



St. Stephen Presbyterian
DAY SCHOOL

PARENT HANDBOOK
2024-2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW	4
MISSION STATEMENT	4
PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION	4
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	4
SUMMARY	4
PARENT/SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP	4
RESPONSIBILITIES OF DAY SCHOOL PARENTS	4
RESPONSIBILITIES OF DAY SCHOOL STAFF	5
OPERATIONS	5
HOURS OF OPERATION	5
AGE/RATIO REQUIREMENTS	5
ADMISSION POLICY	6
REGISTRATION AND ENROLLMENT	6
WITHDRAWAL AND RE-ENROLLMENT	6
TUITION AND FEES	7
ST. STEPHEN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH GROUNDS AND PARKING LOT	7
SECURITY/CHILD SAFETY/DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP	8
ENTRANCE TO THE FACILITY	8
PERSONS APPROVED TO PICK UP A CHILD	8
DROP-OFF, PICK-UP, AND LATE ARRIVALS	8
VISITING THE DAY SCHOOL	8
HEALTH AND WELLNESS	9
IMMUNIZATION POLICY	9
ILLNESS AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASES	10
ACCIDENTS AND MEDICAL EMERGENCIES	10
EPINEPHRINE AND ALLERGIC REACTIONS	10
MEDICATION	10
ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING	11
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN	11
EMERGENCY DRILLS	11
COMMUNICATION	11
GENERAL DAY SCHOOL INFORMATION	12
LUNCHTIME	12
NAPTIME AND SLEEP	12
CLOTHING AND PERSONAL ITEMS	12
EXTRA CLOTHING	13
DIAPERS	13

VALUABLE ITEMS	13
WEAPONS	13
SPECIAL OCCASIONS	13
FIELD TRIPS	13
BIRTHDAYS	14
CELEBRATIONS	14
DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE POLICY	14
DISMISSAL FROM THE PROGRAM	15
PARENT CONCERNS, QUESTIONS, OR COMPLAINTS	15

Day School Office Hours

8:30-3:00

Mondays and Wednesdays

2700 McPherson Ave

Fort Worth, TX 76109

Website

www.sspdayschool.org

Day School Office Phone

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Mission Statement

The Day School program of St. Stephen Presbyterian Church is a quality care program available to members and non-members. It is designed to create a safe, loving, secure, nurturing atmosphere of play and learning experiences to help each child grow physically, socially, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. Structured and unstructured activities are planned to encourage creativity with emphasis placed on developing a strong sense of self-esteem and emotional well-being in each child.

Philosophy of Education

Education is more than the pursuit of a certain course of study. It has to do with the whole person. It is the harmonious development of physical, mental, social, and spiritual capabilities. True education prepares children for a life as productive human beings, concentrating on not only academics but also on the practical, imaginative, and creative thinking powers of each individual.

Organizational Structure

The Session of St. Stephen Presbyterian Church is responsible for the operation of the St. Stephen Presbyterian Day School. The Day School Board oversees the implementation of the programs.

The Day School Director is responsible for the Day School. The Day School Director receives support and supervision from the Director of Christian Education. In the absence of the Day School Director, the Day School Assistant Director assumes the authority for the Day School. In the absence of both the Director and the Assistant Director, the Director of Christian Education and the Moderator of the Day School Board act as back-up staff support, respectively.

Summary

The parents and staff of the Day School share a joint, special interest and responsibility in the care and nurturing of children. By working together, the staff and parents can ensure a positive, growth-oriented experience for the child.

Responsibilities of Day School Parents

The following parental responsibilities are important for maintaining a constructive relationship with the program. Day School Parents shall:

1. Keep staff informed of any event in the child's life that may help the teacher to better understand the child and relate to him or her appropriately.
2. Share an active interest in the child's work and development.

3. Arrange for the child's regular, prompt attendance.
4. Ensure that the responsible teacher is aware of the arrival and departure of the child.
5. Notify the staff if the child contracts or is exposed to a communicable disease.
6. Ensure the health and welfare of the child by providing proper nutrition, adequate rest, healthful hygiene, and prompt attention to illness.
7. Provide a nutritious breakfast before the child arrives at the program.
8. Provide a nutritious lunch for the child each day.

In addition, parents are expected to make timely tuition payments and update the child's enrollment and health information as necessary. Parents will sign a statement indicating that he or she has read, understands, and agrees to the responsibilities and program policies as outlined in this document.

Responsibilities of Day School Staff

The following staff responsibilities are important for maintaining constructive relationships with the parents and children. Day School Staff will:

1. Keep parents informed of the child's development.
2. Discuss events in the child's life with parents to foster a better understanding of the child.
3. Relate to the child as a person of worth. Through attitudes and actions the staff will show genuine concern and respect for each child.
4. Keep parents informed through use of individual notices, bulletin boards, daily/weekly notices, the Procure app, and through Day School publications.
5. Inform parents of outbreaks of disease within the class.
6. Follow the guidelines for discipline set forth in the Day School Operations and Personnel Policies and Manual.

OPERATIONS

5

Hours of Operation

The St. Stephen Presbyterian Day School office is open from 8:30 to 3:00 on Mondays and Wednesdays. Day School hours are 9:30 to 2:30. Rise & Shine begins at 8:30. A school calendar is published prior to the beginning of each school year.

The program follows the Fort Worth Independent School District's (FWISD) decisions regarding the opening and closing of school during inclement weather or emergency closings. If FWISD postpones opening to or after 10:00, the Day School will be closed. No refunds will be made, or make-up days offered.

Age/Ratio Requirements

The Day School serves children 4 months through Pre-K. To be eligible for enrollment in each class, the child must be the specified age on or before September 1st of the school year.

Roly Poly Room (babies ages 4m+): 2 teachers/6 students
Bumblebee Class (age 1 by Sept. 1): 2 teachers/10 students
Dragonfly Class (age 2 by Sept. 1): 2 teachers/12 students
Butterfly Class (age 3 by Sept. 1): 2 teachers/14 students
Firefly Class (age 4 by Sept. 1): 2 teachers/15 students

Admission Policy

Admission into the Day School is available to members and non-members of St. Stephen Presbyterian Church on a first come first serve basis with priority given to siblings of those currently enrolled, church members, and then to children and grandchildren of current staff.

Once classes are filled, those interested in the Day School may place their child's name on the waitlist. Siblings of current students, church member's children or grandchildren, and the children or grandchildren of current Day School staff will be placed at the top of the waitlist. If there is an opening in any class with no waitlist, the spot will be available to the first interested party. If this child has a sibling, the sibling will be placed at the top of the waitlist of his/her age grouping.

If a sibling, staff member, or non-church member declines an opening, the child's name will be removed from the waitlist unless the parents request that the name remain, wherein the name will be moved to the bottom of the waitlist. If a church member declines an opening, but it is requested that the child's name remain on the waitlist, the name will move below any other church member's child on the waitlist for that age group. The waitlist will consist of names in this order: (1) Siblings of current students; (2) Church Members; (3) Staff Members; and (4) Non-Church Members. ** If siblings do not take a space at age one, they are moved to the bottom of the preferential list for that age group and church members and children of staff who are on the waitlist will have priority.

Registration and Enrollment

A two-week pre-registration time is reserved for current students, siblings of current students, children of church members, and children of current staff. After that time, any openings will be filled from the waitlist and then available to the public. Enrollment is considered complete when all forms are filled out, signed, and submitted to the Day School. These forms include:

- Registration Form
- Child Information Form
- Medical Release Form
- Immunization Record
- Safe Sleep Form (Roly Poly Room)
- Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis
Emergency Plan

Withdrawal and Re-Enrollment

If there is a need to withdraw a child from the program, parents are requested to notify the Day School Director in writing 30 days in advance or one month's tuition will be due. To re-enter the program, the child must be re-enrolled.

Tuition and Fees

	Registration Fee	Supply Fee	Monthly Tuition
Non-Church Members	\$100.00	\$275.00	\$275.00
Church Members	\$100.00	\$265.00	\$265.00

Tuition is determined by the Day School Board and approved by the Session of St. Stephen Presbyterian Church. Rates are evaluated annually and adjusted as needed. In the event of a change, parents will be given advance notice.

Tuition is due on the 1st of each month and late after the 7th. Payments can be made in the Day School office or online. To determine the monthly tuition rate, the total tuition for the school year is determined and then divided into nine equal payments. Therefore, the amount due is the same each month regardless of the number of program days in each month.

No deduction in tuition is made when a child is absent, on vacation, or sent home sick. School closings for inclement weather or emergency closings will not be rescheduled. A calendar of events, specifying scheduled holidays, in-service days, and breaks is provided to every family and is available on the Day School webpage.

Registration Fee: A non-refundable Registration Fee of \$100 per family is due at the time of registration and guarantees a spot for the child in the Fall.

Supply Fee: The Supply Fee is due on or before August 1st and is non-refundable after August 31st. The Supply Fee will be pro-rated for families who enroll during the school year.

Late Tuition Fee: A \$10.00 late fee will be charged if payment is received after the 7th of the month, with an additional charge of \$5.00 for each subsequent week tuition is late. If a tuition check is returned, the Day School Director will contact the parents and request the payment be made by different means, plus any fees incurred by the Day School.

Late Pick-Up Fee: If a child is picked up late, the parent is charged \$10.00 for the first 10 minutes, assessed at 2:40, plus \$1 per minute thereafter. Late fees will be processed through Procure.

St. Stephen Presbyterian Church Grounds and Parking

Parents are expected to observe the parking guidelines for the St. Stephen Presbyterian Church parking lots. Please do not park in handicap spots without the proper designation. The reserved Day School parking spot will be raffled off at the beginning of each school year. Please drive slowly and carefully in the parking lot.

When entering and exiting the Day School, parents should keep their child with them or in their line of sight at all times. Absolutely no one should play on or near the grates outside the sanctuary. Please remind children to be respectful of the church grounds and property and do not allow children to climb the trees.

Entrance to the Facility

During operational hours, all exterior doors of St. Stephen Presbyterian Church will remain locked. All doors to the Day School will be locked 15 minutes after school begins and unlocked 15 minutes before dismissal. If a parent should need access to the Day School, the intercom system may be used to request entry. All visitors and volunteers must check in at the Day School office.

Persons Approved to Pick Up a Child

All registration forms must be complete and on file in the Day School office prior to the child attending school. The information on the Registration Form must include a list of parent(s)/guardian(s), emergency contacts, and all other designated drivers (carpool drivers, relatives, or friends) who might assume responsibility of the child.

If changes or additions to the Registration Form need to be made, please call the Day School office or email the Day School Director. Children will only be released to those people who are listed on the Registration Form. Anyone picking up for the first time, other than the child's parents, will be asked to show picture identification. The Day School Director must authorize emergency last-minute changes of the designated pick-up person.

In the event of a family in which there is a non-custodial parent, a copy of the custody and visitation papers are required to be on file in the Day School office.

Drop-Off, Pick-Up, and Late Arrivals

It is important that parents bring and pick up children at the designated times. This helps build self-confidence and ensures the smooth operation of the program. For the safety and security of the children in the program, a parent or guardian must sign each child in and out every day using the Procure app. To allow for a smoother transition into the classroom for all students, non-enrolled children and adults other than guardians are discouraged from entering the classroom.

As soon as a parent knows he/she will be late for pick-up, an attempt to contact the Day School Director or the child's teacher should be made. If a child is picked up late, the parent is charged \$10.00 for the first 10 minutes, assessed at 2:40, plus \$1 per minute thereafter. Late fees will be processed through the Procure app.

Visiting the Day School

Parents are welcome to observe the program at any time. Any person visiting the program must check in at the Day School office and must be accompanied by a Day School staff member for the duration of the visit.

The Day School is a WELL CHILD facility. If you suspect your child is sick or may be coming down with an illness, the child must remain home to prevent the spread of infection. Please do not administer a fever reducing medication prior to sending a child to school.

Day School staff and children are encouraged to practice healthy behaviors. Tissues and hand soap are available in all classrooms and hand sanitizer is used if hand washing is not possible (children ages 2+). Frequently touched surfaces are cleaned routinely and items are sanitized in accordance with health department guidelines.

Immunization Policy

Upon enrollment, each child is required to submit the Medical Release Form signed by the child's licensed physician (M.D. or D.O.) authorized to practice in the State of Texas, including the physician's license number. This form must be updated annually. The Medical Release Form is made available in the enrollment packet.

Also upon enrollment, each child shall be immunized against certain vaccine-preventable diseases as required by the Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS; the Required Vaccinations). Visit the Texas Department of State Health Services website for additional information.

Each child shall show acceptable evidence of the Required Vaccinations annually and/or as vaccines are received during the school year. The following documentation constitutes acceptable evidence:

- 1) Documentation of vaccines administered that include the signature or stamp of a physician or his/her designee, or public health personnel;
- 2) An official immunization record generated from a state or local health authority; and
- 3) An official record received from school officials, including a record from another state.

Exclusions from compliance are allowable in Texas for public school students for certain reasons. However, SSPDS shall deny enrollment to any student or prospective student who is considered excluded from compliance for any reason other than medical exemption. In order to claim a medical exemption, a student must have a letter from his or her licensed physician (M.D. or D.O.) authorized to practice in the State of Texas, including the physician's license number, stating that the Required Vaccine(s) would be medically contraindicated. This letter must be updated annually prior to the start of the school year. Students who receive such exemptions may be excluded from school during periods of emergency or epidemic as declared by SSPDS in consultation with local health authorities.

Exemptions for Reasons of Conscience, which may be permissible for attendance in public schools, do not qualify as an exemption for enrollment at SSPDS. (See Atty. Gen. Op. GA-0420).

Illness and Communicable Diseases

To preserve a healthy environment, parents should notify the Day School if the child contracts, or is exposed to, a contagious disease while in attendance. Children should not be sent to school with a fever or other signs of illness and should remain at home for 24 hours after having a temperature of 100.0° or higher. When a child becomes ill at school, the parents are notified and are expected to pick up the child immediately.

Accidents and Medical Emergencies

A first aid kit is kept in the Day School office for cuts and scrapes. Parents will be provided an Incident/Illness Report in the case of illness or injury. The staff member who witnessed the incident will complete the report, which will be signed by the Day School Director.

If an accident requires transporting to an emergency room, 911 will be contacted immediately. Parents or the emergency contact will be notified immediately in the case that emergency care is required. An AED device is located near the southwest entrance of the Education Building, adjacent to Parish Hall.

Epinephrine and Allergic Reactions

The Day School staff will administer epinephrine or allergy medication in an emergency. Parents should note any medical conditions or special situations on their child's Registration Form; notes will be kept in the classroom folder for the teachers' reference.

If your child requires epinephrine or medication, an Allergy Action Plan must be submitted with a photo of your child attached. The medication will be registered in the Day School office and placed in a paper sack with the Allergy Action Plan; the sack and plan will remain in the child's classroom out of children's reach.

Medication

If you have given your child any medication before coming to school, please inform your child's teacher at drop-off.

SSPDS prefers not to administer medication to a child; however, if a parent finds it necessary, the Day School Director must be consulted, and a Medication Authorization Form must be completed. The Director must administer any necessary medication in the Day School office, where record of the medicine administration will be kept.

- Prescription medicine must be in the original container and labeled with the child's name, date, directions, and physician's name.
- Nonprescription medicine must be labeled with the child's name and date brought to school and must be in the original container.
- Under no circumstances may medicine be sent to school in a child's backpack or lunch box.
- As there are no facilities for locking up medications overnight, the parent must pick up the container at the end of the day.

Abuse and Neglect Reporting

Day School employees are required by law to contact the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (“DFPS”) to report suspected abuse or neglect of a child. In the event of suspected abuse or neglect, it is the responsibility of the Day School employee to contact the DFPS. Day School employees are not required to discuss suspicions with parents prior to filing a report to DFPS, nor are they required to investigate the cause of suspicious marks, behavior, or condition prior to making a report.

As mandatory reporters, Day School employees cannot be held liable for reports made to DFPS that are determined to be unsubstantiated, provided the report was made in “good faith.”

Per DFPS requirements, Day School Employees are required to complete annual training focused on prevention, recognition, and reporting of child abuse and neglect, including:

1. Factors indicating a child is at risk for abuse and neglect;
2. Warning signs indicating a child may be a victim of abuse and neglect;
3. Methods for increasing awareness of prevention techniques; and
4. Community organizations that have assistance and intervention programs.

A parent/guardian of a child who is the victim of abuse or neglect should call the child abuse hotline at 800-252-5400 or visit the Texas Abuse Hotline website <https://www.txabusehotline.org/login/default.aspx>.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

11

Emergency Drills

Fire and severe weather drills will be discussed with children and performed each semester. Day School employees will be trained in fire, severe weather, evacuation, and lock-down procedures. Evacuation plans are posted in each classroom. Children in the Roly Poly Room will be evacuated using a stroller or evacuation cribs. All other children will exit the building with Day School employees and assemble on the far side of the front lawn. In the event of emergency sirens or tornado warning, children will be moved to the hallway or a lower level of the church.

Communication

The Day School will utilize the Procure app for quickly informing families of an urgent message. Please be sure you are familiar with the Procure app. E-mail will be utilized whenever possible as an additional method of communication.

Families will be contacted if a child is absent from class to check on the child and monitor for increased illness within the school.

Lunchtime

Children will bring their own lunch and non-carbonated beverage to the Day School every day. Lunches should be an appropriate serving size for the child and should contain foods that the child enjoys eating. Please keep it simple; lunchtime should not be a time to try new foods.

Please make sure all containers, icepacks, water bottles, and utensils are labeled with your child's name. Glass containers are not permitted.

ALL FOOD MUST BE CUT INTO BITE-SIZE PIECES (especially hot dogs, baby carrots, grapes, cherry tomatoes, and chunks of meat and cheese).

There is no refrigeration or heating of meals in a microwave (except for the Roly Poly Room); it is recommended that a cold pack be used in lunchboxes for foods that need to be kept cold. Children are encouraged to open containers independently. However, staff will assist if needed. Please consider using a bento box-style container for your child's lunch to reduce the number of items that need to be opened.

Staff will encourage children to eat their main entrée first, followed by healthy snacks, and then dessert (if included). At the end of lunch, all opened containers (i.e., opened juice containers, yogurt, applesauce) will be thrown away. Partial or uneaten food will remain in the lunch container so the parent can see what the child has eaten.

Naptime and Sleep

Except for the Firefly Class, children are offered the opportunity to sleep each afternoon after lunch. A sanitized nap mat is provided by the Day School for children sleeping outside of a crib. Parents may send one small blanket and a fitted crib sheet. These items must fit inside the child's backpack when zipped up. Personal belongings will be stored in cubbies and sent home on Wednesdays only. It is the responsibility of the family to wash naptime linens each week.

Children in the Roly Poly Room can sleep, as needed, during the school day. These parents must sign the Safe Sleep form. Infants must be laid down on their backs without swaddles, blankets or other loose items on a firm mattress with a clean, tight fitting sheet.

Clothing and Personal Items

Children should be dressed comfortably for messy, active play. Tennis shoes are recommended. Children will go outside daily, weather permitting. Please provide appropriate clothing including a light jacket or coat in cooler weather. All outdoor clothing must be clearly marked with the child's name. The Day School is not responsible for lost/damaged clothing. Please dress children who are not toilet trained in clothing that will easily accommodate diaper changing. Children who are using the restroom independently should be able to pull up/down clothing with little assistance. All students should have available in their school cubby extra clothes in case of an accident.

Extra Clothing

Children must have multiple changes of clothing kept at the Day School. New guidelines recommend more frequent clothing changes when/if the clothing is soiled. Please provide two complete sets of appropriately sized clothing, stored in separate Ziploc style bags and clearly labeled. These will be stored at the Day School and sent home as necessary. All clothes and other personal items should be labeled with the child's name.

Diapers

Packs of diapers may be stored in your child's classroom at the Day School. Each package must be labeled with the child's name.

Valuable Items

Children should not bring items considered to be of great monetary or sentimental value.

Weapons

Guns, swords and/or any toy that resembles a weapon are not permitted on the premises. St. Stephen Presbyterian Church is a house of peace where children are encouraged to problem solve through positive role modeling and cooperative methods of play.

SPECIAL OCCASIONS**13****Field Trips**

Field trips are occasionally scheduled for children in the Butterfly and Firefly classes. Each time a field trip is scheduled, parents will be notified in writing of the destination, time to be away from the school, and of any costs associated with the trip. Only children whose parents have signed and turned in a permission slip may attend a field trip. If, for some reason, your child may not participate, other arrangements must be made ahead of time. Alternate care will not be available at the Day School.

Parent volunteers who have been approved by the Day School Director will provide transportation. Volunteer drivers will be required to have a valid driver's license, proof of insurance, and must be listed as an emergency contact for each child whom they are transporting. The Day School does not provide transportation. Parents whose children are transported by volunteers will provide an appropriate child safety seat and install it in the vehicle, or approve their child to ride in a previously installed child safety seat in the vehicle.

Siblings of children attending a field trip will not be allowed to attend the field trip without permission from the Day School Director.

Birthdays

Celebrating a child's birthday with a special treat is welcomed with the consent of the teachers. **All edible items are required to be sealed and store-bought or from a commercial bakery.** Parents are asked to schedule with the classroom teacher at least two weeks in advance. This allows the teacher time to notify parents whose children have food allergies, allowing those parents to bring an allergy-friendly treat for their own child.

Celebrations

Special activities or class parties are scheduled for these holidays: Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's, and Easter. Details about each event will be shared in advance.

DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE POLICY

14

The discipline and guidance policy for the Day School is the Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapters 746 and 747, Subchapters L, Discipline and Guidance and is included here.

Discipline must be:

1. Individualized and consistent for each child;
2. Appropriate to the child's level of understanding;
3. Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control

A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include at least all of the following:

1. Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
2. Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
3. Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
4. Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per one year of the child's age.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

1. Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment
2. Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
3. Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;
4. Hitting a child with a hand or instrument;
5. Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
6. Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
7. Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
8. Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet; and
9. Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age

If very difficult behavior occurs where the child does not respond to redirection, a brief, supervised separation from the group may be used either in or outside the classroom. Should further guidance be necessary, parents may be asked to pick up the child from school. On rare occasions, the Day School Director reserves the right to counsel with parents and possibly remove the child from the Day School either temporarily or permanently. The Day School Staff want to partner with families to create a positive school experience for all children.

DISMISSAL FROM THE PROGRAM

15

A child's enrollment may be terminated for any of the following reasons:

1. Tuition Payment is delinquent or not paid.
2. The Day School policies are not followed.
3. The student repeatedly displays unacceptable behavior that affects the morale of the program.
4. A change in the student's health, mental or physical condition requires services beyond what the program can provide.

Chronic problems will be documented. When the problem becomes serious, the Day School Director notifies the parents in writing and in conference. A follow up conference will be set and progress evaluated. If the parents are dissatisfied with the Director's recommendation or request for dismissal, they may request evaluation by the Day School Board and the Education Committee.

PARENT CONCERNS, QUESTIONS, OR COMPLAINTS

15

Parents who have a concern about any aspect of their child's development or classroom experience should first contact the child's classroom teacher. If the parent does not think the teacher has satisfied the concern, or if the parent would like further information or clarification, the parent should contact the Day School Director. If the parent is still not satisfied after meeting with the Day School Director, the parent may, with or without the Director's knowledge, contact the Director of Christian Education or the Day School Board Moderator.

If a parent has specific concerns regarding a Day School employee and does not feel comfortable addressing the issue directly with the employee, the parent should bring the concern to the Day School Director or the Director of Christian Education. The Day School Director or the Director of Christian Education will work to resolve the issue with the parent and the Day School employee in a fair and reasonable manner. Issues that cannot be resolved through these means will be elevated to the Day School Board.