

St. Matthias Lutheran
Church Preschool
Parent Handbook



Welcome to St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool. We are so happy to have your child enrolled in our program and look forward to working with you.

Our Vision

Our Vision is to be a place where young children can “play & learn” in a faith-based environment and where “ordinary can become extraordinary” through age appropriate & stimulating activities.

Our Purpose

Our Purpose is to provide the highest quality preschool education in a secure, nurturing, and stimulating environment. St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool serves the spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of preschool children and their families.

Our Mission

Our Mission is to provide a fully integrated preschool program for the Easley community and to foster the child’s social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and language development.

St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool leadership consists of the Preschool Board of Directors including the Pastor, and 5 church members. Director reports to the Pastor.

Curriculum

St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool takes great pride in preparing Curriculum for our students. Our curriculum is aligned with the South Carolina Early Learning Standards. It is a theme & discovery-based learning experience that gives each child the opportunity to move through specially designed learning centers at his or her interest level. The curriculum focuses on learning basic concepts and skills through hands-on experiences and activities. We use ABC Jesus Loves Me as our base curriculum.

Goals of the Curriculum:

- To provide a positive sense of identity and emotional well-being
- To gain a deeper understanding of God's Love
- To develop age-appropriate social, physical, language and literacy skills
- To encourage thinking, reasoning, questioning and experimentation
- To provide exposure to the arts and encourage creative expression
- To demonstrate proper health, safety and nutritional practices
- To respect cultural diversity
- Incorporate STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) into preschool lesson plans

Daily Schedule

We strive to provide the best preschool experience for you and your child. We offer a center based learning environment. Thematic units are the basis for developing centers, whole class instruction, and enrichment activities for each child.

***Class Schedules will vary slightly based on individual classrooms. Please refer to your child's daily class schedule for more details. Below you will find information on all classes spread out throughout our week here at the preschool. We believe each moment here at our preschool should be fun and engaging. It is our desire to reach our children in their early years while the brain is most rapidly developing.**

Description of what is offered at SMLC Preschool

Morning Work and Table Top Manipulatives: Each day as our students come into preschool, they will be welcomed to school and directed to their spot at the table where there will be a table top manipulative or project for the children to come to the table and participate in.

Circle Time: Circle Time is a fun interactive way to start the day. The children will sing songs for the days and months. The children will help place the day of the week onto the calendar, and the class helpers of the day will be assigned. Circle time will change weekly to accommodate what they are learning at that time.

Story Time Theatre: This will include an interactive story that correlates with the theme of the week will be read with children participating in acting, sequencing, and recalling.

Character Training: The children will have fun with interactive stories, songs and lessons that correlate with our verses and virtues. The children will also learn how to show the love of God by being a good friend. Our goal is to reach the child's heart, not just modify their behavior.

Math and Science Exploration: Your little scientist or mathematician will love this. Anything from naming the planets to graphing activities and all in between will be conducted here. This will be appropriately planned for your child's age by their teacher!

Music and Movement: Children who are consistently exposed to musical experiences gain neural connections that help with brain development and cognitive thinking. It has been proven that this exposure helps them do better in areas such as reading and math, helps them gain better control of their bodies, aids in focusing, promotes higher self-esteem and emphasizes teamwork.

STEM: Our plan is to gradually incorporate the *STEM* (Science, Technology, Electronics, and Math) teaching method into our preschool curriculum.

Fine Motor Skills:

All students participate daily in activities that promote fine motor skills. Water droppers, tweezer pick up, and much more are offered.

Bible Lesson Time: Faith Based Focus

ABC Jesus Loves Me curriculum promotes a different biblical story each week & is strictly a bible story based & represents all Christian denominations.

SMLC Preschool POLICIES & DAILY PROCEDURES

Arrival/Departure –

Our school operates Monday through Friday from the hours of 8:45 am until 1:00 pm. Arrival Begins at 8:45 and the children should be here NO LATER than 9:00. This ensures that we start our day in a timely manner. Class begins promptly at 9:00 am. Repeated late drop-offs could result in termination.

For safety reasons, Parents are required to park their car and escort their child to their classroom. A staff member will welcome you and your child at the door. For Departure, Parents are again asked to park their car and will pick up their child from their child's classroom. Our staff will greet you at the door. This policy is subject to change as necessary.

Afternoon pick-up is between 12:45 p.m. and 1:00 pm. All students should be picked up by their designated care giver NO LATER than 1:00. A late charge of \$1.00 per minute will be charged for any student picked up later than this time. This is to be paid the day of the occurrence. Repeated late pick-ups could result in termination. It is important that anyone picking up your child has written permission and is listed on the enrollment form. Your child will not be released to anyone not listed on the enrollment form or given written permission to do so. Please ensure that you let us know of any changes in pick-up and that they have proper ID when picking up.

Front doors will be locked at 9:00 and unlocked at 12:45 pm. An SMLC Staff member will be at the door during Pick-up and Drop-off.

Disaster Preparedness

SMLC Preschool has an emergency disaster plan in place. Staff members are will be First Aid/CPR/AED certified & have taken Blood Borne Pathogen training to be prepared to handle an emergency.

Class Size

Preschool class size will meet or be below student teacher ratios of all state appointed ratios.

Dismissal Authorization

Please inform us with a note or phone call if someone other than those you have originally authorized will be picking up your child. The authorized person must be over 18 years of age and present a photo ID. Your child(ren)'s safety is our main concern. On your registration forms, you will find a place to put any and all person(s) who you deem able to pick up your child(ren) in your absence.

Field Trips

We will have two Field Trips during our school year for the students. In order to provide an optimum level of safety, we require that a parent attend the field trip and transport their child to the field trip location. This makes for a more family friendly field trip, and ensures that all of our children are well supervised. Field trips are for St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool children only. If you choose not to have your child participate in scheduled Field Trips, he or she must remain at home that day as the preschool will be closed.

Discipline Policies

Our classes have a positive reinforcement policy and use redirection as our method of managing positive behavior. If a child is having a hard time following the classroom guidelines, we may use "time away" from the activity to allow for the child to calm themselves so that they can rejoin the group. Our goal is to show love and forgiveness at all times.

Our younger classes have daily communication sheets that are used to keep parents informed as to class participation and behavior.

To make certain that every child is treated with respect and care; our teachers adhere by the following guidelines when disciplining a child.

- No child shall be subjected to any form of corporal punishment, handled roughly, or confined in any way.
- Discipline shall never be delegated to another child.
- Discipline shall never be exercised for a child not eating or for a lapse in potty training.
- Withholding food or drinks is never used as a discipline procedure.
- Harsh language or belittling children is never tolerated.
- Redirection is our first option for helping a child to calm down.

Biting

As with any behavior, how biting is dealt with depends on the ages of the children involved, the reason for the biting (if it can be determined), frequency of the biting and many other specific circumstances. General guidelines for biting include:

- Helping calm the child who was bitten & give lots of love
- Clean the area and apply a cold compress
- Completing an incident report for the parent of the bitten child.
- Discussing the situation with the biter's parent.

Depending on the ages and circumstances involved, additional actions might include:

- Discussing a better solution with all children involved.
- Separation of involved children.
- Showing/giving the biter something appropriate to bite (teething ring).
- Ensuring that the environment provides enough challenging activities.
- Carefully observing the involved child to identify precipitating events and prevent recurrences.
- Maintaining a log to track when the behavior occurs.
- Conferences with parents to discuss the child's actions at home, parental discipline techniques, search for outside resources, etc.

Just as any other behavior issue regarding a child is confidential, the name of the child that has bitten is also confidential, in order to ensure the privacy of the child and family and prevent bias from others enrolled in the center. We will keep you informed as to what steps are being taken and if bites are from the same or a different child. Informative handouts are given to parents regarding biting.

Biting is often a common behavioral action of frustration in young children; however, it is our responsibility to ensure the safety of our preschool children. We will follow the Parental notification Policy below after 2 bites; this policy will also be followed for other behavioral issues.

Parental Notification Policy for Behavioral Issues

Parents will be notified when our methods are not adequate to help the child calm down, or if excessive behavior issues occur. We will work with our staff to correct the situation in the best interest of the child and still maintain an orderly and loving class. The following will occur when notifying the parents does not solve the problem:

1. Conference between parents, teachers, and Director
2. "Time Away" from Preschool for a reasonable amount of time. This sometimes help break the cycle or biting. Tuition fees will be required to hold your child's spot.
3. An individual behavior plan will be put in place to accommodate the child's individual needs.
4. If all of the above has failed, the school will have no alternative but to dismiss the child from the program.

Labeling Items

Please label all items of personal property. We will make every attempt to locate and return lost items. This task is much easier if your child's name is on the items. We cannot be responsible for any personal items that your child may bring to school.

Toy Policy

Please do not send toys or other items from home unless requested by the teacher. Please remove all toys from your child before entering the Preschool. The staff at the SMLC Preschool takes the approach of starting each day on a positive note, when we are forced to take toys away from children in the morning this sets a negative tone for the day.

No Weapon or Rough Play Policy

Our students are not allowed to play guns, swords, or any weapon oriented game. Our students will be reminded of this and redirected if needed. We also have a "hands are for helping, not for hurting" slogan that encourages our children to not handle their friends in a rough manner. Please help your child understand this policy.

ADMISSION AND ENROLLMENT

Registration and Enrollment

St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool opens enrollment for the upcoming school year in January to current students and siblings as well as church members. In February, enrollment is open to the public. All current students that enroll in January are guaranteed a spot, however after the exclusive January enrollment for in house students, enrollment becomes first come serve to those who submit form and payment. When registering your child, you must provide a completed enrollment form, and current immunization record that must be on file prior to start of school year. An annual registration fee and materials fee is due upon enrollment. "At meet the teacher" or when your child is enrolled in our program you will need to sign acknowledging that you received a copy of the handbook and that you will abide by all policies in it.

Photo Release

At the beginning of each school year, parents will be asked to complete a photo release form for your child. The release is used to gain parent permission for the purpose of promoting services at St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool only. Names of students or preschool information will not be released.

Preparing for the First Day of School

In an effort to prepare and welcome you to St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool, we will schedule an Open House/ "Meet & Greet" from 6:00-7:00 pm prior to Preschool opening. Date to be announced. Our first day of school is Monday, August 7, 2023. All schedules are subject to change and you will be notified.

Separation from the Parent

The process of separation from the parent as the child enters and attends preschool is one of the most important accomplishments of the preschool child.

At each age level, a child will react differently. As children mature, they begin to identify themselves as independent personalities. In separating from you, the parent, your child is learning:

- To develop an interest in the activities of the preschool
- To feel comfortable with others at preschool
- To understand that his/her parent will come back and pick him/her up
- To understand that all parents leave their children and come back for them
- To understand that parents often must concentrate on their own interests and duties which are separate and different from those of a child
- To develop an acceptance and willingness to allow the parent an open-door policy

Tuition Policy

We use the Brightwheel app for all tuition and other fee payments. You will need to download the app to pay your fees.

St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool tuition is calculated on an annual basis and then is divided in to nine equal payments and is paid monthly. **Tuition is due by the first of each month. A service charge of \$25.00 will be added to your account for tuition that is late.**

You will be invited to accept the Brightwheel app once your child is entered into our data base. You have to personally click that you would like to do auto payments. This will be a full month's tuition and will be the first installment payment of 9 total payments for the year. Checks, Cash, made payable to SMLC Preschool will be accepted until further notice.

If there is insufficient funds in your account when the withdrawal is scheduled you will be assessed an additional fee of \$35.00. Enrollment may be terminated for accounts that are 15 days past due.

A fee of \$1.00 per minute will be applied for children who are picked up after 1:00 p.m. See Arrival/Departure for additional information.

Should any extenuating circumstances arise that would prevent you from paying on a timely basis, please discuss this with the preschool Director immediately.

Termination of Service by St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool

St. Matthias Lutheran Preschool may terminate services in a time frame determined by the Director under any of the following conditions:

- The child's account is 2 weeks past due. On the Friday of a past due account the child will be withdrawn by the preschool. The spot will be given to any child on the waiting list. If there are any available spots and the family wishes for the child to continue to attend SMLC Preschool, the family will need to re-enroll by paying the registration fee, all past due balances, and all current monthly dues in order to re-enroll.
- St. Matthias Preschool cannot appropriately provide for the child.
- Continual negligence by the parents of policies and procedures
- Child becomes chronically unmanageable and cannot participate effectively in classroom activities, or interferes with the participation of other children, and teachers conclude that it is the best interest of the class.
- Your child has missed 2 continuous weeks of school in which the school has not been notified.

Termination of Service by Parents

Parents may withdraw a child from the program with an advanced 2 week written notice to the Director. The Date of withdrawal will be effective 2 weeks after the advanced written notice was received. St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool is always interested in knowing the reason a child leaves the program; parents may be contacted by the Director for feedback. No refunds will be made as all fees collected by the preschool are non-refundable.

Schedule Deviations

St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool generally follows the School District of Pickens County schedule, however our schedule may differ. Make sure to keep a copy of our preschool calendar. We have already scheduled several fun events and special days. Also, look for information in our newsletter or from the messages on the Brightwheel app (on your phone) about upcoming holidays and school closings.

For all inclement weather closings please stay connected to your local news stations, Brightwheel messages, Facebook, Instagram, & email for all information regarding school closings, delays, or early dismissal. If Pickens county schools are closed then we will be closed. If Pickens county schools are on a 2 hour delay then we will open at 10:30 a.m. Subject to change if necessary.

We will not make-up any days that we are closed.

Toilet Training

St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool accepts children that are not yet potty trained in our 1 and 2 year old programs. Children may not move up to a K3 class, regardless of age until he/she is completely potty trained. Our 2 Year old staff and preschool Director may offer suggestions with potty training. We ask that parents send disposable pull-ups (Side Break away) for our 2 Year old class. Please be sure there is a change of clothes for your child in his/her classroom and send appropriate replacements and extras and label everything.

Please feel free to speak with the preschool Director about extenuating circumstances. We want to provide the best program for your child and some modifications may need to be made.

Volunteer Opportunities

Some things you may want to consider for future opportunities.

We believe that a strong correlation and working relationship between the teachers and parents is essential in maximizing your student's education. Please consider how you can help our children and teachers by participating in fundraisers, class parties, or other special days. You could benefit the school by becoming a part of the Parent Panel Organization, volunteering to read to your child's class, or helping during small group learning. If you have any ideas or suggestions on ways you would like to help, please let the preschool Director know.

Please look for volunteer opportunities in upcoming communications.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS POLICIES

Nutrition

Please send a nutritious lunch with your child each day along with a drink cup that we can refill throughout the day with water. We also ask that you provide your child with a nutritious breakfast prior to coming to Preschool as we offer a morning snack, but not breakfast. If your child has special medical concerns and/or allergies, please be sure that information is on file. **Please do not send any food with peanuts, peanut oil, or peanut butter. All bags, bottles, etc., need your child's name written on the items. We are completely nut free.**

Illness

Other Diseases & Protocols:

Colds, flu and other contagious diseases spread easily among preschool and toddler children. To help protect your own child's health and to minimize the possibility of contagious spread at Preschool, please keep your child at home if you observe any of the following symptoms:

- Nasal discharge that is green or yellow
- Complaints of ear pain
- Productive cough
- Severe sore throat
- Eyes that are pink, burning or itching or producing discharge
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Fever

If these symptoms of possibly contagious conditions are observed in your child during the day, you will be called to pick up your child immediately. As a preventive measure, if your child has more than 2 loose bowel movements in the day, you will be called to pick your child up. The stomach virus seems to be the most contagious.

When your child has a fever, please keep him/her at home an additional 24 hours after the temperature returns to normal without the use of fever reducing medication. This will help to ensure that the illness has actually passed and that your child will be well enough to resume school activities.

Medication

Prescription and Non-prescription medications will not be administered by the staff at St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool. We ask that you administer your child's medication before arrival at Preschool. Please contact the Director if you have questions about this. The only exception may be the use of Ora-Gel for teething or motrin in emergency cases. Bug bite cream and Neosporin may be applied as needed.

Health and Immunization Forms

A report of a current physical exam and current immunizations are required for entry in the preschool program. We must have a copy of this form by the first day of class.

Clothing

Please dress children in simple and comfortable clothing. This will make restroom breaks and "playing" easier. Rompers and overalls are often very frustrating to children learning to potty train. Also, please dress your child appropriately for the outdoors. We will be playing outside each day that we are able.

Changes of Clothing

Please send a change of clothes labeled with your child's name in a zip-lock bag at the beginning of school. This change of clothes should include a seasonal friendly outfit. Pants and a t-shirt are recommended. Also include underwear and a pair of socks.

Accident or Injury

Safety is the top priority at St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool Program; however, in the event of an accident we have outlined several procedures and guidelines. Our staff is required to take Blood Borne Pathogen training and current CPR/First Aid training.

Occasionally, a child will become injured due to a fall or bump. When this occurs, parents receive a written incident report about how it happened and the first aid treatment.

In the event of a life threatening injury or emergency, CPR will be administered, 911 will be called and parents will be notified immediately.

For a non-emergency injury or any sign of blood, basic first aid will be administered by preschool staff and the parents will be notified. At this time, arrangements to stay at school or to make plans for the child to be picked up will be made.

Minor injuries will be washed, cleaned and covered with a bandage. Parents will be notified during dismissal or by messaging on our Procure Solutions app.

Any and all injuries will be kept in a file and will be recorded in the student's school file.

Family physician and medical information will also be kept on file for each child at the school in addition to a current emergency contact information sheet.

COMMUNICATION

We want there to be a direct line of communication between our dedicated parents and our school. Please use Brightwheel as your form of communication.

Preschool Bags

Each child will be issued a school bag. Please use this bag to keep the daily folder, lunch bag, and any other materials in. Please do not send book bags or any other bag that is not a designated preschool bag. We have found that the simple preschool bags are easy for the children to drop their belongings in, and also easy for the teacher to find correspondence by preventing the teacher from unzipping 10 different compartments to find necessary items. In turn, this allows the teacher to spend more time teaching. We also are working with limited space and this is a space saver for us

Website

You can access the website at www.stmatthiaspreschool.com. On the website you will find up-to-date information on our preschool program. An electronic copy of this preschool handbook is found there and there is also a tab that includes upcoming events. Registration and pertinent forms will also be available for download. Be sure to check this site often.

We also have a Facebook page and Instagram. On these pages, friends and family can be kept up-to-date with preschool events, happenings, and special information. We will also post pictures of St. Matthias events and activities. We hope this will be a great tool of communication between our preschool, families, and the community.

Contacting Us

If you ever have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact any member of our staff through Brightwheel. We are always here to help you out or answer questions. You may call text, email or write a note to us.

We appreciate your help in advance and look forward to having a wonderful working relationship with you.

Welcome to the St. Matthias family...we're so glad you're here!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PARENT HANDBOOK
St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool

This parent handbook outlines the policies and procedures of the St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool. An understanding of and adherence to the policies and procedures will ensure positive parent-school relations and that the children's needs are being adequately met. Therefore, the preschool requires that all parents and/or guardians of children enrolled at SMLC Preschool read, sign, and return to the Preschool Director the statement that follows.

1. I have read and studied the Preschool Parent Handbook.
2. I will read and study any additions to, or revisions of, the parent policies.
3. I will adhere to the parent policies explained in this handbook.
4. I understand that lack of adherence to these policies may result in termination of the child care arrangement.

I understand that the policies in this handbook and communicated to me in any fashion are subject to interpretation, review and change by the Preschool Board.

Failure to sign this form does not excuse anyone from the policies outline by the St. Matthias Lutheran Church Preschool.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Child's Name (please print): _____ Goes By: _____