



**Student and Family
Handbook
2024-25**

Greetings Bulldogs,

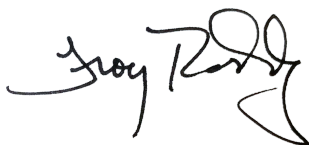
It is an honor to welcome you to the 2024-2025 school year.

I am excited to begin my second year as Head of St. Stephen's Episcopal School. Over the past 12 months, I have learned quite a bit about this wonderful community. One aspect that continues to amaze me is the pure joy of learning that I see our teachers and students engaged with every day. In that same spirit, I am excited to see how our school continues to evolve as we welcome new programs and people to our community.

One addition that I feel speaks clearly to our purpose to help the world become kinder and smarter and our commitment to providing students with an excellent educational experience is the addition of a Student Wellness Department comprised of our School Counselor, School Nurse, and Learning Specialist. This new initiative exists to help support parents, students, and teachers with the challenges inherent to child development and learning. While St. Stephen's has established a mutually supportive community, providing specific and dedicated support for social, emotional, physical, and academic challenges is new and builds off of the uniquely supportive SSESH spirit. We care deeply about your children and their development, and want to cultivate the best possible learning environment for them. The Student Wellness Department is one way we are investing in our promise to you.

In the larger sense, we continue to be guided by our IGROW Principles (Integrity, Grace, Respect Optimism, and Wisdom). However, aligning with clear expectations is critical for building and sustaining the partnership we need to be our best. In this handbook, we outline these expectations and provide a wide range of other useful information. If there is any way we can help make your St. Stephen's experience better, please do not hesitate to reach out.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Troy Roddy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Troy" and last name "Roddy" clearly legible.

Troy P. Roddy, Ph.D.
Head of School
troddy@ssesh.org

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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 the American Montessori Society.

St. Stephen's is a member of the following organizations.

- Council for Advancement and Support of Education
- Houston Area Independent Schools
- National Association of Episcopal Schools
- National Association of Independent Schools

Educational Program

St. Stephen's embraces a continuum of education, where each developmental stage of the child is considered. We implement Montessori curriculum and principles for all levels. This 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 integrated with the core curriculum, and our students enjoy creative outlets to express what they are learning in history, math, literature, and science. Through visual and performing arts, 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 STEAM. Students will explore computer programming, 3D printing, woodworking, laser cutting techniques, and much more! Our STEAM offerings also include a dynamic robotics program.

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.

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

- Morning Carpool (drop off): 8:00 am
- Partial Day Carpool (pick up): 11:30 am
- Full Day Carpool (pick up): 2:30 pm

Primary

- Morning Carpool (drop off): 8:00 am
- Partial Day Carpool (pick up): 11:45 am
- Full Day Carpool (pick up): 2:45 pm

Elementary and Middle Years

- Morning Carpool (drop off): 8:00 am
- End of School Day Carpool (pick up): 3:30 pm

Early Dismissal

- Orientation Carpool (pick up): 11:30 am
- Primary Carpool (pick up): 11:45 am
- Elementary and Middle Years Carpool (pick up): noon

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 that all students must be dropped off or picked up from the designated carpool locations.

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.
- Please drive slowly and prudently. Use your blinker.
- Please ensure that your child is fully awake and alert at morning carpool. Faculty must assess each child before removing them from the vehicle and cannot do so if your child is asleep.
- Do not park in front of Pecore Hall / Monro Building or on Sul Ross between 7:45-8:15 am and 2:15-3:45 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.
- During morning carpool, please do not disembark from your car unless directed to do so by a St. Stephen's staff member.
- During afternoon carpool, parents may be asked to buckle younger children into car seats.

Late Arrivals (Drop-Off and Pick-Up)

Morning Carpool will operate from 7:55 am to 8:15 am. Families seeking to drop off or pick up students during the school day, but not during carpool, should proceed to the Main Reception Desk at 1805 West Alabama.

St. Stephen's expects that all students are duly picked up at the applicable time, whether at the end of the student's school day or by the end of the applicable Extended Care offering. Students who are not picked up at the end of the student's school day or by the end of Sibling and Activity Care and/or After School Care Option 1, will be charged the Extended Care Drop-In Rate. Students who are not picked up by 6 pm will be additionally charged \$20 for the first minute past 6 pm and \$1 a minute for each additional minute.

SSESH Family 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.

- 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).
- The FACTS Family Portal will be used to share details on school events, academic reporting (if applicable), 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). Please use the email addresses shared in the Directory to build community, and not to sell products or services.
- 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: Upper-level classes may utilize Google Classroom.

The Hallway: *The Hallway* is a blog post shared via text and/or Seesaw each Friday during the academic year and selected Fridays during the Summer months.

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.

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. Teachers use Seesaw to make learning visible by sharing photos and videos of students in the classroom. 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). St. Stephen's also uses Seesaw to share announcements, events, and *The Hallway*. Seesaw doesn't share or sell your child's personal information or journal content. Seesaw's strong privacy promises are available [here](#).

Social media: St. Stephen's celebrates our students and teachers on the following social media platforms: Facebook (epischool), Instagram (ssesh_bulldogs), and Twitter / X (epischool). Social media posts will feature students with media releases only.

Zoom: The Zoom platform may be used for meetings, conferences, and/or 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. Email addresses for our faculty and staff may be found on the school website at www.ssesch.org under About > Faculty & Staff.

- Absences: Teacher with 24-hour notice requested
- Academic Difficulty: Teacher
- Behavioral Concerns: Teacher
- Donations, fundraising suggestions: Director of Development (development@ssesh.org)
- Admissions and Enrollment: Director of Enrollment Management (admission@ssesh.org)
- Extended Care: Extended Care Coordinator (extendedcare@ssesh.org)
- Financial Questions: Business Office
- Homework Assignments: Teacher
- Illness: School Nurse (nurse@ssesh.org)
- IT issues: IT Office (helpdesk@ssesh.org)
- Parent Involvement/Volunteering: Director of Community Engagement and Student Enrichment
- Questions on School Policies: Principal
- Special Needs, Learning Differences and Accommodations: Learning Specialist
- Standardized Testing: Teacher
- Tuition Assistance / Financial Aid: 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.

Program Placement Benchmarks (Orientation and Primary)

Orientation students are expected to be independently and uprightly mobile before the first day of school or summer camp, as applicable. St. Stephen's will partner with parents of students who do not meet this benchmark. Placement solutions may include delaying admission into Orientation and will be determined at the sole discretion of the Principal and/or Head of School.

Primary students are expected to be toilet trained before the first day of school or summer camp, as applicable. Being fully toilet trained includes both urination and bowel movements. St. Stephen's will partner with parents of students who do not meet this benchmark. Placement solutions may include, without limitation and as determined by the Principal and/or Head of School, delaying admission into Primary and/or placing the student in an Orientation classroom to accomplish toilet learning.

Academic Dishonesty and Cheating

Academic dishonesty consists of passing off another's work as the work of the student. Passing off could include AI generated text and/or text derived predominantly from content found on the Internet and/or other published work. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, collusion, duplication of work and any other conduct that results in an unfair advantage for a student.

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 event that academic dishonesty is suspected in Middle Years, the teacher shall notify the Principal and/or Head of School. With due notice and communication with the students and their parents, the School shall determine an appropriate response, which may include, without limitation, zero or partial credit for an assignment, academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, and/or expulsion.

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.

Attendance and Tardies

Attendance

A full-day student is counted present if they are at school for at least four hours during the school day. A partial-day student is counted present if they are at school for at least two hours during the partial school day.

Tardies

Classes begin at 8:15 am each school day. Students arriving in the classroom after 8:15 am are counted as tardy. Families are responsible for their child(ren) arriving in the classroom on time.

Consequences and Thresholds (applicable to students in Kindergarten and above)

Excessive absences equate to over four (4) unexcused absences per trimester. Consequences could include, without limitation and based on the level of the student:

- Conferences with the teacher and/or Principal,
- Loss of course credit in Middle Years,
- Required make-up work and/or tests,
- Recommendation to not promote to the subsequent level,
- Withholding of an enrollment contract for the subsequent academic year, and/or
- Failure to recommend to a future school or program.

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.

St. Stephen's believes that attendance is paramount. St. Stephen's strongly suggests that families schedule vacations and trips in accordance with school breaks as established in the academic calendar. Families wishing to pull students out of class for planned family vacations should not expect teachers to provide extra work or support.

For students in Kindergarten through 8th grade, 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;
- 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 main reception desk before proceeding to class and may be required to visit with the School Nurse prior to being admitted following a personal illness.

Parents are asked to call the School Office (713-821-9100) before 9 am on the day of the absence or tardy arrival. Please provide a written excuse for the absence or tardy immediately

upon your student's return to school, including the reason for the absence or tardy and your signature.

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.

If, in the discretion of the teacher(s) and/or Principal and/or Head of School, the number or frequency of excused absences and/or tardies negatively impacts the learning experience of the student, families may be asked to meet with the Principal and/or Head of School to determine remedial action and/or educational support.

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 Nurse 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);
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours;
- Deep cough, greenish-yellow nasal discharge, or rash.

Children must be free of the above for a minimum of 24 hours, without medication, 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. Students may be required to visit with the School Nurse prior to being admitted following a personal illness.

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. Middle Years students are responsible for completing all assignments, if necessary outside of the school day. Middle Years students are also responsible for independent reading and ISEE prep outside of the school day. 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 email, 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. Any costs to be covered by parents will be communicated in advance.

Parent chaperones are selected and invited at the sole discretion of the teacher. The role of parents as chaperones may vary depending on the type, duration, and location of the trip as well as on the needs of the program. 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 expected. The guidelines for absences apply to field trips and class trips.

While on field trips and class trips, students represent St. Stephen's and are expected to behave accordingly. School policy prohibits: (1) the possession of weapons, (2) the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs and (3) any sexual misconduct during field trips and class trips. Participants, including parent chaperones, 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.

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.

Standardized tests are administered by St. Stephen's in order to track student progress over time and in comparison to national averages. We also administer standardized tests as a low-risk, safe opportunity for students to learn how to take standardized tests.

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.

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

Transcripts

Requests for transcripts require completion of the transcript form here:

<https://ssesh.org/transcript-request/>

Student Support

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

- Making or reporting observations;
- Gathering documentation;
- Testing, evaluation or assessment of the student's needs by qualified professionals (costs to be borne by families);
- 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 at 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. Unless approved by the Head of School, a child may not be tutored for an extra fee by any St. Stephen's teacher responsible for any academic assessment of the student.

Responsibilities and Conduct

Values

St. Stephen's mission is to nurture each child's academic, creative, and spiritual potential – making the world kinder and smarter – while our vision sees a future where young people lead with compassion, acceptance, and a holistic view of the world. This mission and vision guide our dedicated faculty and staff as they instill core values and foster a sense of community within our students. 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), and Future (we cherish the future). Members of St. Stephen's Episcopal School are committed to abiding by the IGROW principles of Integrity, Grace, Respect, Optimism, and Wisdom. Additionally, the faculty and staff implement the following keys to delivering the Bulldog Experience: Safety and Security, Model Bulldog Leadership (IGROW), Professionalism, and Efficiency.

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 parameters of the School's dress code.

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. St. Stephen's adopts the definition of bullying established by the Anti-Bullying Alliance as follows.

The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or online.

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:

- 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;
- Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with the student's academic performance; or
- 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 as a result of 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 prohibited. 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 may be taken to rectify inappropriate student behavior:

- Redirection;
- Verbal correction;
- Tiered communication with stakeholders
 - Parent contact (email and/or phone call)
 - Parent contact that includes Counselor and/or Principal
 - Meeting with Principal
 - Meeting with Head of School
- Behavioral interventions (e.g., community engagement);
- Removal from class, including Extended Care and Bulldog 360 programming;
- Disciplinary probation;
- Withholding of enrollment contract; and/or
- Removal / suspension from School.

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 will be subject to disciplinary procedures. 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:

- Attire should include shirts, shorts, skirts, dresses, pants, sweaters, and sweatshirts as applicable and seasonally appropriate.
- No visible undergarments or crop tops. Shorts must be worn underneath skirts or dresses.
- No clothing bearing offensive remarks.
- Athletic shoes are required; no light-up shoes.
- Hats, caps, and sunglasses are worn out of doors only.
- Children's clothing should allow for a child's freedom of movement. Children who are developing independence and are toilet learning should be dressed in clothing they can put on and take off easily.

Students who do not adhere to these guidelines may 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 or soft drinks. 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.

Personal Property

Cell phones and iPads and smartwatches, defined as watches that enable wearers to make and receive calls and messages, are not permitted in view or in use during the school day. Students must turn in any aforementioned device 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.

Vandalism may be subject to disciplinary action, including remedial action and/or the assessment of costs to the family.

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, 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 Chromebooks and Google accounts to complete their work. These Chromebooks 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, and parents are expected to monitor this usage. 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.

Divorce agreements and/or other documentation of custody and/or parental rights must be provided upon request of the Head of School.

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 and/or services 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. The Head of School must receive advance, written notice of anticipated restricted contributions or gifts of real property such as real estate or furniture.

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 31st 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 \$50. 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 / X (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 (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.

Families, please respect the data privacy of minors and other persons by not posting photos or other identifying information.

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 with proper advance notice. 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.

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 stated purpose of the St. Stephen's Episcopal School PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization) is:

- Supporting the educational experience at St. Stephen's Episcopal School;
- Building a strong school community;
- 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 automatically granted membership to 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.

Room Parents

Room Parents foster community at St. Stephen's. Room Parents:

- Are the teacher's first points of contact for any classroom needs outside of what the school provides (e.g., items needed in the classroom, volunteers for tasks)
- Help to promote PTO-related events and school events like Teacher Appreciation week
- Coordinate the celebrations of the birthdays of teachers and assistants and encourage parents to give during the holidays in accordance with the Student and Family Handbook
- Provide opportunities for families to get together and connect outside the classroom (e.g., playdates!)
- Reach out to new families and check in on their transition at the school, answer questions or connect the new families with someone who can answer their questions
- May be asked to provide testimonials for the school's marketing initiatives

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.

Extended Care

St. Stephen's Extended Care program is a fun-filled, age-appropriate program 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.

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

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.

For information regarding tuition or financial obligations, please refer to the Enrollment Agreement or contact the Business Office at 713-821-9100. If your family is behind on payment, please notify the Business Office immediately to create or revise a payment plan. The following penalties may be imposed in the event of past-due payments.

- A late fee of 1.5% per month may 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 the account is made current.
- A re-enrollment contract may be withheld until the account is made current.

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.

Credit card fees assessed via FACTS Tuition and FACTS Payment Forms will be paid by families.

Financial Aid

There are more applications for assistance than funds available; therefore, St. Stephen's uses the following practices to distribute aid responsibly.

- New students must be mission-appropriate and in good standing with their previous school.
- Current accounts must be up-to-date to be considered for aid in the subsequent year.
- All awards are assessed with regard to family needs as determined by a third-party assessment.

Immunization and Health Records

Annual registration via Magnus Health must be completed and processed before students may start school. School processing takes a minimum of 3 business days to complete. Annually, your child must have documented immunization records and receive a comprehensive physical

examination. Registration via Magnus Health must be completed and processed before students may start school. School processing takes a minimum of 3 business days to complete.

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-8th grade: an introduction to the Liturgical year, Episcopal liturgy and biblical stories.

- 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.
- Every other year, Middle Years students study World Religions as part of their core curriculum.

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 members from the St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, School, and surrounding community. The structure and work of the Board of Trustees is governed by a set of by-laws, which are aligned with and approved by both the Episcopal Diocese of Texas and the St. Stephen's Episcopal Church's Vestry.

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](#)

Families must notify nurse@ssesh.org if their child is exposed to or tests positive for any communicable disease, including COVID-19.

Communicable Disease	Signs and Symptoms for Exclusion	Criteria for Readmission to School
Chicken Pox	Fever, raised red bumps on abdomen that itch	MD grants permission and 7 days from onset of rash or until all blisters crust over
Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)	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
COVID-19	See CDC Guidelines, as may be amended by the Head of School in consultation with the Re-Gathering Task Force of St. Stephen's Church and School	See CDC Guidelines, as may be amended by the Head of School in consultation with the Re-Gathering Task Force of St. Stephen's Church and School
Diarrheal Disease	Loose or frequent stools, abdominal cramping, often headaches, presence of temperature, and vomiting	Parents provide a note and 24 hours after symptoms resolve
Fifths	Bright red cheeks, blotchy, lace-like appearing rash on extremities that fades and reoccurs, runny nose and sore	Parents provide a note and 24 hours after fever

	throat, loss of appetite, headache, low grade fever	
Hand, Foot and Mouth	Painful white blisters in the mouth, hands or feet, mild fever, poor appetite, malaise, frequently a sore throat	MD grants permission
Head Lice	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.
Impetigo (Staph)	Blister-like sores (often around the mouth and nose), crusted, draining and itching	MD grants permission, or sores stop draining
Influenza	Abrupt onset of temperature, headaches, muscle aches and cough	MD grants permission and 24 hours after symptoms resolve
Measles	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
Mononucleosis	Fever, sore throat, swollen lymph nodes, fatigue, and abdominal pain	MD grants permission

Mumps	Fever, muscle ache, and swelling of the glands close to the jaw	MD grants permission
Ringworm	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
Strep Throat	Sore throat, fever, red swollen tonsils, tender neck, enlarged glands, headache	MD grants permission