

THE “UNOFFICIAL GUIDE” TO ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC SCHOOL



Prepared for parents, by parents, to answer some frequently asked questions

Revised 8/9/2016

Welcome to St. Thomas More Catholic School! We are so pleased that you have chosen to join our school community.

This guide has been prepared by parents at the school to act as a quick reference for some of the most commonly asked questions by new families. This guide is not meant to replace or supersede the STM Catholic School Family Handbook, which is prepared by the school administration and can be found on the STM Catholic School website under the Parents & Students tab [direct link: <http://stmcsnc.org/student-handbook>]. For questions that are not answered here or in the handbook, consult the STM Catholic School website [www.stmcsnc.org], or contact the STM Catholic School office at 919-929-1546.

We hope you find the guide informative and we wish you and your children a happy and blessed school year.

Warmest regards,
The STM Catholic School Home and School Association (HSA)

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DASHBOARD INFORMATION

Lower School Office	919-929-1546 Beth Ferrel, Linda Raymond
Middle School Office	919-929-2241 MJ Krafte
School Office Hours	7:30a–3:30p M-F (School year) 9:00a–1:00p Tu-Th (Summer)
Website	http://www.stmcsnc.org <i>All school events can be found on the school calendar at this site</i>
Address	920 Carmichael St Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Pastor	Fr. Scott McCue
Principal	Dr. Michael Ashton
Assistant Principal	Kathy Sullivan
School Nurse	919-942-6248 Emily O’Brien
School Hours	3 year olds 8:00a–11:30a Pre-K 7:55a–11:30a K – 5 th 7:55a–2:45p 6 th – 8 th 7:55a–2:50p
Drop off	7:30a–7:55a After 7:55a, park & escort students to the office
Pick up	2:45p–3:10p
Aftercare	2:45p–5:45p Director, Mary Vandergraft 919-942-6266 or 919-967-8561
Enrollment	430 students (average) 25-35% non-Catholic*

*The religion curriculum is based on each year’s learning, so newly enrolling non-Catholic students are not at a disadvantage

HSA & VOLUNTEERING

What is the HSA?

- HSA stands for Home and School Association
- It is like the PTA at public schools
- ALL parents are automatically members of the HSA
- There are no dues
- The HSA board consists of the HSA officers—president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary—the committee chairs, and representatives from the parish and school administration
- All parents are invited to attend the HSA board meetings which are held the 2nd Tuesday of every month in the lower school library at 7:30pm
- More information about the HSA can be found on the school website at <http://stmcsnc.org/stmhsa> .

How do I volunteer?

- The HSA coordinates many of the volunteer activities at STM Catholic School
- STM Catholic School asks ALL families to volunteer a *minimum of 20 hours* per school year. These hours need to be recorded using the link on the volunteering page at the HSA web site [<http://stmcsnc.org/volunteering>]. Volunteer opportunities may also be found at that link.
- When the parents of students are engaged and involved in the school, students seem to become more quickly acclimated, regardless of their grade upon entering STM Catholic School.
- As a Catholic institution, giving back is at the core of our mission. Please provide a good example to your children by giving back to their school. You will receive far more than you give!
- Before volunteering in the school, you must attend a Safe Environment Workshop, as mandated by the Catholic Church. This training is offered several times a year at STM Church and at other area churches. For dates and times, refer to the Child & Youth Protection page on the STM Parish Website [<http://stmchapelhill.org/child-and-youth-protection>].

What volunteer opportunities are there?

- The HSA has several different committees offering a wide variety of volunteer opportunities to suit everyone's interests and/or time constraints. Following is a list of the HSA's committees:

Annual Gala
Special Fundraisers
Holiday Shoppe
Grocery Cart
Uniform Resale
Academic Enrichment
Arenal Mission
Cultural Enrichment
Halloween Carnival
Communications
Grade Parents
Buildings and Grounds
Teacher Appreciation
Social Committee
Middle School Social
Environmental Stewardship

To find out more about any of the above committees, email the HSA using the Contact Us link on the HSA volunteering page of the STM School website [<http://stmcsnc.org/volunteering>].

Additionally, teachers often have volunteer needs in their classrooms. They will communicate these needs directly to parents.

The annual HSA gala & auction is the largest fundraiser for the school. It is typically held in early or mid-March. Participation in the auction both with volunteer hours and attendance is vital to the success of the HSA.

How do I find out about everything the HSA does?

- The HSA communicates to school families through...
 - ...the HSA web site, <http://stmcsnc.org/stmhsa>
 - ...email (via RenWeb), for general announcements
 - ...email (via room parents), for class-specific announcements
 - ...flyers, either in the take-home folder or virtual

UNIFORMS

What are the uniform requirements?

- All students K–8th grade are required to wear the STM Catholic School approved uniform.
- There are different uniforms required for regular school days and PE days. Additionally, middle school students have a required uniform for Mass days.
- PE uniforms are only worn on days when your child has PE. On those days, the PE uniform is worn all day.
- Tennis shoes / athletic shoes should be worn every day.
- Lands' End is the school's uniform supplier. On their web site [www.landsend.com/schooluniforms], click on "find your school" and enter your information to be given a list of approved/required uniforms for STM Catholic School. Our preferred school number is 900167370. You can also call Lands' End directly at 1-800-963-4816.
- Only uniform sweatshirts or sweaters can be worn as outerwear in the classroom. Other non-uniform sweatshirts, sweaters, or coats cannot be worn inside the classroom. Of course, any jacket is allowed during recess.
- **Your child must come to school in uniform on the first day of school.**

Are there any used uniforms for sale?

- The HSA has a uniform resale service where gently used uniforms are offered for sale at \$2/piece.
- The used uniforms are in the "chair room" located in the lower school hall. Ask for the key to the room in the lower school office.

- You can browse and purchase used uniforms at any time in the school year.
- Payment should be taken to the lower school office.

How many uniform items should I buy?

- A good rule of thumb is:
 - 4 shirts
 - 4 shorts/skirts
 - 1-2 pairs of pants
 - 1 PE uniform
 - 1 pair PE sweatpants
 - 1 PE sweatshirt or MS sweatshirt
 - 1 Mass uniform (middle school only)
- There are occasional “dress down” days in which students can come to school out of uniform. The administration will make the dates of these days known to students and parents in advance. Please refer to the STM student handbook for acceptable attire for “dress down” days.

DROP OFF, PICK UP, AND AFTERCARE

When do I drop off and pick up my child for school? (3 year olds)

- 3 year olds are dropped off directly in the 3 year old classroom in the parish hall.
- The door opens at 7:45a for drop off and the school day begins at 8:00a.
- Pick-up begins at 11:30a in the carpool line formed in front of the 3 year old classroom. Children will be brought to the cars by the 3 year old teachers.

When do I drop off my child for school? (PreK–8th)

- Children can be dropped off for school beginning at 7:30a
- Drop off for lower school students (PreK–5th) is in front of the lower school (main entrance)
- Drop off for middle school students (6th–8th) is in front of the middle school

- Except on Mondays... because all students meet in the Lower School Hall on Monday mornings at 7:55a, middle school students should be dropped off at the lower school.
- Middle school students will open car doors and help small children into the building. *Please do not park in the drop off line and walk your child into the building. If you need to park, do so in the parking lot at the church and walk down to the school together with your child.*
- If your child arrives after 7:55a, you will have to park and walk your child into the office.

When do I pick up my child from school? (PreK)

- PreK pick up is at 11:30a in front of the lower school (main entrance).
- The PreK teachers will bring your child to your car.

When do I pick up my child from school? (K–8th)

- The pick-up line begins forming early, but does not begin to move until 2:45p.
- Teachers will open your door and help your child into your car.
- There is a separate pick-up line for middle school.
- You can park near the church and walk down to the lower school or middle school entrance to pick up your child. You have to sign in at the lower school so they can call your child while you wait in the breezeway between the lower school entrance and the gym.
- You may not go to your child's classroom to pick them up.
- If you have not picked up your child by 3:10p, they will be sent to Aftercare and you will be charged a fee.

Can I pick up my child early?

- If you need to pick up your child early for any reason, please go to the school office, sign out on the computer, and tell the secretary so she can call your child to the office.
- Do not schedule an early pickup after 2:00p if at all possible.

Is there an afterschool program?

- STM offers aftercare from 2:45p until 5:45p. The director is Mary Vandergraft, who can be contacted at 919-942-6266 or 919-967-8561.
- Children will be called to aftercare from their classrooms at the end of the school day.
- Aftercare is available after school every day—even early dismissal days—unless you are otherwise notified.
- You must go to the aftercare room to pick up your child.
- You can enroll your child in aftercare on practically any schedule—every day, a few days a week, or on a drop-in basis.
- Complete information on the Aftercare program can be found on the school website [<http://stmcsnc.org/aftercare>].

LUNCH PROGRAM

Can I order lunch for my child?

- STM offers prepared lunches from a different vendor each day of the week.
- Parents place lunch orders a month in advance via a link found on the school website.
- Lunches are ordered a la carte, so you can order exactly what your child will eat.
- Lunch orders close the 20th of every month. **Late orders are not accepted.** If you miss the order-by date, you will need to pack lunches for your child for the next month.
- Melanie Ubil is the school's lunch coordinator. She coordinates with the vendors and recruits parent volunteers to help the program run smoothly every day. Parent volunteers organize the lunches brought in by the vendors. This is a great volunteer opportunity and a good way to see your children during their lunchtime.

What if my child forgets his/her packed lunch at home?

- If you can get their lunch to the school before 11:00a, you may deliver the lunch to the kitchen in the lower school. The lunch monitor will make sure your child gets it.
- If you cannot get their lunch to the school, a peanut butter sandwich and side will be provided for your child. The family will be charged \$5.00 for the lunch provided.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

How will the school administration contact school families?

- Most information can be found on the school's website: www.stmcsnc.org
- All events can be found on the school calendar on the school website
- "More Notes" are letters from the principal and assistant principal, which you will receive at the email address(es) that you provided to the school when you registered. These should arrive weekly.
- **School administration sends out weekly updates to your email every Wednesday**
- Administration will send out a "Parent Alert" message via email and phone with any information they deem vital for parents to be made aware of.

How will the HSA contact school families?

- The HSA communicates to school families through...
 - ...the HSA web site, <http://stmcsnc.org/stmhsa>
 - ...email (via RenWeb), for general announcements
 - ...email (via room parents), for class-specific announcements
 - ...flyers, either in the take-home folder or virtual
- The HSA sends out weekly updates on Sunday evening with information on upcoming HSA events.

What is Kidmail?

- Kidmail is unique to STM Catholic School

- If you want to send something to the office, to a teacher, or to another parent—e.g. an event RSVP, a check, or an order form—use Kidmail!
- Put it in an envelope and address it as Kidmail and put it in your child’s backpack
- Here are some examples of how to address Kidmail to the school office or to another parent:

KIDMAIL
To: Lower school office
From: Mrs. Smith

KIDMAIL
To: Mrs. Smith via Ann Smith / 3A
From: Mrs. Brown

- Your child will give the envelope to his/her teacher in the morning and it will be sorted accordingly.
- Kidmail to be delivered via middle school students should be addressed to their homeroom/1st period teacher.

SCHOOL MASS

Do students attend mass weekly?

- All students K-8th grade (Catholic and non-Catholic) attend Friday Morning Mass every Friday at 8:30a, unless otherwise communicated.
- Parents (Catholic and non-Catholic) are always welcome to attend Friday Morning Mass.

- Each week throughout the school year, a different class is responsible for coordinating the Mass—doing the readings, ushering, etc. You will be notified by your child’s teacher when their class will responsible the Mass.
- If your child’s class is participating in the Mass, they look forward to having their parent(s) in attendance.
- During Communion, all students go forward to be blessed, but only Catholics who have received the sacrament of Holy Communion can receive the Eucharist.
- Middle school students must wear the appropriate Mass uniform to every Friday Morning Mass.

AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS

Are there after school clubs or activities?

- There are several afterschool clubs and activities for both lower school students and middle school students. Information on these clubs can be found on the school website [<http://stmcsnc.org/clubs>].

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Do middle school students have homeroom teachers?

- Yes, their 1st period class is also their homeroom.

Can students use a cell phone during the day?

- Students are allowed to have cell phones, but they must be turned off and put away during the school day.
- Phones can be turned on after school while students are waiting in the pick-up line.
- Cell phones can be used at afterschool activities such as sporting events and practices.
- If students use cell phones during the school day, they may be taken away and given to Dr. Ashton. Students will not be able to bring them back to

school for a week. Parents will have to come to the school to pick up the cell phone from the middle school office.

Can students decorate their lockers?

- Locker decorations are limited to one magnet to hold a copy of their schedule and one/two shelves to organize their materials, which may be necessary for all materials to fit.
- These limitations are in place because of the potential for distraction due to having too many decorations. Additionally, due to the small size of the lockers, too much decoration can interfere with opening and closing the locker.

ATHLETICS

Does STM have any middle school sports teams?

- The following sports are offered at STM:
 - Fall: Boys soccer; Girls volleyball; Co-ed cross country
 - Winter: Boys & Girls basketball
 - Spring: Boys Lacrosse; Boys baseball; Girls soccer; Co-ed golf
- Students can try out for sports as early as the 6th grade
- Tryouts for fall sports usually begin on the **first day of school**
- Tryout information and sports physical information can be found on the school website athletics page [<http://stmcsnc.org/athletics>]
- Information about cross country, golf, and lacrosse can be found on the school website clubs page [<http://stmcsnc.org/clubs>]