
Lower School

The Lower School section of the Parent-Student Handbook contains pertinent information for all Lower School families. In addition to this handbook, more specific rules and procedures will be sent home during the first week of school. Parents and children are expected to go over these rules together after which each parent and child must sign and return a statement indicating that this process has occurred.

ATTENDANCE

Absence Policies

- School begins promptly each day at 8:05 a.m. If your child is ill or will not be attending school, please call the Lower School Office by 9:00 a.m. The Lower School secretary will call you if we haven't heard from you by 10:00 a.m. Also, please call the Office if your child will be late in the morning. We require notes from home explaining your child's absence upon his or her return to school; these notes should be given to your child's teacher.

- Parents are asked to schedule doctor and dental appointments, etc., at times that will not conflict with school hours. However, if no other arrangements can be made, parents should send a written explanation explaining the student's absence before the beginning of class. If it should be necessary to pick up a student before dismissal of class, parents should check in with the Lower School secretary rather than going directly to the child's class. The parent must remain in the office until the teacher is notified by the Lower School office staff to send the student to the office.

- We discourage families from taking their children out during the school year for family trips because it interrupts their school routine. We believe that much important instruction and class activity will be forfeited by your child's absence. We understand that there are times that such trips are unavoidable. When you know that your child will be gone from school for several days, please notify the Lower School Principal and your child's teacher. The teachers are generally unable to provide assignments ahead of time, but, when they can, they will make suggestions in regard to make-up work. Please do not expect the teacher to tutor your child upon his/her return to school.

As most special classes are scheduled at the end of the day and P.A. systems are not in place in all these rooms, it is almost impossible to retrieve students in a timely manner after 2:15. The Lower School secretary cannot be away from the office at this critical time of day; therefore, we ask that parents in need of picking their children up early do so by calling ahead and signing them out no later than 2:15.

Excused Absence

In the Lower School, daily homework assignments may be picked up after school if a request is made to the Lower School secretary by 9:00 a.m.

Unexcused Absence

Unexcused absences, such as for family trips, visits to Disneyland, etc., will be noted separately on report cards.

⋮

HL2

Tardiness

Lower School students must report to the Lower School Office with a note from home. A student arriving after 8:05 a.m. or during Chapel is marked tardy. Medical and tutorial appointments are exempt.

CURRICULUM/GRADING SYSTEM

The subjects studied in Lower School are the following: Reading and Literature, Language, Spelling, Handwriting, Social Studies, Science, Mathematics, Physical Education, Health and Safety, Art and Music, Chapel, Spanish, Christian Life Skills, and Computer Education. In addition to their regular classroom academics with their primary teacher, Lower School students have Art, Music, Spanish, Computer Education, Science, and Physical Education with an enrichment teacher two to three times a week depending on the grade level.

Enrichment Classes

Students of unusual skill and intelligence participate in enrichment activities. Students working at accelerated levels must still show periodic proficiency in current classroom material. Texts from the next grade level are not to be used for enrichment purposes.

Homework

Homework is an integral part of the St. Margaret's curriculum as it frees in-class time for instruction and enriched programs and instills life-long learning patterns and responsibility.

Students in grades one and two generally have 15–30 minutes of assigned homework several nights a week. In grades three through five, students should expect 30–60 minutes of homework each night. With the exception of unfinished class work or long-term assignments, homework is not given on weekends.

When a student is absent, a parent should call the Lower School Office to ask for homework assignments, which can be picked up in the Office anytime after 2:00 that afternoon. We are unable to fax these assignments.

Quizzes and Tests

Quizzes and tests are scheduled throughout the year as deemed advisable by the teacher.

ERB Testing

All students in the Lower School are mandated by the California Association of Independent Schools to take the Educational Records Bureau (ERB) exams biannually; at St. Margaret's, they are given annually beginning in second grade. These tests are administered nationally to students at most member schools of the National Association of Independent Schools, as well as some suburban public elementary schools. Our students typically score at or above the median of this selective group of schools.

Kindergarten Screening

Our children in the four and five-year-old Preschool classes participate in Kindergarten screening, which is conducted by an outside group of educational specialists. The purpose is to determine the children's readiness for Kindergarten and to ascertain potential strengths and weaknesses. The screening is accomplished during school hours in the Early Childhood Education Center of St. Margaret's.

Grading System

Kindergarten - Grade 2: Kindergarten skills are evaluated with Mastered and Being Mastered. First and second grade students receive evaluations of Excellent, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory, or Needs Improvement.

The following outline indicates the plan of marking Lower School students' report cards.

E – Excellent. Indicates outstanding achievement and excellent work done. Shows personal initiative and quality work.

S – Satisfactory. Indicates good achievement. Pupil is attentive, responsive, and careful to turn in his/her work fully completed and on time. Work is acceptable for grade level.

N – Needs improvement. Work is generally not up to grade level, not completed fully, or not turned in on time. Attitude and/or work habits may be below expectations.

U – Unsatisfactory. Indicates failure to produce quality work. This is a failing mark because of unsatisfactory effort. In cases in which all possible effort is being made by the pupil, the general welfare of the pupil should be the first consideration.

4 – An area of concern. This symbol is used primarily on report cards in Kindergarten and grades 1 and 2. A skill may be below grade level or below expectation and is in need of particular attention.

Beginning with the third grade level, students earn a letter grade in each subject of study, as well as a separate effort grade in citizenship.

E	Excellent	N	Needs improvement
S	Satisfactory	U	Unsatisfactory effort

All grade evaluations are based on the St. Margaret's Episcopal School percentile grade scale:

- 90 - 100 = A
- 80 - 89 = B
- 70 - 79 = C
- 60 - 69 = D
- 0 - 59 = F

Report Cards

Report cards are distributed every nine weeks with mid-period reports issued at five weeks, as necessary, to forewarn students and parents of any areas needing improvement. Pluses and minuses may be used on report cards.

Report cards are given to parents after the first-quarter teacher conference. Thereafter, quarterly report cards are sent home with the student to be reviewed, signed, and returned.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

A formal conference time is set aside in November, after the completion of the first quarter, to discuss report cards, the children's progress, and any concerns. The conferences usually take between 15 and 30 minutes and are generally scheduled to coincide with ERB testing. Other conferences are held often during the year, particularly when a concern arises.

HANDBOOK—
LOWER SCHOOL

UNIFORMS

Boys

- Plain white knit shirt; navy shorts or pants; red sweater with emblem (see note).
- Optional: Long sleeve white knit shirt or turtleneck in winter, hooded or crew neck SMES red sweatshirt, red SMES jacket.
- Fifth Grade Privilege: Red v-neck sweater with emblem,
- (see note) official Tartan hooded sweatshirt, which may be worn everyday to class and only on Friday to Chapel.

Girls Kindergarten – Fourth Grade

- White blouse with Peter Pan collar; blue pinfeather jumper until Thanksgiving holiday and spring, red plaid jumper in winter; red sweater with emblem (*see note).

- Optional: Plain white turtleneck in winter, hooded or crew neck SMES red sweatshirt, red SMES jacket.

Fifth Grade Girls

White knit shirt; blue pinfeather skirt until Thanksgiving holiday and after date in spring that is noted on calendar, red plaid skirt in winter; red v-neck sweater with emblem (*see note).

- Optional: Long sleeve white knit shirt or white turtleneck in winter.
- Fifth Grade Privilege: Official Tartan hooded sweatshirt which may be worn everyday to class and only on Thursday to Chapel.

Please note

Red sweaters must be worn to Chapel everyday, with the exceptions of Free Dress, and, for 5th graders, who may wear hooded sweatshirts on Fridays only. Crew neck or hooded red SMES sweatshirts and red SMES jacket may be worn at school by K-4 students during the day on the playground and before and after school, but not to Chapel or class. In cold weather, jackets may be worn outside but they should not cover the red sweater for Chapel unless it is extremely cold or raining.

Shoes

The only acceptable shoes are red, white, navy, brown, or black athletic shoes (non-marking). Boots, party shoes, jellies, and sandals are inappropriate and not permitted. No heel on any shoe may be more than 1/2 inch. For P.E., the athletic shoes must be flat, and it is recommended that the student wear the same shoe for school and for P.E.

Boys and Girls P.E. Uniforms

SMES navy P.E. shorts; House League t-shirt, which may be purchased at the Bookstore about the second week of school; red sweatshirt and red sweat pants, which may be purchased at the Bookstore the second week of October; flat athletic shoes, with laces or velcro, same as worn with uniform. P.E. clothes may not be worn to Chapel except on track and field days in the spring and special House League award days, which will be announced. Students must come to school in their regular uniforms and change into P.E. clothes later, although they may wear their P.E. shorts and shirts under their regular uniform if it looks appropriate and is comfortable for the child. Students are expected to change back into their regular uniform after P.E, except for Kindergartners.

Accessories

Socks and hair ribbons should always be in school colors—red, navy, and/or white. Seasonal socks may be worn on the day of the holiday and the preceding week. Also, tights are permissible (red, white, and navy). Girls' earrings should be studs, as dangling earrings are unsafe. Necklaces are inappropriate except for a religious symbol on a small chain worn inside the shirt. Consideration must be given when wearing watches that alarms are not set to go off.

Hair

Girls' and boys' hair must be neat, clean, and conservative in style. Hair should not be distracting. Boys' hair must not hang below the collar. No dyed or bleached hair.

In General

Uniforms shirts/blouses are expected to be tucked in at all times. Red sweaters are to be worn to chapel every morning even over P.E. clothes on the special days. Free dress days are the exception. Those days will be announced a week ahead of time.

Girls' skirts must not be more than four inches above the middle of the knee. Regular boys' uniform shorts are to fit at the waist and be above the knee in length. They are not to be a size bigger or purposely baggy.

Forms for Monogramming Guidelines are available in the Bookstore and the Lower School Office.

On free dress days, students should not wear sandals or open-toed shoes or shoes with heels higher than 1/2 inch; athletic shoes or other sturdy shoes are recommended. Girls should not wear halter tops. The red sweater is not required for Chapel on free dress days.

*The school's emblem may be purchased from the Bookstore or True Grits Uniform Company. It is to be sewn on the sweater over the heart.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Philosophy

St. Margaret's Episcopal School is proud of its students and their behavior. High standards are set both academically and behaviorally, and the vast majority of our children are able to attain these standards. Students and teachers follow clear standards of behavior through a school-wide discipline plan. These standards are designed to create a positive learning environment by encouraging all students to behave in such a manner that they will be a credit to themselves, their parents, and St. Margaret's Episcopal School.

All students are expected to comply with the following behavioral guidelines:

General School Expectations

- Respect yourself. Be proud of yourself and your accomplishments. Strive for the best in whatever you do. Be honest and do not blame others for your own mistakes.
- Be respectful of teachers or any adult at St. Margaret's Episcopal School. Do not talk back or defy authority.
- Establish good classroom conduct; follow the class rules established by your teacher.
- Be courteous and considerate of others at all times. Treat others as you would like to be treated.
- Be responsible for yourself and your belongings.
- Be loyal and respectful toward your school. Always respect and take care of school property.
- Each teacher's classroom rules and consequences are appropriate for her/his class situation. Those rules are clearly articulated during the beginning of the school year and throughout the year by each teacher.
- Benching: A student may be benched during recess for rough play, inappropriate behavior, non-compliance to rules, or for failure to follow classroom rules.
- In-house suspension sometimes occurs when a full-day suspension is not called for or parents are unable to be home with their child on the day of the suspension. In such a case, the student does his/her schoolwork in the Lower School Office and does not participate in recesses or special events during that day.

Suspension and Expulsion

A student may be subject to suspension or expulsion at the discretion of the Principal for any conduct generally detrimental to the well-being or reputation of the school; this holds true not only on campus but also at school-sponsored activities off campus.

Possession, use, or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs at school or at school-sponsored and/or chaperoned functions, theft, vandalism, continued disobedience or inappropriate or mean-spirited behavior may result in expulsion from SMES.

Supervision

Students should arrive between 7:45 and 8:05 a.m.. Students may not play on the playground prior to the arrival of the supervisor. If for some reason, such as a parent conference, a child is on the grounds before 7:45 a.m., he/she must go to the before-school daycare room, located in the Lower School workroom. The early morning daycare room is available from 7:10 until 7:45. No one may play until the supervisor appears. An assigned teacher supervises from 7:45 until 8:05 when the whistle blows.

Students may not play on the LS playground after school at all as there is no supervision, unless they are with the Daycare Director or the Funsports Director and are enrolled in one or both.

Lunch and Snacks

Neither snacks or lunch are provided by the school, and there are no food-dispensing machines on campus. The PTF offers a Hot Lunch Program on a subscription basis.

Community Service

In September, students work on various service learning opportunities in their Chapels and Christian Life Skills classes. These have included Head Start families, food and clothing drives, Valentine vases for the elderly, service opportunities with St. Timothy's, our sister school in Episcopal education, and letters to the elderly and our military abroad.

Parties

- Procedures for room parties will be planned by the individual teacher and parents. Traditional class party dates are Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, and end of the year. Easter parties are discouraged because of the solemn nature of Holy Week. In order to minimize interruptions and distractions during the school day, we ask that children's birthdays be celebrated at school only in Chapel.

- We request that, if you are giving a party for your child at your home, invitations not be distributed at school. If more than four or five children from your child's class are being invited to the party, we strongly recommend that all the boys for your son's party or all the girls for your daughter's party be invited from the class (not from the entire grade, however), rather than leaving out a few children.

- St. Margaret's Episcopal School observes a closed campus rule. Students are not allowed to leave the grounds once they arrive except for approved reasons.

- Lower School texts are purchased by the school and distributed to the students. Texts are subject to annual evaluation and review. A few supplemental reading and reference books will be purchased by families.

Field Trips

- All trips are arranged by the individual teachers. Permission slips are to be taken home by the children, signed by the parent, and returned to the teacher. Students must return these slips. A permission slip is needed for each field trip. The cost of the trip is divided evenly among the children. Bus (or occasionally train and plane) or

private cars are used for transportation. Parent drivers must furnish proof of insurance and have adequate seat belts for each person in the car.

- If parents are driving their own children to a field trip, rather than having them travel on the school-provided bus, they must be responsible for their children during the entire event and should not drive any other children from the class to the event. If parents are accompanying the class on a field trip, they should not bring younger siblings on the event.

- Full uniforms must be worn on all field trips (unless inappropriate, as on a beach trip), and students will be reminded that they need to represent St. Margaret's Episcopal School at its best.

After School Clubs

The Lower School offers the following after-school clubs: art, choir, chess, computer, cooking, dance, drama, foreign language, homework, math, science, fun sports, and intramural sports. For information regarding these clubs, please contact the Lower School office.

Extended Day Care

Lower School (Grades 1-5): Please contact the Extended Care administrator at ext. 208. You may pick up registration forms from the Lower School Office or download and print from www.smes.org.

Registration fee—\$25 per family per year.

Charges—\$5.00 per hour per child.

Hours: 7:10-7:45 a.m. and 3:00-6:00 p.m.

Hours on Minimum Days: 11:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Students are provided the opportunity to work on homework, play games, read, watch videos, or play on the playground. Please note: Kindergarten students may enroll in the Preschool and Kindergarten Extended Day Care—see Preschool section.

ATHLETICS/PHYSICAL EDUCATION HOUSE LEAGUES

Our House Leagues system was begun by a previous Lower School P.E. athletic director, who was familiar with this British system of establishing long-standing teams and encouraging team spirit and support throughout the grades. When a child enters Lower School, he/she is placed on one of the four House League teams: Belmont (red), Carlton (yellow), Oxford (green), or York (blue). A child will usually belong to

the same House League team throughout her/his time in the Lower School and often will belong to the same House League as her/his sibling. Children play on teams in P.E. with the same children who are in their House Leagues, and they earn points for their all-school House League through service and outstanding citizenship. Points are announced each month in Chapel. Leading and winning teams receive rewards, such as free dress days.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Back-to-School Night

Back-to-School Night is held during the first two weeks of school. It is an occasion to meet your child's teachers and learn about their plans for the year. It is not a time for individual conferencing. You will also meet the room parents for your child's classroom and have an opportunity to sign up for parent responsibilities and activities, such as field trips, during the year. Additionally, you will have a chance to make an appointment for first quarter conference with the teacher to discuss the first report card and your child's progress. The program begins in the school gym at 6:00 p.m. and then moves to the teachers' classrooms. This is an evening for adults only.

School Pictures

Pictures of your child and your child's class are taken during the first month of school. Be sure your child is in full uniform on that day. If for any reason he or she cannot be at school on the appointed day, there will be a make-up day the next month. The pictures are usually back in late November. You will be receiving more information during the first two weeks of school.

Tartan Trot

A special event for Lower School students is the jog-a-thon, which we call the Tartan Trot. Children in Lower School are the trotters, and the Middle and Upper School cheerleaders are often in attendance to offer cheers, water, and support.

Tartan Faire

The Tartan Faire is a friend-raising, carnival-type event for the entire school community. Beginning in the early afternoon, the Tartan Faire offers age-appropriate game booths and activities for all students. The food booths as well as some game booths are run by Middle and Upper School students in an effort to raise funds for their classes. Participation at the game booths is by ticket(s), which may be purchased pre-sale or on the day of the Faire. All food is purchased with cash. The day is highlighted by the participation of the instrumental music and dance classes, as well as athletic contests involving the Middle School sports teams. Kids of all ages love this festive day!

Homecoming

Homecoming is an all-school event at St. Margaret's. Lower School as well as Middle and Upper School students are part of the cheering and halftime festivities.

Lower School Christmas Service

Our Christmas Service, which is a traditional Episcopal service of lessons and carols, is presented during the week preceding Christmas vacation. All the Lower School students are performers in our program—as singers, speakers, dancers, and members of the Nativity story. Families are invited to attend either the afternoon or evening performances, but, in the interest of space demands, we ask that parents attend only one performance. Picture-taking and videos are limited to the afternoon program only.

Lower School Open House

Our Open House is held in the evening during the spring. Children and their families are invited to visit the classrooms to view work and special projects. This is an informal evening and a good opportunity to see the work the students may have been telling their families about during the year.

Grandparents' and Special Friends' Day

Grandparents' and Special Friends' Day is traditionally held on the first or second Friday in May. The day includes a special program in the gym and visits to the classroom. Grandparents, relatives, neighbors, or older friends are always welcome. We ask that, in the interest of space and parking considerations, parents not come on this day. Lower School students are dismissed at noon so they may spend the rest of the day with their guests.

Talent Show

Any student in Kindergarten through fifth grade is invited to audition and participate in the Talent Show. No act should be more than two minutes in length, and no one may be in more than one performance. Talent varies from serious musical selections to dancing, comedy skits, and dramatic readings. The Talent Show is held in the school gym during the last week of school, and all parents are invited.

Traditional Class Events

Specific class events, such as Africa Day, Beatrix Potter Day, Pioneer Day, the Sacramento trip, etc., will be explained by classroom teachers at Back-to-School Night.

Tartan of the Month

Once a month, two or three students from each class are honored with Tartan awards. They may have distinguished themselves for academic achievement, citizenship, or some other particular contribution to their class or school. During the course of the year, each student will have the opportunity to receive an award. Parents are especially invited to attend Chapel on the day their child will receive this award.

Birthday Blessings

Your child will receive a special blessing in Chapel on the day of his or her birthday. Parents are invited to come and participate on that day.

HANDBOOK—
LOWER SCHOOL