



2019-2020

**Lower School
Family Handbook**

I. Introduction

This Family Handbook is published for members of the Abington Friends Lower School community for the purpose of providing information on day-to-day student life. The Handbook is informed by the [philosophy of Abington Friends School](#) and our core community values, grounded in the Quaker testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship.

Parents should read and be familiar with the contents of the Handbook in order to navigate and understand the expectations of joining the school community at AFS. We believe in an assumed partnership with families, where we work together to maintain a healthy learning environment in which every child can thrive.

II. Contact Information

Our email system allows teachers to be contacted directly at school. Any member of the faculty or staff may be contacted directly by email through their first initial, last name @abingtonfriends.net. You can also call the Lower School office at 215-576-3960 to leave a message and Tricia will make sure the message is delivered.

Andrea Emmons, Lower School Director
215-576-3959
aemmons@abingtonfriends.net

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215-576-3960, Fax: 215-690-7660
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Susan Harris, School Nurse
215-576-3978, Fax: 215-886-4796
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Chris Santaniello, Transportation Office
215-576-3981
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Mikael Yisrael
Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
215-576-3951
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Address: Abington Friends School
575 Washington Lane
Jenkintown, PA 19046
Phone (AFS Main Number): 215- 886-4350, Fax: 215-886-9143
School Website: www.abingtonfriends.net

Additional contact information can be found on the AFS website
<https://www.abingtonfriends.net/contact/>

III. The School Day

Hours of Operation

We are open from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The school day is considered 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., with the option of enrolling in the Extended Day program from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. for an additional fee. The Lower School office is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. each school day. Please leave a voicemail message if no one is available to answer your call. Voice mail messages are picked up frequently throughout the day.

At 8:20 a.m., all entrances to the Lower School are locked. The Redbud Nature Playground entrance is not accessible via fob again until 2:45 p.m. Between 8:20 a.m. and 2:45 p.m., please enter through the main door of the Lower School building and sign in at the counter of the LS front office. You may be asked to wear a name tag during your visit, and you will sign out at the end of your visit.

Attendance

Absences/Late Arrivals/Early Departures - In the event of lateness or absence, we ask that families call and inform the Lower School Administrative Assistant, at 215-576-3960 by 8:30 a.m., as it is important to have accurate attendance records as early in the day as possible. Students arriving after 8:15 a.m. MUST report to the office and be signed in by an adult before proceeding to their classrooms.

Planned Absence

When a family knows in advance that the student will be absent for any length of time, written notification must be given to the Lower School Office before the planned absence. Examples of a planned absence include:

- Religious holidays or obligations
- Documented medical appointments (A note is required upon return to school.)
- Family emergencies or obligations.

Routine Drop-off and Pick-up

Early Care

Early care is available for all Lower School students at 7:30. There is no supervision until that time. Early childhood and kindergarten students should be walked to LS Room 8. Please connect with the early care teacher before leaving the school building. First through Fourth Grade students should hang up their coats and bookbags and then proceed to the LS library for early care.

Early Childhood Regular Arrival - Please walk your child to their classroom and connect with the teacher before departing.

Kindergarten through Fourth Grade Regular Arrival - Please let your child out onto the front sidewalk so that he/she will not have to cross in the pathway of other cars. For the safety of all, do NOT park on the circle directly in front of the Lower School between the “No Parking” signs. If you need to park, please use one of the designated spaces in the parking lots in front and to the side of the Lower School. Please exercise extreme caution when driving in the circle.

Departure/ Dismissal Procedures

Early Childhood students - Children who are scheduled for half-day are picked up at 12 p.m. from the classroom. Children scheduled attending full day must be picked up either directly from the classroom or from the Nature Playground and Outdoor Classroom adjacent to their classrooms. Families should park in the parking lot on the left side of the building. Make sure you connect with your child’s teacher before departing. Please read posted notices and check cubbies for projects, soiled clothing, lunch boxes, notices from school, etc.

Kindergarten Through Fourth Grade

- Carline - Between 2:45 and 3:15 p.m., the driveway near Tyson House should be used by Middle and Upper School families for entering and exiting the campus. The driveway near Lower School should be used by Lower School families. For Lower School carline pick-up, two lanes of cars from the driveway will be directed into one lane in the Lower School circle during dismissal. Please have your child’s name tag

displayed in the windshield. A teacher will walk your child to the car. Children are required to shake their teacher's hand before leaving.

- Parking - Please park your car in a designated spot and walk to the dismissal directly in front of the Lower School entrance. Children are required to shake their teacher's hand before leaving.
- Bus riders - Teachers will supervise the dismissal process. Buses pick-up Upper and Middle School students first followed by students in Lower School. Buses generally arrive between 3:10 and 3:35 p.m.
- When raining, the dismissal occurs from indoors; dismissal procedures are the same except we use umbrellas to help keep everyone dry!

Additional Dismissal Information for all Lower School Families

If an individual, other than the parent or caregiver, regularly picks up your child, list that person's name on the Emergency Contact form (on-line) and the Dismissal Instructions Form. If someone new is coming to pick up your child, we will likely ask them for identification and you will be required to authorize the person ahead of time by using the Note to School form or contacting the Lower School Office. Any changes made to the daily dismissal form need to be addressed to the Administrative Assistant in the Lower School Office (215-576-3960). If you will be delayed in picking up your child, please notify the office so that the teachers can inform your child.

If you stay for playtime after you have picked your child up, please supervise them on the playground. Playground and school rules are in effect during and after school.

Custodial Disputes

Custodial disputes in a family can be challenging for family members as well as for faculty and staff. Where custody of a child is in dispute, AFS follows all legal guidelines outlined by the PA Family Court system. ALL parents/guardians must have unlimited and on-demand access to their child while in our program unless that access is restricted by law. The law states that we may not deny any parent access to his or her child unless there are specific custody orders in a child's file. When a court order restricting access exists, we are bound by its restrictions. We require a copy of any such court orders for our files.

Snow or Emergency Closings

Announcements of the closing of school because of weather conditions will be made over major Philadelphia radio and television stations, the school website, via your e-mail, and via our alert

system. Announcements of school closings are usually posted by 6:30 a.m.

If snowfall begins during the school day, AFS will make every effort to avoid mid-day closures. Should the school have to close during the day, you will be notified via email as soon as possible. An administrator will remain in school until the last student is picked up.

IV. General Information

Attire

Our school is made up of a diverse group of families with a range of expectations around clothing and self-expression and we embrace the fact that learning can happen in varied physical environments. With that in mind, we ask students to follow these guidelines:

- NO flip-flops on the playgrounds. Closed toe footwear is best.
- Attire reflecting violence, the military (including camouflage or military symbols), or sexual, racial or religious insensitivity, or that refers to tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs is not allowed.
- Hats, caps and sunglasses may not be worn inside the school building.
- Any clothing that allows undergarments or midriff to show should not be worn.
- At the discretion of the administration, a student may be asked to change clothing that violates this policy, or to cover the clothing they are wearing.
- In special circumstances, students may be asked to dress more formally or wear specific attire to meet the standards of that event or occasion.

Birthdays

Birthday celebrations are significant events in the lives of many children. You are welcome to celebrate your child's birthday with the class. We ask that you adhere to the Quaker principle of simplicity and avoid elaborate celebrations with balloons or party favors. We suggest bringing in cupcakes, muffins or another easy-to-manage favorite snack. Please talk with your child's teacher to find the best time for a classroom birthday celebration.

If you are having a birthday party for your child, invitations can be distributed at school ONLY if the entire class is invited. If only a few students are invited, please help your child learn how to respect the feelings of others by not talking about the party at school. Please make sure you have not invited all children except one or two. If you have any questions about class lists or birthday parties in general, please contact your child's teacher before sending out invitations.

Cell Phone Policy

Lower School students may use cell phones before or after school, but not during the school day. If you need to reach your student during the school day for an urgent matter, please call the Lower School office at 215- 576-3960. Please help us keep the LS campus and Outdoor Classroom a place of limited cell phone use. We ask that you limit cell phone use on school property. Also be mindful of turning off cell phones prior to any school events.

Child Abuse Reporting

State law mandates that all individuals working with young children be required to report any suspected instances of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The decision to report any suspected instance of abuse or neglect is taken very seriously and involves close consultation with our consulting school psychologist. The Director will follow the direction of the child protective service agency regarding completion of written reports. If the parent or legal guardian of the child is suspected of abuse, the Director will follow the guidance of the child protective agency regarding notification of the parent or legal guardian.

Communication

Communication is essential to ensuring the best possible learning environment. Families can generally expect a response to an email or phone message within 24 hours. Evenings and weekends are often busy for everyone. If you reach out to a teacher at those times, they may not get back to you until the next school day, but they will do their best to be of help. Please reach out to your child's teacher or advisor if your family is experiencing circumstances that may impact your child at school.

Talking while students are waiting in the classroom, such as at the start of class, is challenging and can make it difficult for the teacher to focus on the conversation. If you would like to talk with your child's teacher, please ask for a meeting and we will schedule a time. Scheduling a time will also allow the teacher to gather any pertinent information or resources that might be needed. Good communication is truly important to the home and school partnership, and we will do our best to foster communication which strengthens that partnership.

Community Standards

The AFS community believes the Quaker value that there is "that of God" in every person. We recognize that the diversity of our school community is a core strength. We work to create inclusive community standards that reflect the context of the diverse lives and identities of our school community, while maintaining an environment of respect and physical and emotional safety for all members of the community. By attending AFS, students and families agree to abide by these community standards.

Friday Notes

Each Friday an email entitled Friday Notes will be sent home. Friday Notes announce upcoming programs, after school enrichment classes, special events and family volunteer opportunities. Occasionally a note from the School or from your child's teacher will come home on another day of the week. It's a good idea to review items brought home in your child's school bag.

Holidays

The words "holiday" and "celebration" mean different things to different people. We seek to take a simple approach to holiday celebration. Holidays are not a major focus of our curriculum. However, students and families are invited to share their connection to special days throughout the year. For various holidays, we focus on the values at the core of the holiday such as community, peace and togetherness. We leave the celebration of Mother's Day and Father's Day to each individual household as we have children from diverse family structures. We believe that holiday activities at school can serve the following goals and functions:

- Validate student and families' holiday experiences and traditions at home
- Expose students to different ways of celebrating the same holiday
- Expose student to celebrations, traditions and religions different from their own
- Foster respect for celebrations, traditions and religions different from their own
- Build a sense of community, family and togetherness

Lost and Found

Lost books, clothing and personal effects are placed in the treasure chest located in the Lower School entryway. Periodically, all unclaimed items are donated to charity. The School claims no responsibility for items left or stored in school buildings. Small items such as eyeglasses, change purses or jewelry that are found are kept in a special container on the Administrative Assistant's desk.

Student Support Team

For students in need of support or enrichment, the Student Support Team (SST) serves as a resource for teachers and families. The SST process is a multi-disciplinary approach, engaging teachers, families, our psychological consultant and other learning specialists in discussion as to how the student might best be supported or challenged. Students who have been identified as having learning differences through a psycho-educational or neuropsychological evaluation may need modifications or support. The SST and the family will work together to develop a Formal Education Plan (FEP) for implementation at school and home.

It is our hope that every child admitted to Abington Friends School will thrive academically,

socially and emotionally. There are times when, despite support, a student exhibits either a lack of academic progress or a pattern of behavior that is disruptive to the learning environment. The School seeks to work in partnership with families and will help to identify other learning institutions if a different learning environment is deemed necessary.

V. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Our School Nurse is on call to the Lower School for any medical emergency. An Abington Township School District Nurse is here two days each week to collect the Pennsylvania required physical and dental examinations and immunization forms and conduct annual Pennsylvania mandated screenings for height, weight, vision and hearing.

Illness Guidelines

- **Fever:** Students must be picked up for a fever at or above 100 degrees. They may return to school only when they are fever free, (without the aid of fever reducing medication such as Tylenol/acetaminophen or ibuprofen) for 24 hours.
- **Vomiting and diarrhea:** Students who have vomited or had more than 2 episodes of diarrhea must be picked up from school. They may return to school 24 hours after the last episode of vomiting or diarrhea, and when they are able to tolerate a normal diet.
- **Colds/Coughs:** Students should stay home if they have a fever, if their symptoms keep them up at night or worsen with activity, or if they have a severe cough, congestion or runny nose that makes them unable to participate fully in a 7 hour school day.
- **Pinkeye (conjunctivitis):** Students will be sent home if Pinkeye is suspected. A note from your health care provider is required to return to school 24 hours after starting antibiotic eye drops or ointment, and when symptoms have subsided.
- **Undiagnosed rashes:** A note from your health care provider is required to return to school stating the rash is not contagious. Please contact the nurse's office prior to your child's return to school.
- **Communicable/Infectious diseases:** Please report any infectious diseases (strep throat, influenza, chicken pox, mononucleosis, ringworm, impetigo, 5th disease, hand, foot and mouth, scarlet fever, etc.) to the Nurse's office, EXT. 3978. A note from your healthcare provider is required to return to school stating they are no longer contagious.
- **Head lice (pediculosis):** When a case of head lice is identified in the school, measures will be taken to minimize further spread and assist in the elimination of the problem. The infested child will be sent home from school to receive treatment by the families, who should consult with their pediatrician. Students may return to school after treatment with an effective pediculicide and the removal of all nits (eggs) from

the child's hair. Your home should be treated as well. Upon arrival to school after treatment, and before returning to the classroom, students must be reexamined by the school nurse to determine that they are lice and nit free. Please notify the Nurse's office if you discover head lice on your child so that other families may be notified. We will make every effort to examine all the children in your child's grade and anyone else who may have been in close contact with your child. For additional information visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/index.html>

Illness/Injury at School

If a student becomes ill or injured at school, he/she should tell their teacher or the office, and then come to the nurse for evaluation. The student is not to call home before notifying an adult at school. No student is permitted to leave school during school hours for illness or injury, without the school's permission.

If a medical emergency occurs at school, we will call 911 and then contact you. If we are unable to contact you, we will call your emergency contact numbers. If your child becomes sick or injured at school, we will call you to pick up your child as soon as possible. If you cannot be reached, we will call your emergency contact numbers.

Food Allergy Guidelines

AFS has many students with food allergies. If exposed to even a small amount of allergen, a life threatening reaction called Anaphylaxis can occur. Abington Friends is not a peanut/tree nut free school. However, in order to provide a safe environment for all of our students, we do not serve peanuts or tree nuts on campus. In addition, we ask that the following guidelines be followed.

No peanuts or products with nuts should be brought to school for parties, snacks, bake sales, class projects, bus trips, after school or sports activities. Carefully examine the label of packaged foods to confirm their contents. Do not use nuts/peanuts/nut oils in homemade goods. Exceptions must be cleared by faculty and/or the school nurse.

Although AFS discourages it, peanut/nut products may be brought to school for lunch to be eaten **in the cafeteria**. Students eating peanut/nut products should wash their hands well after eating or use the wipes available in the cafeteria. If a student has peanut butter or nut products for breakfast, please make sure they wash their hands before coming to school.

All students who are in class with a student with a life threatening food allergy should wash their hands after eating. Students should not trade or share lunch, snacks or drinks.

Medication Policy

When medication, prescription or over-the-counter, is to be administered to a child during the school day, the parent/guardian must bring the following to the School Nurse:

- Written orders from a physician giving the name of the drug, dosage, when prescription medication is to be taken, diagnosis and/or the reason that the medication is being given.
- A completed Medication Permission Form from a parent or guardian requesting that the School comply with their physician's written order.
- Medication in an appropriately labeled pharmacy container and/or an over-the-counter medication in its original container as purchased. In either case, an adult should bring the medication to the School Nurse.
- The School has some over-the-counter medications in stock to administer to students if a Medication Permission Form has been completed. LS families will be contacted prior to over-the-counter medication being dispensed.
- If you have any questions, please call the School Nurse at 215- 576-3978.

Epipens, Inhalers and Medication

Medication is permitted in the classroom only with approval of the school nurse, even if the Medication Permission Form is on file in the Health Room. The School conforms with the public health law of Pennsylvania in respect to medication administration. If you wish any special consideration in respect to this practice, please notify the School Nurse in writing. Epipens or inhalers are not permitted in the classrooms unless the proper Medication Permission Form is on file in the Health Room.

Health and Wellness

Our Health and Physical Education program seeks to teach children about nutrition, caring for their health, engaging in physical activity and developing social and emotional learning skills. All health and wellness activities are developmentally appropriate and geared toward helping students grow in their understanding of how their bodies work.

Children in Lower School classrooms grow and experience many physical changes. We recognize and respect family members as the primary source of education in a child's life. Children also need teachers to be accurate and honest about physical and pubescent development. The information that children will receive will be factual and developmentally appropriate. Teachers use correct names for all of the body parts and functions. Teachers also explain differences between private and public behavior, appropriate touches such as back rubs at rest time and inappropriate touches. Teachers help children to establish personal physical

boundaries and teach them that it's ok to say "no" to touch.

At certain ages, it is developmentally appropriate for children to ask questions about their bodies and the bodies of others. Teachers respond to these situations in a respectful, open and non-shaming manner. We will let families know so that further conversation and education can occur at home. Teachers and the Director are available to answer questions families may have and give further information.

Emergency Operations Plan

AFS has completed a detailed Emergency Operations Plan that defines and refines our response plans for a variety of types of emergencies.

Highlights of the Plan: Depending on the circumstances of the emergency, we will use one of the following protective actions:

- Building Evacuations are used when students move to a safe area on campus in the event of a fire, bomb threat, or other events.
- In-Place Sheltering is used when sudden occurrences, weather or hazardous materials related events may require taking cover inside the building.
- Evacuations From Campus - total evacuation of the facility may become necessary if there is a danger in the immediate area. In this case, students are taken to a safe location.
- Modified Operation may include cancellation or postponement of normal activities. These actions are taken when a winter storm or building problems such as a utility disruption make it unsafe for students but may be necessary for a variety of situations.

Emergency Communication:

In an emergency, our power sources may be shut down, precluding some communications options. Cell phones and local television networks can become overloaded in an emergency. Every effort will be made to keep families informed rapidly as to what we are doing and where we can be found. The Directors and Administrative Assistant will implement the communication plan. Please be sure we have correct and updated contact information at all times.

- A message will be sent via our alert system.
- The school voicemail will be updated, if possible.
- Brief messages will be sent to our entire email list and posted on the AFS home page.

We ask that you not call during any emergency. This will keep the main telephone lines free to make emergency calls and relay information if we are able. Division Directors will be in contact with the Head of School (or designated person in charge) and respond to events as they unfold.

Fire Drills

Fire drills are held periodically. Evacuation routes for fire drills and other emergencies are posted near the exit doors in each classroom, bathroom and office. If the fire drill occurs while you are present, follow the lead of the teachers and evacuate with us. Do not re-enter the building until cleared to do so.

VIII. Conclusion

The Family Handbook is not meant to be a comprehensive document, but a guide for major policies that affect students' and families' daily lives. Whenever there is confusion or a lack of clarity, the first step for a family is to reach out to their child's teacher or the Lower School Office.

The Lower School administration, faculty, and staff wish you and your child a wonderful school year!