

THE VINE SCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK

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FORWARD

This handbook is an outline of policies and procedures but does not encompass every circumstance. Therefore, the school is not limited to what is written in the handbook and reserves the right to develop policies and procedures as needed to provide an appropriate environment.

Communication among parents and staff is encouraged. If we are made aware that a concern exists, we can deal with it in a mutually satisfying manner. If we are unaware of a concern, we are powerless to address it. This can affect the functioning of the school and the students' learning. Clear and open communication among parents and staff is encouraged and promoted.

Group pictures and individual pictures are used in The Annual Newsletter, The Vine School Facebook page and our website for publicity purposes and to enhance the learning environment. Should you NOT want your child's picture, or a group picture that includes your child, to be used by the school or a public entity, please make sure to indicate this in the enrollment packet (see media release).

Please read through this handbook carefully and return the signed section acknowledging that you have received and read the Parent/Student Handbook.

GENERAL INFORMATION

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to create a customized learning environment and use specialized teaching methods to serve children two through eighteen affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders and related Communication Disorders.

PURPOSE AND AIMS

We believe in using a multisensory curriculum that addresses the social and language challenges children with Autism encounter. A low student to teacher ratio is essential to achieving this goal. Our specialized learning environment combined with our unique approach will nurture your child's special needs.

We are committed to the following aims:

- Providing a safe and nurturing environment for our students to learn meaningful social interactions;
- Providing a multisensory curriculum in order to teach children with Autism most effectively;
- Small teacher to student ratios
- Individualized education plans for each student;
- Providing community education and public awareness about Autism and related disorders;
- Maintain affordability so that new students, teachers and aides can be attracted and retained.

HISTORY OF THE VINE SCHOOL

The Vine School was developed by Erin Hatley and John and Melody Handley in March 2008. The Vine School was created to fill a need for an appropriate place to education children with Autism in the Victoria area.

STRUCTURE OF THE VINE SCHOOL

A Board of Directors serves as a major governing body of the School. The Board is elected to 3 year terms. The Board makes policy decisions and works through committees. The Director of The Vine School serves as an ex-officio (non-voting) member of the Board of Directors.

THE VINE SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Erin Hatley –Ex-officio Member, Executive Director

Meredith Potts - Ex -officio Member, The Bridge Program at The Vine School

John Handley – President

Keith Henke –Treasurer

Carole Oliphant – Secretary

Lynn Gisler - Member

Clayton Johnson – Member

Kristy Nelson –Member

Glen Dry - Member

Jill Fox – Member

Tom Stocker –Member

Melody Handley - Member

Brenda Tally - Member

Patty Zapalac - Member

PROCEDURES FOR ADVERSARY SITUATIONS

The final authority at The Vine School is the Board of Directors. The Director of School is given the responsibility and the authority by the Board to run the school. The Board is responsible for evaluating the performance of the Director of School.

The acceptance or hiring, promotion, retaining, and dismissing staff, and faculty is the responsibility of Director of School.

In any situation where a difference of opinion arises with the Director of School decision, you may bring the matter to the President of the Board of Directors in writing.

Parents and members of the community may attend and/or present at the Board of Directors meeting with prior permission from the President of the Board of Directors.

ADMISSIONS

The Vine School strives to maintain the appropriate environment in which to create a functional learning experience for children with moderate to high functioning Autism. Parents are invited to make an appointment to visit the school and observe the classroom so they will be able to make an informed decision on whether or not The Vine School is an appropriate placement for their child. An initial screening is then conducted to determine each child's eligibility for admission including:

1. Review of formal diagnosis from a developmental pediatrician or diagnostician
2. Informal evaluation of the child through observation at home and school setting.
3. Parent interview
4. Review detailed application information
5. Review of relevant developmental history

Every child who is admitted must have a completed medical examination including detailed pediatric evaluations as well as hearing assessments and a vision assessment.

NOTE: No child deemed by The Vine School administration to be a serious safety threat to themselves, or others, shall be enrolled.

Please read your enrollment application carefully. We consider the enrollment and re-enrollment agreements legal and binding.

EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

Assessment

Each child will be assessed through a comprehensive inventory of basic skills called the ABLLS (Assessment of Basic Learning and Language Skills) and the AFLS (Assessment of Functional Living Skills). The following areas will be assessed:

Fine and Gross Motor Skills

Expressive and Receptive Language Skills

Academic/Cognitive Skills

Social/ Emotional /Behavioral Skills

Daily Living/ Self-Help Skills

Classroom Curriculum

The results from the ABLLS-R and the AFLS help us to create an individual plan to outline specific goals in each of the skill areas. We utilize a variety of curriculum resources in order to teach concepts, track progress and assess mastery of goals.

Progress

Individual Plans will be updated every nine weeks using a formal progress report that will be sent home. The dates for progress reports to be sent home will be indicated on the school year calendar. Parents will then be contacted to schedule a Parent/Teacher Conference to review the Progress Report and Data associated with the goals in place.

Discharge

Discharge from The Vine School is a qualitative rather than quantitative analysis. The Vine School uses Individual Plans and the Assessments along with parent/teacher to determine a child's eligibility to remain enrolled or if there is another educational program that will provide a more functional environment for the student.

PROCEDURES

TUITION

There are several options for payment of tuition to The Vine School. If paying bi-monthly payments are due by the first and fifteenth day of each month. If paying bi-annually the payments are due by September 1st and January 1st. If paying amount in whole it is due by September 1st. Statements are not mailed to parents unless the account is in arrears. We use FACTS/RENWEB as our third party payment processor. Each student will need a FACTS account created in order to submit payments through this system. The Vine School does accept payments at the school. We ask that if any payments are made at the school, that they be submitted at least 4 business days before FACTS is due to deduct payment from your account. We are unable to post payments to the account after the payment due date!!!

Any child whose parents are in arrears after 60 days is subject to dismissal until such time as the accounts owed are paid in full, including the month when the child shall return unless arrangements have been made with the Director of School and the Board of Directors.

ATTENDANCE, ARRIVAL, ABSENCE AND DISMISSAL

Regular and punctual attendance habits are essential to school success and students' progress. Parents are to use the carpool line for drop off in the morning and pick up at dismissal. Keeping the hallways clear of excessive traffic will aid in the safety of our school and its students and staff. Morning carline runs promptly from 8:00AM-8:20AM. Afternoon carline runs from 2:00PM-2:15PM. Please assist us in moving the carline as quickly as possible, by having the following items in order:

- child's backpack, lunchbox, other materials needed for their day
- child off any devices (iPhone, iPad, etc.)
- child dressed with shoes and socks on

We request a note or a phone call or text message to your child's lead teacher from the parent explaining any absence or to have their child released for an appointment. If we have not heard from the parent regarding the child's absence by 9:00AM, the absence will be considered "unexcused".

If someone other than the parent or guardian is picking up the student, a note or a phone call is necessary, and we prefer that the person be on the transportation release form in your enrollment application. If the person picking up is not on the transportation release a Valid ID is required before we release the child into their custody.

All students remaining after school has been dismissed ***will be subject to a fee of \$5.00 for the first ten minutes and \$1.00 every minute after that.*** We understand that there are emergencies and circumstances that cannot be avoided. In these times we ask that you call and make alternative arrangements in order to not accrue a late pick up fee.

BIRTHDAYS

Sharing a birthday with peers and family members is an important part of a child's life. Children may share birthday cupcakes or other appropriate treats with their classmates during a specified time agreed on by the lead teacher and the parent(s). We ask that you give us advanced notice of what items you may be bringing in order to accommodate those students that are on a special diet. Party invitations may be issued at school, if and only if every student in the class is included.

CANCELLATION OF SCHOOL

With severe weather, storm, danger of flooding and/or staff being severely ill, The Vine School will not hold school. Most local radio and/or TV stations will carry any severe weather closing announcements. If The Vine School is not mentioned than please follow the procedures put in place by VISD, unless otherwise notified. If bad weather occurs during the day, regardless of what VISD announces school would be closed early only if there is time to contact parents by 1:00 pm at the latest. No student in a regular carpool will be permitted to leave in another vehicle unless arrangements have been made with parents and Director of school has been notified by phone or note.

COMMUNICATION FROM HOME TO SCHOOL

Due to the nature of our school and the development of our students frequent communication between home and school is essential. Each child will be given a communication binder. In this binder will be any daily/weekly communication from the teacher or administration. We advise parents to check this binder daily to be informed of upcoming events, assignments and their child's progress. There is also an area in the binder for parents to notify the teacher of any concerns, questions or general information. The staff expects communication from home for the following circumstances:

1. You will be out of town leaving your child in the care of someone else. Write down the dates of your absence, how we can reach you, responsible parties contact information and any deviations we should make from our general procedures in case of an emergency.
2. If there is some change or stress being experienced in the family that may affect your child.
3. If there was an absence a written excuse can be placed in this area.

Please respect our staff members private time outside of The Vine School. We ask that you keep any communication via cell phone, email or social media to school related topics.

FIELD TRIPS

Traditionally field trips are a part of a child's experience in an educational program. We intend to provide that opportunity to our students in an appropriate and functional way. The purpose of every field trip is to extend the classroom curriculum and provide our students access to the community we live in. Teachers will notify parents of the upcoming field trip through a permission slip that must be signed and returned to the lead teacher. Volunteers and parents are regularly asked to attend and participate in our field trips. Anyone who assists in the transportation of the students must provide the school with a copy of their automobile insurance and driver's license. Parents cover the transportation cost of the field trips. To ensure proper supervision of the students, younger siblings may not accompany chaperones on field trips, unless prior consent has been given by Director of School.

FIRE AND DISASTER DRILLS

The school has fire drills each month and a disaster drill annually. Instructions and procedures are posted in each room. All people present in the school participate in the drills. We are aware that fire drills and disaster drills are exceptionally difficult for our students. We intend to make this activity and transition as calm and efficient as possible by providing visual and verbal supports to our students.

HEALTH AND EMERGENCIES

Health Records – we encourage parents to update their child's file regularly with any new health records, evaluations or reports. These can be turned in to your child's lead teacher or Director of School. Please indicate if this information is the Original document or record and if you need copies made for your child's file.

Physician's Name – is required in case of a medical emergency when the parent cannot be reached. Please make sure all physician contact information is updated and current.

Emergency Number – please make sure emergency contact information is updated and current.

Illness – Parents are asked to not send sick children to school; it causes other children and staff to become sick; this included colds, fevers, and any contagious illness. *After an illness, a child must be free of fever, vomiting and/or diarrhea for twenty-four (24) hours before returning to school. If a child becomes ill at school and cannot remain in classes, parents or emergency contact will be called to pick up their child.*

Medications – for the administration of medications, the following conditions must be met before a school employee can be authorized to administer medication to your child:

1. A signed request to administer the medication to a student has been provided by the parent or legal guardian.
2. A written doctor's request to administer medication when a medication is to be given or stored at school for more than 10 days.
3. All medications are in the **original container**, properly labeled, stating:
 - a. Name of student
 - b. Name of Medicine
 - c. Dosage to be administered
 - d. Time to be administered

Medical Emergencies – when these arise, school personnel will render first aid, contact family or authorized person in their absence, contact the child's physician when necessary, or take the child to the nearest medical facility if needed.

Lost and Found – Please identify all articles of clothing and other items with your child's first and last name. Lost and Found articles will be brought to the Lost and Found box, which you may find in the Director of School's office.

Messages – Staff will check messages regularly throughout the day and return your message during an appropriate time.

Parent Conferences – The Director of School and teaching staff welcome conferences with parents at anytime throughout the school year, **by appointment**. Any concerns or problems should be brought to the Director of the School's attention immediately so that the best possible solution can be found in a timely manner. There are mandatory conferences throughout the school year; **every nine weeks**. You will be notified of scheduling via letter or email. Again, these are the conferences that are mandatory to review assessments and your child's progress; any additional conferences can be scheduled throughout the year by contacting the Director of School or the Lead Teacher. It is **NOT** safe or appropriate to conference about detailed topics during the carpool line. Your child's teacher can set up an appropriate time to discuss these matters with you.

Dress code – The Vine School does not follow a certain dress code. Although, we do suggest that the following things be taken in consideration when preparing your child for school:

- a. All shoes have functional fastenings, laces, straps
- b. All clothing fits comfortably – not too loose or too tight
- c. Remove tags out of clothing if this tends to be a sensory threat to your child

- d. Appropriate clothing for the seasons. Your child will not be able to attend outside activities if a jacket is not provided during cold weather.
- e. Staff will notify you when your child is running low on extra changes of clothing, diapers, pull ups, wipes, etc. Please replenish these items as soon as possible.
- f. No distracting jewelry or hair ties
- g. No strong smelling lotions or perfumes

DRUG FREE SCHOOL POLICY

The Vine School has a responsibility to our employees, staff, parents and students to assure that our operations are free from the effects of drug, alcohol, or other substance abuse. The purpose of this policy statement is to reemphasize the school's policy on the use of drugs, alcohol, and other intoxicating substances and to develop procedures to address and control their use. This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and students of The Vine School.

Policy – The Vine School:

1. Prohibits the possession, sale, distribution, and/or use by its employees, contractors, and students, and
2. Does not tolerate its employees, contractors, or students being under the influence of or in a state indicating the use or abuse of any illegal drugs, or other mind, mood, or body-altering substances, alcoholic beverages, or prescription drugs (except when taken as directed by the person's medical doctor) at anytime while on school premises, on school business, or school activities. Reporting to work for classes or other school activities under the influence of or in a state indicating the use or abuse of alcohol, illegal drugs, or other mind, mood, body altering substances is a violation of school policy.

Definitions - As used in this policy the word “drug” includes alcoholic beverages, inhalants, other substances capable of causing intoxication or altering bodily functions regardless of how introduced, illegal drugs, prescription drugs that are not prescribed for current medical treatment by the person's physician. “Illegal drugs” are those substances defined as illegal under federal, state, or local laws including, but not limited to, marijuana, heroin, hashish, cocaine, hallucinogens, and depressants and stimulants not prescribed for current medical treatment by person's physician.

Consequences of Violation - An employee, contractor, or student who violates a provision of this policy can and may be subject to disciplinary action up to, and including, termination.

Available Treatment - The Vine School encourages employees, contractors, and students who recognize that have problems with drug addiction, alcoholism, or other substance abuse to

resolve those problems voluntarily through treatment, counseling, or other means. **Participation in a rehabilitation or treatment program, counseling, or other positive actions by an employee, contractor, or student will not, however, excuse non-compliance with the policies of the school.**

Drug Testing – All applicants for a position with the school will, if and when requested to do so, submit to a urinalysis for the purpose of detecting any illegal drugs. The Vine School does not presently have a regular testing program for existing employees, contractors or students, but reserves the right to institute such program at anytime.

HARASSMENT POLICY

GENERAL POLICY

The Vine School seeks to be a community in which every individual is treated with sensitivity and respect. The school encourages consideration of others and will not tolerate harassment of individuals based on ethnic or religious background, race, sex or sexual orientation.

The environment necessary for the educational program and fostered by the school must be one in which all individuals are free to work, learn, and develop appropriate relationships. The individuals must be able to pursue his or her work or academic program without fear of intimidation, humiliation, or degradation from the unwelcome and unacceptable behavior of another.

It is the policy of the school to prevent, correct, and remedy any form of harassment. All students, faculty, staff, and volunteers are subject to this policy. Individuals who engage in such behavior are subject to discipline up to, and including, discharge, expulsion, or other appropriate sanctions.

ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS, OR RACIAL HARASSMENT

Ethnic, religious, or racial harassment is an abuse of an individual or group on the basis of ethnicity, religious preference, or race. Harassment includes both easily identifiable acts of verbal, written, or physical abuse and subtler, but equally damaging, forms of harassment such as graffiti, epithets, and stereotyped remarks of humor.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is a violation of anti-discrimination laws. It is defined as unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when: (1) submission to or rejection of such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or a basis for employment decisions; (2) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance; (3) such

conduct has the purpose or effect of creating a hostile, intimidating, or offensive work environment (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964).

Activities that may constitute Sexual Harassment, include, but are not limited to:

1. Physical assault
2. Subtle pressure for sexual activity
3. Any demeaning sexual propositions
4. Inappropriate touching
5. Sexually explicit or suggestive remarks about a person's physical attributes, clothing, or behavior
6. Sexually stereotyped insults, humor, or verbal abuse
7. Inappropriate personal questions
8. Inappropriate or exploitive media such as, but not limited to, posters, calendars, magazines, movies, and emails.

REPORTING PROCEDURE

Any alleged violation of the Harassment Policy should be reported immediately. When the accused or accuser is a faculty member or staff member of the school, grievances may be brought to The Director of School.

If a student or colleague comes to you with a report of harassment, follow these guidelines:

1. Allow the individual to express his/her feelings. Avoid asking details.
2. Report the incident to The Director of School.
3. Maintain confidentiality.

INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURE

Any alleged violations of the Harassment Policy involving students, faculty, or staff will promptly investigated in a timely and appropriate manner, depending upon the circumstances of the individual case. In an effort to protect the alleged accused and accuser, the school will make all reasonable efforts to keep the matter confidential, except as required by law.

The investigation process will be under the discretion of the Director of School. Depending on the circumstances of the case The Board of Directors may be called upon to review the case and submit recommendations to the Director of School.

Following a full investigation of the circumstances, if the evidence suggests that action is appropriate, depending on the severity of the offense, sanctions may include, but are not limited to:

1. An apology to the individual(s) involved
2. Participation in appropriate counseling
3. Probation, suspension, non –renewal of appointment, or termination.

Please return signed portion to The Vine School:

I have read the Parent Handbook and understand all the policies, rules and procedures explained herein. I agree to follow all rules, policies and procedures put in place by The Vine School administration and staff.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date