



St. Paul's Catholic School  
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Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250  
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Dear Parents,

Out of concern for the welfare of all in our Catholic school community, Bishop Estevez and the Bishops of the Province of Florida reviewed the current immunization policy and endorsed a change effective the 2015-16 academic year. Students will need to show proof of immunization to enroll in diocesan Catholic schools.

While it may well be true that public schools recognize a religious exemption to immunizations, public schools have students who run the gamete of all religious beliefs, and none at all, and must maintain a certain neutrality regarding their approach to such beliefs. Catholic schools exist to, among other things, teach the Catholic faith and form youth in the faith. This is even true in some sense with respect to Catholic school students who are not in fact Catholic.

In that regard, there is nothing in the teachings of the Church regarding matters of faith and morals which could be the basis for a religious exemption. Such an exemption based upon religious beliefs could not, therefore, be legitimately recognized in a Catholic school. Nor could an exemption based upon sincerely or strongly held views against immunization (conscientious objection) be recognized, when weighed against the great public health danger which immunizations protect against.

Medical exemptions will be considered if substantial evidence from a qualified medical professional is presented, which indicates that vaccination would present a serious health risk because of conditions such as allergies, immunodeficiency, or neurological disorders. School authorities may request a second opinion from a medical professional of the school's selection. If a parent refuses to cooperate in obtaining a second opinion, the medical exemption request will be presumed to have been withdrawn. The granting of a medical exemption presumes that a determination has been made by school authorities that admission of the child without a vaccination (for medical reasons) would not constitute a health risk to the school community under the circumstances. If such a determination cannot be made, a medical exemption should not be granted, notwithstanding health risks to the individual child seeking the exemption.

In Christ,

Krissy Thompson, Principal