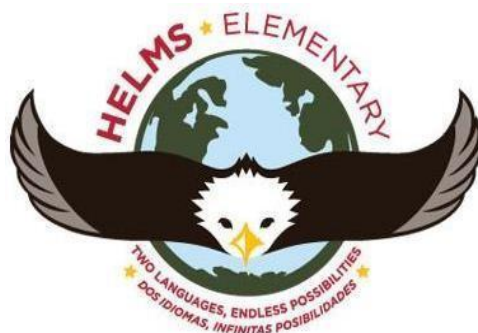


**Helms Elementary School**  
**Parent and Student Handbook**  
**2024-2025**



*Celebrating Neurodiversity: Cultivating minds through biliteracy and personalized growth*

503 West 21<sup>st</sup> Street  
Houston, TX 77008  
713-867-5130  
[.houstonisd.org/HelmsES](http://.houstonisd.org/HelmsES)

Alexander Gonzalez, Principal  
Helen Patino, Assistant Principal  
Julie Hernandez, Magnet Coordinator

This handbook serves as a guide to the expectations, responsibilities, policies, and procedures of Helms Elementary. It is used in conjunction with the Code of Student Conduct and the policies of the HISD Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency. HISD does not discriminate in regard to race, color, national origin, age, gender or disability.

**School Colors**

Red and Blue

**Mascot**

Eagle

**Motto**

“Ascending to New Heights”

**Campus Magnet Theme**

Spanish Immersion Dual Language

**Built:** 1918

Dear Helms Families,

This handbook is published so that you may have a reference with information about the daily operations of the school. Please read and use this reference throughout the school year. In addition to the handbook, you are encouraged to become familiar with the provisions of the district-wide HISD Code of Student Conduct Handbook. We are very proud of our outstanding teachers, instructional programs, and supportive community. If you have any questions at any time, please feel free to contact me by email at [agonza30@houstonisd.org](mailto:agonza30@houstonisd.org) or at the school at 713-867-5130.

Our instructional day begins at 7:30 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m. Research tells us that regular attendance, arriving on time and staying the full instructional day is correlated with academic achievement in high school, college, and the workforce.

We are excited about the potential we have this year to continue to improve Helms and make it an even better place for kids to learn and grow.

We are happy to have you with us at Helms Elementary and look forward to a wonderful school year!

Sincerely,

Alexander Gonzalez  
Principal

**Main Office Phone** – 713-867-5130

**Main Office Hours** – 7:00 am – 3:30 pm - Monday – Friday

#### **OFFICE STAFF**

School Secretary – Ms. Lucy Gonzales; [lgonza32@houstonisd.org](mailto:lgonza32@houstonisd.org)

Student Information Representative – Mrs. Pat Hernández; [phernan6@houstonisd.org](mailto:phernan6@houstonisd.org)

Office/Magnet Clerk – Mrs. Miriam Montemayor; [Miriam.Montemayor@houstonisd.org](mailto:Miriam.Montemayor@houstonisd.org)

Receptionist – Mrs. Dulce Romero; [dulce.romerojuarez@houstonisd.org](mailto:dulce.romerojuarez@houstonisd.org)

Juntos Afterschool Program – Ms. Jae Jerrols; [afterschool@helmsPTA.org](mailto:afterschool@helmsPTA.org)

#### **PROFESSIONAL STAFF**

Assistant Principal - Mrs. Helen Patino; [helen.patino@houstonisd.org](mailto:helen.patino@houstonisd.org)

Magnet Coordinator - Ms. Julie Hernandez; [jhernan2@houstonisd.org](mailto:jhernan2@houstonisd.org)

Social Worker - Mrs. Olga Chavez; [ochavez@houstonisd.org](mailto:ochavez@houstonisd.org)

WrapAround Specialist - Mrs. Gabriela Echavarri; [gabriela.echavarria@houstonisd.org](mailto:gabriela.echavarria@houstonisd.org)

School Nurse - Mrs. Joanna Phillips; [joanna.phillips@houstonisd.org](mailto:joanna.phillips@houstonisd.org)

Cafeteria Manager - Maria Trejo [mtrejo@houstonisd.org](mailto:mtrejo@houstonisd.org)



## SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS

Always arrive at Helms on time, in uniform, prepared, and ready to do your best.

Always show your Eagle Pride, walking quietly with your hands to yourself, and don't forget to smile.

Be respectful of yourself and others at all times.

Helms is your nest away from home so please keep it clean.

## SCHOOL SCHEDULE

Supervision is not available for students who arrive at school before 7:10 a.m. Students may not be left unattended in front of the school due to safety considerations. The crossing guards do not provide student supervision. **Please do not send your child/children to school before 7:10 a.m. Safety is our first priority.**

7:15 a.m.	Parents may begin dropping students off at the assigned drop off locations.
7:15 - 7:25 a.m.	Students wait in their designated areas until they are picked up by their teachers.
7:30 a.m.	Instructional day begins
7:35 a.m.	Tardy Bell rings
2:50 p.m.	Dismissal bell rings
3:00 p.m	Students are dismissed
3:20 pm	Student supervision ends

**PLEASE NOTE: IN THE INTEREST OF STUDENT AND STAFF MEMBER SAFETY AND BUILDING SECURITY, PARENTS WILL NO LONGER BE ALLOWED TO WALK STUDENTS INTO THE BUILDING FOR DROP-OFF DURING MORNING ARRIVALS.**

**School staff members are not responsible for the supervision of students who arrive at school before 7:10 a.m. or for students who remain after 3:20 p.m. and are not involved in afterschool activities.**

If there are no provisions made for the supervision of children at the end of the regular school day or if they are not enrolled in the after or before school program, the Houston ISD Police Department may be called to pick up students remaining on campus beyond a reasonable time. Students and parents are hereby apprised of the times before and after school when the students are not supervised. Student's Code of Conduct will be enforced while on campus before and after school.

**\*Students will only be supervised 30 minutes after students are dismissed. Schools are not required to provide free supervision after dismissal. This service is provided as a courtesy. Please do not abuse it. If students are not picked up on time, the school may have to call CPS or Houston ISD Police Department to come and get any students who are not picked up on time.** In the case of an EXTREME emergency, please call the office.

Magnet students are eligible for HISD transportation for on time morning arrival and afternoon pickup. If your child's drop off and pick up times become a problem and you are on a Magnet transfer, you will be asked to use HISD transportation. If you decline this service and the problem continues, your child will be placed on a growth plan and child's transfer may not be renewed for next year.

## ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCES

At Helms Elementary our attendance goal is 97%. Attendance is required for promotion to the next grade. Research shows that student attendance directly impacts student outcomes. A child who comes to school on time and every day does better academically. When your child is frequently absent or late, they miss valuable instruction. This can be even more damaging for a student who is learning in another language. Additionally, funding for our school is based on student attendance. Each day a child is absent represents a loss of funding for the school. Plan to have your child at school on time every day all day. Texas Compulsory Attendance Law states that parent/guardians are held accountable for their child attendance.

Helms' ADA time is 9:00 a.m. The official attendance for the day is taken at that time. A student who is not physically on campus at 9:00 a.m. is absent unless they present official documentation of a visit made that same day to a doctor, dentist, or other medical/clinical professional.

If your child is absent, please call or email Mrs. Pat Hernández ([phernan6@houstonisd.org](mailto:phernan6@houstonisd.org)) before 9:00 a.m. on that day to notify the school. Then, bring a note to the school the next day stating the reason for the absence, the date, and your signature. **Notes received after 3 days will automatically be considered unexcused.** Excessive absences can result in an automatic retention, non-renewal of transfer and/or court action for you and your child.

The only acceptable excuses for an absence to be excused are:

- Personal illness (fever, vomiting or diarrhea)
- Dental or doctor appointments (note required from physician)
- Death in the family
- Quarantine
- Weather or road conditions making travel dangerous
- Emergencies or any unusual circumstances recognized by the principal
- Observance of religious holidays
- Health services provided to Medicare-eligible students
- School sponsored or school sanctioned activities away from the campus (no parent note required)
- Court appearance of the students-documentation required

When we receive notes from parents with acceptable reasons for absence or notes from a doctor on their stationery, these absences are considered excused absences. Excused absences will cause a student not to have perfect attendance but will not be considered truancy unless there is an extreme number of absences.

**Family vacations and midyear trips are considered unexcused absences.** Please plan your family vacations/trips around the HISD Academic Calendar. Research shows that loss of more than five days of school could greatly impact social and academic achievement.

The Magnet Program Entrance Agreement states under Program Expectations:

- Maintain regular attendance in accordance with school and Magnet policy
- Refrain from excessive tardiness in accordance with school and Magnet policy
- Respect school rules concerning the timely drop off and pick up of students.

Failure to adhere to this agreement will result in your child being placed on a Magnet Growth Plan and possible non-renewal of your Magnet transfer.

Every moment is a learning moment when your child is at school. We work to maximize your child's educational experience when they are here. Doctor's appointments are considered excused absences with the note from the doctor's office. A pattern of regularly leaving the campus early is also grounds for a non-renewal of transfer and/or release from the magnet program.

## **COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE LAWS**

### **TO PARENTS OR TO PERSONS STANDING IN PARENTAL RELATION TO CHILDREN**

This section is to inform you of Senate Bill 1432 as passed by the Texas Legislature effective September 1, 2001. The law states that if a student is absent from school three (3) days or parts of days in a four week-period without parental consent or is absent without an excuse for ten (10) or more days or parts of a day in a six-month period:

- **The student's parent or legal guardian is subject to prosecution under Texas Education Code 25.093**
- **The student is subject to prosecution under Texas Code 25.094**

It is your duty to monitor your child's attendance, require your child to attend school and request a conference with a school official to discuss absences. Parents or legal guardians are subject to prosecution under Texas Education Code 25.093 (b) for failure to require their child to attend school.

**Once enrolled in a Texas public school, all children beginning at age 4 (PK) are subject to the Compulsory School Attendance laws.**

### **TARDY POLICY**

***Students arriving late not only miss valuable instruction but disrupt the learning of other students and the orderly environment of the classroom.***

School begins promptly at 7:30 a.m. each day. Students who arrive after 7:40 a.m. are considered tardy and must go to the office to obtain an admit slip. Persistent tardiness is unacceptable. According to the *HISD Code of Student Conduct*, it is the parent's and student's responsibility to arrive on time each day. ***Transfer students with excessive tardies during the school year are subject to non-renewal of the transfer.***

A conference with the administration will be required and intervention plans will be developed for students with repeated tardies to solve the issue. Magnet students who use HISD transportation will automatically be counted as on time if the bus arrives late. If on-time arrival is a problem for you and you are a Magnet student, you will be asked to use HISD transportation. If you decline this service and the problem continues, your child's transfer may not be renewed for next year.

### **PERFECT ATTENDANCE RECOGNITION REQUIREMENTS**

Students with Perfect Attendance during a six-week grading period or for the entire school year will be recognized. To be eligible for Perfect Attendance recognition, a student may have no more than three (3) tardies in a six-week grading period and no more than twelve (12) tardies for the school year.

Other requirements include:

- Perfect attendance beginning on the first day of enrollment.
- A student is disqualified for the award if absent one day.
- Fifth-grade students who have a record of perfect attendance for all years of elementary (PK-5) will receive a special recognition at their end-of-year program.
- Excessive early departures for non-medical reasons may disqualify a student for perfect attendance.

## STUDENT DISMISSAL

Students are dismissed at 3:00 p.m. from various locations.

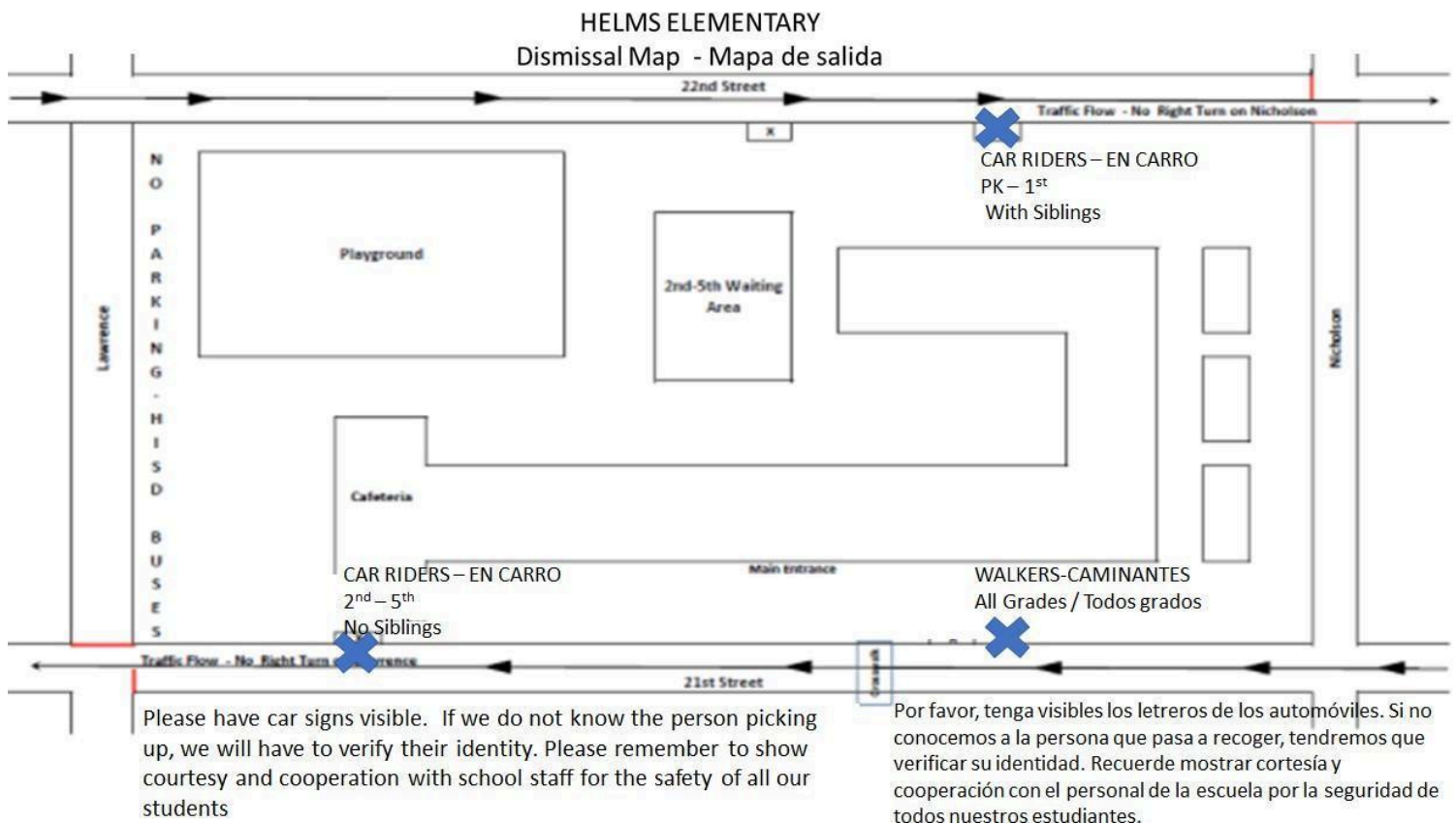
### Car riders:

- PK – 1st Students and older siblings are picked up by the gate on 22nd Street. The car rider line queues up along 22nd Street. Please make sure your dismissal tag is visible from your vehicle. Students will be loaded into parents' cars. Please do not get out of your vehicle.
- 2nd – 5th Students without younger siblings are picked-up by the cafeteria gate on 21st Street. The car rider line queues up along 21st Street. Please make sure your dismissal tag is visible from your vehicle. Students will be loaded into parents' cars. Please do not get out of your vehicle.

### Walkers - Parent pick-up (for parents picking up their child on foot):

- All grade levels will be dismissed from the side gate by the geology garden.

**PLEASE NOTE:** If you do not have your Pick-Up Card, you will be asked to go to the office, where you will be asked to show your ID for verification.



## PARENTAL CHANGE OF STUDENT DISMISSAL PLAN

As an extra safety precaution, any changes requested to a student's afternoon dismissal plan must be communicated directly to the Helms Elementary office. An email to your child's teacher is encouraged but will not suffice as the only means of communicating a dismissal change. The office will require that a parent communicating a dismissal change over the phone must provide the driver's license number that is written on the student's enrollment form on file with the school. To inform your child of a change in his/her dismissal plans, please notify the office by 2:30 p.m., and the message will be relayed to your child's teacher.

## RELEASE OF STUDENTS BEFORE REGULAR DISMISSAL

Children are expected to attend school for the entire day. If a student needs to leave during the school day for an appointment or due to illness, he/she must be signed out by his/her legal guardian. If you have an unavoidable appointment and need to sign your child out early, you must come in to the front office and sign-out. We will not call a child to the front office until you are present at the school. Therefore, there is no need to call ahead. The parent must come into the office to sign the child out from school. Only the parent or persons listed on the emergency contact list will be allowed to take a child from school during regular school hours. A government issued form of identification is required at time of check out. No student will be allowed to leave at any time with an adult whose name is not on the emergency contact list. When possible, the classroom teacher should receive a note in the morning if the student is to leave before the regular time for a doctor's appointment, so the teacher can plan accordingly.

In the case of an extreme emergency, notify the office in writing through a note, fax, or email if you need someone else not on the emergency list to pick up your child.

Please do not try to pick up your child before the dismissal bell. Students will not be released between 2:30 p.m. and 2:50 p.m. The safety of the children is our top priority.

If you have a custody agreement, be sure to provide the school with the most recent court order with a judge's signature. Schools may call law enforcement personnel should an issue arise regarding student safety and security.

## SAFETY REMINDERS

At Helms, student safety is our number one priority. Please review the following procedures for morning drop-off and afternoon dismissal. **"Safety is our first priority; please do not ask us to take short cuts with our children."**

- Children should not be dropped off at school before 7:15 a.m. There is no one to supervise and monitor before that time.
- Every visitor who enters the grade-level hallways and/or classrooms must have a visitor's badge issued by the office.
- A student will not be released to any person not listed on the parent's release form. No exceptions. (If there is a court decision on this, please file court papers with the office.)
- Communicate any changes regarding dismissal to **front office staff** by phone or email by 2:30 p.m. For your child's safety, no changes in dismissal will be made after 2:30 p.m.
- Respect that no child will be released between 2:30 and 2:50 p.m. without a doctor's excuse or permission from the principal or designee.
- Students will be called to the office if parents need to speak to them if it does not interfere with instructional time. Parents will not go the classroom. We follow dictates of the courts in allowing parental visits by non-custodial parents.
- After 7:30 a.m., all outer access doors are locked. All campus visitors must come to the front door near the



office and press the call button to be allowed building access.

- No adult may serve in any volunteer capacity unless that person has VIPS clearance.
- Obey posted signs and driving laws and exercise good safety practices when dropping off and picking up students in the mornings and afternoons. Please do not use a cell phone while driving in the school area. Parents who do not follow safety rules put children at risk. We will speak directly to any parent who is violating rules and, if necessary, ask for assistance from HISD Police.
- Do not park your car in areas marked “No Parking”. It poses a safety risk to students and Houston Police give tickets in these areas.
- Stop your car on the right-hand side of the street and have your children get in and out of the car on the curbside.
- **Do not stop in the parking lot or at the parking lot entrance without parking to let your children out.**
- Only pick-up on the designated areas in the front and the back of the school. Remain in your cars if driving on 21st or 22nd Street.
- Maintain an updated emergency pick-up list and updated emergency numbers with the front office and the teacher.
- Refrain from having conferences with teachers during pick-up. You can request a conference with a teacher at another time.
- All students (Pre-K-5th) will be picked-up from the main entrance after 3:15 p.m.
- When crossing the street, students should cross with the crossing guard at the crosswalk.
- Please remember to observe laws concerning safety around school buses. All auto traffic is to STOP while school buses are stopped to load and unload students.

## HEALTH SERVICES

In the event of illness or injury during the school day, clinic services are provided by the school nurse or office staff. If it is determined that a student is too ill to remain at school, the parent or emergency person designated on the “*Emergency Contact Form*” will be contacted to make arrangements for the student to be picked up. The person coming will be asked to show their ID before the student is released. Parents are responsible for keeping **ALL phone numbers current.**

## MEDICATIONS

Students may not carry medication or have it in the classroom or backpacks and its possession will be a violation of the HISD Code of Conduct. HISD Board Policy states that it is not the function of public-school personnel to administer medical treatment or medication, including over-the-counter drugs. Long-term student medications, which cannot be administered under any arrangement other than during school hours, may be taken at school only with a physician's written statement and completion of Form No. 40.3740. “Policies Governing Administering Medication During School Hours” and it is returned to the school office. The medication must be in the original container and appropriately labeled by the pharmacy or physician with the student name. Medications must be delivered to the school nurse by an adult. No medication can be given without this documentation.

## WITHDRAWING A STUDENT

Please call the office **at least one day in advance** of withdrawing a student from school. Bring the forwarding address and phone number if available. You must provide the name and district of the school your child is going to attend next. Records will be sent to the new school.

## **SCHOOL CLOSURE/INCLEMENT WEATHER**

Should school need to be closed or canceled due to inclement weather or other emergencies, parents will receive the information through HISD's telephone and e-mail notification system, School Messenger, and Class Dojo. This information is also announced on radio and television stations and posted on the district website and social media accounts.

## **REQUEST FOR RECORDS**

Parents may request records from the school. Requests should be made in the office and the parent should allow 48 hours for the school to respond.

## **CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR TELEPHONE NUMBER**

For the school to handle emergencies, maintain communication, and keep records current, please notify the school office immediately of address or telephone number changes.

## **COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL**

Letters, flyers and informational items are posted on Class Dojo; however, please check your child's backpack daily for important notes sent home by the teacher. Please set up a Class Dojo account to ensure you receive valuable school information. If you would like to receive printed communications, please request them in the main office with Ms. Lucy.

Email is an excellent way to communicate with your child's teacher. Please keep these messages brief and allow up to 48 hours for a response. Always address concerns with the teacher first before contacting an administrator.

It is our expectation that Helms teachers and staff return phone messages and emails within 48 hours whenever possible.

## **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Parents may request a parent-teacher conference to discuss concerns or suggestions. Teachers are available during their planning period. Parents must make appointments 48 hours in advance and wait for teacher confirmation. Always sign in at the main office and receive a visitor's pass. We encourage every parent to have a formal parent-teacher conference in the first semester and to stay well informed of your child's progress through the year.

### **Supporting Parent Concerns/ Resolving Conflicts**

If you have a concern related to your child's classroom experience:

1. Make an appointment with your student's teacher during their conference time to see if the issue can be resolved. Most issues are due to a lack of communication or misunderstanding and can be resolved with ongoing two-way communication. A parent/teacher conference is the place to start.
2. If further attention is needed after an honest attempt to address your situation is made, please schedule an appointment with the magnet coordinator, assistant principal or the principal.

If your concern is related to magnet issues such as buses, magnet applications, etc, please contact the Magnet Coordinator, Ms. Julie Hernández at [jhernan2@houstonisd.org](mailto:jhernan2@houstonisd.org).

For all other concerns, questions, or comments, please contact the principal.

## GRADING POLICY

Grades should accurately reflect the progress of the student and mastery of grade level skills. Conduct grades shall be separate from academic grades. Teachers are required to post grades within two weeks of the assignment. Graded work will be sent home for parent review on a regular basis. Grades earned in student notebooks can be viewed upon request. For students in Kindergarten, subjects are marked according to the scale listed on the report card. For students in Grades 1-5, report card averages in each of the core academic subjects (Reading, Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies) shall be based on the following weights:

Test and project grades have a weight of 40% on the gradebook.

Classwork grades have a weight of 60% on the gradebook.

**Reassessment:** Grades earned below 70% automatically qualify for reassessment. Graded assessments will be sent home no later than the second Wednesday following the date of the assessments and the student and parent will be notified in advance of the date for the retesting. Students will be given one opportunity to retest and will receive the average of the original and retest grade with a maximum of 70%. Reassessment methods include, but are not limited to:

1. Observation
2. Oral questioning
3. Additional assignments
4. Correcting tests under supervision of teacher
5. Retesting using alternate version of exam

**Make-up Work:** Students who have an excused absence from school will have the same number of days to make up work provided by the teacher. In other words, a student who was absent for two days will have two days to turn in make-up work once he/she returns to school.

**Modifying Work:** Some students have allowable accommodations/modifications, per Special Education IEPs. (Section 504 students are allowed accommodations only.) Teachers should clearly communicate with parents on this topic.

**Projects:** Projects or Project Based Learning activities assigned by the teacher may be done both at home and at school, with the teacher defining the standards and the work expectations with a list of requirements or a grading rubric. Parents are asked to facilitate, but the work itself should be completed by the student. Rubrics should award points for projects that are turned in on time and include point deductions for work or projects turned in late.

Parents can log in to the HISD parent/student portal and create an account to access their child's grades. To learn more about the HISD "Parent Student Connect" (PCS) parents may go to the HISD website.

## HOMEWORK

Students are expected to read a minimum of 20 minutes every night, per Houston ISD policy. Additional homework options provided by the classroom teacher can be completed at the discretion and convenience of the parent(s)/family and are not factored into student averages. (Students participating in the after-school program are expected to work on homework options during designated academic time blocks.)

## **Essential Understandings Regarding Homework**

The Teacher will:

- Foster a growth mindset in students, conveying the importance of hard work and practice in developing skills.
- Provide access to and communicate supplementary homework activities to families that review concepts covered in class.
- Communicate student progress/academic concerns to parents and recommend (not require) any specific homework activities that may further support individual student learning needs/growth areas.

The Student will:

- Develop a growth mindset, work hard in class, and complete homework assignments when directed to by parents.
- Follow classroom procedures for recording homework options and share those options with parents. (Students participating in the after-school program are expected to work on homework options during designated academic time blocks.)
- Study and practice concepts as needed prior to tests.

The Parent will:

- Encourage a growth mindset in their child and convey the importance of hard work and taking responsibility to practice concepts as needed.
- Direct student to complete homework at parental discretion and family convenience.
- Communicate with the teacher if wanting additional homework options or more information on skills/concepts for their students to practice at home.

## **PROGRESS REPORTS AND REPORT CARDS**

One progress report is issued during each grading cycle. They will be sent home accordingly. Report cards are sent home at the end of the six-weeks grading period. Parents must sign and return one of the copies sent home to indicate to the teacher that the parent has seen the report. Refer to the 2023 - 2024 school calendar for report card dates and progress reports.

## **HONOR ROLL RECOGNITION**

Helms recognizes Honor Roll as defined below.

- Students must be graded in all ACADEMIC SUBJECTS.
- Students must have all "As" with an "E" or "S" in conduct or
- Students must have all "As" and "Bs" with no more than two "Bs" and with an "E" or "S" in conduct.

## **DRESS CODE**

The faculty and staff of Helms Elementary School expect students to come to school each day dressed appropriately to ensure focus on learning, health and safety for everyone on campus. Each student's appearance should always reflect a positive image of the school on campus and while representing Helms Elementary School at school-related activities. Our campus values and needs the support of parents in upholding our dress code. The following guidelines outline appropriate dress for all Helms Elementary School students.

**Uniform Tops:** Students are required to wear red, white, or navy-blue polo-style shirts, oxford shirts or girls' uniform blouses with collars. Solid colored turtlenecks and/or undershirts (red, white or navy are preferred) may be worn in cold weather with the appropriate uniform shirt. Helms spirit shirts are available through the PTA. Spirit shirts, Helms student club shirts, may be worn on any day of the week. Shirts must cover tops of pants. Shirts must always be tucked in.

**Uniform Bottoms:** Uniform khaki, navy or black pants (cargo, jogging, sweat, athletic not permitted), shorts (biking shorts are not permitted), and skorts and/or skirts to the knee will be allowed. Pants must not be torn or ripped and must fit appropriately at the waist and crotch (no sagging pants). Leggings, tights, and knee highs may be worn under skirt or jumper. Leggings and work out or athletic attire may not be worn at any time as a uniform bottom unless permission is given by the administration. Denim bottoms may be worn on Fridays.

**Jumpers:** Girls may wear uniform jumpers no shorter than two inches above the knee in khaki or navy.

**Jackets and Outerwear:** Helms embroidered, or printed outerwear is preferred and is available through the PTA. If students do not wear Helms outerwear, as a safety measure, it is preferred that students wear **solid** color outerwear (sweaters, sweatshirts/hoodies, or light jackets) in red, white or navy blue (with **no** logos or designs).

**Footwear:** The following shoes are permitted: athletic shoes, laced shoes, boots, dress shoes, flat closed-toes/closed-heel shoes. Footwear deemed unsafe such as sandals, cleats, clogs, house or bedroom slippers, shoes with rollers, flip-flops, and/or footwear deemed distracting such as light up shoes are *not permitted*. High heels/wedged shoes are not permitted.

**Jewelry and Accessories:** Stud earrings and hoop earrings smaller than a quarter are permitted (only one piercing per ear). Chains and/or necklaces should be worn on the inside of the uniform top. Sunglasses are not to be worn on campus, whether inside or out, unless for medical reasons. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen jewelry or other personal belongings. Bringing these items to school is at the owner's risk and not recommended.

**Hair:** Hair should be clean, combed, and worn in a style that does not impede vision. Hair cannot cover either eye. Hair must be pinned up and kept out of the face. Hair style, designs, color or hair accessories should not take away from the learning environment.

**Headwear:** No hats, caps, bandanas, skull caps, do-rags, hoods, or any other head covering may be worn at any time while inside the building or classrooms, unless for religious or medical purposes.

**Makeup:** Girls should not wear make-up.

**\*Label your child's outerwear such as jackets, sweaters, gloves, and hats with full name on the tag.**

\*Please be sure to check the lost and found closet weekly. All unclaimed items will be donated to local charity once every six weeks.

**\*The school is not responsible for lost or broken clothing, jewelry, accessories or personal belongings of any kind.**

## **CAMPUS BEHAVIOR POLICIES**

At Helms Elementary, we are focused on providing an exemplary academic environment for your child. We also believe children should enjoy school. The HISD Code of Student Conduct shall serve as the guide for setting expectations for student behavior and the consequences for misbehavior. Parents are expected to review expectations for proper behavior at school on a regular basis with their child. In all classrooms, teachers establish, review, and post the rules of conduct expected. Minor infractions are handled by the teacher. These and repeated instances of disrespectful or disruptive student behaviors will be communicated to parents by the teachers. Students are afforded consistent, fair, and predictable standards of conduct management, responses and interventions. Repeated infractions or discipline matters of a more serious nature are handled in the office and the

teacher will complete a discipline referral. Consequences for misbehavior are assigned based on the infraction and the level. During disciplinary actions we work to protect the classroom from disruptions, correct the behavior, protect the dignity of the student, and partner with parents to make responses meaningful and appropriate.

## **CAFETERIA AND FOOD SERVICE POLICIES**

These policies are developed by the Texas Department of Agriculture and enforced by the Texas Education Agency:

- Lunch items may not be bought, traded or sold between students
- Students must make their own food choices
- We requested a Free Lunch application for all students whether they qualify for service or not. The school is required to verify that all parents have been provided this opportunity to access this program
- Food may not be removed from the cafeteria
- Food modifications are made only for health reasons and not for individual or religious preferences, please visit [www.houstonisd.org](http://www.houstonisd.org) for more information.
- Cafeteria behavior of each class will be monitored with a three-color system.
- Parents and visitors will not be allowed to have lunch with their child.
- All children will eat at their scheduled lunch time.

## **LUNCH MONEY PAYMENTS**

ALL students, regardless of application status, will be served free breakfast and lunch every day and provided with an HISD lunch account.

Parents who do not wish for their child to participate in the free breakfast program should communicate with Ms. Trejo, the cafeteria manager, and their child(ren) teacher.

## **VOLUNTEERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS (VIPS)**

Volunteers are always needed both during and after school hours. Volunteers are active at Helms as mentors, tutors, field trip chaperones, teacher helpers, office helpers, in the gardens, and through many PTA functions. Please contact Ms. Olga Chavez, our Social Worker if you would like to volunteer. You may also check the PTA website for opportunities to volunteer. Thank you for your willingness to help!

**All volunteers must register with the VIPS program online ([www.houstonisd.org/VIPSLOGIN](http://www.houstonisd.org/VIPSLOGIN)) the entire process is completed online. The process is expected to take 2-3 weeks depending upon the type of ID that is used. Please stop by the office for more details on this process.**

**Volunteers are not allowed to bring siblings or younger children while volunteering during events or in the classrooms.**

To chaperone a field trip, volunteers must be pre-scheduled with the organizing teacher.

Volunteers in the classroom or school may not discuss any confidential information such as student progress or discipline issues of students who are not their own children. Volunteers must follow all district policies and regulations when on campus. Violations of policy can result in the loss of the ability to volunteer.

## VISITORS

Visitation is limited to essential and pre-scheduled visitors, including individuals who have been pre-approved through the Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) program. Parents registering their children for school also are allowed. All visitors are required to sign in, always show identification, and obtain a visitor's pass from the receptionist for the safety of all Helms' students and staff. Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our children safe.

Individuals walking through the hallways without a Visitors Pass will be escorted to the office by the staff. **No adults are allowed in any student restrooms. Adult restrooms are located upstairs in the teacher's lounge.** No visitors are allowed on campus during secure testing such as STAAR administrations. The principal reserves the right to deny any visitation that may disrupt the educational process or violate any legal requirements. Visitors and volunteers may not interrupt instruction.

## CLASSROOM PARTIES

Class parties are limited to two (2) per year by HISD policy. Helms will hold parties before Winter Holiday and at the end of the school year. There will be no other classroom parties during the school year. Students may distribute Valentine's Day cards.

## BIRTHDAY TREATS

Per Texas Department of Agriculture policy regarding birthday treats at school, if a parent wishes to celebrate a child's birthday, they may bring store-bought cupcakes or cookies (one per student) to school. No other items are permitted such as candy, sheet cakes, juice, sodas or fast food items. Items that do not meet these guidelines will not be served and will be sent back home at the end of the day. Healthy snacks are encouraged.

**Helms is a nut free school. Please do not send any treats containing nuts.**

To maintain our instructional focus, teachers will allow your child to share store-bought cupcakes or cookies with classmates at the end of the day. Parents should send the food items to school in the morning in a sturdy container. Parents are not allowed to interrupt instructional time to drop off items or supervise this activity.

No party-type activities will take place including group photographs, balloons, gifts, or party favors.

Please do not hand out party invitations at school unless all children in the class are to receive one.

We ask that parents notify their child's teacher if they prefer that their child not participate in birthday celebrations, or if a child has a food allergy.

## FIELD TRIPS/LESSONS

Field trips will be arranged by the teacher as an extension of the school curriculum. All students are expected to participate in the field lesson as it is a learning activity. Parent approval forms will be sent home to be signed and returned. No student will be permitted to attend a trip without written permission on the appropriate form. The signed permission form must be returned to the teacher no later than two days prior to the scheduled field trip. We reserve the right to deny a child's participation in a field trip or in co-curricular activities if classroom conduct (P or reflects or any other behaviors indicate that a child's safety could be in jeopardy off-campus. A parent may be required to accompany their child on the field trip if the teacher has concerns regarding the student's ability to stay with the group or follow directions. Our group represents the school while on field trips; therefore, the appearance and conduct of everyone should be exemplary. **Field Trip T-shirts designated by grade level are required for field trips.** For field trips requiring transportation by bus, students must ride the bus to and from the site unless receiving school approval beforehand due to extenuating circumstances.

**Chaperones for Field Trips:** Assisting teachers with field trips is an integral part of our volunteer program. Adequate adult supervision makes for a pleasant learning experience for all students. Please keep in mind that teachers are often required to limit the number of parent chaperones that can attend certain field trips. Teachers will notify those parents who will attend the field trip as a chaperone. All chaperones must complete HISD Volunteers in Public Schools registration (VIPS) and background check prior to any field trip according to district policies. You must go online and register. Allow 2 – 4 weeks for the approval process. It is recommended you complete the VIPS Volunteer registration at the beginning of the school year. Parents are responsible for updating their status yearly. There is no rollover from year to year. You must go through the volunteer enrollment process each school year. **Parents without VIPS clearance cannot go on field trips with the students nor can they act as chaperones per HISD Policy, for the safety of our students.** Adults must ride school buses and pay applicable bus and admission fees as required. Parents may drive personal vehicles to field trips, but those parents may not act as chaperones for other children on a field trip. Appropriate attire must be worn that is conducive to a school setting. **Parents may not bring siblings or other family members or friends on field trips.** Parents on field trips are there as chaperones to support the educational extensions of the classroom. The principal reserves the right to limit the number of chaperones or deny certain individuals from acting as chaperones.

## **CELLULAR PHONES AND ELECTRONICS**

Students must turn off cell phones during the day and keep them stored in backpacks. If a cell phone or electronic is turned on or is visible, it will be picked up and turned in to the office. The parent must retrieve it. Other electronic devices, including iPods, should be left at home. The school cannot be held responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen phones or electronic devices.

## **ITEMS NOT PERMITTED**

Students may only bring toys or objects to school as part of a special lesson or school event pre-authorized by the teacher. These items should be labeled with the student's name and returned home at the end of the day. We ask that all personal belongings (TOYS, COSTUMES, HATS, RECORDS, BIRTHDAY PRESENTS, JEWELRY, PURSES, etc.) remain at home. MP3 players, CD players, iPods, video games or other electrical devices such as cameras should not be brought to school. Students who do so will have the item confiscated and returned to the parent. The school cannot be held responsible for lost, stolen, or broken toys, jewelry, accessories or personal belongings of any kind.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

The use of technology in the classroom is an integral part of the instructional process. The entire school campus is wired to the Internet with all work stations connected to a Local Area Network with access to HISD's Wide Area Network. The *Code of Student Conduct* covers violations of security, copywriting, and various other inappropriate uses of technology by students. Students may be denied the right to access a computer connected to the Internet if they violate the acceptable use policy. Parents must sign and return permission forms for students to access the technology on campus.

## **PARENT PICK UP TAGS & BACKPACK TAGS**

Parents will be given a set of pick-up tags. Parents of students in prekindergarten and kindergarten will be given a backpack tag. After the first set is distributed. There will be a \$1.00 replacement/lost fee. Please go to the main office to request a new set of parent pick-up tags or backpack tags.



## TEXTBOOKS AND LIBRARY BOOKS

All textbooks are owned by the State of Texas and library books by the school. Lost books must be paid for if lost or stolen. Another book cannot be issued until payment has been made for the lost book. Refunds are given if books are found after payment is made. Payments for any lost books must be made to the front office and a receipt will be issued.

## LOST AND FOUND

**All student items such as backpacks, lunch kits, and jackets should be labeled with the student's name in permanent marker.** A lost and found is located in front of room 6. Unclaimed items are donated to a local charity once every six weeks. The school cannot be held responsible for lost or broken clothing, jewelry, accessories or personal belongings of any kind.

## PARKING

Parking can sometimes present a challenge around our Helms' neighborhood. Generally, parking is permitted in the parking lot across the street from the school at any time during the day in the designated areas. Spot with the letter **T** are reserved for school employees. Parking is not permitted on 21st, 22nd, or Lawrence streets at any time. Parking is not permitted in the middle of the parking lot. Please heed **NO PARKING** signs posted and respect areas designated as "Handicap Parking". The parking lot on the west side of the campus is reserved for Helms' staff and after-school program staff only.

Please show courtesy to our neighbors when parking around the school by not blocking driveways or alleys. Persons blocking driveways may have their cars towed by residents.

## COMPENSATION OF TEACHERS BY PARENTS

HISD Elementary Guidelines state that a teacher shall not be permitted to use the school building for giving private lessons for pay nor to receive any money for giving instruction outside of school hours to pupils whose promotion that teacher of record will be called upon to pass judgment. Any financial transactions between teachers and parents are discouraged to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

## WAYS TO BE INFORMED

- Helms website [houstonisd.org/helms](http://houstonisd.org/helms)
- School Marquee
- Follow us on Facebook and Twitter: @helmsdlschool
- **Class Dojo** is an online social engagement site in which parents can connect to their child's classroom(s). Using Class Dojo, parents can view photographs and information about current activities, events, and achievements taking place in the classroom. Parents are also able to post photos and notes following school events such as field trips, ceremonies, or after-school events. Class Dojo is the best way for you to be connected and informed of all Helms community and parental involvement events.

How to join Class Dojo:

- 1- Come to Meet the Teacher to obtain a code from your teacher.
- 2- Visit <https://www.classdojo.com/invite/?s=52ead6b793bd290b62001c5a>
- 3- Enjoy receiving updates from your teacher and the administrative team

## **PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION**

Helms Parent Teacher Association (PTA) invites every parent or family member of a Helms' student to be a member of the PTA. The PTA is involved in a variety of events designed to support the school and its endeavors. PTA meeting dates can be found on the school website. This is a great opportunity for students to see their parents support their learning community and become involved in their education. Please contact the PTA president at [hello@helmspta.org](mailto:hello@helmspta.org) for more information or check the school website.