LAPTOPS)

Kindergarten-Eighth Grade Students\$25

1. **EARLY ARRIVAL/BREAKFAST:** The school will continue to open promptly at 7:20 A.M. Breakfast will be served in the cafeteria from 7:20am. - 7:45am. Students will also be afforded a “Grab & Go” option. Instruction will begin promptly at 7:45am. Child Development – eighth grade students will report directly to classrooms if they choose not to have breakfast. Buses will unload at the bus ramp.
2. **SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS:** Supervision of students at SMK8 begins each morning at 7:20 A.M. Students should NOT be dropped off before this time.
3. **TARDINESS:** Students arriving after 8:00 A.M. must come into the office with a parent to be signed in. Students arriving after 8:00 A.M. will be marked tardy and must receive a pass from the office to enter class (no teacher will admit a tardy student without an official pass.) The entrance doors for the main hallway will be locked daily at 8:00 A.M. to ensure the safety of our children. The Calhoun County Code of Conduct Book addresses the consequences for students who are tardy. Please be sure to look over the information. SMK8 will adhere to the district's tardy policy.

4. DISMISSAL TIMES FOR BUS RIDERS:

	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, & Friday	Tuesday
Primary Hall	3:00 P.M.	1:00 P.M.
Elementary Hall	3:00 P.M.	1:00 P.M.
Middle School Hall	3:00 P.M.	1:00 P.M.
Buses Departure Time	3:05 P.M.	1:05 P.M.

5. DISMISSAL TIMES FOR CAR RIDERS:

	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, & Friday	Tuesday
All Car Riders	3:00 P.M.	1:00 P.M.

For safety reasons, parents are asked to remain in their vehicles when picking up their child/children in the afternoons.

- A. **Early Dismissals:** Once a student reports to school, he or she is expected to stay the entire day. If a student has to leave early due to illness or any other circumstances, it must occur before 2:30 P.M. **Sign out will not be allowed after this time.** When possible, appointments should be scheduled after school or on school holidays. Parents are urged to request early dismissal **only when necessary.** **Extensive early dismissals will be considered an attendance concern.** Students will not be dismissed on a regular basis to prevent waiting in the car line.
- B. **Transportation Changes:** Changes in student transportation must be submitted in writing. You may send a note, an email to (ldebruhl@ccpsonline.net or dmichael@ccpsonline.net), or you may fax the request to 803-874-3273 before 2:00 P.M. For the safety of our children, **transportation will not be changed over the phone.**

6. **STUDENT ATTENDANCE:** Attendance is the key factor in student achievement. Any school absence represents an educational loss to the student. Please help ensure that our "children" are College and Career Ready by ensuring that they are attending school daily. The following policies govern student attendance for Calhoun County Schools. All students are expected to attend school until the last day of school, May 31, 2024.

Attendance Policy and Laws:

- **It is important for students and parents to understand that mandatory attendance as established by the South Carolina Department of Education Uniform Grading Policies as well as Calhoun County Public Schools expectations, will be strongly enforced.**
- Any student who accumulates more than ten absences faces the possibility of being retained.
- Attendance starts when your child enters Pre-School.
- Your child(ren) must be at school for over 50% of the day to be counted as present.
- When your child is absent, you must send a medical note or parental note within **five** days of his/her return to school.
- A parental note will excuse a maximum of ten days. *These notes will only be accepted if the absences are considered to be lawful.*
- If notes are not handed in within the specified timeframe, your child's absences will be considered unlawful.
- There are serious consequences for unlawful absences.

Lawful Absences:

- Absences that are excused by a doctor or other medical professional.
- Death in the immediate family (parent, grandparent, or sibling).
- A recognized religious holiday.
- Special circumstances **approved in advance** by the principal (*Teachers do not have the authority to approve absences for special circumstances. You must get approval from an administrator.*)
- If your child has an illness that will cause him/her to be absent in excess of five days, you must call the school and make a request for homebound instruction. You must have medical documentation verifying the need for this request.

Unlawful Absences:

- An unlawful absence is any absence that is not excused under the conditions mentioned above.

Consequences:

- A total of three consecutive or five total unlawful absences is considered to be truancy.
 - **Five** unlawful absences will result in a referral to Truancy Mediation.
 - Refusal to attend Truancy Mediation and accumulating two or more unlawful absences after the scheduled mediation date will result in a referral to Family Court.
 - Parents convicted for educational neglect may be placed under court order, fined up to \$50 a day, and/or imprisoned for up to thirty days in jail for each unexcused absence thereafter.
 - Students between the ages of twelve and seventeen years of age may be prosecuted for truancy in family court. This could result in the child being placed in a DJJ facility for a period of 30 to 90 days and will result in the child having a criminal record.
 - **A Court Order may remain in effect until a child reaches 17 years of age or completes high school.**
7. **VISITORS:** SMK8 School has an open-door policy; however, visitors may not interact with teachers while instruction is occurring or with other students at any time. An exception is allowed for tutoring or mentoring experiences with student(s) that have been prearranged.
8. **TRESPASSERS:** Any person on school grounds without authorization will be required to leave. *This includes parents/visitors who have been placed on "No Trespassing" orders for inappropriate language and/or behavior.*
9. **CHECK-IN:** Please remember, for the safety of our children, all visitors must check-in at the school office to obtain a visitor's pass. *All visitation privileges are granted and revoked at the discretion of school administration.*
10. **PARENT CONFERENCES:** Parents are encouraged to meet with teachers. Parent conferences should be student led. These conferences can provide powerful opportunities for students to advocate for their own learning. Conferences are to be scheduled before/after school. You will need to call the school and schedule the conferences through the Guidance Department. **Teachers will not be allowed to talk with parents or receive telephone calls during instructional time unless there is a true emergency.** Telephone messages will be forwarded to the teacher's voice mail. Written messages will be given to teachers as soon as possible.
11. **MEDICATION PROCEDURES:** If possible, please give all medication before and after school. When prescription medication is to be administered for any period of time and must be given at school, the parent/guardian **must obtain a permission form from the nurse and have it signed by the doctor.** It is the parent's responsibility to get the form signed by the doctor. **Short-term prescriptions and non-prescription drugs must be brought to school by the parents in the original bottle with the appropriate permission form. Students are not allowed to keep medication with them in the classroom.**

Appropriate disciplinary actions will occur if a student is found to have medication in class or on school grounds and not with the designated personnel.

12. **IMMUNIZATION CERTIFICATE:** South Carolina requires that students have a Certificate of Adequate Immunization. No student will be allowed to begin school without being in full compliance of the law. Only “transfer” students will be allowed to receive a 30-day exemption in order to begin school.
13. **Withdrawals:** The school should be notified if you plan to withdraw your child/children. **All textbooks, library books, lunch fees, chrome books, and other fines must be cleared before the student receives a transfer record to another school.**
14. **GUIDANCE SERVICES:** Guidance Services are provided for all students. Emphasis is placed on each student’s developmental needs. Some specific objectives are orientation, placement, academic support, counseling, information, and evaluation.
15. **LIBRARY SERVICES:**

St. Matthews K-8 School Media Center Circulation Policy

Child Development and Kindergarten: Students who have turned in permission forms may check out one book at a time for one week starting in January. The book will be overdue after two weeks.

First Grade: First grade students may check out one book per week. The book will be overdue after two weeks.

Second through Eighth Grade: Second through eighth grade students may check out two books at a time. The books will be overdue after two weeks. It is recommended that students check out books in their comfort reading zone according to the STAR Reading Assessment.

Renewals

Books may be renewed if not in demand or on hold for another student.

Overdue Policy

A book is overdue the day after the due date. Overdue notices for students with late materials will be placed in teachers’ mailboxes for distribution to students. Checkout privileges are suspended when a student has an overdue item on record. These are reinstated when the overdue clears.

Lost Book Policy

When a book is reported “lost”, the Media Center will issue a Lost/Damage Book Notice to the student. Checkout privileges are suspended for the student until payment is made. After payment, a receipt is issued, and the student may check out books. If the book is found within 30 days and is in good, usable condition, the student will receive a complete refund. If the book is found after thirty days, there will be no refund given. The student may keep the book or donate it to the library. Lost book fees are based on the current replacement cost of the book.

Damaged Book Policy

All students are informed of the guidelines for taking care of books during orientation. When a book is damaged, a student should return the book to the Media Center. A damage fee assessment based on current replacement cost of the book will be made. A Lost/Damage Book Notice will be issued to the student. Checkout privileges are suspended for students with outstanding Lost/Damaged Book Notices. When payment is made, a receipt is issued, and checkout privileges are reinstated. Damaged books are discarded or given to the student.

****The school has the right to withhold from any student the privilege of attending a school sponsored paid event until outstanding fines are paid on all overdue, lost, or damaged books.**
The media center will open at 7:45 A.M. and close at 3:30 P.M. Please be mindful that on rare occasions the Media Center may be closed or the hours may be adjusted.

16. LOST/DAMAGED TEXTBOOK POLICY:

1. Students will be charged the replacement cost if a book is lost.
2. Students will be charged the replacement cost if a book is damaged and cannot be reissued the next school year.
3. Students whose names appear on the Textbook Obligations List will not be issued any textbooks.
4. *Students who lose their textbooks during the year will not be issued any replacements until the books are returned or the fine is paid.*
5. Students will be responsible for completing assignments during the time between the loss of the book and receipt of a new book. A book may be loaned to a student (if available) for classroom use only.

Academics:

17. **REPORT CARDS:** Report cards will be issued every nine weeks and must be signed and returned. See the School Calendar for issue dates. Interim reports will be issued mid-grading period of each quarter.

18. **ACADEMIC RECOGNITION:** At the end of each nine-week grading period, grades are reviewed to determine qualification for Honor Roll. Students who have earned a grade of “A” in every subject will qualify for the Principal's List. Students who earn no less than a “B” in every subject will qualify for the “A – B” Honor Roll.

19. **LEARNING PROFILES:** Students will have learning profiles. Learning profiles refer to a wide variety of ways in which learners vary in how they prefer to deal with content, process, and product. Learning profiles include attention to intelligence preferences, learning styles, and cultural and gender differences.

20. **HOMEWORK:** Homework is assigned as the needs of students are determined. The reasons are:
 - To provide practice on learned skills and the opportunity to learn good study habits.
 - To provide opportunity for growth in responsibility.
 - To provide the parent with an opportunity to see what the student is studying and how well the student is progressing.
 - Homework is individualized to meet the needs of the child.

21. **MAKE-UP WORK:** A student will be allowed to make-up work missed during an absence if arrangements are made with the teacher within two days of his/her return to school. The teacher will notify the student of a reasonable work completion time.

22. **TEST PAPERS:** Teachers of grades K-4 will send tests and other work samples home bi-weekly. Parents should sign and return these papers to the teacher the next day. Parents should contact the school office if papers are not being sent home at least twice per month.

23. **FLOWERS:** Students receiving flowers, balloons, stuffed animals, etc. will be called to pick them up at the end of the day. Balloons are not allowed on school buses.

24. **BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS:** Birthday celebrations must be pre-approved by the teacher. The teachers will inform administration and receive approval. Celebrations must be held in the cafeteria at the end of the day.

25. **FOOD/TREATS:** All food items shared with students must be purchased, (no homemade items) packaged and sealed. This is for the safety of ALL children.

26. **FIELD TRIP PROCEDURES:** It is recommended that all students be transported via school/site arrangements. It is the principal's discretion whether or not to allow students to be transported via another means of transportation. If the student is transported via means other than arranged by the school, the parent releases the School District from any and all liability that may arise as a result of this alternate means of transportation. In addition, a Field Trip Transportation Release must be completed upon approval and returned to the principal/assistant principal prior to the day of the trip.

27. **SMK8 DRESS CODE:**

Purpose: The purpose of the St. Matthews K-8 Dress Code is to create an atmosphere that will allow us to provide the best education possible for your children and our students.

The Student Dress and Grooming Regulations at St. Matthews K-8 School specifies standards that promote a positive and safe learning environment for students. Appropriate dress for special events will be communicated to parents and students by the school. Exceptions to the dress code may be made by the administration for special days, special events, or activities. Third-eighth grade students must follow the student dress and grooming regulations.

Standards

1. To ensure adequate coverage of the body at school and school activities, the following articles of clothing are not permitted:
 - See-through garments
 - Backless or strapless dresses or tops, including halter-tops or any tops that expose cleavage
 - Bare-midriff tops. (Tops and bottoms must touch when student is standing.)
 - Muscle shirts or sleeveless undershirts that expose the torso
 - Shorts, skirts, or dresses that are shorter than five inches above the knee or that expose undergarments when standing or sitting. These articles must provide full coverage of the body at all times.
 - Clothing that is tight or revealing
 - Flip flops and slides
 - Face or body piercings that are distracting
2. Shoes shall be worn at all times. Shoes that interfere with safe play and instructional activities are inappropriate.
3. Clothing, accessories, and jewelry shall be free of writing, pictures, symbols, or any other insignia, that are vulgar, profane, obscene, libelous, slanderous, or sexually suggestive. Clothing, accessories, or jewelry that degrade any cultural, religious or ethnic values, that advocate racial, ethnic, or religious prejudice or discrimination, or that promote sex, the use of tobacco, drugs, or alcohol or any unlawful acts are prohibited.

4. Hats, caps, and other head coverings shall not be worn.
5. Dark glasses shall not be worn indoors, except for valid medical reasons authorized by the principal or administration and verified in writing by a physician.
6. Gang-related clothing or accessories, including but not limited to bandanas, or other symbols, emblems, or insignia are prohibited. School officials shall use information obtained from community resources and the local gang task force to make judgments on what items and accessories are gang-related.
7. Tattoos, on any part of the body, must be covered if they are gang-related or violate any of the provisions of this dress code.
8. Items of clothing or accessories with spikes, safety pins, or chains, including wallet chains, are prohibited. Clothing or any attachments to clothing that could be considered weapons are not allowed.
9. Sleepwear or slippers may not be worn.
10. Clothing must not have excessive rips or tears, and appropriate clothing should be worn under clothing with rips in them.
11. At the elementary and middle level schools, a student's hair color must be within the spectrum of colors that hair grows naturally.
12. Excessive sagging or baggy pants are not to be worn. Undergarments may not be exposed.
13. Any clothing or an accessory that inhibits the safety of the student or others is prohibited.

28. LOCKER POLICY:

Middle School students that have after school activities or sports can use the lockers.

LOCKER RULES

In order to implement the school corporation's policy concerning student lockers, the school board adopts the following rules and regulations:

1. Locks

The school corporation will retain access to student lockers by keeping a master list of combinations or retaining a master key. Students may not use their own locks to prevent access to lockers by school officials, and any unauthorized locks may be removed without notice and destroyed.

2. Use of Lockers

At the discretion of school administration, lockers are to be used to store school supplies and personal items necessary for use at school. Lockers shall not be used to store items which cause, or can reasonably be foreseen to cause, an interference with school purposes or an educational function, or which are forbidden by state law or school rules, such as drugs (other than medicine for which a student has current prescription or common cold or headache medicine sold over the counter), drug paraphernalia, beverages containing alcohol, weapons, any flammable substances, bombs or explosive device, any pungent acid or nauseous chemicals, any library book not properly checked out or overdue, unreturned gym or athletic equipment, any stolen items, any obscene material, or tobacco products that are banned by school rules or regulations. Students will be expected to keep their lockers in a clean and orderly manner.

3. Authority to Inspect

The school corporation retains the right to inspect lockers to ensure they are being maintained in accordance with the conditions of Rule No. 2. All inspections of student lockers shall be conducted by the principal, his/her designee, or a member of the administrative staff designated in writing by the principal.

4. Inspection of Individual Student's Lockers

The inspection of a particular student's locker will not be conducted unless the principal or his/her designee has a reasonable suspicion to believe that the locker to be inspected contains items which caused, or can reasonably be foreseen to cause, an interference with school purposes or an educational function, which are forbidden by state law or school rules, or which pose an imminent and serious threat to health and safety necessitating the general search of part or all of the lockers.

- A. Before a particular student's locker is inspected, the student (or students if more than one have been assigned to a locker), if present on the school premises, shall, where practicable, be contacted and given the opportunity to be present during the conduct of the inspection unless circumstances require that the inspection be conducted without delay in order to protect the health and safety of others present on school premises. Whenever an individual student's locker has been inspected under this rule without the student's presence, the principal or his/her designee shall notify the student of such inspection as soon as practicable thereafter.

- B. If a general inspection of a number of lockers is necessary, then ALL lockers in the defined inspection area will be examined. Students will not necessarily be given the opportunity to be present while a general inspection is being conducted.

5. Inspection of All Lockers

An inspection of all lockers in the school, or all lockers in a particular area of the school, may be conducted if the principal, superintendent, assistant superintendent, or police officer reasonably believes that such an inspection is necessary to prevent, impede or substantially reduce the risk of:

- (1) An interference with school purposes or an educational function,
- (2) A physical injury or illness to any person,
- (3) Damage to personal or school property, or
- (4) A violation of state law or school rules.

29. E-LEARNING EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS:

1. **Be on time.** Punctuality is especially important for the Canvas Platform instruction because we are working in the absence of normal checks to ensure that everyone can be gathered to start classes on time.
2. **Wear proper attire.** It is our expectation that students dress in a way that is modest, clean, and avoids any unnecessary distractions.
3. **Think through an ideal location.** The most important thing is to have a clean and non-distracting background. If a student must work in his/her bedroom, make sure the bed or decorations are not prominent in the background. If possible, set up a desk with materials ready and a neutral background.
4. **Mute yourself if you experience unavoidable background noise.** If for reasons beyond your control, noise becomes a problem in what you thought was a quiet space, please click the icon on the bottom left that will mute your audio. If it's impossible to find a quiet place in your current family setting, it's still important to attend classes.
5. **Give your full, focused attention and participate fully.** Giving eye contact to the screen is a good way to show your instructor that you are attending, unless of course you are taking notes. Side conversations with other students via another means of communication are definitely off limits. Show respect to the important learning process that you are engaged in during the Canvas Meeting, just as you would if you were present in person with your whole class.
6. **Do ask questions.** Your teachers are there to support and help you, and it makes it easier on everyone if you can ask a question while together in the Canvas Meeting. If you are experiencing some confusion or have a question about something, it's likely that someone else has that same question. Speak up.
7. **Keep up with all assignments.** Set a routine and schedule to review and complete assignments. Adopt a mindset that each day you will put in a solid day's work on school and learning. Give yourself little breaks and set micro-goals to ensure that you keep up the motivation.
8. **Check your email regularly.** Your teachers will be emailing you assignments, instructions, links to Canvas Meetings, clarifying misconceptions, and answering questions.

9. **Keep up with all assignments.** Set a routine and schedule to review and complete assignments. Adopt a mindset that each day you will put in a solid day's work on school and learning. Give yourself little breaks and set micro-goals to ensure that you keep up the motivation.
10. **Check your email regularly.** Your teachers will be emailing you assignments, instructions, links to Canvas Meetings, clarifying misconceptions, and answering questions.

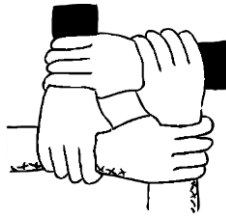
Please complete this form and return it to your child's HOMEROOM TEACHER no later than August 18, 2023. Thank you.

Parent's Name: _____

Student's Name: _____

Homeroom Teacher's Name: _____

St. Matthews K-8 School



I have read and understand the following policies as explained in this handbook. I am aware the policies will be followed as outlined.

Date

Student's Signature

Parent's Signature