



St. Matthew School

*"We are committed to the intellectual, moral and spiritual development of our children,
in a safe, nurturing Catholic environment, to the honor and glory of God."*

RETURN-TO-SCHOOL PLAN

IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

School Reopening Taskforce

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Thank you to the taskforce members for their input in the creation of this document. Their expertise and commitment to Catholic education is commendable. The pastor and principal have the right to amend this document as needed.

INTRODUCTION

In an effort to best meet the needs of our students and families, St. Matthew School will offer full day, in-person, classroom instruction beginning on September 7, 2021.

We have created this plan to aid in navigating the reestablishment of our school where employees, students, and families feel safe and to reduce the impact of COVID-19 conditions upon returning to the school. The guidelines referenced in this plan are based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), and the State of New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) *The Road Back*. Regular updates will be made to this plan based on information provided by the CDC, WHO, and applicable federal, state and local agencies.

SOURCES

Center for Disease Control: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html#anchor_1589931942037

New Jersey Department of Education:
<https://www.nj.gov/education/reopening/NJDOETheRoadBack.pdf>

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In order to ensure the continued well-being of our employees and students the following guiding principles have been put in place:

1. EMPLOYEE AND STUDENT SAFETY MEASURES
2. HEALTH GUIDELINES

PHASES AND TIMELINES

Information and direction about the phases and timeline will be sent to all employees and parents before implementation. Please see below for a summary of the phases and timelines.

Phase	Timing	Items
Planning	August	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supplies, equipment• Prepare detailed work schedule for phases• Prepare building for reopen with thorough cleaning
Phase 1	August	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement social distancing protocol and open facilities with limited access/use
Phase 2	August	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand use of school based on recommendations and data from CDC, NJDOH, New Jersey Governor, and applicable state and local agencies
Phase 3	September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open school• Expand full operation based on recommendations and data from CDC, NJDOH, New Jersey Governor, and applicable local and state agencies• Determine what restrictions/guidelines stay in place

SCREENINGS AND HEALTH PROTOCOL

MORNING ARRIVAL

STUDENTS:

A screening should be completed by the child's parent/guardian prior to arriving at school each day.

The school's screening will include the following COVID-19 symptoms, including:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea
- Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.3 degrees Fahrenheit
- Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19

If the student develops a temperature of 100.3 degrees or greater, or exhibits any of the above symptoms, he or she will be sent home.

EMPLOYEES:

- All employees MUST be vaccinated against COVID 19. Any employee not vaccinated MUST be tested weekly.
- School staff will be screened daily.
- All staff are required to wear face coverings.
- If a staff member becomes ill at work or is exhibiting symptoms of COVID19 at work, they will be asked to leave work and go home or to the nearest health center.
- Employees returning to work from an approved medical leave must contact the principal. A healthcare provider's note must be submitted before returning to work.
- If an employee has been diagnosed with COVID19, the school, Office of Schools, and local health department will be contacted. The health department will determine the next steps.

Students:

- Parents are encouraged to be on the alert for signs of illness in their children and to keep them home when they are sick.
- Students are required to wear face coverings, mask or shield. Provided social distancing is in place, students will have "mask breaks" for snack and lunch.
- Student health checks will be conducted safely and respectfully.
- Results will be documented when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed.
- Accommodations will be made, if needed, for screening students with disabilities.
- As per regular school policy, students must have a healthcare provider's note upon returning to school after a medical absence of 3 or more days.

Protocol for Symptomatic Staff and Students

Procedures for symptomatic staff and students include:

- Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 will be safely and respectfully directed to an isolation room. This room is located near the nurse's office and main office.
- If an employee or student becomes ill on campus, he/she will immediately report to the isolation room and a report form will be completed.
- In isolation, mask and gloves will be provided along with an explanation that this is a measure used to help prevent the spread of the possible virus. Anyone attending to the individual will also wear a mask and gloves.
- Students will remain in the isolation room with supervision and care until picked up by an authorized adult. Staff will leave as soon as they are able.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) will be available, accessible, and provided for use. Items will be kept in the nurse's office and isolation room.
- The nurse and principal will identify any persons who may have come into contact with the suspected, infected individual.
- The principal will apprise the staff of the situation.
- The isolation room and the student's classroom or staff's work area will be cleaned and disinfected.
- If the school becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in the school tests positive for COVID-19, school officials will immediately notify local health officials, staff, and families of the confirmed case, while maintaining confidentiality.
- The principal or nurse will call the local health department and seek advice on the quarantining of classes or closure of school.
- St. Matthew School will follow current State of New Jersey Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting - <https://www.nj.gov/health/>

REPORTING PROTOCOL

The following information will be provided when consulting public health:

- The identity of the person with COVID-19 or probable COVID-19 (i.e. staff, child in care, household contact).
- The date the person with COVID-19 or probable COVID-19 was last in the building.
- The date the person developed symptoms.
- Types of interactions the person may have had with other persons in the building or in other locations.
- How long their interactions were with other persons in the building.
- If other persons in the childcare program have developed any symptoms.
- Any other information requested to assist with the determination of next steps.

RE-ADMITTANCE PROCEDURES RELATED TO COVID-19

- A student or staff member that is symptomatic and is suspected of having COVID, has come into contact with a person with COVID or has tested positive for COVID-19 must have been quarantined for 10 days following a positive test result before returning to school.
- A student or employee that has been absent from school must be fever-free for more than 72 hours (3 days) before being re-admitted to school.
- A healthcare provider's note stating that return to school/work is allowed must be submitted.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Social distancing is an effective way to prevent potential infection. St. Matthew School employees, students, and parents should practice staying 3 to 6 feet away from others and eliminate close contact with others.

- Desks will be positioned to provide a 3-foot distance between students.
- Movement around the classroom will be limited.
- Additional modifications, such as acrylic safety barriers will be used if needed.
- Times for any group movement through the halls (restroom visits and recess) will be staggered to avoid crowding.
- Signs will be located around the school and in bathrooms to remind students of social distancing and good hygiene/handwashing procedures.
- When weather allows, windows will be opened to allow for greater air circulation.
- When weather permits, students may be taken outside for class, gym and recess.

As per CDC guidelines, Non-essential/informal meetings and visiting should be avoided as much as possible, until further notice.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

- Face coverings are mandatory for faculty, staff and students.
- Students at their desk with 3 feet of social distancing may remove their masks for eating, but they must be in place if walking in the classroom or halls.
- If social distancing guidelines cannot be met, acrylic partitions will provide separation.
- Hand sanitizer, antibacterial wipes, disinfecting spray, gloves, additional masks and tissues will be available throughout the school and in each classroom.
- All PPE will be available in the nurse's office and in the isolation room.

In addition to using PPE, students and staff will be reminded to:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.

CLASSROOM AND COMMON SPACES

Classrooms:

- Desks will be positioned to allow for a minimum of 3 feet of distancing.
- Students' belongings will be kept separated from others.
- Students will be directed under the supervision of the teacher to clean their personal space.
- There will be no sharing of books or supplies.
- Each student will be assigned a Chromebook. It will be distributed by the teacher and collected and sanitized by the teacher after use.
- Students will not share electronic devices, toys, books, games or learning aids until they are cleaned and disinfected between use.
- Cots for PreK naptimes will be placed head-to-toe, with distancing.
- Teachers will disinfect their own personal workspace throughout the day, paying attention to frequently touched surfaces.
- Classrooms will be cleaned and sanitized daily by custodial staff and cleaning service.

School Entrances, hallways, and common spaces:

- Signage will be placed both inside and outside the school building, emphasizing social distancing.
- To limit crowds and contact, grades will be assigned a specific door for entering and exiting the building.
- Students and staff must have masks on when entering the building and in the halls.
- All frequently used surfaces (including doors, doorknobs, handrails and bathrooms) will be cleaned regularly throughout the school day.
- Water fountains will not be available for use. Students are encouraged to bring reusable water bottles to school. Teachers will have a supply of water in the classroom should a child need it.

Restroom usage during the day:

- Classes will be assigned a specific bathroom and time schedule to use the restroom.
- Restrooms will be sanitized after the class completes their visit.
- There will be limited shared use of restrooms.
- Students will maintain social distancing when using the restroom. (Students will follow a restroom schedule limiting the number of students using the restroom at one time.)
- Students will be permitted to use the restroom individually as needed or utilize the bathroom in the nurse’s office.

FACILITIES CLEANING

The safety of our employees and students are our first priority. Upon reopening, our school has been completely cleaned and disinfected and we will continue to adhere to all necessary safety precautions. In addition to the deep clean of the office and school before employees and students return, the cleaning steps outlined below will be taken to disinfect workplace surfaces, chairs, tables, etc. to protect employees and reduce the risk of spread of infection. We will require employees to maintain this safety standard by continuously cleaning and disinfecting based on the frequency stated below. Deep cleaning is triggered when an active employee or student is identified as positive for COVID 19 based on testing.

GENERAL DISINFECTION MEASURES

Category	Area	Frequency
Workspaces	Classrooms, Offices	At the end of each use/day
Appliances	Refrigerators, Microwaves, Coffee	Daily

	Machines	
Electronic Equipment	Copier machines, Shared computer monitors, TV's, Telephones, keyboards	At the end of each use/day and/or between use
General Used Objects	Handles, light switches, sinks, restrooms	Several times a day
Common Areas	Cafeteria, Library, Conference rooms, Gyms, Common Areas	At the end of each use/day; between groups

- Hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol) will be in every classroom and throughout the school, including the entrances and exits, offices.
- Children ages 5 and younger will be supervised when using hand sanitizer.
- Students will be encouraged to wash hands for at least 20 seconds at regular intervals, including before eating, after using the bathroom, and after blowing their nose/coughing/sneezing.
- Students will use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) if washing with soap and water is not possible.
- Antibacterial wipes will be available in each classroom.

Early Childhood programs:

- Children arrive between 7:30 and 7:50 AM.
- Half day program dismisses at 10:50 AM.
- Full day program dismisses at 2:20 PM.
- Maintaining social distancing will be encouraged within the classroom and at play.
- Children will be kept 6 feet apart during nap time with cots oriented in the same direction.
- Materials will not be shared.
- Toys may only be used by more than one child after they have been cleaned and sanitized.
- There will be designated times on the schedule to take students out of the classroom to wash hands with soap and water, including, at a minimum:
 - at the start of the day when children enter the classroom
 - before snacks and lunch
 - after using the toilet or helping a child use a toilet
 - after sneezing, wiping, and blowing noses
 - after snacks and lunch, particularly if hands are sticky, greasy or soiled
 - when students come in from outdoor play or recess

In limited cases, hand hygiene with an alcohol-based sanitizer or alcohol-based wipes, when there is no visible soiling of hands, are alternatives to hand washing with soap and water by

children over 24 months of age, under the supervision of the teacher. The CDC recommends an alcohol-based sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol and to rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry, about 20 seconds, then wash hands with soap and water as soon as possible.

VISITORS ON CAMPUS

Until further notice there will be no visitors allowed in the school building during school hours. Fewer people entering the school building allows for greater implementation of safety measures.

RECESS and PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- Exit times for outdoor recess will be staggered.
- Designated areas will be assigned for recess, with social distancing in place, to avoid class mixing.
- Cones, flags, tape, or other signs will be used to create boundaries between groups.
- Students will wash hands immediately after outdoor playtime.
- Equipment will not be shared unless cleaned and disinfected between each use.
- For indoor physical education class, the students will be in the gymnasium and activities will be planned that maintain 6 feet of distance at all times.
- Students will wash hands before returning to classroom after gym class.

CAFETERIA AND LUNCH/SNACK TIME

St. Matthew School will begin the school year with students having lunch and snacks in their self-contained classroom. Food service in the cafeteria **will not** be available.

- Students must bring their lunches, snacks and drinks to school in a lunchbox or bag, no glass, please. We cannot refrigerate or heat foods.
- Students should bring a water bottle to school as water fountains will be unavailable.
- We request no deliveries of food to school. Should lunch be forgotten, a delivery may be made to the main entrance of the school.
- As per school policy, there is no sharing of food or drink.
- With teacher supervision, the classroom will be cleaned and wiped down with antibacterial wipes following food consumption.
- Proper hand washing before and after eating meals will occur.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

To stay updated on the most current information, families are encouraged to:

1. Check email often.
2. Visit the school website: www.school.stmatthewtheapostle.com
3. Visit the teacher's classroom site and student's Google Classroom
4. View PowerSchool
5. Read Constant Contact messages
6. Communicate any questions or concerns with your child's teacher and/or administration.

ACADEMICS

Full-day, full-time, in-person instruction is the plan for the 2021-2022 school year.

TRADITIONAL IN CLASS INSTRUCTION

- Students will attend school 5 days a week.
- School hours are 7:50 AM to 2:20 PM.
- Arrival time is 7:40 to 7:50 AM.
- Lunch/Recess is 11:10-12:05 PM.
- Dismissal is at 2:35 PM.
- Modifications will be made, per state and local guidelines, to ensure the health and safety of all students.

CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Catholic schools have a two-fold charge: to provide an education that is academically excellent and one that is deeply rooted in Catholic identity.

- Catholic values will be infused intentionally across all grade levels and all subject matter.
- Participation in liturgy and prayer will continue to be encouraged and will be conducted with safety protocols and social distancing in place.
- Dates will be shared as to when we will be attending school masses and holding prayer services. All are welcome to attend. Please call the office so we may arrange seating that follows the guidelines for social distancing at indoor gatherings.
- Service learning opportunities will remain a priority in our schools.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES/BEFORE AND AFTERCARE PROGRAMS

- St. Matthew School will adhere to all social distancing requirements and hygiene protocol during any extracurricular activities.
- Where applicable, we will maximize the use of technology and online resources to continue some extra-curricular activities without additional person-to-person contact.
- Morning Care beginning at 7:00 AM and Aftercare will be available, with distancing guidelines strictly followed.
- Masks may be removed if social distancing is in place outdoors, but teachers will advise the student if it needs to be put on at any point.
- A schedule of activities will be planned to avoid mixing groups.
- Student may bring a toy or device from home to occupy some of the time, but the parent must recognize that the child is held responsible for it.
- Use of school facilities to school-sponsored extracurricular activities and groups may be restricted particularly if it interferes with the cleaning and disinfecting schedule.
- Once the building is vacated, no one may return until school reopens the next day.