



Shepherd Christian School Student Handbook

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WELCOME

Welcome to Shepherd Christian School. We rejoice that God has brought us into a partnership centered on educating your children. We have watched the Lord bring together a combination of staff members who love Jesus and love your children. He is our strength and our joy; we will trust Him throughout this year. Thank you for praying for the school! We request that you pray for God's protection for our students, our staff, and the entire school system as we continue this year together.

Much planning goes into preparing for each school year by the teachers and the administration. This handbook contains guidelines and procedures that are designed to make everything run smoothly for all involved. Please carefully read all of this information, keep it handy and refer to it throughout the year as the information should help you and your student understand school policies.

SCS Story

Shepherd Christian School is a non-denominational Christian school with its own legal identity that functions as a ministry of **Shepherd Gate Church**. We are a non-accredited member of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and are positioning ourselves for accreditation in the coming years.

Mission

It is our mission to shepherd students in an atmosphere of God's love and presence through an education grounded in Biblical wisdom, Christian virtue, and our faith in Christ.

Vision

As lifelong learners motivated by Christ's love and filled with the Holy Spirit, Shepherd Christian School's students will confidently fulfill their God-given destiny and impact the world around them.

Philosophy

In keeping with our mission and vision, SCS will foster an environment of joy-filled learning. As stated in II Corinthians 3:17, ...where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty...and we desire this atmosphere for our students and teachers at SCS. We seek to educate with the heart of a shepherd, coming alongside students in teaching, communicating, and leading by example.

We affirm that parents carry the primary role of training their children and have taken the approach that SCS partners with parents who align with our mission and faith statement so that what is taught at school aligns with what is being taught at home.

Furthermore, we desire to be sensitive to the home background of each student and to build up the authority of the parents in the eyes of their children. **We focus on fundamental truths from God's Word, leaving more specific doctrinal questions for parents and their churches to provide training in those areas.** It is our ultimate goal that each family be Christ-centered and active in their local church.

We seek teachers who are solidly committed to following Jesus Christ and well prepared to communicate God's love as they shepherd and mentor the students.

We recognize that parents bear the primary role of training their own children. Therefore, the school and the home need to work closely together in order to function as partners. This necessitates frequent communication between staff and parents. These discussions should reflect an openness to deal with both positive and negative factors and be characterized by a Christian spirit of love.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

Each family, employee, and board member is shown the following Statement of Faith & Beliefs to promote transparency and alignment as we agree to these statements.

About the Bible

We believe that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God and that men were moved by the Spirit of God to write the very words of Scripture. Therefore, we believe the Bible is without error.

About God

We believe in one personal God who exists eternally in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, equal in power, authority, and glory.

About Jesus

We believe Jesus Christ to be the virgin-born Son of God who lived in flesh, died for the sins of the world, was buried, rose again bodily, and ascended to the Father.

About the Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit who regenerates and indwells every believer in Jesus, assures us of our salvation, guides us into all truth, glorifies Jesus and convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment. He comforts us, gives us spiritual gifts, and empowers us for service.

About Mankind

We believe that all people were created in the image of God to have fellowship with him but became alienated in that relationship through sinful disobedience. As a result, people are incapable of regaining a right relationship with God through their own efforts.

About Salvation

We believe that the blood of Jesus Christ, shed on the cross, provides the only way for the forgiveness of sin. God freely offers salvation to those who place their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ as sufficient payment for their sin. Salvation cannot be earned; it is a gift from God.

About the Church

We believe in the universal church, the body of Christ, of which Jesus Christ is the head. The members of the church are those who have trusted by faith in the finished work of Christ. The purpose of the church is to glorify God by loving Him, obeying Him and bringing the gospel to the world.

About Eternity

We believe in the personal, visible return of Christ to the earth and the establishing of His Kingdom, in the resurrection of the body, and the final judgment. We believe that our eternal destination of either heaven or hell is determined by our response to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Statement on Marriage and Sexuality

Marriage is a holy covenant between a biological man and a biological woman instituted by God that unites one man and one woman in a lifetime commitment to each other (Gen 2:23-24; Matt 19:4-6). Marriage provides for intimate companionship, pure sexual expression (Gen 2:25; Eph 5:31-33), procreation, and reflects the relationship of Christ and the church (Gen 1:28; Prov 5:15-19; 1 Cor 7:1-5). We hold that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage

between one man and one woman. We believe that any sexual activity outside of the marriage covenant is a perversion of God's gift of sex.

Statement on the Sanctity of Human Life

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in his image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life (Psalm 139:13-16).

Statement on Gender

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female (Psalm 139:14). God has designed each person in His image, purposefully with the biological gender with which he or she was born. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. We believe gender is defined by the normal chromosomes in the body that make a person a male or female. Altering one's appearance cosmetically or surgically cannot change the underlying reality of a person's biological make-up. We don't believe someone's gender is defined by how they feel or identify with being male or female.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Above all, we want graduates of SCS to leave with no doubt of God's love for them as shown through the Christ-centered curriculum and the teachers and administrators from whom they learn. We seek to produce well-rounded students and lifelong learners who are equipped for high school and beyond:

- They have a strong foundation of faith upon which their education has been built.
- Their worldview is distinctly Christian.
- They are confident in Christ and full of the Holy Spirit, understanding that it is God who works in and through them to do the works He has prepared beforehand for them.
- They will know practical ways to be in the world but not of it as they seek to engage their culture, love their neighbor, and speak the truth in love.

- They will have solid phonics, writing, critical thinking and computational skills, ready to achieve academic success in high school.

BIBLE TEACHING GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are used as we teach in our classrooms:

- We present the major, indisputable doctrines of the Bible boldly such as sin, salvation and the deity of Christ. (Romans 3:23, John 14:6, John 1:1-5)
- When subjects come up on which born-again believers differ (such as modes of baptism, tongues, baptism of the Holy Spirit, healing, etc.), we are certain to explain that various views exist. Rather than present our own personal convictions on the matter, we let the Scriptures speak for themselves and encourage students to study what the Bible says. We pray that the Holy Spirit will give the students understanding according to His perfect timing.
- As we teach, it is the Holy Spirit's job to actually do the teaching. The Holy Spirit is truly at work when Jesus Christ is exalted (John 16:3,14). We center on the Person and work of Christ! (1 Corinthians 2:10-12, John 3:36). It is our privilege to share God's Word with young people daily and to live it before them.

DAILY PROCEDURES

SCS OFFICE HOURS: 7:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Until further notice, the office telephone number is 703-946-8273.

Arrival

- Morning car line is staffed from **7:45 am to 8:00 am**. Do not drop students off prior to 7:45 am.
- All students are required to be dropped off in the car line.
- When possible, we ask that students unload from the passenger side of the vehicle.

Dismissal

- Dismissal begins at **2:45 pm and ends at 3:00 pm.**
- We ask that all car riders get picked up using the car line.
- When loading students along the sidewalk, we ask parents to pull as close to the car in front of them as safely possible.
- When possible, we ask that students load from the passenger side of the vehicle.
- Students who need to return to the building (pick up forgotten items, restroom, etc.) must be accompanied to the office by an adult where a staff member will assist them.
- Please use turn signals when entering and exiting the lot to help staff direct the traffic.

ATTENDANCE

TARDIES. Students are encouraged to arrive at school by **7:45 a.m.** and are considered tardy if they are not seated in homeroom or morning meeting after **8:00 a.m.** It is absolutely necessary for students to be on time to school. The day starts better for everyone when each student is in his or her class on time.

Being on time teaches respect for your child's teacher and classmates by eliminating interruptions when classroom routines and instructions have already begun. Parents of children who are tardy by more than 5 minutes must notify the school via email. Most tardies will be considered unexcused. The only excused tardies are for medical appointments. Please communicate any extenuating circumstances in writing to the administrator or office manager for consideration.

Once a student has been tardy to school three times within a quarter, parents will be notified in writing. An additional tardy may result in a meeting with the parents and administrator; further action may be taken.

Leaving Early

Teachers carefully plan instruction through the end of each day. When your child is picked up early, he/she will miss critical classroom instruction. If you know your student will be leaving early, we ask you to please send a written note to your child's teacher no

later than that morning (earlier if possible). This allows the teacher to have the agenda and make-up work ready. When you arrive, please call the school office so we may escort your child to you at the front entrance.

Absences

If your child is absent for illness, please call or email the office on the day of the absence. If you would like to request work for your child, you may call the school and arrange a time to pick up the work. If your child is absent due to illness for 5 or more consecutive days, please provide a note from the physician. However, if your family is planning a vacation that would require your child to miss school, we ask that you **notify the teacher and office manager at least one week in advance**. This allows the teacher to compile work to be completed while away and submitted upon return. Teachers will provide a schedule of due dates for assessments and presentations missed.

Required Days

In rare instances, a student may miss a block of time due to illness. Fifteen days absent in one semester or 30 days missed in a school year would indicate a significant loss of instructional time. If your student has missed an excessive number of days, you will receive an email or phone call from the administrator to advise you of our concern.

Early Dismissal Days

Please note on your SCS school calendar the scheduled early dismissal days. These days are planned for teacher in-service training and workdays. Refer to weekly emails from the school concerning upcoming events. Parents, please provide your daycare providers with our school closing and early dismissal dates as this is not the responsibility of SCS.

Unexpected Closing Days

Please be aware that we do not necessarily follow the closing/delay schedule of other schools in the area. As a general rule, we will make decisions based on Fairfax County, but reserve the right to make our own final decision. Factors we consider are students

and teachers coming from multiple counties, county closures that are based upon factors that do not affect SCS (i.e. sidewalk clearance for walkers) and decisions made by Shepherd Gate Church that could affect use of the building.

Means of Notification

In the event of an unscheduled early dismissal, delayed opening, delayed dismissal, or school closing, parents will be notified promptly. We plan to utilize our Student Information System (FACTS) to communicate such notifications. If this is not available for any reason, we will call/text parents.

Parent Responsibility

Parents, please make prior arrangements for your children on inclement weather days in case there is a delayed opening or early closing. Parents utilizing day care facilities must convey this information to them.

Afternoon Pick-Up

Please be considerate about picking up your student on-time in the afternoon. **If your child is not picked up by 3:00pm, there may be a \$10 charge for every 10-minute increment after 3pm in which a staff member must wait with the student.**

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

Grades

Students in Kindergarten through 2nd grade receive the following grades:

- 1 - Area of Concern
- 2 - Emerging
- 3 - Progressing
- 4 - Secure
- NI - Not introduced (Means standard has not yet been introduced)

Students in third through eighth grade receive the following grades:

A+ - 98-100 C+ - 77-79

A - 93-97 C - 73-76

A- - 90-92 C- - 70-72

B+ - 87-89 D - 65-69

B - 83-86 F - 64 and below

B- - 80-82

Late Grade Policy

In determining deductions for assignments that are turned in late (not due to absence/illness), the following procedure will be used at the elementary level.

1st Day Late 10% deduction (student earns 93%; the grade will now be 83%)

2nd Day Late 20% deduction

3rd Day Late 30% deduction

4th Day Late 40% deduction

5th Day Late 50% deduction

Grades will be entered as missing until the assignment is received. Any assignments not received by the end of each quarter will receive 0%.

Homework

SCS utilizes a weekly communication sheet to record homework assignments in K-5. To encourage accountability and grow personal responsibility, each student should have his/her parent initial the daily homework assignment column. Middle School students will utilize student planners to record their assignments.

Homework is assigned to review and reinforce what has been taught. It also teaches students responsibility and pacing for larger projects. Below are the homework guidelines:

1. As a general rule, homework should take ten minutes multiplied by the grade level of the student. For example, a third grader could expect up to 30 minutes of homework per night. This includes both study time and written work.
2. If a student is absent, upon request, a teacher will provide the homework assigned at the end of the day.
3. For every day a student is unexpectedly absent due to an illness or similar situation, he/she shall have 2 days to make up assignments for each day missed. Teachers will work with students and families to determine reasonable deadlines to complete assessments after an absence.
4. Students must get assignments prior to prearranged absences. These assignments should be completed and handed in upon a student's return. Late work policy will be enforced in these circumstances. Teachers will work with students and families to determine reasonable deadlines to complete assessments after an absence.

Retention Policy

The academic progress of students at SCS is carefully monitored by school faculty and administration. When a student's progress is in question, a conference with the parents, teacher, and an administrator will be called in order to make a plan to help the student improve. It is important that students gain mastery of each subject matter every year in order to be successful the following year. When a student has not achieved mastery of material according to the school's standards, it may be necessary to retain the student and have him/her repeat a year of school. Retained students will be carefully monitored during the year of retention to ensure that appropriate progress is being made and to direct parents towards additional resources for their child's success. Support of the parents is critical to success when making this decision; however, the final decision regarding placement of the student must be made by the school.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Field Trips

Local and out-of-town field trips are planned carefully to coordinate with the specific areas of the curriculum. We desire that the students glean knowledge along with having an enjoyable and safe day. We take the supervision of your children seriously and are grateful for those parents who chaperone these trips. When a teacher has confirmed with a parent that he/she will chaperone, the teacher is counting on the parent to supervise and assist with the trip. If a conflict arises, the teacher must be notified in sufficient time to arrange a replacement. In order to accomplish our educational goals, many of our field trips are designed for our students, and we ask that you not bring siblings. There are occasional exceptions. Thank you for being so supportive! We ask that only parents or legal guardians of the student serve as chaperones. Parents desiring to chaperone a field trip must communicate with the teacher in advance and present their driver's license prior to the trip.

Party Invitations

It is our policy to request that parents not send party invitations to school for distribution **unless** there is one for either all boys or all girls in the class or for the entire class. We do reserve the right to open any invitations that are sent home through the school. Thank you for the consideration this shows to the children.

Birthday Treats and Class Celebrations

When you desire to provide birthday refreshments for your child's class, please schedule the day and time with the teacher ahead of time. Consult with your child's teacher regarding the number of students in the class and classmates who have food allergies.

All treats must be store-bought or restaurant-made with the list of ingredients provided. Please deliver treats to the school in a sealed, un-tampered container.

In choosing a theme for treats, please keep in mind our school setting, our values and discuss the refreshments with the teacher in advance.

School Lunches, Snacks, and Drinks

SCS cannot provide breakfast or lunch; a packed snack and lunch should be sent daily from home (please only water; no sodas or milk to keep our facilities clean). Include silverware, napkins and an ice pack for refrigerated items as we will be unable to refrigerate or heat food.

Recess—Cold Weather Guidelines

We intend to go outside daily as long as the conditions are safe for the students and staff. If the temperature or windchill is below 32 degrees, students will not go out. Precipitation may also warrant an indoor recess. If the temperature is between 32 and 40 degrees, children must wear a winter coat. Hats and gloves are recommended. Parents are encouraged to monitor their children's clothing selections each morning to make sure they are prepared for colder temperatures and are appropriately dressed for outdoor recesses. If a student arrives at school without the proper recess attire, they will have to stay inside during recess. Due to health concerns, we will not loan out or share winter clothing for recess. PLEASE LABEL all coats, jackets, and accessories so we can return any misplaced items.

Lost or Damaged Textbooks

In an effort to keep our textbook inventory in good condition and complete, we will notify parents if a student's books are damaged or lost while in their care. Completely destroyed or lost books will require a full reimbursement. We will ask for a partial reimbursement for damaged books.

STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR

As a Christian school, we are guided by these simple commands: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: you shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Mark 12:30-31)

Furthermore, we want to encourage--at all times--that we treat one another as we ourselves would want to be treated. If students ask this simple question of themselves and abide by it daily, it will take care of a host of issues. Each student should encourage one another, grow to self-govern, and lead by humble example.

SCS does not encourage a culture of tattling. SCS does, however, encourage students to alert teachers or administrators to any situations that are not safe and/or in which the student needs help managing the situation. A heart attitude that is opposed to the golden rule, Scripture, or behavior intended to bring harm to others is considered serious and will be addressed.

Teachers may limit certain items from being brought into the classroom if they lead to repeated misbehavior or simply distract from the learning process.

BULLYING: As part of our mission to develop Christian character and leadership skills in our students, we take bullying very seriously and promote resolution and Christlike honor for all students. No student at SCS is expected to sit by and absorb persistent unkind words or actions.

Consequences

Unacceptable behavior shall be handled in a fair and appropriate manner. Consequences depend on the age of the student involved, offense, and understanding of the student. This includes discussion with the child concerning the behavior, prayer, redirection, and if necessary, a “time-out” and perhaps additional consequences as deemed necessary by the administration, which may include being sent home, suspension, or, in extreme cases, expulsion. Please note, however, that there will be no physical punishment. Notification of such incidents will be given to all families involved. Teachers may occasionally meet with a student for the first ten minutes of recess to

conference about behavior or conduct, so as not to interfere with the instructional time of the entire class.

COMMUNICATION

Matthew 5 and 18

Shepherd Christian School believes strongly in the biblical principles of communication as taught in Matthew 5 and 18. We are convinced that when one has been offended, has offended another, or has a concern of any kind, he should go immediately to the person involved to discuss the matter in love. For example, when a difficulty arises concerning a classroom-related issue, please talk with your child's teacher **without discussing it with other parents** and before approaching the administrator. We have seen relationships restored and new relationships develop when these precious principles are practiced between staff members, parents and students. Our desire is that as a school family we would be committed to building up one another and confronting one another with a loving spirit.

Custody Documentation and Non-Custodial Parent Information

You must notify the school of any changes to marital status or custody arrangements that occur during the school year, and we must maintain an up-to-date copy of any and all custody documentation in the student's file. Unless otherwise specified by a court order, SCS is legally obligated to make academic records available to both parents listed on the student's birth certificate, and it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the non-custodial parent's contact information. If the non-custodial parent's whereabouts are unknown, the custodial parent must submit a signed statement to that effect.

Custodial parents should be aware that without certified legal paperwork on file stating otherwise, SCS may not prohibit a parent listed on the birth certificate from contacting their student at school, signing them out, or picking them up.

Contact Information

Please help us serve you better by keeping your contact information (address, phone numbers, email addresses) up to date throughout the year. Please provide at least one local emergency contact who would be available to pick up your child should an emergency situation arise when the parent is unavailable.

Email Communication

Emails from the teacher will be specific to classroom happenings, and school emails will contain school-wide information and updates. Feel free to email your child's teacher, however, please know that you may not receive a response immediately as teachers are with students. With this in mind, please be sure your email address is correct and your account accepts SCS emails as "safe."

Online Resources

We hope to make more information available online to school families via our student information system (FACTS), so be sure to create a log in for announcements, events, calendar items, student progress, and other news and resources.

Our school website is most helpful to prospective families, although we may also post pictures and videos from school events here and on our social media pages that are also of interest to current families.

Conferences

Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled at set times each year. Additional conferences may be scheduled throughout the school year upon request. Please keep in mind that during the school day, teachers need to give their full attention to their students. If you need to speak with your child's teacher, please schedule a meeting time outside of the regular school hours.

Reporting Obligations

All staff members are trained to recognize child abuse or neglect. Virginia law requires that any reasonable suspicion of physical or sexual abuse, neglect, or emotional maltreatment must be reported to the Department of Social Services Hotline within 24 hours.

HEALTH

Illness

When a student develops a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher, is vomiting, has diarrhea, or has symptoms of a contagious nature (e.g. pink eye), he/she will be sent home. Your child needs to be picked up within 30 minutes. Your child needs to be free of the above symptoms without the aid of medication for 24 hours before returning to school. If he/she is being treated with antibiotics, the medication must be taken 24 hours prior to returning to school. Your child needs to be fever-free without the help of medicine for 24 hours before returning. If a child returns to school before the 24-hour period, a parent will be contacted to come back to school to pick up the child immediately.

Emergency Contacts and Pick-Ups

Emergency contacts are critical for this reason. Emergency contacts should be individuals who live or work locally and are available to pick up your child within 30 minutes. Please provide at least one emergency contact.

Immunizations

Please make sure the school has copies of your child's VA Entrance School, MCH 213 form, including immunization records and a birth certificate as we are required by Virginia law to have these if your child is attending our school. The required records must be submitted by the start of school. Please contact the school office if you have questions.

Medication

Medication must be sent in its original container so that it is properly identified with your student's name, type of medication, dosage, and time to be given. **The authorizing physician's signature** is required for all prescription medications administered at school. The only exception to this policy is short-term prescription medications (i.e. antibiotics) of ten days or less. In this case, the parent must provide written notice authorizing the school to administer medicine. These medications, like all others, must be in the original container from the pharmacy.

Medical Emergency Plans

If your child has a need that requires emergency medication (e.g., asthma, seizures or allergies), the school must be notified before the first day of school.

TECHNOLOGY USE AT SCS

Within the context of our school, technology will be used to assist us in meeting the objectives of our curriculum; it will not become the central focus of student learning or replace the teacher.

K-5.

Students in K-5 may not bring personal tablets, cell phones or wearable technology to school. This includes things like Fitbits and Smart watches. If found, teachers will place devices brought to school in the backpack to return home. Thereafter, devices will be turned into the office manager to be picked up by parents. Exemptions to this policy for medical reasons will be handled through an administrator.

6-8 Grades

Older students may bring tablets or laptops for school use or specific projects only when pre-approved by the teacher and administrator. Students in grades 6-8 must turn in cell phones during home room and may only use them with permission during school hours on rare occasions to call home. Parents needing to communicate with their student during school hours should call the school office. Unless special permission is given, headphones or listening devices are not permitted during school hours.

Consequences

Misuse of technology falls under the same discipline policy that SCS uses for all other behavior infractions; more serious infractions may require more serious consequences. We reserve the right to limit or revoke access to devices as needed due to discipline issues.

DRESS CODE

Beginning the 2025-2026 school year, we are implementing a SCS Uniform Policy. You can read more details on the dress code policy handbook.

In addition, dressing modestly is encouraged for staff and students alike. Students shall wear clothing that is neat and clean in appearance. Clothing should not be sloppy, baggy, torn or unusually tight or revealing and should not distract or get in the way of learning.

Students will be active at SCS, whether at recess or bi-weekly during physical education. If, for example, lessons or classes are carried on outside, we encourage students to wear attire that fits the teaching environment (Example: Shorts, pants, sweatshirts, sweaters, or jackets).

Neatness and modesty are vital. Hair styles or coloring should not be extreme or distracting. As styles change over the years, we ask families to keep an open dialogue with the school if clarification is needed about appropriate dress.

Additional Guidelines

Earrings are not permitted for boys.

Girls' jewelry should be of modest size and nature. For safety reasons, dangling earrings are not advised, and we do not recommend make-up on girls in K-5.

Again, keeping modesty as a rule of thumb, girls should not wear tops that expose the midriff or any undergarments (including straps) or very short bottoms that show the upper thigh.

Other:

- While indoors, coats and hats may not be worn.
- In the interest of safety, no flip-flops, sandals where a strap divides the toes, or rubber sports sandals will be allowed. All shoes must have a strap around the heel. (Students are encouraged to wear athletic shoes each day to school or bring tennis shoes with them.)
- Clothing must be labeled with the student's name. The school is not responsible for lost clothing.

Enforcement. Ultimately, administrators will determine appropriate dress.

I _____ have read the above Student Handbook for my child(ren) _____. I agree to adhere to the guidelines set forth at Shepherd Christian School to the best of my ability. If I have difficulty in fulfilling these obligations for any reason, I will, in good faith, contact the administrative office to discuss the issue, options, and come to a mutually agreed-upon solution.

Signature

Print Name

Date