

MATTHEW WHALEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

STUDENT HANDBOOK

301 Scotland Street
Williamsburg, VA 23185

This agenda belongs to:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/TOWN _____ ZIP CODE _____

PHONE _____

STUDENT NO. _____



PLEASE NOTE: The front cover is sensitive to extreme heat. Do not leave in direct sunlight!

Printed on recyclable paper A standard recycling symbol consisting of three chasing arrows forming a triangle.

PRINCIPAL’S MESSAGE

The Matthew Whaley staff is eagerly and enthusiastically preparing for a new school year. We are proud to assume the responsibility for educating your children. Our goal is to provide an intellectually stimulating and culturally rich environment which challenges each student to develop their talents and capabilities. Ultimately, our goal is to enable our children to be productive workers, critical thinkers, and creative problem solvers.

This handbook is designed to provide our parents with valuable and useful information about Matthew Whaley’s program and instructional services. We feel it is critical that our parents are well informed and involved in developing an effective learning environment at Matthew Whaley Elementary School.

We welcome questions, concerns, and suggestions you may have about your child’s progress. Please know that we are strongly committed to working cooperatively with our parents and community members to make Matthew Whaley Elementary an outstanding school!

Sincerely,

Robin Ford

Debbie Besnier

Principal

Assistant Principal

HISTORY OF MATTHEW WHALEY ELEMENTARY

The Matthew Whaley School has a unique history within the story of Williamsburg. Its location adjacent to the historic area and overlooking the gardens surrounding the Governor’s Palace suggests its prominence in the community’s history.

Matthew Whaley, the only son of James and Mary Whaley, was born in 1696 and attended the small grammar school his mother had in the family’s backyard. Young Matthew died at the age of nine and was buried in the churchyard of Bruton Parish Church where his tomb still stands. After Matthew’s death, Mrs. Whaley moved to England.

When Mrs. Whaley died in 1742 she left her property along with what was known as the “Mattey School” to Bruton Parish Church. She also bequeathed fifty pounds to promote education of the children of Williamsburg and to perpetuate the name of her son.

There was considerable trouble as to the legality of this charity and it was not until 1865 that the money was received. By this time, however, the original modest sum had grown to over \$8,000. In 1870 a two-room brick building called “The Mattey School” was finally built on the Palace Green at the cost of \$3,700.

Shortly after construction of the original building, a new and larger school was added with the old building housing the first three grades. The two schools remained together with this dual arrangement until 1929 when Colonial Williamsburg purchased the property for the reconstruction of the Governor’s Palace. It was then that the present Matthew Whaley School was built. It housed twelve grades until 1955. After ten years of consolidation negotiations, James Blair High School opened on Longhill Road in 1955 and after the twenty-fifth class graduated, Matthew Whaley reverted to its original purpose as a grammar school.

Today the present school houses grades K-5 with an enrollment of approximately 470 students and 24 classroom teachers. There are full time teachers in art, music, movement and technology, a media specialist, reading specialists, learning specialists, a speech therapist, a guidance counselor, and a nurse. To further meet the needs of our students, we have the services of a school social worker, a student support specialist, an occupational therapist, physical therapist, and a teacher of the gifted.

Spring 1997 was the beginning of a major renovation to the building and grounds with \$5.4 million funded by the James City County Board of Supervisors and the City of Williamsburg. Oyster Point Construction was contracted to complete the work. For the first time in the school’s history, the building became handicapped accessible through the addition of an elevator tower and other modifications to entrances, restrooms and a common area. Major renovation to the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system substantially improved air quality. Contractors repaired and refurbished the original roof to maintain a slate roof on the building. Other improvements included complete refurbishment of all classrooms and instructional spaces to make these spaces much more functional for students and teachers. In addition, contractors enlarged and refurbished the kitchen, cafeteria and media center. By August 1998, major improvements to the school were completed. Another refurbishment was completed during the summer of 2008.

The Virginia Board of Historic Resources added Matthew Whaley School to the Virginia Landmarks Register on June 16, 2004. The school has also been honored with the distinction of being listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

WJCC MISSION STATEMENT

We are committed to providing an excellent education, in partnership with families and community, so that each and every student is prepared for lifelong learning, independent thinking, and responsible citizenship.

MATTHEW WHALEY

SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

The staff of Matthew Whaley Elementary believes that the elementary school experience will provide the foundation for all higher learning. The children will become literate citizens, responsible persons, and independent thinkers, developing positive attitudes and values. All children will be challenged to achieve their full potential.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Copies of elementary student standards, grade level objectives, and core content for K-5 students are available for review in school media centers and public libraries.

Reading and Language Arts

The reading and language arts curriculum is designed to improve the achievement of all students as they (1) apply reading and thinking strategies in order to understand, evaluate, and respond to a variety of literature and information texts; (2) communicate knowledge, ideas, and feelings through a variety of written products; and (3) use effective listening and speaking skills in communicating with others. Our literature-based, integrated language arts program provides a balanced approach, focusing on comprehension and skill development. Students read and respond to a variety of types of fiction and nonfiction; they also provide a variety of written products. Skills and strategies instruction are presented in the areas of oral language, comprehension, word analysis and word meaning, literary elements, composition and style, mechanics, usage, spelling, and research and study skills.

Mathematics

The elementary mathematics curriculum enhances students' abilities to apply mathematical skills to school, home, and daily life experiences and stimulates creative interactions among learners.

The content of the curriculum supports four goals for our students: (1) becoming mathematical problem solvers, (2) communicating mathematically, (3) reasoning mathematically, and (4) making mathematical connections. Specific topics include number and number sense, computation and estimation, measurement, geometry, fractions and decimals, probability and statistics, and patterns, functions, and equations. Textbooks, manipulatives, and tools of technology are all used.

Social Studies

The primary purpose of the social studies program is to prepare young people to be responsible citizens who actively participate in civic affairs, understand their role in a changing global society, and who can apply knowledge and skills from their study of history, geography, economics, and government. In the elementary curriculum Virginia and the United States receive primary emphasis.

Science

The elementary science curriculum encourages a "hands-on" approach to instruction. Students investigate scientific methodology and develop their understanding of the nature of science and technology as they increase their scientific knowledge base. Students in the primary grades are introduced to the basic scientific process skills and by 4th and 5th grade are involved in more advanced and formal investigations.

Technology

The technology curriculum teaches students basic vocabulary and keyboarding skills as well as the use of word processing and databases. Students have experiences with a variety of instructional technologies that increase subject-area knowledge and concepts as well as learning about telecommunication and multimedia applications.

Health and Physical Education, Wellness and SHIP

These areas promote social and emotional development and provide instruction in physical fitness, group games, sports skills, nutrition, and personal health and safety. Group relationships and team play are emphasized as are the development of personal habits that promote lifelong wellness.

State physical fitness testing is required for all 4th and 5th grade students.

SHIP is an ongoing school-community partnership that creates a culture of wellness for staff, students and their families. At Matthew Whaley, the SHIP Kidlink team includes an administrator, school nurse, physical education teacher, food service staff and classroom teachers. Their task is to plan and implement healthy choices and activities at the school level.

Fine Arts

Appreciation, skills, and production are emphasized in art and music classes. Students develop fundamental concepts and skills, produce a variety of artistic products, and have opportunities to attend a variety of presentations.

Family Life and Sex Education

Williamsburg-James City County Schools offer a comprehensive, sequential Family Life and Sex Education program. The curriculum as developed provides a framework of knowledge and understanding designed to enhance students' respect for self and others and promote responsible decision-making and personal behavior. **Notification of parental rights and procedures for opting out of all or part of this curriculum is sent home before any family life units are presented to students.**

Resource Personnel and Services

Child Study Team

The Matthew Whaley Child Study Team meets regularly to process teacher and/or parent referrals and makes recommendations for individual students experiencing academic, social, emotional, or physical difficulties. The Child Study Team is composed of several resource personnel.

Art, Music and Physical Education

Full-time teachers in art, music, and physical education provide large group instruction in regularly scheduled classes. Opportunities for specific skill instruction and enrichment classes are also provided. A strings (violin and cello) and band program is available to fifth grade students. Chorus is also available to fifth grade students.

Library/Media Center Services

A full-time library/media specialist and media assistant are available to help students in this center. The media center is open to all students for checking out books, learning library skills, working on research projects, and for participating in enrichment activities. In addition to library books and children's magazines, the media center has audio-visual aids and computers. A professional library is available for staff and parents.

Health Services

A full-time school nurse works cooperatively with teachers and administrators in identifying health problems and handling medical emergencies. The school nurse also assists by serving as a resource to faculty and staff on health and safety issues.

Guidance Services

The elementary school guidance and counseling program consists of a variety of services for students and parents. Individual and small group counseling is provided. Classroom guidance is instructional in nature and includes planned developmental activities that focus on students' academic, social/interpersonal and career needs. In addition, elementary school counselors consult with parents individually and may provide parents skill groups during the year. No students shall be required to participate in any counseling program to which the parents object. Parents may exercise their right to exclude a child from participating ("opt out") in guidance and counseling activities by writing a letter to the school's principal. Parents have the option, when writing the letter, to exempt students from all facets of the program or to allow participation in some parts of it. This "opt out" provision is applicable to the current year only, and parents must request, on an annual basis, that their child not participate.

Reading Specialist

The reading specialist coordinates the total reading and language arts program. This includes meeting with teachers to assist in planning for instruction, recommending and managing instructional and professional materials, providing staff development, and monitoring student progress.

Student Support Specialist

A student support specialist is available to assist students who are in need of additional academic assistance. The classroom teacher and specialist work together to meet the needs of these students.

Reading Recovery Teachers

Reading Recovery teachers teach identified first grade students on a daily basis, either through small group instruction or individual tutoring. The program’s emphasis is early intervention and prevention of reading difficulties. Reading Recovery teachers work closely with K-2 teachers and the reading resource specialist.

Technology Specialist

A full-time technology teacher works with all students and teachers in the computer lab.

Learning Specialists

Learning specialists work with children who have been identified with a specific disability which impacts their learning. These teachers work collaboratively with the students’ regular classroom teachers. Instruction most often takes place in the regular classroom, with occasional assistance given in a resource room.

Teaching Assistants

These instructional personnel work with teachers and teams to provide a wide range of instructional and clerical services to benefit all students.

Enrichment Resource Specialist – Visions Program

This resource teacher will meet every day with 5th grade students identified for gifted services in math and/or language arts. The remainder of their day will be spent working with 3rd and 4th grade students who are identified and or in need of gifted services. The specialist also collaborates with regular classroom teachers of these students, providing resources and suggestions for their education program. An itinerant teacher serves students in K-2.

Speech and Language Pathologist

A speech/language pathologist provides diagnostic consultation and direct therapy services. Children who are

identified as having significant speech or language delays receive therapy in small groups or on an individual basis. The speech teacher also consults with classroom teachers to provide developmental language instruction as needed.

School Psychologist

A school psychologist provides diagnostic services for referred students. Services include the evaluation and interpretation of a pupil’s intellectual, social, and emotional growth and development.

School Social Worker

The school social worker serves as a liaison between school, home, court, and community agencies.

Physical Therapists/Occupational Therapists

These teachers meet with identified students as needed.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Telephone Numbers

Matthew Whaley School Office.....	229-1931
Matthew Whaley School Fax.....	221-0286
WJC Central Office.....	603-6400
WJC Transportation Office.....	565-0808
WJC Hotline Line.....	872-6535

WJC Internet Home Page www.wjccschools.org

Matthew Whaley Home Page <http://wjccschools.org/mw>

Matthew Whaley PTA <https://sites.google.com/site/mwhaleypta/>

TV Cable Channel Information

Channel 47 (James City County)

MATTHEW WHALEY SCHOOL HOURS

Students.....	9:20 a.m. – 3:50 p.m.
Teachers.....	8:45 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
School Office.....	8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Students may begin arriving at 9:10 a.m. Teachers and other school staff are involved in meetings and planning and are not available to supervise children before 9:10 a.m. **To be ensured of your child’s safety, all parents must observe the 9:10 a.m. arrival time. Please do not drop off your student in the car line until school staff members arrive to provide supervision.**

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Attendance at school is very important. It is vital that our children learn early in life the importance of attending school regularly and being on time. Please try to schedule doctor and dentist appointments outside school hours when possible.

Absences

The Williamsburg-James City County attendance policy, in compliance with the Virginia Compulsory Attendance Law, defines a legal absence as one “caused by illness, quarantine, religious holiday, death in one’s family, floods, hurricane, and “storms” OR educational family field trips not to exceed five (5) school days and for which at least five (5) days prior notice has been given in person and writing by the parent to the principal. Families are encouraged to limit their vacations to times that do not interfere with their children’s schooling.

To make sure an absence is excused, the teacher must receive a note from the parent stating the date and the reason for the absence. Without this written communication, the absence will not be excused. Excessive or chronic tardiness and absenteeism are monitored by teachers, assistants, attendance specialists, and the school social worker. Excessive absences may result in court action. For additional information on school attendance, see School Board Policy JEA.

Tardiness

Tardiness is disruptive to the routine of school. Acceptable reasons for excused tardiness are: illness of student, medical and dental appointments that cannot be arranged out of school hours, or bus problems. All children arriving at school after 9:30 a.m. must be accompanied by their parents and report to the office before going to the classroom.

Leaving School Before Dismissal and Parent Pick up/Drop Off Procedures

Parents are requested not to take children out of school before the school day has ended. Learning continues until the end of the day, and we do not want for students to miss valuable instruction.

When a student must be picked up early, parents should send a note with the child notifying the teacher. This note will be forwarded to the office with the attendance list. If circumstances arise during the school day that necessitate picking up your child, please call the school office to inform us before 3:30 if possible.

All authorized persons listed on student registration forms must have a note from the parent/guardian. Identification of parents and authorized persons will be verified before children are released.

Parents may begin dropping their students off at the back of the school no earlier than 9:10 a.m. A Matthew Whaley staff member will be there to greet them. Parents or other authorized persons picking up children from the school at the end of the day are requested to report to the school by 3:40 p.m. You will be required to sign your child out in the office. Parents will receive their children from the auditorium beginning at 3:50 p.m.
Please do not go to the classroom areas.

COMMUNICATION

Good home/school communication is critical to the success of your child and to our mission as a school. The Matthew Whaley staff will make every effort to actively communicate with our students and families, and we urge you to contact us by phone or in writing at anytime.

Communicating with the Teacher

If you need to contact your child’s teacher, please do so before 9:10 a.m. Teachers cannot be called away from the classroom in order to take a call. Upon request, the school office will be happy to relay a message to the teacher so that your call can be returned at a time when the teacher is not responsible for instruction. Written communication from parents sent by the child will also receive prompt attention.

Progress Reports

School year is divided into four grading periods. Parent/Teacher Conferences are held at the completion of the first grading period. At the end of the other three grading periods, a written progress report is sent home. The dates of these progress reports are noted on the school division calendar.

Conferences and Meetings

In addition to regularly scheduled conferences, parent/teacher meetings are always welcome. Appointments for conferences should be scheduled in advance so that adequate time and attention can be devoted to the issues without impacting instructional time. Parent/Teacher meetings are almost always scheduled before 9:10 am or after 4:00 pm. Meetings with the Principal, Assistant Principal or other Resource Personnel may also be scheduled upon your request. Please contact any of these individuals or the school office to set up such appointments.

Newsletters

Regularly scheduled newsletters include communication from teachers, the principal and the PTA. These publications keep you informed of school events, schedule changes and team news.

School Messenger

Matthew Whaley utilizes an automated calling system in an effort to communicate important events, schedule changes, and other school happenings.

School/Teacher Web Pages

Matthew Whaley maintains a webpage (www.wjccschools.org/mw). Matthew Whaley teachers develop and maintain Edline web pages which can be accessed through the Matthew Whaley website homepage. Call the office for an Edline Code.

ENROLLMENT, HEALTH AND SAFETY

School Entrance Requirements

Students entering public school for the first time in Virginia must present the following:

- Certified copy of the birth certificate
- Federal social security card
- Written evidence of adequate immunizations as required in Code of Virginia and in accordance with the Regulations of the State Board of Health
- Written proof of a second measles immunization
- Written evidence of a physical exam (elementary schools only, unless upper grades are coming from a

private school) performed no earlier than 12 months prior to enrollment

- Proof of residency (e.g. residence purchase, lease agreement, utility bill dated within 30 days)

Emergencies

All health emergencies (severe injuries or serious illness) will be evaluated by the school nurse. Appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the Standing Medical Orders for WJC Public Schools and accepted First Aid Protocol. At the nurse's direction, the JCC rescue squad may be called to transport the child to the Williamsburg Community Hospital Emergency Room. The nurse or other appropriate school personnel will stay with the student until the parent can be reached and can join the child.

Illnesses and Non-critical Injuries

Should your child become ill during the school day, or if he/she needs to be excused early, it will be necessary for you to come to school or send an authorized adult. Each child must be signed out in the school office by an authorized adult.

Health Care

Children with complaints or symptoms of illness such as vomiting, diarrhea, rash, severe headache, severe cough, or sore throat should remain at home. If your child has a fever of 100 or more degrees, he/she should remain at home for 24 hours after the temperature returns to normal. These practices are important for your child's health and the welfare of others.

Restricted Activity

Students with injuries or illnesses that necessitate missing more than one regular physical education class require a doctor's note. A parent's note will be accepted for one class period only, after that, a doctor's note is required. Students not allowed to participate in physical education will also be excused from recess.

Medication

When possible, parents are advised to give medication at home and on a schedule other than during school hours. However, if medication must be given during school hours, the following rules must be observed:

- Medication must be brought to school by the parent or guardian (not the child) and must be brought to the clinic in its original container with the appropriate label intact. (To make this easier, ask your pharmacist to fill an extra container with the amount of medicine that will be needed for the school doses. Then the container may be left at school with the nurse.)
- The parent or guardian and prescribers must complete and sign the Medication Consent Form (H.S. #3-1) granting the school nurse permission to administer the medication and to contact the health care provider as needed. This form is available on the Matthew Whaley website and at school.
- All over-the-counter medications require a written order form from the physician or dentist and are subject to the same rules. If you have any questions, please see the school nurse.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Bus transportation is provided to all students who live far enough from school to make walking impractical and to those students close to school where traffic conditions make walking unsafe. Bus assignments are made by the director of transportation. All bus riders should be at their assigned stop on time.

No student will be allowed to ride any bus other than his/her assigned bus without permission from a parent. Occasionally it may be necessary to have your child ride a different bus. For your child's safety, we must have a written request if a bus change is to be made. This note must be turned into the school office. Teachers and bus drivers have been instructed not to allow bus changes without notes approved by the school office. Students who do not follow this procedure will ride their assigned bus.

Bus Safety

Good behavior on the bus and at the bus stop is essential for students' safety. All students who ride on the bus are expected to:

- Immediately sit down in their assigned seats
- Stay seated when the bus is moving
- Keep heads, arms, and legs inside the bus
- Respect other people and their property
- Talk quietly and use polite language
- Throw nothing on the floor or out of the window
- Refrain from eating or drinking on the bus
- Refrain from bringing any pets or animals on the bus
- Be at the bus stop on time
- Cross in front of the school bus if they must cross the street
- Get off the bus only at their assigned stops (unless they have the parents' written permission to leave the bus at some other stop)
- **Follow all instructions given by the bus driver**

The bus driver will report to the assistant principal any behavior problems needing special attention. Continued refusal to follow bus rules will result in loss of bus privileges.

Parent concerns about bus routes or other issues should be discussed with the transportation office (565-0808).

GENERAL PROCEDURES

Textbooks, Library Books, and Supplies

Williamsburg-James City Schools provide textbooks without charge for each child. Supplemental textbooks, library books, and other instructional materials are also available. We encourage all children to keep all books clean and in good condition. In the event of lost or damaged books, parents are required to replace the book at fair market value. Students will be asked to provide their own writing paper, pencils or pens, and other school supplies. Lists of required supplies will be sent home by teachers.

Scheduled Early Dismissals

A number of days are identified in the school calendar as early dismissal for students in grades K-5. Lunch is served on early dismissal days.

Emergency Closings

Due to weather conditions or other unforeseen emergencies, it is sometimes necessary to close school during the school day. In the event of severe weather conditions, listen to radio stations 92.3 The Tide FM Station and WMBG 74.0 AM for information regarding early dismissal of schools. The information hotline (872-6535) also provides emergency closing information as does Cable Channel 47.

Be sure your child knows where to go in the event of an emergency closing, and make sure your child's teacher has on file any special instructions requested by you. Please go over this information with your child, if this information changes at any time during the school year, remember to notify the teacher and the school office.

Transfers

If it becomes necessary for a child to move out of the Matthew Whaley's attendance zone you are required to promptly notify the school office of your new address. The school office will transfer all records to the new school. All school property including textbooks, library books, and supplies must be returned to school before the transfer is issued.

School Pictures

Student photographs will be taken during the fall and spring of the school year. Both individual and group class pictures are available for sale, and parents will be notified in advance.

Fundraising

Fundraising activities that involve students in door-to-door solicitation are prohibited.

Visitors

Parents are always welcome to visit in our classrooms. Parent visits should be scheduled in advance

with the teacher. **For the safety of every child, we request that all adults report to the office before going to the classroom. There you will be asked to sign in and receive a visitor's sticker.** Children visiting from out of town are not permitted to attend school with your child.

Student Dress

Children should dress comfortably so that they can take part in physical activities with ease and take part in art activities without fear of ruining clothing. For example, long dresses, sandals and clogs make physical activities difficult and unsafe. In a school environment, all children should dress modestly. This is especially important for our older students. **Please do not send fourth and fifth grade students in short shorts, shirts above the waistline, halter-type blouses, or tank tops.** Makeup and excessive jewelry are also discouraged. Offensive messages on clothing are prohibited. Hats and jackets should not be worn inside.

Shoes for school should be safe and appropriate for outdoor play. Athletic shoes are required for physical education and recess. Flip flops and heelies are prohibited.

Lost and Found

Many articles of clothing and other personal possessions are frequently left by the children. Please send your child to the school office if they have lost small or valuable items. Lost and found clothing is stored in a box right outside the gymnasium. Please label everything.

School Meals

Menus are sent home at the beginning of each month. Children may bring their lunch from home or buy lunch and/or breakfast on individual days. We encourage parents to set up a cafeteria account. This works on a debit system and may be set up for any amount that is convenient. When funds are running low, a reminder note will be sent home. Free and reduced-price lunch eligibility forms will be sent home at the beginning of the school year, or parents may request them at any time. All lunch and snack prices are determined centrally and may change during the school year.

Price information will be provided at the beginning of the year and upon request.

All meals are eaten in the school cafeteria. Students may bring lunch from home if they do not wish to participate in the school lunch program. Breakfast is served at 9:10 a.m., and a time limit of 10 minutes will be enforced so that the loss of valuable instructional time is minimized.

We encourage healthy eating habits and ask your assistance in doing the same. Canned, carbonated soft drinks are prohibited except for field trips.

Parents are welcome to join their children for lunch. Reservations for parents are not needed, and visitor prices are a la carte.

Parents at times will want to provide refreshments for special occasions. Please seek approval from your child's teacher in advance. This should not be disruptive to the school environment (classroom, playground, cafeteria, etc.).