



**St. Matthew School**  
**Return to School Plan**  
**School Year 2020-2021**

## **Introduction and Appreciation**

The teachers, students, parents, family, and staff of St. Matthew School successfully completed the 2019-2020 school year virtually on June 12, 2020. We are proud of our accomplishments and know we can and should do more. In preparation of another school year with COVID-19 concerns, we assembled a “Return to School” Taskforce in order to begin the 2020-2021 school year safely and effectively. Father Dietrich and I are fully appreciative of all the discussions and hard work the taskforce was able to do in such short notice. We had individuals that represented the major stakeholders of St. Matthew School.

As a taskforce, we focused on three pertinent areas of concern in order to begin the school year safely and effectively for all students and staff, as well as provide guidelines for how the school will operate under different scenarios. The areas of focus were: **Teaching and Learning, Health and Safety, and Communication**. The scenarios are broken down into three phases : green (full in-person teaching with all state requirements and social distancing protocols in place), yellow (hybrid teaching of both in-person and remote teaching) and red (full remote learning at home).

This Return to School Plan provides specific actions St. Matthew School will implement in the areas of health and safety strategies, social-emotional learning, daily operations within the school, teaching, learning opportunities, professional learning, and school services. In addition to this plan, we have included a Frequently Asked Questions and Answers Section as well as the Archdiocese of Hartford Guidelines.

Despite our best efforts to document our plan and all the necessary protocols and established guidelines, much can change in a very short period of time. Flexibility and prayer will be greatly needed throughout the 2020-2021 school year as we adjust to the impact of COVID-19 on our region and community.

Our primary concern is to do everything possible to keep all students, faculty and staff safe while providing an enriching and positive educational environment.

We look forward to a time when some normalcy will return. Until then, please stay healthy and remain ever safe.

*Peace be with us.*

Mrs. Helen Treacy, Principal

Father John Dietrich, Pastor

## Prayer at the Time of a Pandemic



Lord Jesus, Who promised to remain with us always,  
When information overwhelms us,  
and fear overtakes us,  
speak to us again those comforting words,  
“Peace be with you.”

Though we cannot be physically close to others,  
give us the ability and courage  
to love as well as we can,  
since “perfect love cast out all fear.”

Direct your caring gaze on doctors and nurses,  
researchers and safety personnel;  
Come to strengthen the sick, the vulnerable,  
and comfort those who are grief stricken.

And when the pandemic has passed,  
and this frightening crisis is resolved,  
teach us to know You more certainly  
as our dearest Friend and our only Hope.

You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
One God, forever and ever. Amen.

**(Offer one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and the Glory Be...)  
Our Lady, Mother of Perpetual Help, pray for us.**

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ST. MATTHEW SCHOOL  
RETURN TO SCHOOL INSTRUCTION PLAN

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For Instructional and Non-Instructional Activities

St. Matthew School's Return to School Plan is tailored to the unique needs of our school, the resources available to optimize teaching and learning, and predicated upon the health and safety of the entire school community. Our plan was designed in consultation with our local health agencies, a Return to School Taskforce, Bristol Public Schools and in compliance with Archdiocesan Guidelines. The Return to School Plan incorporates flexibility to adapt to the ever-changing health conditions.

The following template accounts for a phased approach that considers three scenarios for the school year 2020-2021, with the understanding that conditions may arise that require the transition from one phase to another. ***At all times when students or faculty are gathered in person, it is understood that close adherence to state health and safety guidelines and social distancing will be maintained.***

**Green Phase:** The school will conduct all in-person instruction with strict adherence to health and safety guidelines. All state requirements and social distancing protocols will be adhered to. A nurse aide will frequent cohorts for added reminders of proper hygiene practices.

These guidelines include but are not limited to:

- All desks are facing the same direction.
- Desks are spaced out at least 6 feet apart from one another. Students will wear masks in classrooms with some exceptions when 6 feet of distancing cannot be maintained.
- Masks will be worn in all common areas of school (bathrooms, gymnasium, hallways, office, etc.)
- Hand sanitizing dispensers are available in each classroom and office space and at each entrance/exit.
- Students will be allowed to wash hands as often as possible.
- Classroom surfaces are cleaned with disinfecting wipes at least twice a day.
- Restrooms are cleaned at least three times a day.
- Lunches can be organized in classrooms or outside, weather permitting, with adherence to required 6-foot distancing.

Classes will be designated by cohorts. Cohorts will be determined based on enrollment. The purpose of cohorting is to limit the number of students who are exposed to or may be diagnosed with COVID-19 if

there is community transmission in a school. Maintaining stable cohorts helps to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19.

A “cohort” is a group or team of students and educators with consistent members that stay together throughout the school day. In many of our grades, a single cohort can be achieved.

Each cohort teacher will incorporate mask breaks (during independent seatwork or non-discussion instruction) in their daily schedules. Manipulatives (such as building blocks, counting chips, puzzle pieces, etc.) will be cleaned daily and will not be shared. Each student will have their own email address solely for the purpose of schoolwork and communication with their teacher. The school will communicate weekly updates via ENEWS, SMS website, School Messenger and social media (Instagram, Twitter and Facebook) when necessary and appropriate. Our website will have a designated landing page for updates with COVID-19. The Wednesday Communication folders will now be on-line and sent out every Wednesday through emails to all families and staff.

The gymnasium will be utilized as a learning space for Grades 6-8. Honors Math will be in a smaller room near the gymnasium to preserve the cohorts affected. Students will remain in their learning space and teachers will move from class to class, therefore limiting how many students are in the hallway at one time. This will provide additional space for smaller class sizes in the younger grades where needed. The main hallway in the school will have a line down the center to keep with social distancing protocols. All classroom space will be washed down 2-3 times daily by the cohort teacher (preferably beginning of the day and after students' dismissal). All bathrooms will be disinfected 3-4 times daily. The day custodian will take opportunities to clean and disinfect the bathrooms and common areas throughout the school day. Whole classes will not go to the bathroom together. Students that need to use the facilities will stand in designated areas until it is their turn to go into the bathroom. Arrows will notify which side of the hallway you should walk. Communication will need to increase. Proper signage reminding all persons in the building of social distancing protocols, proper mask wearing and washing of hands frequently will be displayed in areas throughout the campus.

Art, Music and Physical Education will be incorporated into all cohort schedules with adherence to the 12 feet of social distancing protocol. Opportunities for outdoor instruction will be utilized when possible based on weather conditions.

All teachers will receive professional development days on health and safety protocols from the Bristol-Burlington Health District as well as remote learning opportunities prior to the beginning of school.

It is important to note that St. Matthew School will adhere to the protocols established by Bristol-Burlington Health Department that give guidelines as to if a child has symptoms prior to the beginning of the school day or if a child/staff member gets sick throughout the day. An “isolation” space has been designated in the school for the infected/ill person to wait until the child / staff member can be picked up by an appropriate person and brought home. The child/staff member cannot come back to campus without a clearance from their doctor.

**The Yellow Phase:** Each class will be limited to no more than 50% capacity of the learning space. The school will provide a hybrid-blended model of in-person instruction and remote learning. Any in-school instruction will follow the health and safety guidelines outlined in the Green Phase. This Yellow Phase plan is tailored to St. Matthew School based on available resources, classroom size, enrollment, and physical school space structures. There would be a balance of pre-recorded lessons, Zoom meetings and flipped classroom style lessons. The students would be closely monitored and assessed on a weekly basis. All work would be done and handed in electronically. Each student will have their own email address solely for the purpose of schoolwork and communication with their teacher. Both regular and e-textbooks will be utilized in this phase.

**Data from the recent family survey indicated having 2 days in the classroom and 3 days of remote learning at home per week was the preference when in the yellow phase.**

St. Matthew School will survey all families at the beginning of the school year while in the Green Phase to finalize which option may be implemented if the school is required to transition to the yellow phase:

- **Half the class will be home remote- learning and the other half would be in-person instruction with a schedule to alternate by family last names on a weekly basis.**
- **Alternate days when whole grades come to school and receive in-person instruction; whole grades remain at home to receive remote learning instruction.**

**The Red Phase:** School is closed for in-person instruction. All instruction will be provided via remote learning using digital and non-digital platforms, depending on the grade level. Grades 4-8 will incorporate live virtual classroom instruction and connections at least twice a week, optimally four days

a week. Grades PreK-3rd may rely on digital and non-digital platforms with a live virtual classroom session at least once a week. There will be a balance of pre-recorded lessons, Zoom meetings and flipped classroom style lessons. The students would be closely monitored and assessed on a weekly basis. All work would be done and handed in electronically. Each student will have their own email address solely for the purpose of schoolwork and communication with their teacher. The school will communicate weekly with updates via ENEWS, SMS website, School Messenger and social media (Instagram, Twitter and Facebook) when necessary and appropriate. Our website will have a designated landing page for updates with COVID-19. The Wednesday Communication folders will now be on-line and sent out every Wednesday through emails to all families and staff.

## **St. Matthew School Tentative Daily Schedule**

7:30 AM: Doors will open

Masks are to be worn upon entering the building.

Hand sanitizing areas will be at each entrance. All persons coming into the building must sanitize their hands.

**Grades 6-8 will enter at the gymnasium entrance and proceed to their designated learning space.**

**Grades K-5 will enter at the main entrance and move along the arrows to their designated learning space.**

**There will be proper signage and staff to help the students reach their cohort.**

***Pre-Kindergarten will enter the convent door. (Masks are optional) Hands will need to be sanitized.***

7:55 AM: Morning Exercises and Prayer will be done over the intercom to start the academic day.

Cohorts will be with each other all day. There will be recess twice a day and masks breaks throughout each class's daily schedule. There will be opportunities to have classes outside, weather – permitted.

Classrooms will be cleaned 2-3 times a day and bathrooms will be disinfected 3-4 times daily. Classes will have Art, Music and Physical Education once a week.

Grades 6-8 teachers will change classes and Honors Math will be held in Room 9 closest to the gym to preserve that learning space.

2:20 PM: Afternoon exercises and Prayer will be done over the intercom

2:30 PM (Wednesday 2:05 PM): Classes will be dismissed beginning with the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade in a staggered fashion. Grades 6-8 will be dismissed with their teacher at the gym exit. Grades K-5 will be dismissed by the main entrance/exit. Students will be reminded to sanitize their hands upon leaving the building. All aftercare/GAP will also proceed to the church parking lot and go to the designated spot to be with GAP personnel. An area will be designated specifically for GAP students for outdoor activities. In case of inclement weather, GAP will be held in the Father Blaney space in back of the church.

## Names of Return to School Task Force

Individual Name	Stakeholder Group Represented	Roles and Responsibilities
<b>Ms. Jennifer Bernaiche</b>	<i>St. Matthew School teacher</i>	Teaching and Learning Committee
<b>Mrs. May Pat Caputo</b>	<i>St. Matthew Church Trustee and St. Matthew School Board Member</i>	Communications Committee
<b>Mrs. Chrystal Collins</b>	<i>St. Matthew School Board Chair and retired principal</i>	Teaching and Learning Committee
<b>Ms. Jennifer Hart</b>	<i>Home and School Interim President and parent</i>	Communications Committee
<b>Mr. Tim Pikiell</b>	<i>Maintenance Director of St. Matthew School/Church campus</i>	Health and Safety Committee
<b>Mrs. Kate Ricci</b>	<i>St. Matthew School Secretary</i>	Communications Committee
<b>Mrs. Yolanda Rodriguez</b>	<i>St. Matthew School Nurse Aide</i>	Health and Safety Committee
<b>Dr. James St. Pierre</b>	<i>St. Matthew School Board Member and parent</i>	Health and Safety Committee

*St. Matthew School guides students' hearts, minds, and souls to live as Jesus did. In the tradition of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary we encourage students to be people of faith, critical thinkers, and lifelong learners.*

## Frequently Asked COVID-19 Questions and Answers

### *HEALTH AND SAFETY*

#### **Will students be allowed to take a break from wearing masks?**

Yes, teachers and administrators will coordinate mask breaks for students throughout the school day. Teachers and administrators will incorporate mask wearing, social distancing, hand washing, and other new routines in their plans for each school day. Opportunities for outdoor learning with proper social distancing will be utilized as much as possible, weather permitting.

#### **What if a student has a medical condition and is not able to wear a mask? Are shields allowed as an alternative to masks?**

Administrators and teachers will work with students who have medical needs that would prohibit wearing face masks. In certain situations, face shields will be permitted. Medical justification from a doctor is necessary to obtain an exemption from wearing a mask.

#### **Who will be on your School Health and Safety team?**

The School Health and Safety team will be comprised of the nurse, nurse aide, principal and lead teacher.

#### **Will teachers be tested for the COVID-19 routinely?**

As of July 29, 2020, there are no provisions to routinely test teachers, aides, or other SMS employees.

#### **What is the protocol if a teacher (of a specific cohort of students) tests positive?**

In the event an employee or a student tests positive or is exposed to someone who tests positive, SMS will immediately contact the Bristol-Burlington Health District (BBHD) and the Office of Education, Evangelization and Catechesis (OEEC). At that time, the situation will be reviewed, and the appropriate level of response and notification will be activated which may include:

- Immediate isolation of employee or student
- 14-day quarantine of staff, student(s)
- Deep cleaning protocol of classroom/program space and bus (if applicable;)
- Temporary shutdown to allow for cleaning and disinfecting

- Notification of possible exposure to employees and classmates.

**How will you bring students and staff back to the physical school building safely, maintaining health guidelines?**

Before faculty and staff come back for the 2020-2021 school year, the entire facility will be cleaned and disinfected. Air conditioners have been serviced and proper filters have been installed. Ceiling fans have been cleaned and windows will be open as well as doors throughout the entire school day for continuous ventilation.

*OPERATIONS*

**How will SMS communicate the re-opening plan to the school community and stake holders and maintain ongoing communication?**

There will be a landing page on the school website for updates on COVID-19 as well as the SMS Return to School Plan will be published on our website and streamed through ENEWS and EduConnect.

**How will remote learning look at each grade level?**

All instruction provided via remote learning will be using digital and non-digital platforms, depending on the grade level. Grades 4-8 will incorporate live virtual classroom instruction and connections at least twice a week, optimally four days a week. Grades PreK-3rd may rely on digital and non-digital platforms with a live virtual classroom session at least once a week. There will be a balance of pre-recorded lessons, Zoom meetings and flipped classroom-style lessons.

**What professional development will SMS and the OEEC coordinate to ensure teachers are well-prepared for remote learning at their grade level?**

All teachers will receive professional development days on health and safety protocols from the BBHD as well as remote learning opportunities from the OEEC prior to the beginning of school. There will be continuous opportunities for webinars and virtual conferences throughout the school year to provide professional development for teachers and administration.

**What are the district's bus plans? Will students need to wear masks on the bus?**

As of July 29, 2020, BPS and SMS are working with First Student to design bus routes that allow for as much space as possible for the safety of our riders. Students will always be required to wear a mask while on the bus. We are asking parents to transport their child(ren) to school if they can do so.

**What happens when you are unable to have six feet of distance?**

As of July 29, 2020, we are assessing class sizes and enrollment and will adjust to ensure the recommended distance of 6 feet or more within each learning space.

**Will visitors be allowed in school?**

Visitors, including the HSA and Planning and Placement Teams (PPT), will not be allowed into the building without an appointment.

**What about sports and after school activities?**

At this time, we await further guidance from the CIAC (Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference) . After school activities may resume if cohort guidelines can be followed.

**Will we have traditional Open House, Back-to-School Nights, and parent-teacher conferences?**

At this time, we will use video platforms for Open House, Back-to-School Nights, and parent-teacher conferences.

**How will SMS group students with staff to limit the number of individuals who come into contact with one other throughout the school day?**

There will be cohorts/teams: Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, Grades 1-3, Grades 4-5, and Grades 6-8. The school will be broken into 4 segments for each of the cohorts. Pre-Kindergarten will remain in the convent. The Middle School will utilize the gymnasium area, including the bathrooms.

**How will SMS ensure enough substitute teachers are prepared in the event of staff illness?**

Teachers will be working in teams, therefore if one team member becomes ill, we have another teacher to take his/her place. We will also have extra staff available to assist the team teachers.

**What if I have a unique situation?**

Please contact the principal with specific individual concerns or questions.