



**Lower School
Student-Parent Handbook
2025–2026**

**Trinity School of Durham
and Chapel Hill**

Please note: The information in this handbook is subject to change at any time, as Trinity's policies and procedures are updated to best serve our students and their educational goals.

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Lower School Handbook

LOWER SCHOOL ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL TIMES

Please note the regular Lower School hours for 2025–2026, which are listed below. During both morning and afternoon carpool, drivers may not walk their students in to school or walk up to the school building to pick them up, but must stay in their cars.

Lower School classes begin: 8:00 a.m.
The Lower School Building opens at 7:40 a.m. Students should wait quietly in the hall until their classroom door is opened.

TK/K dismissal: 1:15 p.m.

Grades 1–6 dismissal: 2:30 p.m.

LOWER SCHOOL ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

Carpool

Please use both lanes for drop-off in the morning. Stay in your lane all the way around the parking lot. All students must stay in their vehicles until 7:40 a.m. and must be careful not to step into the flow of traffic. A teacher or staff member will help students exit the vehicle. **Drivers must remain in their car at all times.**

Students Who Bike or Walk to School

Students not arriving by car must use the paved pedestrian and bike path along the south side of the campus, which begins at Cambridge Road at the main entrance of the campus and follows the Hope Creek neighborhood property line. All pedestrians must cross the parking lot at the designated crosswalk markings. The Lower School Building opens for students at 7:40 a.m.

Late Arrival or Tardy

Students must be in class by 8:00 a.m. If students arrive after 8:05 a.m., they will be marked tardy and they must stop at the Lower School receptionist's desk to check in. Students who are not in their classrooms and ready promptly at the beginning of the instructional day are considered late. **Lower School students who are more than 15 minutes late for the start of the school day must follow the late arrival procedure described below.**

Late arrivals fall into one of two categories: excused or unexcused.

- **Excused.** Late arrivals due to an appointment or other excused reason.
- **Unexcused.** Late arrivals with no previous notice of an appointment and no parent phone call, note, or email to the teachers and Lower School receptionist Karen Safley (karen.safley@tsdch.org) are considered unexcused.

Late Arrival Procedure

If your student arrives late to school, please walk them to the front door of the Lower School Building and use the call button to notify the Lower School receptionist of your arrival, and then walk your student into the building.

LOWER SCHOOL DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Please follow these guidelines when picking up your student from the carpool lane. Remember that parents may not park and walk up to the school building to meet their children.

TK and K: Parents must use the carpool lane to pick up their students from the sidewalk in front of the Lower School. Except on early-dismissal days, TK and K students are dismissed at 1:15 p.m.

Grades 1–6: Except on early-dismissal days, students will be prepared to exit their classrooms at 2:25 p.m. Students should remain in their classroom until called and display orderly behavior until they have entered their vehicle. **Please understand that carpool is not the time for parent-teacher conferences.**

Early dismissal days: On early-dismissal days, all Lower School students will be dismissed at 11:45 a.m.

Lower School parents will be issued a visor tag with their student's last name. **Drivers in the carpool line must display the visor tag.** We recommend attaching the tag to the visor with rubber bands. Replacement or additional visor tags may be requested from the office.

Drivers in the carpool line must stay in their vehicles and move as far forward as possible. Teachers will see students to their cars. As soon as students have entered the vehicle, drivers should pull forward to maintain traffic flow. Drivers needing to buckle in a young child should pull up and park on the right-hand side of the exit driveway, across from the basketball goals.

Changes to a student's regular carpool arrangements must be **emailed to the classroom teacher and to Kelly Lipford (kelly.lipford@tsdch.org) before 2:00 p.m.** Only in case of emergency should changes be called in to the office. **A student's word will not be sufficient to make last-minute carpool changes.**

If a Lower School student has not been picked up by the end of carpool time, the school will call their parents and the student will wait on the porch or in the Lower School office to be picked up.

Parents or guardians who would like to stay at school with their student for outdoor playtime must continue out through the carpool line and re-enter the campus to park.

Leaving School Early

Parents should not take students out of class early except for emergencies or occasional, unavoidable appointments. Trinity encourages parents to schedule students' appointments outside of school hours.

If a student needs to leave school early, their parent must send an email in advance to the student's classroom teacher, Lower School administrative assistant Kelly Lipford, and Lower School receptionist Karen Safley indicating the reason for and time of release. Parents should follow the procedure described below for leaving school early. If a student returns to school after an appointment, parents must follow the procedure for late arrival described in the previous section.

Early Release Procedure

- Email your student's teacher, Kelly Lipford (kelly.lipford@tsdch.org), and Karen Safley (karen.safley@tsdch.org) **before school starts** to notify the school of your student's early departure and the time of pick-up.
- When you arrive on campus, please park, walk up to the Lower School entrance, and ring the call bell to alert the staff to your arrival. Your student will be called from class and meet you at the Lower School reception desk.

TRINITY NEIGHBORHOOD AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

Trinity Neighborhood is Trinity's after-school program for Lower School students (grades TK–6). The program begins on the first day of school and meets every day that school is in session **except** early dismissal days, when Trinity Neighborhood does **not** meet. To participate in Trinity Neighborhood, students must be registered by their parents or guardians in advance in Veracross. Students must be registered for the full academic year; Trinity

Neighborhood does not offer drop-in attendance. For more information, please visit the [After-School Care](#) page of Trinity's website.

Trinity Neighborhood offers two programs:

- The 1:15–2:30 program for students in TK and K
- The 2:30–5:30 program for students in grades TK–6

Students who are registered for Trinity Neighborhood will be escorted by a staff or faculty member to the Trinity Neighborhood location for their grade level after their school day ends.

Trinity Neighborhood pick-up procedures

- For the **1:15–2:30 program**: Students departing at 2:30 p.m. will be picked up in the regular Lower School carpool line.
- For the **2:30–5:30 program**: Students who are enrolled in the 2:30–5:30 p.m. program will remain in Trinity Neighborhood. They will be in the modular until 4:00 p.m., and afterwards they will be on the playground. Parents may pick up their student at any time. Please be aware of the Middle and Upper School carpool lines when picking up between 3:15–3:45 p.m. Parents will meet their student at their location and sign out on the tablet available using the KidCheck App.

If a person other than a parent or guardian will be picking up a student from Trinity Neighborhood, the parent must email Joy Campbell (joy.campbell@tsdch.org) in advance to let her know. The person picking up should be prepared to show their ID. Parents should let the person picking up know where to meet the student.

If a Trinity Neighborhood student will be absent from school, their parent must email both Joy Campbell and the student's classroom teacher at the same time and let them know that the student will not be present at school or after-school that day. Additionally, if the student needs to leave school earlier in the day or otherwise will not be attending Trinity Neighborhood, their parent or guardian should email Joy Campbell to inform her, as she will be taking attendance.

ATHLETICS PROGRAM

Sixth grade students have the opportunity to participate in Trinity's Middle School athletics program in a variety of sports. For more information, visit the [Athletics page](#) of Trinity's website or contact Athletic Director Sophie Smith at sophie.smith@tsdch.org.

ATTENDANCE

Regular, punctual attendance is vital to successful learning and is in the best interest of the developing child. All students are expected to attend school regularly and to be on time for classes in order to receive the greatest benefit from the instructional program and to develop habits of self-discipline and responsibility. Irregular attendance or tardiness can lead to academic difficulty, hindering both the student and the teacher, who must allow a disproportionate amount of time and attention for make-up instruction. There is a direct relationship between good attendance, success in the classroom, and enjoyment of school. The Head of Lower School may contact the parents in cases of frequent absences or tardiness.

Parents must notify the school if a student will not be in class at the beginning of the instructional day. An excused absence is one in which a student is absent from school because of illness, necessary appointments, or a planned absence. If the school is not notified that a student will not be present, he or she will be reported as having an unexcused absence.

CLASS PLACEMENT

Trinity School seeks balance in each class section, taking into account a number of different factors. Using information from enrollment applications, the Head of Lower School assigns each new student to a class section. Returning students are prayerfully and carefully placed in a class section by the Head of Lower School and the

teachers who have worked with the students the preceding year. They take into consideration each student's individual needs, with the child's best interest in mind.

CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE

Classroom Rules

Following are the "Five Rules" posted in each classroom of the Lower School Building. Parents should review these rules with students at the start of the school year:

1. Obey authority.
2. Honor others above yourself.
3. Practice self-control.
4. Do all things in a decent and orderly manner.
5. Guard what comes out of your mouth.

Conduct Outdoors

- Since students will go outdoors daily, except during extreme weather (such as strong winds or heavy rain), they should dress for outdoor play.
- Students must stay within the specified boundaries.
- Students may not climb trees, pick up sharp sticks, or throw anything except appropriate playground equipment.
- Students may not push, hit, or kick.
- Students must pick up all trash and place it in trash cans before going inside.
- Students must get permission from the teacher on duty if they need to go inside before the designated time.
- Students must clean their shoes before entering the building.
- Students must "be a good sport." Recess is to be fun, not overly competitive.
- Students should speak to the teacher on duty if there is a problem.
- Students must line up immediately when the teacher gives the signal.

Disciplinary Action

There are times when students may need correction and sometimes rebuke for their behavior, and consequences are one means by which to accomplish this. Consequences shape behavior, but real change comes from the heart. A caring relationship allows for both to happen.

Teachers take responsibility for discipline in the classrooms, with support from the administration. Teachers, parents, and administrators partner together in issues of conduct in ways that respect the students while maintaining the integrity of the learning community.

Students may be referred to the Head of Lower School or Assistant Head of Lower School for any behavior that is deemed to be serious. Trinity reserves the right to exercise discretion in assigning consequences in light of exceptional extenuating circumstances. The spirit of the law, rather than the letter of the law, guides Trinity's decisions.

CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled during the first and third quarters. Conferences are an important part of the communication between home and school, and all parents and guardians are encouraged to attend. At conferences there is an exchange of information about the student: how he or she has become acclimated to the new school year, what the parents see as his/her needs and interests, and how both school and home can help in

generating a happy and productive year for the student. The teacher will also elaborate on the student's academic progress. Registration for conferences is done through an electronic system, and parents will be given instructions from the classroom teacher on sign-up procedures.

Additional conferences may be scheduled at any time during the school year if the teacher or parent considers it desirable. Parents' questions regarding a child's general well-being or overall progress will be gladly answered.

Please note: Teachers are not available to confer with parents during morning drop-off, during class time, or at dismissal.

DRESS CODE

Dress Code

Modesty, moderation, cleanliness, neatness, appropriateness, and safety should serve as guidelines for choices regarding dress and appearance. The following information is provided to help direct students' choices.



Head: Hats, caps, and sunglasses may not be worn inside the school buildings. The hoods of jackets or hoodies may not be worn inside the school buildings.

Torso: Clothing must cover stomachs, backs, and chests. Undergarments must be covered.

Legs: Shorts, skirts, and dresses must be longer than mid-thigh. Unhemmed shorts are not allowed. Leggings and other form-fitting pants should be opaque, with no mesh, holes, or tears, and must be worn with a shirt or top that is longer than mid-thigh. Undergarments must be covered.

Feet: Footwear appropriate to the activity must be worn at all times. All students are expected to wear safe, closed-toed shoes or sandals.

The shaded portion of the above figure represents both the front and back views. These parts of the body must be covered in all positions—sitting, standing, bending, reaching—while students are attending school.

Pajamas or clothing intended for sleeping are not allowed.

For P.E. classes, Lower School students should wear sneakers or athletic shoes, modest gym shorts, and a t-shirt.

Sunglasses may be worn inside the school buildings only if medically necessary. A copy of a doctor's note or prescription to this effect must be on file in the office.

Exceptions to dress code standards may be made for P.E. activities, field trips, or other school activities. The dress code may be updated or changed at any time. For questions or further clarification, please confer with the Head of Lower School.

Dress Code Violations

Teachers have the primary responsibility in identifying situations in which students' attire is not in alignment with the dress code. If a teacher finds that a Lower School student is in violation of the dress code, the teacher will speak with the student at the end of that school day about the specifics of the situation.

If a particular dress code violation is extreme in the professional judgment of the teacher, the student may be asked to go to the nurse's office to put on a t-shirt or other appropriate clothing before returning to the classroom.

If a pattern of disregard for the dress code is identified, the Head of Lower School will have a conference to discuss this with the student and the student's parent or guardian.

Chapel Attire

All-School Chapels are held five times a year (Opening Chapel, Thanksgiving Chapel, Christmas Lessons and Carols, Easter Chapel, and Closing Chapel). On these days, Lower School students are asked to wear dressier clothes to show respect for parents, guests, faculty, and fellow classmates. The dress code for chapel days is as follows: dresses, skirts, or nice pants or shorts for girls, and collared shirts and nice pants or shorts for boys. Flip-flop shoes or jeans are not permitted for either gender. On chapel days, students should arrive in and will remain in these clothes all day.

EVALUATION AND REPORT CARDS

Grading Scales

Students in grades TK–5 do not receive letter grades for their work, but rather are evaluated by their progress relative to expectations. The following scale is used:

- 5 – Meets or exceeds expectations independently
- 4 – Meets expectations routinely
- 3 – Meets expectations with frequent support
- 2 – Begins to meet expectations with support
- 1 – Does not meet expectations
- NI – Not introduced
- NA – Not applicable

Students in sixth grade receive letter grades. The following scale is used:

A 93–100	B- 80–82	D+ 67–69
A- 90–92	C+ 77–79	D 63–66
B+ 87–89	C 73–76	D- 60–62
B 83–86	C- 70–72	F ≤ 59

Report Cards

Lower School student report cards are issued four times during the year, after the end of each quarter. The end-of-quarter dates can be found on Trinity's [online public calendar](#). Parents can view their students' report cards through the Veracross Parent Portal. Report cards may be withheld by the school office at the end of the year if there are any outstanding fees or tuition due to the school by the family.

Report card comments describe the work accomplished in most units or subject areas, indicate objectives that have been met, and note areas needing improvement or suggestions for further learning. If a student is struggling academically at any point during the marking period, his or her parents will be notified.

At parent conferences, the teacher may also present a portfolio of the student's work to illustrate his or her progress. These portfolios will be sent home with the students periodically.

FIELD TRIPS

The Lower School uses Trinity buses for field trip transportation. Parents may sometimes be needed as additional chaperones. If they are needed, chaperoning parents will meet the students and teachers at the destination. Parents will not drive students for field trips.

HOMEWORK

To encourage time for extracurricular activities, reflection, creative play, and quality family interaction, Trinity teachers will avoid excessive homework and will focus on work that accomplishes the following purposes:

- Reinforcing knowledge and skills that require practice
- Bridging the gap between home and school
- Encouraging reading

Through the fourth grade, group and individual projects assigned by the classroom teacher will customarily be completed during school hours rather than being assigned as homework. In grades 5 and 6, work at home will be required for projects. Parents may be called on to assist with projects for enrichment and with the preparations for special activities that culminate a unit (e.g., making costumes, contributing special foods).

In the earliest grades, homework will consist primarily of the review of memory work and the practice of reading, math, and spelling. Beginning in fourth grade, homework becomes a more important way to accomplish class objectives, as with the reading of novels or completing of math assignments. Art and music teachers generally do not assign homework. In the upper elementary grades, teachers closely monitor the amount of time spent on homework, to help students balance the demands of school with the demands of work, play, and family life.

Generally, Lower School students can be expected to be assigned up to 10 minutes of homework per grade level each night. Thus, for example, first grade may have 10 minutes of homework, third grade 30 minutes, and fifth grade 50 minutes. Sixth grade students may be assigned up to 15 minutes of homework per subject, per teacher, for a total of 60 minutes per night.

RECESS

Students participate in outside recess each day except during extreme inclement weather. During inclement weather, recess may be held in the classroom or the gym. If a student needs to remain inside for any reason, the classroom teacher must be informed in writing. A verbal message from the student is not sufficient.

SNACK AND LUNCH

Students must bring a water bottle to school each day, which can be refilled at school.

Lower School students have a designated snack time in the morning. Please send in a healthy snack with your child, preferably fruit and/or crackers, with protein.

Students should bring a nutritious lunch from home. Alternatively, parents and guardians may order lunch for their student through [YAY!](#), Trinity's hot lunch vendor, which offers lunch options for students on Monday through Friday when school is in session for the full day. Parents should pack nonperishable food or use an insulated container, since refrigeration is not available. Microwave ovens are also not available. Utensils, plates, and napkins should be provided from home if needed.

SPECIAL SUBJECTS

Seeking to educate the head, the heart, and the hands, Trinity School welcomes the opportunity to expose students to subjects beyond those typically found in American classrooms. Nature studies and drama are among the subjects integrated into the Lower School's hands-on curriculum. Lower School students attend visual art and music classes, P.E., and foreign language classes as a regular part of Trinity's classical curriculum.

Music

Through practicing, performing, creating, and responding to music, Trinity students acquire the skills to engage with challenging, meaningful, and diverse musical opportunities, both inside and outside of the classroom. Students participate in musical performances during our Thanksgiving Chapel, Christmas Lessons and Carols, Easter Chapel, and Grandparents Day programs. From time to time, musical performances may require additional rehearsals before or after school; advance notice will be given.

Lower School Band. Students in grades 4–6 are invited to join the Lower School Band. All students are welcome, whether they are experienced musicians or simply interested in learning to play an instrument. Lower School Band rehearses each Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday after school, 2:30–3:15 p.m., beginning after Labor Day. For more information, contact Martin Stam at martin.stam@tsdch.org.

Lower School Strings. Students in grades 1–6 from beginner to experienced are welcome to join the Lower School String ensemble. Strings players work in small groups with our team of directors according to playing level and then come together at appropriate times to enjoy a full ensemble experience. Our Lower School Strings groups meet each Monday after school, 2:30–3:15 p.m., beginning after Labor Day. For more information, contact Martin Stam at martin.stam@tsdch.org.

Trinity Children's Chorus. Third through sixth grade students have the opportunity to extend their singing experience outside of the music classroom by joining the Trinity Children's Chorus. Directed by Lower School music teacher Luke Ferguson, these singers explore delightfully challenging and diverse music to share with their peers and the larger Trinity community. Rehearsals are on Wednesdays after school, 2:30–3:15 p.m. Contact Luke Ferguson for more information at luke.ferguson@tsdch.org.

Visual Art

In addition to a variety of art projects that are part of their regular classes and unit studies, students participate in weekly classes in visual art. Art teachers may coordinate student art projects with topics being studied in other subjects, enhancing students' learning through interdisciplinary work.

P.E.

Students in grades 1–6 have P.E. classes two times each week, and TK and kindergarten students have P.E. once each week. On P.E. days, students should come to school dressed for their P.E. classes and wear athletic/tennis-style shoes. If a student needs to sit out of a P.E. class for some reason, a parent or guardian should notify both the P.E. teacher and the classroom teacher in advance via email.

Foreign Language

Lower School students also have foreign language classes at Trinity. Students in grades 1–3 study Spanish, and those in grades 4–6 study Latin.

BATHROOM USE

Students must be able to reliably and dependably use the bathroom by themselves before entering Trinity School. Bathroom accidents draw attention away from learning and can be upsetting to the student and others. For health and safety reasons, Lower School faculty and staff are not permitted to clean up after bathroom accidents. In case of such accidents, students will be sent to the school nurse's office.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Lower School students are permitted to have cell phones and smart watches with them on campus, but they may not use them at any time during the instructional day. Students must put away any personal devices, including cell phones and smart watches, before entering the school building in the morning and must keep them stored until after the school day has ended.

Without explicit permission of a Trinity faculty or staff member, Lower School students are not permitted to use cell phones, smart watches, or similar devices to call, text, email, or otherwise communicate with others before or during school hours, regardless of their location on campus. Personal electronic devices that buzz or are being used before or during the school day will be collected and held by the Head of Lower School through the end of the school day. Students using cell phones after school hours must do so outside of school buildings except in case of inclement weather.

Trinity School is not responsible for damage or loss of personal devices stored in backpacks or other locations.

During the school day, from 7:40 a.m. to 2:45 p.m., students may use the school phone located in the Lower School office. Parents should call the Lower School receptionist at 919-402-8262, ext. 1500, if they need to leave a message for their child.

Trinity values electronic tools and resources for learning and seeks to use these in age-appropriate ways. Recognizing that the world beyond Trinity is increasingly digitized, we seek to help our students learn to use digital tools safely and well. Trinity's [Responsible Use of Technology Policy](#) outlines principles of good digital citizenship and the appropriate use of school electronic devices. All members of the Trinity community are expected to adhere to this policy.

PARTIES AND IN-CLASS CELEBRATIONS

If a student wishes to celebrate his or her birthday with the class, the family should follow the celebration guidelines established by the classroom teacher and contact him or her several days prior to the event to make arrangements. **Trinity is an allergy-aware school. Parents and guardians should discuss food preparation with their student's teacher.** Invitations for parties outside of school may not be delivered at school unless the entire class is invited, as children are aware of and very sensitive to such matters. Holiday parties will be simple; these are generally coordinated by the classroom teacher and room parents.