



**Student and Family  
Handbook  
2022-23**

Welcome!

At St. Stephen's, we honor and celebrate children's gifts, affirming and acknowledging each student. Our faculty and staff nurture and build on these gifts to cultivate future leaders who will take on the world with confidence.

At St. Stephen's, faculty, staff, and parents are partners who work collaboratively to serve the children. This approach ensures a productive and caring environment that enlivens and fulfills children, parents, and educators.

St. Stephen's was founded on the principles of Montessori education, which teaches not only the three Rs but also leadership and life skills. We teach students independence, problem solving, time management, and, most important, RESPECT: respect for the child, the environment, one another, and all living things.

Wherever your child's journey begins at St. Stephen's, your child will be guided through the curriculum and empowered to learn at their own pace. Classroom work is tailored to the student and progressive, allowing for step-by-step instruction, hands-on learning, skills reinforcement, and seamless progression from concrete to abstract, from simple to complex, and from one level to the next. The new year awaits and we are thrilled to begin, hand-in-hand with your child and your family.

Sincerely,



Nahla Nasser  
Interim Head of School  
nnasser@ssesh.org

**For you, O GOD, are my hope,  
My trust, O GOD, from my youth.  
– Psalm 71:5**

**#thinkspirited@ssesh**

# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Key Information</b>	<b>4</b>
Mission and Vision	4
Accreditations and Memberships	4
Educational Program	4
School Hours	5
Carpool	6
COVID-19	6
School Software and Communications Platforms	7
Whom to Contact	8
<b>Academic Policies and Procedures</b>	<b>9</b>
Classroom Placement	9
Academic Dishonesty and Cheating	9
Attendance	9
Excused Absences or Tardies	10
Illness	10
Homework and Summer Assignments	11
Field Trips and Class Overnight Trips	11
Standardized Testing	12
Conferences	12
Transcripts	12
Grades in Middle Years	12
Academic Difficulties in Middle Years	13
Student Support	13
Tutoring by St. Stephen's Teachers	14
<b>Responsibilities and Conduct</b>	<b>14</b>
Values	14
Non-Discrimination Policy	14
Gender Identity and Expression	15
Harassment, Hazing and Bullying	15
Sexual Harassment and Inappropriate Sexual Relationships	15
Overarching Behavior Policy	16
Disciplinary Process	16
Drugs and Weapons	17
Dress Code	17
Lunch and Snacks	18
Cell Phones, Toys and Sports Equipment from Home	18

Care for School Property	18
Responsible Use of IT Equipment, Internet	18
Supplemental Agreements in Middle Years	19
<b>Expectations of Families</b>	<b>19</b>
Child Abuse and Neglect	19
Family Matters and Family Law	19
Authorization to Release Child	20
Gifts and Fundraising	20
Social Media	20
<b>Campus Life</b>	<b>21</b>
Safety and Security	21
School Visitors	21
PTO	22
Classroom Parents	22
Extended Care	22
Bulldog 360°	22
<b>Enrollment and Registration</b>	<b>23</b>
Key Policies	23
Tuition and Fees	23
Scholarships and Financial Aid	23
Immunization and Health Records	24
<b>Governance</b>	<b>24</b>
Church and School Partnership	24
Board of Trustees	25
<b>Appendix A: Criteria for Readmission to School</b>	<b>27</b>

*In this Handbook, references to the Head of School refer to the Interim Head of School and references to the Principal refer to the Interim Assistant Principal.*

# Key Information

## Mission and Vision

*St. Stephen's Episcopal School—Houston (St. Stephen's or School) nurtures each child's academic, creative, and spiritual potential. We see a future where young people lead with compassion, acceptance and a holistic view of the world. Our students are the future; they are our hope and promise for a more caring human community. To nurture that future, our faculty and staff seek to instill the core values in our students and strive to weave these values into the community.*

## Accreditations and Memberships

St. Stephen's is accredited by the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools and American Montessori Society. St. Stephen's is also a member of the National Association of Episcopal Schools (NAES) and Houston Area Independent Schools (HAIS).

## Educational Program

St. Stephen's embraces a continuum of education, where each developmental stage of the child is considered. From 15 months through 6th grade, we implement Montessori curriculum and principles, while our Middle Years students (7th and 8th graders) enjoy a hybrid Montessori and traditional middle school curriculum. This combination inspires students towards academic success, spiritual growth, creative expression, responsible citizenship, and success in higher education.

Founded on Dr. Montessori's Planes of Development, our multi-age levels are as follows.

- Orientation: 15 months - 3 years
- Primary: 3 - 6 years
- Lower Elementary: 1st - 3rd grade
- Upper Elementary: 4th - 6th grade
- Middle Years: 7th and 8th grade

Specialist classes supplement the Montessori curriculum. Our Fine Arts Program is fully integrated with the core curriculum, and our students enjoy creative outlets to express what they are learning in history, math, literature, and science. Through music, photography, and film, St. Stephen's students give life and form to their creative ideas and share their talents in showcases, exhibitions, performances, and other special events.

Based on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language standards, our Spanish program begins in Primary and builds a strong foundation of Spanish language and culture. Spanish classes are vibrant and include puppets, props, storytelling, pictures, Spanish songs, movement, and Spanish poems, fables, and rhymes. The Spanish curriculum emphasizes listening and comprehension in Primary and incorporates more speaking in Lower Elementary. The Upper Elementary and Middle Years curriculum balances listening, speaking, reading, and

writing. This flow-through curriculum is designed to prepare students to take the Spanish National Exam, to be high school ready, and to be well-rounded global citizens who can communicate effectively in Spanish and are aware of the cultural influences of the Spanish and Latino heritage at home and abroad.

In the da Vinci Lab for Creative Arts & Sciences students engage in problem-solving, abstract thinking, and creative expression. Supplementing the math and science curriculum at St. Stephen's, the da Vinci Lab is both a place and a program, celebrating applied STEM in Lower Elementary through Middle Years. Students will explore computer programming, 3D printing, woodworking, laser cutting techniques, and much more! Our STEM offerings also include a dynamic robotics program, available to students in Upper Elementary and Middle Years.

Students regularly attend PE, reflecting the School's view that exercise plays an especially important role in the development of lifelong healthy habits and is an invaluable component of a child's physical and social development. In PE, students must wear close-toed shoes, preferably athletic shoes. No boots or sandals should be worn in PE. Participation is required.

## School Hours

School is in session after Morning Carpool until the Full Day or End of School Day Carpool. Orientation and Primary families may opt for Half Day. Please note that the Half Day option is not available for Kindergarten students.

### Orientation

- Early Care (drop off): starting at 7:30 am
- Morning Carpool (drop off): 8:00 – 8:15 am
- Half Day Carpool (pick up): 11:30 – 11:45 am
- Full Day Carpool (pick up): 2:30 – 2:45 pm
- Gap Care (pick up): no later than 3:30 pm
- After Care (pick up): no later than 5:30 pm

### Primary

- Early Care (drop off): starting at 7:30 am
- Morning Carpool (drop off): 8:00 – 8:15 am
- Half Day Carpool (pick up): 11:45 am – 12:00 pm
- Full Day Carpool (pick up): 2:45 – 3:00 pm
- Gap Care (pick up): no later than 3:30 pm
- After Care (pick up): no later than 5:30 pm

### Elementary and Middle Years

- Early Care (drop off): starting at 7:30 am
- Morning Carpool (drop off): 8:00 – 8:15 am
- End of School Day Carpool (pick up): 3:30 – 3:45 pm
- After Care (pick up): no later than 5:30 pm

### Early Dismissal

- Orientation Carpool (pick up): 11:30 – 11:45 am
- Primary Carpool (pick up): 11:45 am – 12:00 pm
- Elementary and Middle Years Carpool (pick up): 12:00 – 12:15 pm

\*\*Please adhere to the ending times. Late arrival is subject to a fee in the amount of \$20 plus \$1 per minute, which fees will be invoiced through FACTS.\*\*

### Carpool

Drop off and pick up via carpool is offered for all students. Carpool drop-off and pick-up locations will be communicated to all parents before the start of the academic year and are subject to change.

Please note the following:

- While in the carpool line to drop off or pick up your child, we ask for patience.
- Do not use cell phones or text while in the carpool line.
- Please use your carpool sign at drop-off and pick-up throughout the school year.
- Please drive slowly and prudently. Use your blinker.
- Do not park in front of Pecore Hall / Monro Building or on Sul Ross between 7:45-8:15 am and 2:30-3:45 pm.
- Do not block any main parking lot entrances or exits. Do not drive between cones; these areas are blocked for safety.
- Be alert to traffic signals given by designated school personnel. School personnel are there to keep everyone safe and to keep traffic moving smoothly.

### COVID-19

The School's COVID-19 policies and procedures may be found on the School's website ([COVID Safety Procedures](#)) and are subject to amendment in the sole discretion of the Head of School, in consultation with the Re-Gathering Task Force of St. Stephen's Church and School. All families must comply with the School's COVID-19 policies and procedures.

All families must monitor child(ren) for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and not send sick child(ren) to school.

Families must notify [COVID@SSESH.ORG](mailto:COVID@SSESH.ORG) if their child is exposed to or tests positive for any communicable disease, including COVID-19.

POINT OF CONTACT FOR ALL COVID-19 MATTERS IS [COVID@SSESH.COM](mailto:COVID@SSESH.COM)

## School Software and Communications Platforms

At St. Stephen's, we utilize the following software platforms to serve our community.

**FACTS Family Portal:** The FACTS Family Portal is your password-protected portal for all things SSESH.

1. The School will communicate closures and other health and safety matters via text message to the mobile numbers provided in the FACTS Family Portal during the Enrollment process. Families, please keep your contact information updated by accessing Web Forms > Family Demographic Form in the FACTS Family Portal (our district code is SSESH-TX).
2. The FACTS Family Portal will be used to share details on school events, report cards, enrollment, and the Directory. The Directory, used primarily to send invitations to birthday parties, includes contact information for faculty and staff as well as the email addresses (only) of the student's custodial parent(s) (only). If you wish to opt-out of sharing your name and/or email address in the Directory, please access the FACTS Family Portal (our district code is SSESH-TX) > Web Forms > Family Demographic Form > Custodial Parent Form (scroll to the bottom of the form). We would ask that you please use the email addresses shared in the Directory to build community, and not to sell products or services.
3. Families will also access their FACTS Tuition account via the FACTS Family Portal by clicking the Financial link on the menu on the left.

**Google Classroom:** Middle Years classes may be conducted via Google Classroom, including assignments, grades, and class communications.

**The Hallway:** *The Hallway* is a blog post shared via the email and/or Seesaw each Friday during the academic year. *The Hallway* is password-protected and available on the SSESH website.

**Magnus:** In partnership with [Magnus Health | Online & Electronic Student Medical Record Solution](#), St. Stephen's provides an online portal for health forms, such as the [Annual Physical Exam Form](#) and current immunization records, including COVID-19 vaccination records. Annually, your child must have documented immunization records and receive a comprehensive physical examination. Registration via Magnus Health must be complete and processed before students may start school. School processing takes a minimum of 3 business days to complete.

**Raptor:** Raptor is a visitor registration system that enhances school security. Using Raptor, St. Stephen's Episcopal School screens every visitor, contractor, and volunteer instantly against the most reliable and up-to-date U.S. sex offender databases in all 50 states.

**Seesaw:** St. Stephen's utilizes the Seesaw Family app to keep families informed and the Seesaw Class app to facilitate distance learning, if necessary. Seesaw doesn't share or sell your child's personal information or journal content. Seesaw's strong privacy promises are available

[here](#). By default, family sharing is disabled for all classes and is only enabled on a class-by-class basis.

- When family sharing is disabled, families do not have the ability to download any posts onto their devices or share any posts over social media.
- If family sharing is enabled, we would respectfully ask that you do not post or share photos/videos of other people's children. Please download photos/videos of your child (only) for your personal use (only).

**Social media:** St. Stephen's celebrates our students and teachers on the following social media platforms: Facebook (epischool), Instagram (ssesh\_bulldogs), Twitter (epischool), and TikTok (sseshbulldogs). Social media posts will feature students with media releases only.

**Zoom:** The Zoom platform may be used for meetings, conferences, and distance learning classes. By logging into Zoom, all participants consent to the transmission of their voice and/or image over Zoom. Further consent will be sought should the Zoom session be recorded. Students logging into Zoom for classes must enable their audio and video, as requested by the teacher.

## Whom to Contact

At St. Stephen's, a growth mindset is encouraged and parental questions, concerns or recommendations regarding curriculum, pedagogy or school operations are always welcome. These should be addressed to the Principal or the Head of School. The Head of School and Principal are available by phone, in person, and via email and look forward to hearing from parents.

Other queries may be directed to the person(s) listed below. Email addresses for our faculty and staff may be found on the school website at [www.sses.org](http://www.sses.org) under About > Faculty & Staff.

- Absences: Teacher, copy the Principal
- Academic Difficulty: Teacher, followed by Principal
- Behavioral Concerns: Teacher, followed by Principal, followed by Head of School
- COVID-19: [covid@ssesh.org](mailto:covid@ssesh.org)
- Donations, Fundraising suggestions: Head of School
- Enrollment and Registration: Office of Campus Life ([admission@ssesh.org](mailto:admission@ssesh.org))
- Extended Care: Extended Care Coordinator, followed by Principal
- Family Concerns: Teacher, followed by Principal, followed by Head of School or Chaplain, if needed
- Financial Questions: Interim Business Director, Head of School
- Homework Assignments: Teacher
- IT issues: Desktop Support Specialist, Director of Technology
- Parent Involvement/Volunteering: PTO
- School Policies: Student and Family Handbook (Handbook), Principal, followed by Head of School

- Special Needs, Learning Differences and Accommodations: Lead Teacher, Principal, School Counselor, and Head of School, if needed
- Standardized Testing: Teacher, Principal
- Tuition Assistance: Interim Business Director or Head of School

## Academic Policies and Procedures

### Classroom Placement

In late spring each year, each student's classroom placement is planned for the next school year. This process considers ages, learning groups, unique needs, proficiency levels, and overall classroom dynamics. The Principal will make decisions regarding classroom placements, with input from teachers.

### Academic Dishonesty and Cheating

Students are coached, beginning in Primary, about honesty and fairness. Starting in Lower Elementary, students are also taught about honesty concerning classwork, when collaboration is accepted and when it is not. Teachable moments are seized in Lower Elementary, and logical consequences increase in seriousness in Upper Elementary. Students are provided opportunities to make amends and learn from mistakes. In the Middle Years, academic dishonesty is not common. Students who participate in any form of academic dishonesty are given opportunities to improve their behavior. The School reserves the right to immediately remove a student at its discretion whose behavior is considered sufficiently egregious to necessitate deviation from this general policy. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, collusion, duplication of work and any other conduct that results in an unfair advantage for a student.

### Attendance

Students must arrive before noon to be counted present for a school day. Likewise, students may not depart until after noon to be counted present for a school day. Students who leave school during the class day and return later the same day must complete 4 hours of class to be counted present for a school day.

*For students in Kindergarten through 8th grade, three tardies equate to one absence.*

Students with over 14 absences in the year may be required to make up missed assignments before being promoted to the next grade. The student may need to work during the summer to make up and master work. The School also reserves the right not to promote to the next grade any student who has failed to complete their assignments or attend an adequate number of instruction days. Promotion and make-up work decisions are made at the discretion of the faculty, with the Head of School being the final decision-making authority.

Middle Years students with more than two unexcused absences, or five total absences in a trimester, may not receive credit for a trimester. Excessive tardiness may cause loss of course credit; three tardies equate to one absence.

## Excused Absences or Tardies

Students who have been absent or tardy must present a written excuse from a parent or guardian when they return to school. Acceptable reasons for absences and tardies are:

- Personal illness or COVID-19 isolation;
- Sickness or death in the family;
- Doctor's visit;
- Weather or road conditions making travel dangerous;
- Approved high school visitations for 8th graders;
- Observation of a religious holy day.

Students who arrive late in the mornings must check in at the front office before proceeding to class. Parents are asked to call the School Office before 9 am on the day of the absence or tardy. Please provide a written excuse for the absence/tardy immediately upon your student's return to school, including the reason for the absence/tardy and your signature.

*For students in Kindergarten through 8th grade, three tardies equate to one absence.*

In the event of an exceptional circumstance like a critical illness or hospitalization or death of an immediate family member, St. Stephen's will work with the student and parents in completing assignments and schoolwork.

## Illness

In the case of illness, St. Stephen's reserves the right to send a student home when staff considers it necessary for the health of that student or other students. If a student is absent because of a contagious illness, parents should notify the School Office as soon as a diagnosis is made. A doctor's note is required when a student is absent for more than three days due to illness.

Please keep your child at home if diagnosed with an infectious disease (please consult Appendix A for a complete guide) or if you observe the following symptoms:

- Fever (100.4° F);
- COVID-19 symptoms;
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours;
- Deep cough, greenish-yellow nasal discharge, or rash.

Children must be free of the above a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school. If any of these conditions are evident at school, parents will be called to pick up students, and students should be picked up within an hour.

## Homework and Summer Assignments

At St. Stephen's, we believe that learning does not stop when you leave school. Homework is an extension of what the students do in the classroom and helps reinforce what they have learned. Homework is assigned age-appropriately and allows parents and students to spend time together by reading to each other, solving math problems, or creating a science or cultural project. Assignments begin gradually in Lower Elementary with nightly reading and increase over time. Upper Elementary students are assigned literature and math, and Middle Years students are responsible for more extensive assignments. Your student's teacher will discuss this with you in detail.

Typically, 4th through 8th-grade students will be assigned reading and math assignments to complete over the summer. Students are expected to complete the assignments by the beginning of the academic year. Middle Years assignments will be counted as a grade in the first trimester.

## Field Trips and Class Overnight Trips

Scheduled Field Trip dates will be announced via class letter, and written notices will be sent home with students at least a week in advance. Before a field trip, Permission and Release Forms will be sent home with students and must be returned by the deadline.

Teachers often require assistance from chaperones. Those wishing to volunteer should contact their child's teacher, understanding that only a limited number of parents can attend Field Trips. The Episcopal Diocese of Texas requires all chaperones to complete the *Safeguarding God's Children* training program.

Class trips are an important part of the curriculum, and attendance is required. Typically, Lower Elementary students go to Camp Allen for an overnight class trip at the end of the year. In a typical year, Upper Elementary and Middle Years students go to Camp Allen at the beginning of each year and Camp Olympia at the end of the year for several nights.

While on field trips and class trips, students represent St. Stephen's and are expected to behave accordingly. School policy prohibits the possession of weapons, the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs and any sexual misconduct during field trips and class trips. Participants violating these rules and expectations are subject to discipline, up to and including separation from the school. Students who display exceptionally poor judgment on field trips or class trips may be sent home at their parents' expense as well as face disciplinary action when returning to school. The guidelines for absences apply to field trips and class trips.

## Standardized Testing

Students in 2nd - 8th grade take the IOWA Achievement Test each year. Results, once received, are shared with families. The School reserves the right to make changes to its testing programs without prior notice to parents.

## Conferences

Parent participation in school conferences is essential to maintaining the parent/teacher partnership. Additionally, teacher observation is a key element of your child's assessment and is communicated most thoroughly by your child's teacher during these in-person meetings.

Parent conferences are held at the end of each trimester. At least one parent/guardian is expected to attend these conferences as they are designed to assure a thoughtful and confidential review and discussion of the student's progress.

Students in grades 1st - 8th are expected to attend regularly scheduled conferences with their parents unless told otherwise. At all levels, written evaluations will typically accompany each conference. Should the need arise, parents or teachers may request additional conferences.

If teachers observe behavioral issues or difficulties with class material, recommendations will be made to parents about possible remediation. Recommendations may include seeking an educational/psychological evaluation or specific intervention. Parents are expected to follow up on recommendations, which may involve incurring additional costs through third-party professionals.

## Transcripts

Requests for transcripts require completion of the transcript form. End-of-the-year transcripts will not be processed until tuition is paid in full for the year.

## Grades in Middle Years

The School uses a trimester grading system; credits will be awarded per trimester for Middle Years students. At the end of each trimester, students will receive their cumulative grades with narratives from each teacher. Report cards are mailed at the end of each trimester with earned credit information.

### Grading Scale:

A = 90-100

B = 80-89.5

C = 70-79.5

D = 65-69.5

F < 64.5

If a student is unable to meet minimal academic standards, a teacher may decide, in consultation with and at the discretion of the Principal and/or the Head of School, to award “No Credit” rather than a failing grade. Under extenuating circumstances, such as prolonged absences due to documented illness, and at the discretion of the Head of School, a grade of “Incomplete” may be awarded in lieu of failure or “No Credit.” All grading decisions are made at the discretion of the faculty. The Head of School will be the final decision-making authority on all day-to-day school activities, including grading.

Middle Years students will take final exams at the end of each year. The final grade report at the year’s end includes grades for three terms and a grade for the final exam. There are two exam periods scheduled each day during finals week, and all exams are generally completed by noon.

### Academic Difficulties in Middle Years

Students having difficulty meeting academic requirements are encouraged to seek help from their teachers as soon as problems arise. If a student’s performance drops below expectations, the student’s teacher will typically arrange a parent conference. Parents, teachers and students will work together to assess and remedy any problems. After a group conference, the Principal may place the student on academic warning to indicate the faculty’s concern. During the period of academic warning, the teachers and Principal will carefully monitor the student’s progress and keep parents informed. There may be consequences in addition to the academic warning, such as limiting a student’s participation in extracurricular activities or requesting that the student’s parents arrange to have the student’s needs assessed/evaluated by a professional.

If a student is failing more than two required subjects at the end of the trimester, they will be placed on academic probation for the following trimester. If the student is still failing two or more courses at the end of the probationary period, they may be subject to required withdrawal for poor academic performance. A student who fails to earn credit for a required course must acquire the credit in an approved summer school to return to St. Stephen’s the following year. The student must pass this approved summer school class with a minimum of 70. As discussed elsewhere in this Handbook, all grading, promotion, and decisions regarding acceptance of credit are made by faculty. The Head of School will be the final decision-making authority on all day-to-day school activities, including grading, promotion, and acceptance of credit.

### Student Support

Teachers may observe social, behavioral or academic difficulties in class. In such cases, parents may expect a robust process, guided by the School Counselor, Principal, or Head of School and inclusive of all stakeholders. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process. The process may include:

- Gathering documentation;
- Testing, evaluation or assessment of the student’s needs by qualified professionals (costs to be borne by families); no faculty member may make any medical or

psychological diagnosis concerning a student, and parents understand that they may not rely on a faculty member's representations concerning a student's medical or psychological diagnosis;

- Creation of a holistic, cross-curricular plan, which may include a list of accommodations to implement at St. Stephen's or a recommendation that the student enrolls in a different program at another school if the student cannot be adequately served by St. Stephen's.

Each year, the School will reassess particular modifications allowed for students and may require updated documentation from parents and other professionals. Students who qualify for accommodations should use them consistently in their classroom work to be eligible for the same accommodations on standardized tests, final exams and major assignments. Students and parents utilizing accommodations will comply with faculty, staff and administrative instructions concerning the implementation of the accommodations. Decisions concerning whether accommodations have been implemented properly are in the sole discretion of the Head of School.

### Tutoring by St. Stephen's Teachers

Tutoring by a child's teacher outside of regular class time may present a conflict of interest. Requests for tutoring by St. Stephen's teachers must be approved in writing by the Principal.

## Responsibilities and Conduct

### Values

The School is a parish day school of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. The Church and School share the following six Core Values:

- Individuality: We affirm individuality.
- Service: We practice service.
- Questioning: We question everything.
- Relationships: We build relationships.
- Belief: We believe.
- Future: We cherish the future.

### Non-Discrimination Policy

St. Stephen's admits qualified students of any race, color, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the School. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship programs and athletic and other School-administered programs.

## Gender Identity and Expression

Our community is invested in nurturing an environment that is open and affirming of all students, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The faculty will work with any student to ensure bathroom accessibility, a safe academic environment and inclusion in athletics. In addition, every student has the right to be addressed by a name and pronoun that corresponds to the student's gender identity. Students shall have the right to dress in accordance with their gender identity, within the constraints of the School's dress code.

St. Stephen's is a member of Welcoming Schools, an organization that provides tools to schools that help teach students to embrace family diversity, avoid gender stereotyping, and end bullying and name-calling. We partner with the Human Rights Campaign to create a learning environment in which all students are welcomed and respected.

## Harassment, Hazing and Bullying

Each person at St. Stephen's has the right to participate fully in the life of the School without fear of harassment or bullying. The School recognizes and respects individual differences and does not discriminate nor tolerate discrimination on the basis of race, gender, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, or any other prohibited criteria as set forth in pertinent state or federal law. To provide an environment of mutual respect, tolerance and sensitivity, every member of the community, including students, parents, faculty and staff, must be committed to appropriate behavior.

Inappropriate behavior towards others, whether verbal or physical, is unacceptable. Such behavior includes unwelcome physical advances, discriminatory comments, or words, acts, or gestures that cause physical or emotional harm, cause reasonable fear of harm, create a hostile environment, infringe on the rights of another, social isolation or manipulation. Inappropriate behavior also includes students being disrespectful to teachers.

Anyone who believes that they are a victim of such behavior should report such activity to the Principal or the Head of School. This policy applies on school grounds, field trips, overnight trips, school activities, and the virtual realm, including, but not limited to, social media. Bullying may include cyberbullying, regardless of the time or location of the message sent. Any community member who engages in bullying may be subject to disciplinary action up to separation from St. Stephen's. The School reserves the right to refer to appropriate law enforcement authorities any behavior which the School believes is criminal in nature.

## Sexual Harassment and Inappropriate Sexual Relationships

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; or sexually motivated physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct when the conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it:

1. Affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment;
2. Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with the student's academic performance; or
3. Otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities.

Students or employees who engage in sexual harassment on school premises, off-school premises at a school-sponsored activity, or in another manner that negatively impacts the educational environment will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including separation from the School. This policy applies to opposite-sex and same-sex victims. Complaints of sexual harassment will be promptly and carefully investigated. All students are assured that they will be free from reprisal or retaliation from reporting any such valid complaints. Complaints should be reported to the Principal or the Head of School.

Any sexual misconduct between students is forbidden on campus, on school trips or at a school-sponsored event. In addition, romantic or inappropriate social relationships between students and school employees are prohibited. Any sexual relationship between a student and a school employee is always prohibited, even if consensual. These relationships should also be reported to the Principal or the Head of School.

## Overarching Behavior Policy

St. Stephen's strives to cultivate an open, accepting and respectful educational environment to help each student grow as a compassionate, responsible citizen. All members of the School are role models and must conduct themselves as such at all times. Students are expected to show respect for others, themselves and their environment. All disciplinary and behavioral policies reflect this principle. Violation of any of the School's behavioral norms and expectations described in this Handbook may lead to disciplinary consequences, up to and including separation from the School. Disciplinary decisions are made by faculty, staff, or administration, with the Head of School being the final authority.

## Disciplinary Process

At St. Stephen's, the disciplinary approach varies according to age level. Logical and natural consequences are employed by teachers at all levels. The following summarizes actions that will be taken to rectify inappropriate student behavior:

- Redirection;
- Verbal Correction;
- Request for Parent Conference;
- Removal from Class, including Extended Care programming;
- Disciplinary Probation;
- Suspension from School;

- Expulsion.

If students repeatedly act in ways that disrupt the community, progressive steps for remediation are taken by the family and the School, in concert. Together, they problem-solve to determine the strategies which will help the student develop self-control. If inappropriate behaviors escalate, parent(s) will be called to pick up their student from school. If appropriate progress is not made in the established period of time it may become necessary for the School to recommend a different school environment capable of services not offered at St. Stephen's. Decisions about disciplinary consequences are made by faculty, with the Head of School being the final decision-making authority.

## Drugs and Weapons

Drugs and weapons are not permitted on campus, at school-related events, activities or trips by any community member – adult or student. Students may not possess alcohol, tobacco or any legal or illegal drug while on School property or at School-sponsored events. Any student under the influence of illicit drugs or alcohol will be suspended.

Students may not possess weapons, firearms, handguns, explosive materials, knives and projectiles on campus, on a school-sponsored trip, at a school-related activity, or at a school-sponsored event. Any student in possession of any drug, alcohol or weapon should expect to be expelled. All laws will be observed. The School additionally reserves the right to refer students or parents to counseling programs where deemed appropriate and to require compliance with certain programs to allow a student to continue to attend the School.

All weapons, firearms, handguns, explosive materials, knives and projectiles are prohibited on School campus and at school functions, including those held off campus. Only on-duty police officers may be armed on the St. Stephen's Church and School campus.

## Dress Code

Students at St. Stephen's are expected to attend school appropriately dressed and groomed. St. Stephen's does not require a daily uniform; however, students must observe the following clothing guidelines for all genders:

- Clothing must cover areas from one armpit across to the other armpit, down to the mid-thighs. Tops must have shoulder straps.
- No visible undergarments. Shorts must be worn underneath skirts or dresses.
- No clothing bearing offensive remarks.
- No flip-flops or open-toe sandals.
- Hats, caps, and sunglasses are worn out of doors only.
- In PE, students must wear close-toed shoes, preferably athletic shoes. No boots or sandals should be worn in PE.

Students who do not adhere to these guidelines will not be allowed to attend class. Parents will be called if appropriate clothing is not available or the student refuses dress-code appropriate clothing.

## Lunch and Snacks

Any meal or snack sent to school should be well-balanced and nutritious. Students may not bring to campus any candy, soft drinks, or gum. The teachers will provide more specific guidelines at the beginning of each school year. Unless a teacher specifies otherwise, students may have water in spill-proof water bottles in the classroom.

## Cell Phones, Toys and Sports Equipment from Home

Cell phones are not permitted in view or in use during the school day. Middle Years students must turn in their phones to the teacher at the beginning of the school day, for the duration of the school day. No toys or sports equipment from home are allowed at school, unless specifically allowed by the School and/or faculty.

## Care for School Property

Students are expected to show respect for the School's campus and materials, including indoor and outdoor areas and personal work and eating spaces. All School equipment should be used appropriately and put away after use. Students will be asked to keep desks, picnic tables and the surrounding areas clean after lunch as well as to care for the materials and campus in general.

The School typically provides textbooks and supplies. The Business Office will assess replacement costs for lost books, materials, Chromebooks or instruments.

## Responsible Use of IT Equipment, Internet

Students are expected to take care of school equipment and technology. Computers and iPads are to be used only for school-related projects. The Internet may be used for educational purposes only. Students must use the school network, email system, Starboards, tablets, computers, printers, or other equipment appropriately. Students may not use their school email addresses for any non-academic purposes. Students in Upper Elementary and Middle Years are responsible for checking their school emails regularly as this is the primary form of communication from the school.

Upper Elementary and Middle Years students use Chrome Notebooks and Google accounts to complete their work. These Notebooks may not be removed from the premises without proper supervision. Websites should not be accessed that have been blocked by St. Stephen's, which includes pornographic and gaming sites. In addition, websites like Netflix, YouTube and Hulu may not be accessed unless for educational purposes. If a student inadvertently accesses

inappropriate content, the School will not be held responsible, and students are expected to notify their teacher of the error.

Students are expected to use personal technology in a manner consistent with St. Stephen's mission and norms. For instance, students may be subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal from School, for engaging in inappropriate behavior, even if such behavior occurs on personal devices. Such inappropriate behavior includes, but is not limited to, sending illicit pictures of other students or themselves ("sexting") and engaging in bullying or harassing behavior through text messages, social media, or other forms of electronic communication ("cyberbullying").

## Supplemental Agreements in Middle Years

Middle Years students may be asked to sign supplemental agreements on conduct, as deemed necessary and appropriate by Middle Years faculty, in consultation with the Principal. Such agreements will be shared with families and students prior to signing so as to encourage an open and honest discussion on the goals and objectives of each agreement. Such agreements are incorporated by reference into this Handbook, as if fully set forth herein, and are subject to the disciplinary provisions of this Handbook.

## Expectations of Families

### Child Abuse and Neglect

St. Stephen's, in accordance with the Texas Family Code, must report any suspected cases of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse and/or neglect of children under the age of 18. All cases of suspected child abuse or neglect by a staff member are expected to be reported to the Head of School or Principal, who will then conduct an investigation and prepare a written report. The School's teachers must also report the suspected cases of abuse or neglect to the Department of Human Services, the 24-Hour Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-252-5400), or the Houston Police Department, and fulfill certain legal requirements.

### Family Matters and Family Law

When parents are unmarried, separated, divorced or involved in divorce proceedings, the Head of School is presented with the complex task of determining the rights and responsibilities of each parent and, in some cases, third-party guardians. Issues of who may enroll, withdraw, or pick up the child will require an in-depth analysis of each parent's rights, privileges, duties, and powers with respect to each child. Parents in such situations must reach out to the Head of School at the beginning of the academic year or as soon as possible after such family matters arise.

The Head of School is the first point of contact for any matter involving family law, including requests for statements of character, opinions regarding parental behavior, or questions posed by any Guardian ad Litem.

## Authorization to Release Child

No student will be released to any person other than a parent or legal guardian without written authorization by the student's parent or guardian. Parents are responsible for providing the contact information of authorized persons during the enrollment process and for keeping the School informed of any changes to the parent or guardian's custodial rights and/or the persons authorized to pick up the child via the FACTS Family Portal.

## Gifts and Fundraising

St. Stephen's recognizes that charitable giving is a joyful expression of the donor's commitment to the mission, program, and future of our organization. Every effort will be made to assist the donor in making a gift that will benefit the School and give satisfaction to our donor. Restricted contributions or gifts of real property such as real estate or furniture will be submitted to the Board or a committee of its designees for a determination of acceptance.

St. Stephen's is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Gifts are tax-deductible as described by law. To be considered a gift in a specific tax year, the School must receive the gift by midnight on December 31<sup>st</sup> or, if sent by mail, postmarked no later than that date. Because we respect the privacy of our donors, our mailing list is never given to another party. If a donor wishes to remain anonymous, St. Stephen's will do everything in its power to respect that wish. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee anonymity.

To avoid a conflict of interest, School employees may not accept an individual gift from a single family/parent, student, or any other person connected to the School that is valued at more than \$25. Cash is specifically prohibited.

Students are not permitted to fundraise on behalf of the School. Student-initiated funds raised to benefit other organizations or needs are part of nurturing students' budding compassion for others and the planet.

## Social Media

St. Stephen's celebrates our students and teachers on the following social media platforms: Facebook (epischool), Instagram (ssesh\_bulldogs), Twitter (epischool), and TikTok (sseshbulldogs). Social media posts will feature students with media releases only.

We welcome your thoughts and comments and look forward to what you have to say. However, we will not leave postings that:

- Break the law or encourage others to do so. This includes respecting copyright and fair use laws.

- Contain abusive or inappropriate language or statements. This includes remarks that are hateful as well as those that contain obscenities or are sexually explicit.
- Easily identify students and/or staff in defamatory, abusive, or generally negative terms.
- Do not show proper consideration for others' privacy or are considered likely to offend or provoke others.
- Are spam – i.e. repeatedly posting the same comment or comments that are simply advertising/promoting a service or product.

The page administrators reserve the right to not post or to remove any comments at any time, for any reason, but we hope that will not ever be necessary. We also reserve the right to block or restrict individuals who misuse our social media platforms.

## Campus Life

### Safety and Security

Parents can expect that all faculty and staff are trained in security procedures, an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) is in place and is reviewed as necessary, drills occur regularly and CPR and First Aid training is provided and documented for all employees.

In keeping with the policy of the Episcopal Diocese, all faculty, staff, chaperones and volunteers are required to complete the *Safeguarding God's Children* course and obtain certification. This process includes an interview, background check and course completion.

### School Visitors

We welcome parents to schedule an observation and to visit campus. However, in the interest of safety and service to all families, the School reserves the right to refuse entry to the campus to any person for any reason. This could occur during safety drills or during a safety/security event or in the event the unannounced visitor would overcrowd a classroom or in any other situation considered necessary by Administration.

All visitors during the school day are asked to schedule their visit in advance with the Principal.

With the exception of parents in carpool, all visitors entering campus must register via the Raptor Visitor Management System. Upon entering the shared Church and School entrance (West Alabama), all visitors will be asked to present a valid government-issued ID, which will be scanned into the Raptor Visitor Management System. Upon reading the information, Raptor will check the national database to identify sexual offenders. The Raptor system only scans the name, date of birth and photo for comparison with a national database of registered sex offenders. Additional data from the driver's license is not gathered and the database is not connected to any other system such as the Department of Motor Vehicles. Therefore, any other information connected to the driver's license is not part of the system and is not accessible to

any of the users. Once entry is approved, Raptor will issue a badge that identifies the visitor, the date, and the purpose of their visit.

## PTO

The Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) is responsible for:

- Enhancing and supporting the educational experience at St. Stephen's by developing a closer connection between school and home;
- Encouraging parent involvement;
- Improving the environment at the School through volunteer and financial support.

All parents and guardians of St. Stephen's students, plus all staff and faculty, are members of the PTO. The Executive Committee of the PTO Board shall consist of the Head of School and the following PTO officers: President, Vice President, Communications Secretary, Treasurer, President-Elect and Past President.

## Classroom Parents

Classroom Parents (Room Parents) are volunteers who assist teachers with classroom events and communications. Advocates and organizers, Room Parents help build community in our classrooms by reaching out to fellow parents, organizing classroom events and holiday giving, and assisting as requested by the teacher. Room Parents are not responsible for school curriculum or administration. Room Parents are appointed at the discretion of the Lead Teacher(s) and are subject to the oversight of the Principal and Head of School. For planning purposes, we would respectfully ask that all Room Parents share their COVID-19 vaccination status with the Head of School, such information will remain confidential.

## Extended Care

St. Stephen's Extended Care program is a fun-filled, age-appropriate program for Orientation through Middle Years that nurtures each student's unique gifts and character. In the Extended Care program, students participate in work time, complete homework, play outdoors, and spend time developing friendships. Our faculty members promote understanding and respect as well as cultivate a sense of responsibility for our interconnected world. Extended Care operates on regular school days, All School Conferences, and most teacher In-Services.

## Bulldog 360°

St. Stephen's offers an array of activities for our students to explore beyond the regular school day. Students have the opportunity to engage in physical, creative, musical, technological, and engineering activities. Regular participation in these activities helps students develop their personalities and enhance their skills.

# Enrollment and Registration

## Key Policies

The Enrollment Agreement and non-refundable deposit must be received by the deadline in order to secure your child's seat. The deposit is non-refundable but applied to tuition for the academic year specified in the Enrollment Agreement.

Annual registration via [Magnus Health | Online & Electronic Student Medical Record Solution](#) must be complete and processed before students may start school. School processing takes a minimum of 3 business days to complete.

## Tuition and Fees

St. Stephen's is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, dependent upon tuition as its principal source of income. In order to continue offering high-quality experiences in our classrooms, it is critical that student accounts are kept current. While school life is indeed personal, enrollment is contractual. Therefore, re-enrollment contracts will only be issued to students whose accounts are current. For information regarding tuition or financial obligations, please refer to your contract or contact the Business Office at 713-821-9100. If your family is behind on payment, please notify the Business Office immediately to create a payment plan.

Please note, tuition deposits are non-refundable. Written termination of the Enrollment Agreement must be received by the Head of School before June 1st, per the Enrollment Agreement, in order to terminate tuition responsibilities.

A late fee of 1.5% per month will be assessed on past due payments. If an account is more than 90 days past due, parents may be asked to keep their child out of school until accounts are made current without affecting the full year's tuition obligation. Please note, transcripts and other school documentation will not be forwarded for students with past due accounts.

## Scholarships and Financial Aid

All financial assistance at St. Stephen's is based on the family's need as determined by a third party, Financial Aid for School Tuition (FAST). The Financial Aid Committee confidentially considers parent requests, FAST recommendations, and the funds available as approved by the Board of Trustees.

The Bulldog Scholarship Program celebrates rising 6th, 7th, and 8th graders who demonstrate the criteria founded on our values: excellence in learning, influential citizenship, community building, and leadership. Bulldog Scholarships are awarded by the Head of School, with input from faculty and the Principal.

## Immunization and Health Records

Annually, your child must have documented immunization records and receive a comprehensive physical examination. Texas State Law requires up-to-date medical records to be on file with the Office of Campus Life prior to the first day of school. Students will not be allowed to begin school until their medical records are current and complete. Records that are considered incomplete or unacceptable would be those unsigned by the student's medical provider, those which do not include appropriate vaccinations, those without proper certification. Any refusal by the School to allow the student to attend for reasons such as these does not relieve the student's family of financial responsibility related to the student's enrollment, per the terms of the Enrollment Agreement.

Immunizations are required as outlined by physicians and the Texas Department of State Health Services, in conjunction with the Texas Education Agency. Exemptions will only be accepted by a board-certified physician (ABMS).

## Governance

### Church and School Partnership

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church is an inclusive, nurturing, and healing community that seeks and invites all to practice the transformational and empowering work of Jesus Christ among us and in the world.

*The School is a parish day school of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.*

### Governance in Episcopal Parish Day Schools

- St. Stephen's Episcopal School's by-laws articulate the mission of the School and Church, the relationship between the Church and School and the roles of the Vestry and the Board of Trustees.
- The Church views the School as one of its Missions and is a significant outreach program to the community. The composition of the School's Board of Trustees includes both Church (60%) and School representation (40%).
- Roles and responsibilities of the Vestry, Board, Rector and Head of School are clearly defined and linked to ensure the School is managed wisely, harmoniously and spiritually.

### Study of Religion in Episcopal Schools

- The study of religion within the curricular offering is a crucial dimension of the identity of the School as well as an anchor in a strong and balanced academic program.
- Our religion curriculum includes other world religions and ethics.
- Below is a list of what students will be learning in Chapel with their age group:
  - Early Childhood: an understanding of God's presence and God's love in our lives;
  - 1st-6th grade: an introduction to the Liturgical year, Episcopal liturgy and biblical stories;

- Middle Years: an entry into the discussion of ethical issues and the study of world religions. (Chapel and class curricula)
- All students participate in Chapel once per week. In addition, the School holds several All-School Chapels throughout the year in which parents are always welcome. Chapel content is sensitive to the diversity of religious identities of our students while remaining faithful to Christian foundations and Episcopal practice and tradition.

#### Furthering Episcopal Identity at St. Stephen's School

- The School's traditions and community life demonstrate its commitment to honor, celebrate and worship God in Christ as the center of life and to support all people regardless of origin, ability or religion.
- The School has a fundamental commitment to be an inclusive community grounded in respect for each of its members.
- Community service, service-learning and other forms of outreach are tangible expressions of our Episcopal identity and are mandatory for all Middle Years students.

#### An Episcopal School:

- Is comprehensive and inclusive by encouraging respect for the other person's beliefs, actively seeking faculty and students of diverse backgrounds and traditions and looking for the values that unite people rather than those that divide.
- Has a common liturgical tradition. It is through their worship that Episcopalians are bound most closely together. Students will have the opportunity to experience the best of Episcopal worship if they are to understand the heart of the Church's teaching.
- Begins from the premise that we are all a community of explorers, in which we all need to learn and grow by pursuing questions wherever they lead, to use our critical faculties and to value our learning from the past.
- Encourages students to understand the issues and complexities of society and to consider what their individual responsibilities are and to take action.
- Is founded on love. Love for students, for their value as children of God and for their unique gifts. Love sustains everything we do.

### Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is composed of sixteen to eighteen members from the St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and School. Trustees can serve up to two consecutive three-year terms, sit out one year and serve one additional three-year term. The Board's composition, as dictated by the School's by-laws, is sixty percent from St. Stephen's Church and forty percent from the School parent community. The Church's Vestry and the Board are responsible to the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas.

The Board of Trustees conducts the strategic work of the board via fixed committees. The Board of Trustees sets policy, hires and evaluates the Head of School, approves the annual budget, ensures fiscal soundness, sets fundraising strategy, determines the school's mission, and determines the Growth Strategy every four years, on average. The Board does not determine curriculum, make personnel or admission decisions or address daily operations of the School.

Administratively, the Principal and School Directors report to the Head of School with faculty and staff reporting to either the Principal or Directors. The Head of School is the sole employee of the Board of Trustees and is the chief administrative agent of the daily operations and policies of the School.

## Appendix A: Criteria for Readmission to School

Source: [Communicable Disease Chart for Schools and Child-Care Centers](#)

<b>Communicable Disease</b>	<b>Signs and Symptoms for Exclusion</b>	<b>Criteria for Readmission to School</b>
<b>Chicken Pox</b>	Fever, raised red bumps on abdomen that itch	MD grants permission and 7 days from onset of rash or until all blisters crust over
<b>Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)</b>	Eyes tearing, irritated, red and have yellow discharge, sensitive to light, eyelids may be puffy	MD grants permission and Rx eye drop treatment has begun
<b>COVID-19</b>	See <a href="https://ssesh.org/covid-safety/">https://ssesh.org/covid-safety/</a>	See <a href="https://ssesh.org/covid-safety/">https://ssesh.org/covid-safety/</a>
<b>Diarrheal Disease</b>	Loose or frequent stools, abdominal cramping, often headaches, presence of temperature, and vomiting	Parents provide a note and 24 hours after symptoms resolve
<b>Fifths</b>	Bright red cheeks, blotchy, lace- like appearing rash on extremities that fades and reoccurs, runny nose and sore throat, loss of appetite, headache, low grade fever	Parents provide a note and 24 hours after fever
<b>Hand, Foot and Mouth</b>	Painful white blisters in the mouth, hands or feet, mild fever, poor appetite, malaise, frequently a sore throat	MD grants permission
<b>Head Lice</b>	Itching and scratching of the scalp, as well as pinpoint white eggs (nits) that will not flick off the hair shaft	Parents provide a note that all treatments of shampoo with pediculicide have been applied appropriately and all dead lice and nits have been removed.
<b>Impetigo (Staph)</b>	Blister-like sores (often around the mouth and nose), crusted, draining and itching	MD grants permission, or sores stop draining

<b>Influenza</b>	Abrupt onset of temperature, headaches, muscle aches and cough	MD grants permission and 24 hours after symptoms resolve
<b>Measles</b>	A pink rash that starts at face and spreads rapidly to trunk and limbs, slight fever, aches, red eyes, runny nose, swollen glands in back of head and neck	MD grants permission
<b>Mononucleosis</b>	Fever, sore throat, swollen lymph nodes, fatigue, and abdominal pain	MD grants permission
<b>Mumps</b>	Fever, muscle ache, and swelling of the glands close to the jaw	MD grants permission
<b>Ringworm</b>	Patchy areas of scaling with mild itch in a ring pattern	Parents provide note ensuring that treatment with fungicide has begun and spots are covered
<b>Strep Throat</b>	Sore throat, fever, red swollen tonsils, tender neck, enlarged glands, headache	MD grants permission