

St. Francis Episcopal School
Handbook of School Procedure and Policies 2022-2023

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Check us out online at:
www.stfrancispreschool.org

Like us on Facebook

Members of the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools(SAES)

Licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. A copy of Minimum Standards License and Inspection available in the school office.

Website: www.dfps.state.tx.us Hotline:
1-800-252-5400

St. Francis School is open to students of any race, color, nationality, religion or ethnic group. St. Francis is located in a state designated 'gang free zone'.

Welcome to St. Francis Episcopal School

PURPOSE As a ministry of St Francis Episcopal Church, the purpose of our school is to provide an educational environment that encourages children to grow socially, emotionally and physically, cognitively and spiritually into responsible, caring adults. Children are given a safe, nurturing environment where they will receive a classic education instilling a solid foundation for a future love of learning. We concentrate on positive approaches with a play- centered curriculum that fosters creativity and exploration for active learners. Our school strives to develop a close partnership with our families that will enhance each child's learning experience for a well-rounded education

SCHOOL YEAR Our school year aligns with the local school district calendars. We start in August and end in May. Our hours vary depending on which plan your family chooses. Our regular school day is from 8:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. with a 3-day or 5-day option. We also offer an early bird drop off at 7:30 a.m., as well as an extended day option from 12:15 p.m.- 2:15 p.m. There is a welcome letter mailed in the middle of August with a schedule of meet the teacher date and time.

CURRICULUM Our curriculum is based on play centered, discovery and exploratory manipulatives that allow our children to be active learners in the classroom. We utilize several different curriculum programs such as Frog Street Curriculum, Saxon Phonics, Fry's Sight Words and Math in Focus/Singapore Math. Our purpose is to provide high quality education that promotes a strong foundation for a love of learning that will last a lifetime. We believe in active learners discovering their world through interactive play while also developing their fine and gross motor skills, positive cognitive growth, building an understanding of social skills and a strong sense of Christian morals. We encourage our students to be independent, responsible learners while also developing positive self-confidence. Our curriculum emphasizes instructional strategies that are developmentally appropriate, intended to support all types of learners and guide each age group through their appropriate developmental stages. Students will work at their own pace and advance when they are ready for the next step. The class schedule includes formal chapel, snack time, discovery/instructional/art time, story/circle time, music education and outside/high energy/gross motor skill development play time. In a loving, nurturing, Christian environment, our students blossom before our very eyes as we learn, play and grow in Christ.

PROGRAMS We offer classes for ages 2 years through Kindergarten with small class size environments and individual attention which are the cornerstone of our program. Children are encouraged to be active participants in the learning process through mutual respect and support.

Two's TWTh; Three's TWTh or M-F; Fours TWTh or M-F; Jr Kinder M-F; Kinder M-F
School drop-off begins at 8:15; half-day dismissal at 12:15; extended day dismissal at 2:15.

ADMISSION POLICY St. Francis Episcopal School is open to children of any race, religion, creed, or ethnic origin. Admission is based on openings available, completed registration forms turned in and payment of registration fee.

COMPLETION OF ALL REGISTRATION FORMS, HEALTH FORMS, AND THE PAYMENT OF THE REGISTRATION FEE IS MANDATORY TO GUARANTEE ENROLLMENT.

State law requires that the following be on file:

1. An immunization record signed by a physician/health personnel. Children must have **ALL** required immunizations as stated in state minimum vaccine requirements/ **NO EXEMPTIONS ARE ACCEPTED.**
2. A statement that the child has had a physical examination within the last 12 months, and is

physically capable of participating in the school program.

A registration form must also be completed and signed by the parent which includes:

1. Permission for emergency medical treatment
2. An understanding of the discipline policy
3. Tuition refund policy

All children enrolling in the 2, 3, 4, Jr-Kinder or Kindergarten classes must be the age of the class by **September 1st of the entering school year**. There are **NO EXCEPTIONS**. Children in classes 3 years of age or older must be potty trained. It is important for families of special needs to be aware that if the child is able to participate in the class fully and meet above state requirements for their respective age, the child is welcome to attend St. Francis; however, please note we are a small private school and lack the resources to provide the best learning environment for extreme special needs cases.

REGISTRATION FEE \$250 A once a year, non-refundable fee that is budgeted for teacher training and our scholarship fund. Registration payment must be received before your enrollment is considered complete.

SUPPLY FEE \$50 A once a year, non-refundable fee that covers supply fee expenses in lieu of families having to purchase their own school supplies for their students. The fee covers consumable products like construction paper, markers, paint, etc.

PAYMENTS Our yearly tuition rates may be split into 9 monthly payments beginning August 1. There are no additional fees outside what is stated above for the entire school year. Families may make an alternate payment schedule, yearly or pay by semester, with our bookkeeper Susan Barton; however, statements emailed will reflect an automatic 9-month schedule, unless families have contacted the office to set up an alternate plan.

Payments received after the 10th of the month will be subject to a \$25 late fee. Returned checks are subject to a \$25 fee. More than 2 returned checks within the same school year may result in CASH ONLY payments being accepted. We also accept Paypal or credit card payments with a service fee added.

Siblings will receive a 15% discount on the second child's yearly tuition rate.

Financial assistance is available. Please contact the office to inquire about our financial aid application through Smart Tuition.

DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS POLICY Tuition payments are due no later than the 10th of each month. Payment becomes past due if it is not received by the 10th of the month and a late notice will be sent home/emailed with a \$25 late fee posted to the account. If 2 or more consecutive payments are missed with no communication from the family, a conference will be scheduled with the director to establish a payment plan which will be signed by the parents and kept on file. If the plan is not adhered to and the director is not contacted, or if the parents decline to sign a payment plan, the child's enrollment will be immediately terminated.

REFUNDS No refunds of tuition are given for illness or vacation. Registration and any paid tuition are non-refundable as well. Upon enrollment, the registration form is a signed contract agreeing to pay the yearly tuition. If unforeseen circumstances (such as relocation, etc.) will prevent the student from completing the school year, **30 days written notice** must be submitted and filed to relinquish the family from further tuition obligation.

EARLY BIRD Care needed prior to the start of the day at 8:15 is available Monday - Friday from 7:30-8:15 by appointment only or on a regular basis scheduled through the office at a rate of \$5 per day if you are registered for a permanent spot. If your family occasionally needs this service, you may make an appointment by calling the office. This is **NOT a drop-in service**; teachers are not available unless an appointment has been set up through the office.

ARRIVALS 8:15-8:30 am: Due to safety concerns and the number of vehicles at our school during this time period, we are asking for no walking your children into the school during this 15-minute window of time. Members of our staff will greet the children in our carline and assist the children out of the car and to the school sidewalk at morning drop off. Parents using the carline are asked to remain in their car to allow the carline to move efficiently and safely. **NO CELL PHONE USE/BLUETOOTH IS ALLOWED IN OUR CARLINE AT ANYTIME.** If you choose to walk your child to the front door before or after this time frame, please escort them by hand through the parking lot. Aides will escort children inside the building to first wash hands and then head to class where the teachers are there at the classroom doors to welcome our students. Please do not park in the gift shop parking lot.

BE AWARE THAT CLASS TIME BEGINS PROMPTLY AT 8:30 a.m.

DISMISSAL 12:15-12:30 Half Day School Dismissal; 2:15-2:30 Extended Day School Dismissal; Children will be delivered to the proper car by staff upon dismissal time. Please watch the flow of traffic as the parking lot is full of activity both at the start and dismissal of school. **NO CELL PHONE USE IS ALLOWED IN OUR CARLINE AT ANYTIME** for the safety of our children and staff. Children may **ONLY** be picked up by those listed on their registration form, unless the office has otherwise been notified. Please submit in writing to the office any adult authorized to pick up your child. Identification will be required for anyone other than the child's parent to pick up.

LATE PICKUP POLICY Dismissal begins at 12:15 half day/2:15 extended day. Please make every effort to be prompt in picking up your child. Young children become anxious when they are not picked up on time. In the event that an emergency arises that will cause a parent to be late picking up, we ask that the parent notify the office. A **\$1 per minute late fee** will be charged if a parent has not arrived by 12:30 half day/2:30 extended day pick up time. If the office is **NOT** notified, the parent may be subject to an additional \$25 late fee assessed on top of the \$1 per minute late fee rate.

EXTENDED DAY Students enrolled in our 8:15-12:15 classes may utilize our extended care on a scheduled or drop in by appointment only and if space is available. Parents may select a set schedule of days their child stays for extended day by filling out the Extended Care form in the office. Cost for a scheduled day is at a rate of \$12 per day and will be charged whether or not the child stays. Emergency drop-in rate for extended care needed on an occasional basis is \$15 per day. Parents must contact the office (not their child's teacher) if they wish their child to stay for extended day. Emergency drop in subject to space availability.

STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO TWO'S - 2 teachers per 12 students; THREE'S and FOUR'S - 12 students per teacher; Jr. Kindergarten and Kindergarten - 12 students per teacher.

ABSENCES and ILLNESSES Please notify the school if your child is unable to attend school due to illness. It is required by state law to report any contagious diseases to the school office so other parents may be notified of its occurrence and symptoms.

Illnesses: **DO NOT** bring your child to school when he/she is ill or exhibiting any of the following symptoms

1. Fever within the past 24 hours of 100 degrees or more
2. Persistent or severe coughing or sneezing

3. Vomiting or diarrhea
4. Sore throat, earache or pink eye
5. Any unidentifiable or contagious skin rashes out of consideration to your child, all our families and our staff. Your child must remain home for 24 hours symptom free before they may return to class. If a child becomes ill during the school day, you will be notified and asked to make arrangements for the child to leave school as soon as possible. The child will be removed from class and will wait for pick up in the office.

ADMINISTERING MEDICINE If your child needs to take medicine at school, please be advised that

NO MEDICATION will be administered by any school employee UNLESS there is:

1. A written order from a physician AND
2. A written permission slip from the parent or guardian

This is for ALL medication (both prescription and non-prescription drugs). Medication must be in the original prescription bottle with the label intact and kept in the school office. This is required by law. Forms are available in the office. We will provide/apply insect repellent and/or sunscreen if needed. Staff will contact you if there is a medical emergency. You will complete a medical permission form and we will follow your directions on preferred hospital and provider. We will notify you by phone and/or text.

ASSESSMENTS and CONFERENCES Children will be assessed by their teachers beginning in January in preparation for our parent conferences. The conferences may be either in person or on the phone depending on class, teacher and availability. Assessments will evaluate children not only on their academic knowledge but also on their social and physical development. Assessments are for the benefit of the teachers as well as the parents. The assessments will be kept in the student's file and are available upon request.

Conferences are held before registration so you can make an informed decision on where to place your child for the next school year. If you desire a conference with the teacher or director any time throughout the school year, please call in advance to arrange a time. It is important to keep open communication between home and school. If anything is happening at home that could affect your child's school day, please do not hesitate to notify us by sending a note in your child's backpack or calling the office. It is our desire to foster a learning environment that will allow your child to be successful both at school and at home and keeping open communication between school and home is crucial.

PARENT CONCERN STATEMENT It is vital if a parent has any concerns that they contact the director. Any formal complaints against the school may be filed with the Church, School Board, or DFPS (Department of Family and Protective Services).

With a history of over 40 years specializing in early childhood education, it is our goal that we continue to create a loving, nurturing educational environment that has become expected of St. Francis Episcopal School. Our entire staff are well educated and earn continuing education credits each year as well as maintain Red Cross certification and Safeguarding God's Children certification through the Episcopal Diocese.

If at any time, a parent is not completely satisfied with their child's education here at St Francis or have any concerns, the director asks that you notify her at once.

SPECIAL NEEDS POLICY The following steps will be taken as necessary to handle a child with special needs...

1. A situation is brought to the director's attention.
2. A consultation with the parents, teacher and director to discuss the situation and

recommend possible resolutions.

3. The recommendation of a professional evaluation outside of St. Francis through Child Find services through your zoned public school district.
4. If the parent chooses not to follow the recommendations in steps 2 and 3, and the classroom environment is continually disrupted, then the child may be dismissed from the school.

DISCIPLINE A very important part of the early childhood educational experience is helping children learn how to get along in the world, enjoy being with other children, and follow the direction of an adult other than their parent. A caring and positive approach will be taken regarding behavior management and discipline. The teachers will focus on the positive behaviors of the children and reinforce those behaviors as often as possible. Our goal is to help the children develop self-control and responsibility for their actions.

Our discipline procedures will consist of the following strategies:

Encouraging children to use their words when having a disagreement with another child. Facilitating children in their attempts to settle their own disputes. Redirecting behavior when this seems potentially effective. Separating a child from the group (Time- Out) - one minute away for each year of age. Counseling children individually about their behaviors. Making parents aware of disciplinary concerns (Incident Reports).

Disruptive Behavior distracts from the full benefit of the school program and will result in consequences. The following behaviors are considered disruptive:

- Requires constant attention from staff
- Inflicts physical or emotional harm on other children, adults, or self
- Disrespects people and materials provided in the program
- Consistently disobeys the rules of the classroom
- Verbally threatens other students and/or staff
- Uses verbal or physical activity that diverts attention away from the group of children

DISCIPLINE Procedures for disruptive behavior- Disruptive behavior will be addressed in an incident report. This will be completed to document any inappropriate behaviors that directly impact other children, staff members, or the group as a whole. This report will be shared with the parents and will explain the behavior and how the behavior affected others. It will also explain how the situation was resolved. The incident report will be placed in the child's folder to be taken home, signed and returned the next day to the teacher. If a child has difficulty managing his/her behavior on a recurring basis, parents will be asked to meet with the child's teacher and Director. If the child's behavior continues to be inappropriate, consistently disruptive, and/or dangerous, it may be necessary for the child to be sent home for a time to be determined, or removed from the school altogether.

Children cannot become self-disciplined unless adults teach them right from wrong. Here at St. Francis, children will be taught the expectations for correct behavior and encouraged to live and act accordingly. When children know something is wrong, and choose to do it anyway, consequences will follow to communicate that the behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated in our school.

VISITS St. Francis is a locked down building in accordance with the state minimum standards for the safety of our children and staff. For young children, visits from parents in the classroom can be quite disruptive. Please check in advance with the office and your child's teacher if you would like to visit the classroom. It is

best to allow at least one month of school before having brief visits to the classroom. Parents are always welcome and are invited to come to the school, visit with the office staff and volunteer with our PTO. There will be ways throughout the year to volunteer or offer to help. Please discuss those options with your child's teachers and our PTO. Meet the Teacher for your children will be held with his/her teacher prior to the beginning of the school year. Parents will have an opportunity to attend Open House in the fall, after school hours, to view what your child has been doing in school and visit with your child's teacher as well.

ITEMS FROM HOME (toys, jewelry, etc.) We discourage bringing toys from home to school unless they are relative to a particular unit of study and at the child's teacher's discretion. Some classes will have opportunities during special "Show and Tell" on assigned days that will be on your child's monthly calendar. Any weapons or destructive toys are not allowed. Special blankets, lovies, stuffed animals, (exceptions for two's during naptime) are also not allowed in the classroom. We encourage children to leave them in the car, or as a last resort, in the backpack. We appreciate our parents' support.

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER AND CALENDAR A monthly newsletter will accompany a class specific monthly calendar and will go home each month in your child's backpack. The calendar will include important events happening that month, holidays, birthdays, units of study, etc. as well as contact information for your child's teacher.

PLEASE READ OVER YOUR CALENDAR/NEWSLETTER carefully each month.

CLOTHING Children should wear comfortable clothing to school. Keep in mind that early childhood learning involves messy activities. For your children to participate successfully, they should not have to be unduly worried about spilled juice and/or paint on their best clothes. As we seek to develop independence, it is helpful for parents to be aware of clothing that restricts children from caring for their own needs. Belt buckles and overall buttons are often difficult for your children to manage on their own.

All children must leave a complete change of clothes in their backpacks in case of accidents or spills. Please place the clothes in a plastic Ziploc bag marked with your child's name. This will help ease the embarrassment in the event of an accident or spill. Please do not forget to change out the clothes to match the season or replace if the extra set has been used.

The playground is an extension of your child's classroom and provides a place to develop physically as well as socially. Please have your child wear shoes that will enable safe running and climbing. Sandals, flip flops, shoes with heels and shoes that do not secure to the child's foot create a problem and will hinder your child's play and progress. Do not allow your children to wear jewelry to school. Bracelets, beads, necklaces, and watches are often lost, broken or create distractions at school. Dangling and hoop earrings create a safety problem and are prohibited.

Unless it is raining or severe weather/wind, we will go outside so please dress your child appropriately. **MARK ALL ARTICLES OF CLOTHING WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME.** If your child's clothes are not marked with their name, we cannot guarantee they will make it home each day.

SNACK Parents are responsible for providing a snack for your child daily. This may consist of fruit, packaged goods, etc. The office will provide a back up option in the case that a child accidentally comes to school without a snack. Your child's teacher and all staff will be aware of any allergies pertaining to children in the school.

Children will celebrate their birthday or half birthday during the school year and may bring a special birthday snack on their special day.

Healthy snack options are: graham crackers, apple slices, yogurt, cheese, crackers, raisins, applesauce, carrot sticks, etc.

- We ask that you wash and cut all fruit/vegetables you send, please make sure you reviewed the instructions regarding cutting to prevent choking
- We prefer jug drink options, instead of juice boxes
- Homemade snacks are welcome

No peanut butter, popcorn or nut products. Students with severe allergies will be asked to send in their daily snack option to enjoy each day; however, we will notify each class of any allergies. Note that regardless of any present allergies, we will **NOT** serve any snacks containing nuts.

BIRTHDAYS We will celebrate your child's birthday or half birthday during the school year. You may bring a special birthday snack on their special celebration day. Please communicate with their teacher if you have any questions regarding this. Because this snack will be shared, please do not send anything containing peanut butter or nut products.

PARENTS ORGANIZATION We maintain an active PTO who sponsors many fun events throughout the year. Membership is \$25 for the year. Our PTO organizes school fundraisers, keeps a laminating account at Educational Outfitters for St Francis staff, provides staff and school support throughout the year, collects and submits Box Tops for Education and hosts our Open House, Valentine's Luncheon, and Wheel-A-Thon. PTO has an executive board with numerous committees and opportunities to volunteer. You may contact our PTO at: pto@stfrancispreschool.org if you have any questions or are interested in volunteering. There is also a Facebook page to follow the PTO activities.

Each classroom will have a "Class Parent" who will assist PTO in getting important information out to the families. Parents may contact our PTO or their teacher at the beginning of the school year if they are interested in serving as the "Class Parent" for their child's classroom.

SEVERE WEATHER POLICY We follow, with very few exceptions, our surrounding school district calendars. Specifically for SEVERE WEATHER CANCELLATIONS, we follow both Temple Independent School District (TISD) and Belton Independent School District (BISD). IF EITHER TISD or BISD announces closures or delays, **St. Francis will be closed for the day. WE DO NOT DELAY THE START OF OUR DAY**, but will remain closed if TISD or BISD announces a delay to the start of their day.

You are welcome to review a copy of our most recent licensing inspection report.

The minimum standards for our school as well as emergency preparedness plan are available on-line through the Texas Dept of Family and Protective Services. A hard copy is available in the school office. You may contact the local licensing office located in Temple- 4501 S. General Bruce Dr. 254-773-1682 for further information. Texas Abuse and Neglect Hotline is another resource 1-800-252-5400. All of our staff completes a required minimum annual training on child abuse and neglect. We have posted information on our bulletin board outside the office regarding child abuse and neglect. We are a gang-free zone-this information is posted.

FACULTY The faculty of St Francis Episcopal School are experienced professionals dedicated to teaching and nurturing of our young students. Teachers maintain close communication between the school and our students' families. Parent/Teacher conferences are scheduled during the month of February and are available at any time upon request.

Our staff take a minimum state mandated 24 hours of continuing education credit hours each year as well as maintain Red Cross First Aid and CPR certification as well as Safeguarding God's Children certification by the Episcopal Diocese. Background checks are kept current on all staff and a minimum of four written recommendations required for employment.

GOVERNANCE St. Francis Episcopal School is an outreach ministry of St. Francis Episcopal Church. It is governed by the St Francis School Board. The church appoints the members of the School Board.

Gift Acceptance Policy St. Francis Preschool solicits and accepts gifts that are consistent with its mission and that support its core programs, as well as special projects. Donations and other forms of support will generally be accepted from individuals, partnerships, corporations, foundations, government agencies, or other entities, subject to the following limitations: New or nearly new condition, proof of ownership. Gifts of Real Property, Personal Property or Securities may only be accepted upon approval of the St. Francis School Board.

IN CLOSING To those of you who are looking for a church home, St Francis extends a warm and sincere invitation to any of our worship services or parish activities held throughout the year.