



**THE MUSTARD SEED
DAY SCHOOL**

ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Parent Handbook

2024-2025 School Year

11 St. Luke's Lane
San Antonio, TX 78209

Office: 210-828-6425 ext. 254
E-mail: mustardseed@slecsa.org

I. Program Overview

Our Mission Statement

The Mustard Seed is a ministry of St. Luke's Episcopal Church whose goal is to provide young children, ages 18 months through 3 years, with a safe, loving and developmentally appropriate environment in which to explore God's world and to experience his love.

Licensing

The Mustard Seed Program adheres to the Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers and is Licensed by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. The Mustard Seed's license number is 1654518. A copy of the Minimum Standards is available for review in The Mustard Seed director's office, by contacting the Child Care Information Line at 1-800-862-5252, or at <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/providers/protective-services-providers/child-care-regulation>. Our most recent licensing report may be found posted in the classroom hallway next to The Mustard Seed bulletin board.

Days of Operation

Tuesday – Friday

Hours of Operation

School Hours: 8:30 – 12:30

Curbside Drop-off: 8:30 - 8:45

Curbside Pick-up: 12:15 - 12:30

Optional Early Care: 7:45 – 8:30

Optional After School Care: 12:30 – 1:30

School Year

August – May

Calendar

We use the St. Luke's Episcopal School "SLES" and AHISD calendars to create The Mustard Seed calendar for the year. You will receive a school calendar that will list important calendar dates. The calendar is also posted on The Mustard Seed bulletin board, website, and Brightwheel.

Director's Contact Information

Jennie McLendon

mustardseed@slecsa.org

210-828-6425 ext. 254

Grouping

The Mustard Seed classrooms are comprised of boys and girls whose ages range from 18 months to 3 years old. There are two classrooms at The Mustard Seed, which are the Angel's Room (older class) and Shepherd's Room (younger class). The children are grouped according to chronological age and development level. The maximum adult to child ratio is 1:7, with two teachers in each class. The children stay with their designated teachers and class for the entire school year.

Registration and Enrollment

The Mustard Seed seeks to welcome all children as God's unique and treasured creations and is open to children of every race, color, religion, nationality, or ethnic origin.

All children, both new and those re-enrolling, must apply for admission to The Mustard Seed annually. The Mustard Seed uses a priority-based waitlist for enrollment. Preference for enrollment will be given as follows:

1. Children presently enrolled in The Mustard Seed and/or children of SLEC staff
2. Siblings of current Mustard Seed or SLES students
3. Siblings of former Mustard Seed or SLES students
4. Parishioners of St. Luke's Episcopal Church "SLEC" who have been active for 6 months or longer
5. New applicants

The Director will make final decisions regarding acceptance. Enrollment is secured upon receipt of enrollment application and a non-refundable registration fee. The amount is listed in the Tuition and Fees Schedule.

Children **must be walking** before they can begin school. If for some reason your child is not walking by the time school starts in August, we will ask that you keep your child home until he/she is walking. Children must also be able to feed themselves and drink from a parent-provided cup before they can begin school.

By the first day of attendance, each child must have the following on file at The Mustard Seed:

- Enrollment application, including current authorized pickup list
- Current immunization record
- Signed statement of recent examination by a physician
- Form stating that the Parent Handbook was received, read and understood with parent/guardian signature
- If applicable, any court orders pertaining to the life of the child, such as visitation rights

Any changes in address and telephone number should be reported promptly in writing to the Director. Telephone numbers of emergency contacts and individuals authorized to pick up your child should also be kept current.

Withdrawal/Dismissal from The Mustard Seed program

Should a parent decide to withdraw their child from The Mustard Seed, the parent should:

- Inform the Director two weeks prior to the desired withdrawal date.
- Prepare to pay 100% of the following month's tuition.
- Any special circumstances concerning withdrawal should be discussed with the Director. At the Director's discretion, the payment of the following month's tuition may be waived.

The Mustard Seed reserves the right to dismiss children for non-payment of tuition, or if a child cannot participate successfully in the program. The Director will contact the parents should such a circumstance arise.

Tuition, Fees and Late Payment Penalty

Tuition and fee amounts are listed in the Fee Schedule at the end of the handbook.

Annual Fees

- Registration fee is due at time of enrollment
- Supply fee is due June 1st

Monthly Fees

- Tuition is due by the 1st day of each month
- Extended care (early and/or after school) is due by the 1st day of each month

You will not receive an individual reminder about payment being due. **A late payment fee of \$25 will be charged to your account for payment not received by the 10th of the month.** Payments can be paid in advance by semester or for the entire school year. Payments can be made by check or online through the Brightwheel app.

Tuition and other payments will not be refunded. Tuition must be paid unless the school closes for more than a 14 calendar-day period.

Curriculum

The Mustard Seed strives to provide a developmentally appropriate early childhood experience that allows each child to grow emotionally, cognitively, socially, spiritually, and physically in a loving atmosphere.

The Mustard Seed provides many opportunities for personal and social growth. Since young children learn best by being able to explore and actively engage all their senses, a variety of learning opportunities will be available to them. Children will be exposed to art, cooking, science, math, dramatic play, literacy, music, self-help skills, sensory play, large and small motor activities.

We are a Christian faith-based preschool with many opportunities to hear about God's love. Children attend Chapel weekly, led by the St. Luke's Director of Children and Family Ministry.

Faculty

The Mustard Seed teachers strive to provide each child with the love and attention so important in building confidence and creating a positive self-image. Our teachers are required to complete 24 hours of early childhood professional development each year. All our teachers have had a background check. In addition, all Mustard Seed staff receive training in a program entitled Safeguarding God's Children as required by the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas. The Mustard Seed staff maintain current certifications in Pediatric CPR and First Aid. They are also trained in the warning signs of abuse and neglect and how to prevent/respond to abuse and neglect. The number for the Child Abuse Hotline is 1-800-252-5400.

II. Program Policies

Communication

Messages regarding school news will either be sent to your email or through the Brightwheel app. Should your email address or home address change during the school year, please contact the Director with the updated information.

Your child's teachers will use the Brightwheel app to post pictures of their students engaging in school activities. You will receive an email invite to join Brightwheel. Only members invited to join the classroom group will be able to view the pictures.

You may contact your child's teachers directly through Brightwheel. Teachers may only be available to respond between 8:00-8:30 and 12:30-1:30 Tuesday – Friday. This is their regular work hours when students are not at school. If you need immediate assistance, please contact the Director.

For emergency communication, Brightwheel will be used to send out an announcement. When you create your Brightwheel account, you will have the option to turn on SMS text messaging. Emergency communication includes rare situations like school closure due to weather or building evacuation.

Conferences

The Mustard Seed has parent/teacher conferences twice a year. Once in the fall semester and again in the spring semester. Dates can be found on the school calendar. The teachers will discuss your child's development and progress at the conference. Children will not attend school that day, so teachers can speak with the parents without the child being present.

Guidance Techniques

Your child deserves the most positive early childhood experience possible. Our philosophy is used school wide but may vary somewhat because teacher's expectations of the children may change as the child grows and develops socially. If a behavioral issue does occur, we feel children should be treated fairly and with consistency.

We will use the following strategies to reinforce desired behavior:

- Verbal Praise
- Positive Reinforcement

If a child is not experiencing success in the classroom, these strategies will be used:

- Redirecting - The child will be diverted to another activity to keep the situation from becoming worse.
- Verbal warning - The teacher will discuss with the child the inappropriate behavior and explain the 'logical' consequence to his/her action.
- Not giving attention to negative behavior - Sometimes the child wants extra attention. If he/she doesn't receive the attention, the behavior usually goes away.
- Think it over - The child may be separated from the other students and given time to calm down and think about the choices they are making. The child is never moved to a secluded area but is kept nearby so they can continue to be monitored by the teacher.
- Parent contact - In the case of persistent inappropriate behavior the parents will be contacted. If a child continues to be disruptive or of danger to themselves or other children, we will document all the effort taken by the staff to help the child experience success and then call a conference with the parents. Only, if necessary, would the school require that a child be withdrawn.
- Aggressive behavior – If aggressive behavior (including but not limited to: biting, hitting, kicking, or throwing dangerous objects at students or staff) results in injuring two or more students or staff in a one-day period and staff have concern that even after appropriate action has been taken to modify the child's aggressive behavior, that another injury might occur, the child will be separated from the class and the parent/caregiver will be contacted to pick up their child within one hour.

Accidents and Incidents

Minor accidents will be treated using basic first aid procedures. An “accident report” will be completed by the staff member who witnessed the injury with a written explanation. The accident report will be signed by the Director and will also need to be signed by the authorized person picking up your child the day of the incident. A copy of the report will be sent home in your child’s school bag.

If your child caused an injury to another student, an “incident report” will be filled out and sent home in your child’s school bag. No names will be shared with the family of the student who was injured. A copy of both the accident and incident reports are kept in the Director’s office for the school year.

A parent will be contacted during the school day for more serious injuries, for example broken skin from a bite or a bump to the head.

In the event of a life-threatening emergency, 911 will be contacted. If you have selected a preferred hospital on your child’s enrollment application, the EMS will be instructed to take your child to that hospital. After activating 911 and securing the safety of your child, a parent will be contacted and your child’s pediatrician letting them know that their patient has been sent to the hospital.

Emergency Preparedness

Fire drills are practiced monthly. Severe weather and active threat drills are each practiced four times during the school year. Should an emergency arise which necessitates evacuation of the building, The Mustard Seed will follow the same protocol as St. Luke’s Church and School. Children will be taken on SLES buses to Alamo Heights Presbyterian Church located at 6201 Broadway. Parents will be notified by a Brightwheel announcement.

Grievance Procedure and Policy

Parents are encouraged to first talk with their child’s teacher and/or the Director about any concerns or issues. Parents should request a time to speak with the teacher at a time when she is not responsible for the care of children. The Director is generally available during the day, but parents are encouraged to set a time to meet in advance. The goal will be to resolve the conflict at this initial level in a satisfactory manner for both the parents and the school. If the Director is not able to adequately resolve the matter, the parent may seek input from either the Church Rector or the Director of Children and Family ministries.

Absences

Please notify your child’s teacher or the Director if your child will not be at school.

III. Health and Safety Policies

Illness Policy

The health policies of The Mustard Seed are in accordance with the San Antonio Metropolitan Health Department and Texas Health and Human Services Minimum Standards Guidelines. We are required to notify parents in writing within 48 hours when a child in our care has contracted a communicable disease deemed notifiable by the Texas Department of State Health Services. No names will be shared in accordance with HIPAA.

Please do not send a child to school if they have the following:

- A fever of 100 degrees or higher.
- Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, diarrhea, e vomiting, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill.
- A health care professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease, and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious.
- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities.
- The illness results in a greater need for care than the caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children.

Please do not bring a sick child to school, hoping they might feel better later. If you are giving your child fever reducing medication, please do not send them to school. Children who have been prescribed antibiotics for contagious illnesses such as strep throat, tonsillitis, bronchitis, or pneumonia should not return to school until they have been on the medication for a minimum of 24 hours.

Students and staff who come to The Mustard Seed sick or become sick while at school will be sent home.

- Sick children will be kept separate from well children until they can be picked up.
- A parent or caregiver must pick up the sick child within one hour of being notified.

Parents need to notify the Director immediately if their child is diagnosed with a communicable disease.

Medications

Will be administered to a child only under the following conditions:

- Medications must be in the original prescription bottle with the label intact. (Pharmacies will provide extra bottles on request).
- Instructions must be written on the Dispensing Medication Authorization Form and will need to include the date and time to be administered, physician's name and expiration date. The Medication Dispensing Form will need to be signed by the parent/guardian. The Medication form will be kept in the student's file.
- Outdated medication will be disposed of if not claimed by the parents.
- Parents must personally hand the medication to the Director. Please do not send any medications in school bags.
- Medication will be kept in the Director's office, except Epi-pens, and administered by the Director who has received proper medication handling training.
- Epi-pens will be stored away from children in the classroom and with the teacher when leaving the classroom.
- Diaper ointment, sunscreen, and insect repellent all require written authorization from the parent/guardian. This permission was given in the enrollment application.

If your child has a food allergy, please make sure the Director and teacher are aware of it immediately.

Preventative Health Measures

- All staff will have annual training in appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.
- Frequent handwashing (upon entering the classroom, before and after handling food, diaper changes and assisting children with the toilet, etc.). Hand sanitizer will be available for children older than 24 months, when soap and water is not readily available (e.g., during outdoor play).
- Our already high standards for cleaning will be intensified with more frequent cleanings throughout the day of high-touch surface areas. Including a thorough deep-clean after children have gone home.
- No shared food or drinks. Student's water bottles must be labeled with their first and last name.
- Children's clothing will be changed, into their spare set kept in the classroom, if secretions get on their garments.

IV. Operational Policies

Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures

Parents, please give this information to everyone you have authorized to drop off or pick up your child.

Drop off and pick up will occur outside of the building using a carpool line located in the upper-level parking lot with the line starting at the Narthex doors (the covered portico near the Sanctuary). Please pull up as far as you can to allow other vehicles to pass. The children will wait inside the Narthex with their teachers and classmates. When you arrive, a teacher will escort your child to/from your car. You will receive a hangtag with your last name on it to display in your car window. This sign is to help us to quickly identify you, because tinted car windows make it difficult to see who is inside the car. If you need additional car tags, please let the Director know.

Drop-off times are 8:30-8:45. Please stay in your car until your child's teacher or the Director comes to greet you.

Pick-up times are 12:15-12:30. A child will only be released to a parent, guardian, and those on the authorized pick-up list. You may update your child's authorized pickup list by sending an email to the Director. Those picking up your child must show their identification, e.g., driver's license, unless they pick up daily and we are familiar with them. If you would like to talk with your child's teacher about their day, please wait until you are able to move your car to the front of the line to avoid blocking other cars from being able to leave. **Once the pick-up window ends, any child not picked up on time will be brought back into the classroom and a \$25 late pick up fee will be charged.**

If you are dropping off or picking up your child outside of curbside time periods, please go to the Jones Lobby at St. Luke's Episcopal School to check in. We will be notified of your arrival by St. Luke's Episcopal School, and then we will come and greet you.

Optional Extended Care

Early care drop-off will be from 7:45-8:00 at the SLES carpool line. If you arrive after 8:00, please park and check in at the Jones Lobby at SLES.

After school care pick-up will be from 1:20-1:30 in the carpool line. At 1:30, **any child not picked up on time will be brought back into the classroom and a \$25 late pick up fee will be charged.**

A minimum of three students must be enrolled in the extended care option for it to be offered.

We will offer a drop-in option for extended care if space is available. Prior approval from the Director is required. There will be a \$25 fee for extended care drop-in.

Snacks

The Mustard Seed will provide a daily snack. We will follow all known dietary restrictions of children in the class. We are happy to have Fruity Fridays again. We will send out a sign-up at the beginning of each semester for parents to bring fresh fruit on Fridays for your child's class.

Water bottles

Please provide a children's reusable water bottle with a cap that can be closed or mouthpiece/straw that flips closed. We want to limit the chance of the mouthpiece coming into contact with another bottle, child or surface. Please no disposable bottles, like Ozarka, because they tend to get knocked over and water spilled everywhere. Wash your child's water bottle daily. We do not have hot water in the classroom to properly sanitize the water bottle. All water bottles will need to be **labeled** with your child's first and last name.

Lunches

Children will bring their own lunches. Please be aware that:

- We do not have a refrigerator to keep lunches cold, so please pack them with an ice pack to keep food cold.
- We are unable to warm food, so please pack food that does not need to be heated.
- Please provide any utensils your child may need to eat their lunch.
- We will not force the children to eat, so please send food you know they like, but we do encourage a variety of healthy offerings.
- Please do not send foods that are high in refined sugar (candy, doughnuts, cupcakes, etc.)
- All cups, food storage, and lunch boxes must be **labeled** with your child's first and last name.

The following foods present a choking hazard and should not be sent at any time: hot dogs (whole or sliced into rounds), whole grapes, nuts/peanuts, popcorn, raw peas, spoonful of peanut butter; chunks of raw vegetables, cheese, or meat larger than can be swallowed whole. Licensing will not allow us to serve a student any of these items, even if they are sent from home.

At this time, there are no known food allergies that will limit what other students in the class can bring in their lunches. This can change during the year if a severe food allergy is identified. A message will be sent to all parents in the classroom informing you of the change.

Backpacks

Each child must bring a tote bag or backpack with their name clearly marked on it. You will receive a Mustard Seed backpack that you can use, or you may use a backpack of your choice. Some choose to have their child's name embroidered on their bag.

Toys

Children will not be allowed to bring toys from home to school to reduce the spread of germs.

Dress Code

Children should be dressed in comfortable clothing for active, creative, play. Our program promotes exploration in play. Clothing will get messy, so please select your child's clothing with this in mind. **Children must wear closed-toed shoes.** Tennis shoes provide the best ground support for children at play. Crocs, natives, dress shoes and boots can create problems for young children whose large motor skills are still developing, especially during outside and active play.

Please provide at least two complete changes of clothes (including socks) labeled with your child's name, in a zip lock bag (also labeled with your child's name) to be kept in the classroom at all times. Children's clothes will be changed if they become wet or get secretions on them. Also, please provide an extra pair of shoes to be kept in the classroom. If your child comes home in their spare clothes, please send a spare set back to school.

Once the weather turns cold, please send your child to school with a jacket, sweater, or sweatshirt. On really cold days, please provide gloves and a hat. Without these items, your child will not be allowed to go to the playground or playground time will be limited. All removable clothing (sweaters, jackets, hats, etc.) and other personal items (tote bags, lunchboxes) need to be labeled with your child's name.

Depending on outdoor conditions, please apply sunscreen and insect repellent prior to drop off.

Diapering

Children who wear diapers must have at school an ample supply of disposable diapers and wipes. Cloth diapers and pull up diapers that do not have an open/closure tab are not permitted. Diaper rash ointment, if desired, must be provided by the parent and labeled with the child's name.

Toilet Learning

Children who use the toilet or are learning to use the toilet must have several extra pairs of underwear kept in the classroom. Toileting accidents will be dealt with in a calm, pleasant, and casual manner. Underwear that gets soiled will be thrown away, if not easy to clean. Teachers will work with parents whose children seem ready to learn to use the toilet. Generally, the staff have found "pull ups" to be ineffective and confusing for the child, often delaying learning when to use the toilet. The staff prefer children to remain in diapers until they can achieve significant daytime control and will encourage children who are showing signs of readiness to use the toilet, especially if their diaper is dry. Some of the typical signs of toilet learning readiness include interest in using the toilet, ability to indicate need/desire to use the toilet, awareness of physical cues prior to using the toilet, and can stay dry for at least two hours at a time. Children vary widely in the age of readiness for toilet learning with age 2 ½ typically being the earliest.

School Closure Due to Inclement Weather

We will abide by St. Luke's Episcopal School's decision on school closings. You will be notified of school closure via Brightwheel. Inclement weather days are not 'made up' at The Mustard Seed.

Birthday Celebrations

Your child's birthday is a very special milestone in their lives. Please let your child's teacher or the Director know in advance if you plan to provide a special treat for your child to share with their classmates. We ask that all food items be store bought, to ensure proper food handling safety procedures were followed. If party favors are being provided, the items need to be big enough that it will not fit through the center of a paper towel roll, to prevent a choking hazard. If your child has a summer birthday, arrangements can be made to celebrate a birthday on a day convenient for everyone. Please, do not send invitations with your child to 'away-from-school' parties.

If your child has a food allergy, please let the Director know if you would like to be notified in advance of classroom birthday celebrations, so you can provide an alternative treat for your child.

Visitors

Parents are welcome to visit The Mustard Seed classrooms at any time. All visitors must check in at the Jones Lobby at SLES. Please understand that school hours are not a good time to try to conference with your child's teacher as she has a classroom of children who require her full attention. You may make an appointment with the Director at any time throughout the school year (see: Conferences).

Parent Volunteers

We welcome Parent Volunteers to our campus. One of The Mustard Seed's strengths is the great interest our parents show in the success of their child's learning experience and the success of the program. Parents are invited to choose from several activities throughout the year. We would love to have at least two Homeroom Parents per classroom. The Homeroom Parents will coordinate and organize class parties. There is truly some way for everyone to contribute!

Chapel

Children attend chapel every Wednesday upstairs in the Children's Chapel. Chapel is led by the Director of Children and Family Ministry for St. Luke's Episcopal Church. Parents are welcome to attend chapel at any time. Your child will be recognized and given a birthday blessing in chapel the week of their birthday. Please coordinate summer birthday chapel celebrations with the Director or your child's teachers.

St. Luke's Mustard Seed Program has obtained licensing through the

Texas Health and Human Services
PO Box 23990
San Antonio, TX 78223-0990

Local office: 3635 SE Military Dr. San Antonio, TX 78223 210-337-3399

The Mustard Seed license number is 1654518.

Parents are always welcome to view a copy of Minimum Standards. A copy is in the Director's office in a binder titled "Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers". You can also find a copy online at <https://hhs.texas.gov/providers/protective-services-providers/child-care-regulation/minimum-standards>

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a child-care center is a gang-free zone. Criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalties.



2024 – 2025 School Year Fee Schedule

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|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Annual Registration Fee | \$400 |
| Annual Supply Fee | \$450 |
| Monthly Tuition | \$550 |
| Monthly Early Care | \$105 |
| Monthly After School Care | \$140 |

- Registration Fee is due at time of enrollment
- Supply Fee is due by 6/1/24
- August tuition is due by 8/1/24
- **All payments are non-refundable**

Remaining tuition payments (September-May) are due on the 1st day of the corresponding month. A monthly bill will not be sent out. Paying in advance for an entire semester is an available option. **A \$25 late fee will be charged for any tuition payment not received by the 10th day of the month.**

Optional extended care is available for an additional cost. Monthly payment for extended care is made with the tuition payment. Drop-in for extended care must be pre-approved by the Director and will be based on space availability. The drop-in rate for extended care is \$25.

Early Care Hours: 7:45 - 8:30
 After School Care Hours: 12:30-1:30

A \$25 late pick up fee will be charged for any child who is not picked up on time.

Payment Methods

1. Check made payable to “The Mustard Seed” and placed in The Mustard Seed mailbox in the church office or mailed to The Mustard Seed, 11 St. Luke’s Lane, San Antonio, TX 78209.
2. By credit card or ACH using the Brightwheel app.



Parent Handbook Agreement
The Mustard Seed Day School at
St. Luke's Episcopal Church
2024-2025

I have read, understand, and agree to comply with all the policies and procedures set forth in
The Mustard Seed Day School Parent Handbook.

Child's Name: _____

Parent's Name: _____

Parent's Signature: _____

Date: _____

A parent must sign the parent handbook agreement and turn in by the first day of school attendance.