

Sunflower School Handbook

School Year: 2023-2024

5313 27th Ave. S
Gulfport FL 33707
727-321-7657

www.sunflowerprivateschool.com



We believe in relationship and nature based, whole child focused education.

SunFlower School preserves and protects childhood, respects each child's learning pace and interests, helps each child understand and manage relationships, and prepares students to excel in life academically, socially and emotionally.

SunFlower Private School provides a rich and stimulated, emotionally safe environment where children can learn at their own pace as they are being academically challenged in creative ways.

Our curriculum is based on the proven benefits of art-, science-, music- and nature infused, exploration based, whole-child education.



SunFlower's Financial Policies regarding Tuition

Welcome to new and returning SunFlower families. SunFlower's goal is to make our mutual financial relationship as harmonious as possible. To that end, here are our simple rules regarding finances.

Tuition: Please understand that when you as a parent enter into a contract with SunFlower School you obligate yourself to pay the annual tuition for the applicable school year. The tuition is due and payable in full when you sign the contract. Your obligation to pay the full tuition for the school year can only be terminated if SunFlower agrees to do so. If you withdraw your child from SunFlower and terminate the contract without SunFlower's agreement, the balance of the year's tuition becomes immediately due and payable.

For those families that cannot pay the tuition in full when the contract is signed, SunFlower has established a weekly payment schedule with the tuition payable over the duration of the school year. For families who wish to pay the tuition on a monthly basis, a suggested arrangement is included within the published schedule.

Payment Schedule: The Payment Schedule is designed to reflect tuition payments for the full year. This year we have made a combined schedule for families with more than one SunFlower student. At a minimum, tuition is to be paid on a monthly basis. (Any alternative payment arrangement must be worked out with Jacklyn Boyles sunflowerfinace1@gmail.com).

Payments:

Check, cash, money order, Autopay from your bank, Zelle(sunflowerpay1@yahoo.com) and PayPal (sunflowerpay1@yahoo.com) are ways you can pay SunFlower School.

Late Fee:

If tuition payments are routinely and flagrantly late, a late fee will be imposed.

Post Dated Checks:

We cannot accept post-dated checks, which are checks that you want us to hold and not deposit until some date in the future.

Arrival: 8:15am-8:30am – school starts at 8:30am

1. Parking – park along 27th Ave S or 54th St S and walk your child(ren) to the door or into their classroom.
2. You may use the alley ONLY if you have a sleeping child or a pet in the car. (please call the office if you need this accommodation)
3. Please, DO NOT enter the parking lot with your car.(unless it is rainy day pick up)
4. Rainy day drop off/pick up instructions – see last page.

Departure: school ends at 2:30pm

1. Park and walk into the parking lot (court yard).
2. Children will be at the picnic tables under the tree waiting.
3. A teacher will be on outside duty.
4. Please call the office if you're going to be late; at 2:45pm the children will go to aftercare.
5. Rainy day drop off/pick up instructions – see last page.

Early Pickup:

1. Please let the office or your child's teacher know in advance when you need to pick up your child early.
2. If you pick up your child from snack or lunch, please let the teacher on duty know that your child is leaving.
3. Yellow Sign Out Sheet: If someone known to us is picking your child up from school, you may sign your child out ahead of time on the yellow tablet hanging on the hall bulletin board near the office.
4. If we don't know the person picking up your child, please talk with an office person or your child's teacher. Please make certain to list on your child's information form any person who is allowed to pick up your child from school.

Clothes/Shoes:

1. Comfortable play clothes – modest, weather and age appropriate.
2. Comfortable shoes –for running, jumping, hopping and skipping and they should be weather appropriate. No flip flops.

Absences & Tardies:

1. We know that our SunFlower families respect and appreciate their child's education. We therefore expect families to make certain that their child(ren) attend school every day unless they are sick or have a family emergency.
2. We expect children to be here for school at 8:30am.
3. Call or email the office if your child is going to be absent or late.
4. Doctor's Appointments – If you can, please make doctors and dentist appointments after school or after lunch.
5. Please help your child ease into the day by arriving at school on time so that they have some transition time. Late children are often stressed and disruptive to the class.

Communication:

1. Please read our weekly newsletter, which is sent home in take-home folders, as well as emailed to you each week.
2. Please check your child's Friday "Take-Home" folder. Look through your child's finished work and keep it and the newsletter.
3. We ask that the parents of the older children come in for a short conference after the results of the ITBS Achievement tests have come in. Sunflower School students third grade and above take this test in November. The results do take a while to come back.
4. Please attend at least one sit-down conference with your child's teacher each year. You can email, text the teacher or the office or you can speak directly to the teacher about a time.
5. Please handle questions and concerns about your child's academic work or social/emotional well-being by speaking directly to your child's teacher. If you still feel unheard or problems continue, please talk with Bevin or Nicole who will set up a conference with you as soon as possible.
6. A written evaluation from your child's teacher will be mailed to you in the summer.

Class Placement /Grouping:

“What group will my child be in next school year?”

At SunFlower School we have no formal grades (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc...). We have four main classroom teachers, so your child may be in one group for a year but in another group for two years. Your child’s placement has nothing to do with “being promoted” or being “held back”. In fact, since we are non-graded, we try not to refer to the grade that a child is in, especially when kids of the same age are in different groups.

The mixing of ages in each group has worked for us for many years and is one of the factors that makes SunFlower School unique. Each group is usually composed of some kids who were in the group the year before and an influx of children from the younger group. The experienced/older children act as teachers and leaders for the incoming students. We change our specific unit of study (marine birds, owls, medieval times, etc...) each year so students and teachers are energized by new areas of study. The basic skills such as grammar, reading comprehension, spelling and math are taught in more traditional ways, but the work can be accommodated to each child’s proficiency level and learning style.

Behavior Rules:

Respect each other’s feelings, bodies and property.

1. **Expectations:** We expect kind, honest and respectful behavior from students, staff and parents at SunFlower School. We hope to help children develop self-control, a strong sense of responsibility and connection with their families and school community.
2. **How we help children learn our expectations:** Teachers and children discuss behavioral expectations and issues at morning meetings and during our smaller class meetings, we role play and we discuss body language. We encourage children to discuss conflicts and approach them in direct ways. We explain the differences between aggressive, assertive and passive behavior. We teach children to be assertive and to speak directly to a person who may be hurting their feelings or upsetting them in another way. We assure children that they are to tell a teacher immediately if their classmate won’t listen to them, or is being too rough or hits or hurts them physically.

Teachers often take time to sit with two or more children who are having a disagreement. Children can speak and air out their concerns or feelings while a teacher is there to make certain that they are heard without interruption.

3. **Consequences:** With behavioral issues we first try to talk directly with the child. We may then need to talk with parents if the inappropriate behavior continues. We may call, email her behavior. If the behavior is egregious (hitting, extreme meanness, etc.) your child may be sent home for the day.

We do occasionally recommend that a family participate in counseling to support them in making positive changes.

Homework:

We give homework to reinforce skills and to help children develop a sense of responsibility. Homework should be a routine part of a child's afternoon or evening. Homework, unless it's in a workbook, is sent home in a folder and should be the responsibility of the child to complete and return to school. Homework for kindergarteners is optional.

Field Trips:

1. Formal field trips will be announced in school or class newsletters. Teachers may take their classes on spontaneous walking trips around Gulfport also.
2. Clothing – depending on the event, children may be asked to wear a Sunflower shirt, to dress nicely or they might be asked to dress in clothes for the beach.

Birthdays at School:

1. Please ask your child's teacher in advance if you want to bring in treats for the class. All birthday celebrations will be after lunch.
2. Party Invitations – please do not distribute invitations at school or in the parking lot at school.
3. But if you want to invite everyone in the school to your child's party during Friday in the park day, you may post an invitation on the front window next to the door.

Change in Contact Information:

Please get any change of your family's information – phone numbers, addresses, email addresses, to the office ASAP. Emergency contact people should be updated as needed.

Parent Participation:

We expect and encourage our parent community to participate in as many of these SunFlower activities as possible:

1. Cookie party
2. Open House picnic in the fall
3. Fall party
4. December beach day
5. Holiday sing-along
6. Shakespeare play
7. Art Show and Family Picnic in the spring
8. Last day of school sing-along

Volunteering: (Please see updated covid addendum for volunteers as of now with Covid.)

We encourage parents to volunteer regularly at SunFlower School. Volunteers gain a deeper understanding of our school curriculum and schedule as well as experiencing first hand our values of kindness and inclusion. Here are some ways in which parents enrich our school:

1. Teaching chess or forming a chess club; providing supervision on math game days; teaching special projects such as woodworking or sewing; leading music circle; coaching kickball.
2. Driving on field trips; planning and supervising a SunFlower family camping weekend at Ft. Desoto.
3. Helping with the school Shakespeare play in the spring; designing and making costumes; photographing play rehearsals and the actual play; line coaching; set building and painting.
4. Assisting teachers with lunch and snack duty; gardening with children; weeding the flower beds along the windows in the parking lot; keeping the project room clean and organized.
5. Helping with computers; helping with art projects and art shows (matting and hanging pictures); fundraising for specific needs.

Some of the jobs are occasional and some are once a week, but they all provide our students with richer educational experience. We appreciate your help and we would like every parent to volunteer a minimum of 6 hours per year.

Allowed at School:

1. Stuffys (stuffed animals): ONE small Stuffie per child (if they need it).
2. Books from home from which the child is reading.
3. Show and Tell items for Annie's group – on Tuesdays ONLY.
4. Cell phones may not be used at school. Kindles and I-pads may be used for special academic accommodations only. If these items must be brought to school, your child will put them in the office until the end of the day

Medical:

1. Forms Needed: Copies of health records from doctor; immunization records; copy of birth certificate (you can use the copier in office).

2. Sickness: If your child is sick with vomiting, diarrhea or fever, they must stay home for 24 hours symptom and/or fever free. If your child is diagnosed with the flu, please let your pediatrician help you decide how long to stay out of school. (COVID addendum attached)
3. Lice: According to WebMD, Florida is one of 25 states where 100% of lice tested are over-the-counter pesticide resistant. This means in order to rid your child of lice you'll need a prescription from your doctor, or you could hire a professional company like Headlice911 to treat your child with comb outs and natural products. All nits (eggs) must be removed before your child returns to school. This is the only way you (and we) can tell that your child is lice free.
4. Special Medicines: All medicines are kept in the office labeled with the child's name, and must have exact instructions for administering.
5. Allergies: Let us know about any allergies your child has.

School Closures:

We follow the Pinellas County School System schedule for emergency closures. This applies to hurricane days also. Please check the television or social media for information on Pinellas County School closures. No need to call the school.

Pets:

We love animals. However, because of several unfortunate incidents, we ask that you not bring dogs into the school or parking lot. Remember that if you have a pet in the car you can drive through the alley to pick up or drop off your child.(Please call the office.)

Lunches/Snack/Lunch Boxes:

Parents provide lunches, snacks and drinks for their children. We recommend that you include an ice pack because we don't refrigerate kids' lunches. Always pack a water bottle.

Social Media Consent:

We love to give you parents a peek into your child's daily life at school by posting photos on Instagram and Facebook. We never use a child's last name on these posts. We ask that you indicate on our written form if you do not want your child's photo posted on social media.

Please follow us @:

Facebook: SF Teachers

Instagram: @Sunflowerschoolfl

Safety Procedures:

We have regular fire drills, fire inspections, weather drills and health inspections. We constantly check on the weather and weather radar to monitor the day's storm activities. We never allow children outside when there is lightning.

General

Play & Outside Activities:

SunFlower School believes that all children need the time and space to play, to interact with and learn from each other, to engage in their own fantasies and creative games, and to make choices and decisions. Children have time to play outside after eating snack and lunch in multi-age free play groups.

Children often have time inside after lunch to choose activities. All inside and outside activities are supervised by teachers, but the children discuss and vote on game rules and game choices.

The older two groups play kickball once a week, which is supervised by Coach Mike Hambleton, a volunteer, whose children have graduated from SunFlower.

Friday in the Park: Some years ago, a group of parents decided that it would be fun to go to the park across the street from the school (Chase Park) to hang out together and talk while they let their children play. This has become a tradition which everyone enjoys. Everyone is invited. This is NOT a school sponsored activity; each parent is responsible for their own child's safety and behavior.

Spanish: Spanish is taught in small groups twice a week using games and music to help children learn conversational Spanish. Taught by Analia.

Art: Art is taught by all the teachers at SunFlower School and is an important part of our curriculum.

Ceramic Clay: Kathryn Howd is a former SunFlower parent and ceramic clay artist. She comes with helpers once a week and does a variety of clay projects with our children.

Music Circle: The whole school singing group is taught by Avery Moore

Recorder and Rhythm and Movement : Older children receive recorder class. They learn to read notes and music. They have a good sense of basic musical skills. The younger groups participate in a Rhythm and Movement class as a prelude to recorder class.

Rainy Day pickup/Drop off

- If it is raining and you see our gates open that means we are having a rainy day pickup or drop off.
 - Please drive through the alley coming in from the east side and drive through the parking lot. A teacher will greet your child with an umbrella and walk them into school for drop

off or walk them to your car for pick up. PLEASE do not walk your child in on a rainy day drop off or pick up.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read our handbook! We hope that many of your questions are answered here and that you will keep the handbook available for future reference. We are looking forward to a wonderful year!