



Powering the Future

**Parent/Student
Handbook
2023-2024**

www.virtusacademysc.org

We Are Virtus.

*A Tuition-Free K-12 Public Charter School
Authorized by the Charter Institute at Erskine
& Serving Florence, Darlington, and
Surrounding Communities*

Info@virtusacademysc.org

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Virtus Academy of South Carolina does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, religion, immigration status, national origin, disability, or handicap in its educational programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. For questions pertaining to Title IX, please contact Mr. Famon Whitfield at fwhitfield@virtusacademysc.org.

Welcome to the Power Pack.

A large, stylized blue graphic of a wolf's head, facing forward, serves as a background for the text. The wolf has large, expressive eyes and a slightly open mouth showing its tongue. The graphic is composed of various shades of blue and white, giving it a modern, geometric appearance.

This Handbook Belongs To

Name

Homeroom Teacher

Grade

Student Pledge

I will begin each day with a positive attitude to do my very best.

I will keep an open mind and heart for all members of our Power Pack. I will treat every student, teacher, and leader with respect.

I will do my part to ensure Virtus is a welcoming learning community. I will strive for excellence in everything I do.

We are the Power Pack.

Powering the future through excellence in project-based learning, leadership development, and community service.

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A Few Thoughts About Our Instructional Philosophy

When naming public charter schools, founding groups can name the schools they start pretty much whatever they want. Here in South Carolina (as elsewhere), this includes naming schools after eminent historical figures (e.g., Langston Charter Middle in Greenville), the central component of the school's instructional philosophy (e.g., Midland Arts Conservatory in Columbia), or after the community in which the school exists (e.g., York Preparatory Academy in Rock Hill, which is in York County). At Virtus, however, our founders went in a different direction. They named the school using the Latin word from which the English word *virtue* derives.

Why virtue?

One could, of course, write a book about the importance of cultivating virtue in children, but that is not our purpose here. Instead, we offer this simple explanation: Virtus Academy is a school that strives to transmit moral goodness, as well as excellence in all pursuits, including the pursuit of knowledge, because knowledgeable, morally upright adults are essential to preserving a free society.

This sounds pretty straightforward, but when it comes to teaching and learning in a public school, however, we have to figure out *how to operationalize it for all of our students*, otherwise, it's just some nice-sounding words. Moreover, because a school involves a lot of people, *a diversity of legitimate perspectives* is ever-present. It is in this dual context that disagreements sometimes arise when it comes to instructional philosophy.

Take student discipline. Of course, not everything about it is controversial. For example, we teach students to clean up after themselves in the classroom, on the playground, and when preparing to leave the cafeteria. (We also model this ourselves by picking up trash, wiping tables, and sweeping the floor.) Some schools do this to save money on maintenance costs; we do it because we think that the discipline of being responsible for oneself is indispensable to one's future happiness. Few would disagree.

But what about teaching children the virtue of being self-possessed, that is, according to the Oxford Dictionary, being "calm, confident, and in control of one's feelings; composed." Kids are kids, of course, so we don't expect them to be as self-possessed as adults, but we sometimes get pushback from parents when we don't allow, for example, temper tantrums or failing to put forth a reasonable effort on a task to go unanswered. This can be even more difficult because we must be patient with individual students, but at the same time, maintain a learning environment that is fair to all, i.e., not allowing one student to distract fellow students from learning. On the whole, though, agreement over student discipline can generally be reached.

When it comes to the pursuit of knowledge, however, well, Katie, bar the door. Not because parents want their children to grow up ignorant, but because the very nature of knowledge is often controversial (think, conspiracy theories around President Kennedy's assassination). Moreover, how a teacher teaches a particular topic can be as controversial as knowledge itself, e.g., specific authors selected for students to read and discuss.

Homeschooling parents, of course, do not have this problem, but public schools like Virtus Academy do because there simply is no definition of *knowledge* upon which the parents of some 700 students will always agree.

Not that this is a challenge new to the 21st century. Humans have been arguing what it means to be knowledgeable for several millennia-literally, sometimes with life or death outcomes. (Remember Socrates's fate?) And since public schools both reflect and shape the culture within which they exist, those disputes have been center stage in American public schools from the moment the first state authorized schools appeared in the 1830s.

Here's an admittedly obscure, though relevant example that illustrates how far back the argument about knowledge reaches: One of the most widely read books on education in the latter half of the 19th century was published in 1860 by an eminent British philosopher named [Herbert Spencer](#). The first chapter in his book, *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical* is titled, "What knowledge is of most worth." If this gives you the sense that people were in disagreement at that time as to the answers, you'd be right. So it is in our time.

While we do not claim to have *all the answers*, our position is this: While we cannot promise that we will only teach non-controversial ideas (otherwise, many current events, for example, would be off the table), we will not abuse the position of trust in which you've placed us with respect to *your* children. We will not indoctrinate them in the tenets of any religion or ideology, ancient or modern. And when controversial ideas are discussed, we will not teach them as dogma or doctrine, that is, telling children that they *must* believe, think, or feel a certain way about any idea. (We also strive to teach children to recognize fact from premise, and news from propaganda so that they can discern the differences between news, fake news, and editorials disguised as news.)

So, we will teach without indoctrinating, though we know that some disagreement over what we teach (and don't teach) and how we teach is inevitable. When such disagreements arise, we commit to you to do our best to model that which we expect from our students as citizens of a free, civil society: to show the same respect for other persons as we would have them show us. Although American history is littered with examples where the nation itself has acted in vile contradiction to this timeless principle, we strive to embrace it, because we know of no society in history in which

disregard or disrespect for other persons (and property) ever led to the safety, happiness, and well-being of its people.

In practical terms, if your student comes home from school and relays information about something they learned that you find disconcerting, we invite you to talk to us about it. We can't guarantee any particular outcome, of course, but we want to listen to your perspective, and we'd value the opportunity to explain ours. If we have to agree to disagree in the end, parents at Virtus Academy always have the last word because we are a school of choice, meaning that no one is assigned to attend based on their home address.

The bottom line is that while all of our faculty, staff, and board members struggle with the same shortcomings as the rest of humanity, we are drawn to service at Virtus because we believe that moral goodness and excellence in all pursuits are worthy of transmitting to kids.

We really do want to live up to our name.

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Instructional Calendar

Calendar 23/24 (1).xlsx - Google Sheets

3/8/23, 9:31 AM

VIRTUS ACADEMY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

2023-2024

School Year Calendar

July 23						
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July 24						
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August 24						
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	31					

- First Day/Last Day of School
 - Early Release
 - Holiday/School Closed
 - Grade Period Dates
 - Inclment Weather Make-up Days
 - Teacher PD Days - No School for Students
- August 7-11 PD Day for Teachers
 - August 14 1st Day of School for Students
 - September 4 Labor Day Holiday
 - September 14 Quarter 1 Progress Reports
 - October 5-6 Fall Break
 - October 18 Quarter 1 Ends
 - October 25 Quarter 1 Report Cards
 - October 27 PD Day for Teachers/Parent Conferences
 - November 28 Quarter 2 Progress Reports
 - November 20-24 Thanksgiving Break
 - December 20-January 2 Winter Holiday
 - January 3 Students Return
 - January 11 Quarter 2 Ends
 - January 15 M.L. King Holiday
 - January 19 Quarter 2 Report Cards
 - January 26 PD Day for Teachers/Parent Conferences
 - February 15 Quarter 3 Progress Reports
 - February 16 Inclment Weather Makeup Day
 - February 19 President's Day Holiday
 - February 20-21 Inclment Weather Makeup Days
 - March 22 Quarter 3 Ends
 - March 28 Quarter 3 Report Cards
 - March 29-April 5 Spring Break
 - April 8 PD Day for Teachers
 - May 3 Quarter 4 Progress Reports
 - May 27 Memorial Day Holiday
 - June 3-4 Early Dismissal for Students
 - June 5 Last Day Students, Q4 Ends, Early Dismissal
 - June 6-7 PD Day for Teachers

About Virtus Academy of South Carolina

Virtus Academy is a free public school chartered by the Charter Institute at Erskine. As such, neither students nor staff are assigned to Virtus. This is why charter schools such as Virtus often refer to themselves as a public “school of choice.”

Any student eligible to enroll in South Carolina’s other public schools is eligible to enroll at Virtus Academy. If more students seek admission than we can accommodate, admission is determined by lottery. Students who are not selected in the lottery are placed on a waiting list. In the event of an opening, the student’s parents¹ are immediately notified.

In the 2023-24 school year, we will be serving approximately 700 students in grades K-10. As we continue adding a grade each year, the seniors in our first graduating class will walk across the stage to receive their diplomas at the close of the 2025-26 school year.

Virtus Academy of South Carolina does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, religion, immigration status, national origin, disability, or handicap in its educational programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

Our mission is to power student potential through project-based learning, leadership development, community service, and a spirited pursuit of excellence.

Our Education POWER Pillars

- P:** Problem-Solving Oriented Curriculum
- O:** Organized Student Leadership Development
- W:** Well-Rounded & Engaged School Community
- E:** Energizing Spirit for Service Learning
- R:** Reflective-Thinking Culture That Fosters Understanding

Our School Community’s Core Values

- P:** Positive attitude
- O:** Open minds & hearts
- W:** Welcoming environment
- E:** Excellence in everything
- R:** Respect for others

¹Throughout this handbook and other school publications as well, we use the word *parents* to denote parents, legal guardians, and other authorized caretakers.

Academic Policies

Academic Assistance

Virtus offers a wide array of academic support resources to students beyond classroom instruction. We encourage parents of students who need assistance, or who are not achieving state standards on state standardized tests or other indicators of being at-risk academically, to seek academic assistance. Parents may contact Ms. Ann Purvis, MTSS Coordinator/Special Ed Advisor, at apurvis@virtusacademysc.org.

Student Assessments

As a public school accountable for student performance through its charter, Virtus administers various tests throughout the year to gauge student growth and achievement. We never use test data for admission decisions, but we may use it for grade placement purposes, and/or identification of the need for academic assistance. Standardized tests we use include, but are not limited to:

- **Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA):** Kindergarten students will be administered the KRA within the first 45 days of the school year. This assessment is administered in a face-to-face setting. Testing dates/times will be announced.
- **Measures of Academic Progress (MAP):** Students in grades K-10 will take MAP tests three times yearly. This test provides student growth data which the school can use to inform instruction.
- **SCReady:** Students in grades 3-8 will complete appropriate state standardized tests in the spring.
- **SC End Of Course Exams (EOC):** A statewide assessment and the end of English 2, Algebra 1, Biology 1, and United States History and the Constitution courses.

Academic Achievement

Grades K-2

- Virtus Academy requires students in grades K-2 to master grade-level standards in English Language Arts and Math each year. Students who do not meet grade-level expectations in these courses may be recommended for retention.

Grades 3-8

- Virtus Academy requires students in grades 3-8 to master grade level standards in English Language Arts and Math each year. Students not passing all English Language Arts and/or Math courses may not be promoted to the next grade level.

Third Grade Retention

- [The SC Read to Succeed Act](#) requires that a student be retained in the third grade if they fail to demonstrate reading proficiency as indicated by scoring at the lowest achievement level on the state summative reading assessment equated to “Not Met 1” on the SCReady Assessment.

High School

- Virtus Academy requires the following promotion requirements:

Grade Level	Minimum Cumulative Credits	Must Include
9th to 10th grade	5 credits	1 English 1 Math
10th to 11th grade	11 credits	2 English 2 Math
11th to 12th grade	16 credits	3 English 3 Math 2 Science 2 Social Studies

High School Graduation

Requirements to earn a South Carolina High School Diploma

The student must earn a total of twenty-four (24) units of credit as follows:

Subject Area	Units
English/language arts	4.0
Mathematics	4.0
Science	3.0
US History and Constitution	1.0
Economics	0.5
U.S. Government	0.5
Other Social Studies courses	1.0
Physical Education or Jr. ROTC	1.0
Computer Science	1.0
Foreign Language or Career and Technology Education	1.0
Personal Finance	0.5
Electives	6.5
Total	24.0

Seals of Distinction

Students enrolled in South Carolina high schools shall have the opportunity to earn graduation [Seals of Distinction](#) within each high school diploma pathway that identifies a particular area of focus. For more information contact Ms. Jackee Johnston, Dean of Culture/High School Counselor at jjohnston@virtusacademysc.org.

Grading Scales

Depending on your child's grade level and/or class (example: related arts at the elementary level), one of the two following performance grade scales will be used.

Numerical Scale	Letter Equivalent Scale
A: 100-90	Exemplary
B: 89-80	Good
C: 79-70	Satisfactory
D: 69-60	Needs Improvement
F: 59-0	Unsatisfactory

Special Education, Child Find, and 504 Services Policies

As explained in this [South Carolina Department of Education memorandum](#), "The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) contains a Child Find mandate that requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to seek out students who are potentially eligible under the IDEA and refer those students for an evaluation. Per the IDEA regulations at 34 CFR § 300.111, South Carolina has a continuing Child Find procedure in place to locate all children with disabilities residing in the State, including children with disabilities attending private schools and homeschool programs, regardless of the severity of their disability, and who are in need of special education and related services. This effort also includes highly mobile children with disabilities (such as migrant and homeless children) and children who are suspected of being a child with a disability and in need of special education, even though they are advancing from grade to grade. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is made available to all eligible students with disabilities."

Upon request of a child's parent, Virtus Academy is required to evaluate a child for eligibility for special education services. Such a request for evaluation is known as a referral. When the school receives a referral, administration will appoint an Evaluation Planning Team to determine if the child has a disability that requires special education services. All educational evaluations must be completed by the school.

Referrals must be in writing and include an explanation as to why the person making the referral believes the child may have a disability. A referral can be made by contacting the child's homeroom teacher, or by requesting assistance from administration.

504 Plan

A 504 Plan may also be appropriate for students who need other accommodations within the general education environment. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education. Section 504 provides: “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. The Section 504 regulations requires the school to provide a “free appropriate public education” (FAPE) to each qualified student with a disability who is in the school’s jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability. These regulations require identification, evaluation, and provision of appropriate services and procedural safeguards. To be protected under Section 504, a student must be determined to: (1) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or (2) have a record of such an impairment; or (3) be regarded as having such an impairment.

For more information about the 504 process, please contact Ms. Toni Brandt or Ms. Isabella Montgomery by calling (843) 799-4032.

McKinney-Vento

The purpose of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act is to ensure that homeless students have equal access to the same free, appropriate, public education provided to all children in South Carolina. The law requires schools to develop, review, and revise policies to remove barriers to the enrollment, attendance, and success in school for homeless children. For assistance regarding the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, please contact your students’ school counselor. For grade levels K - 3, contact Ms. Kate Lawhon at klawhon@virtusacademysc.org. For grade levels 4-8, contact Ms. Nisa House at nhouse@virtusacademysc.org. For high school, contact Ms. Jackee Johnston at jjohnston@virtusacademysc.org.

Medical Homebound Instruction Policy

Medical homebound instruction is available for students who cannot attend school for medical reasons, even when transportation is otherwise available. The approval process consists of two parts: (1) A physician must certify the student has such a condition by completing the school’s medical homebound form. (2) A homebound instruction team will then evaluate the recommendation, to include other information not necessarily known to the physician such as a history of truancy. It will consider the severity of the illness or injury, the length of time the student will be out of school, the impact the student’s absence will have on the student’s academic success, and whether the student’s health needs can be met at school. To review Virtue’s homebound instruction policy, [click here](#); to download the physician’s form, [click here](#). To learn more about Medical Homebound Instruction, contact Ms. Toni Brandt or Ms. Isabella Montgomery by calling (843) 799-4032.

Admission and Entrance Requirements

Enrollment Requirements

Any student eligible to enroll in South Carolina's other public schools may seek to enroll at Virtus Academy. If more students seek admission than the school can accommodate, admission is determined by lottery. Students who are not selected in the lottery are placed on a waiting list. In the event of an opening, the parents are immediately notified.

By law, to be eligible, a Kindergarten student must be at least five years old on or before 9/1/2023 and 1st-grade students must be at least six years old on or before 9/1/2023.

Documents Required for Enrollment

Some of the documents below can be provided by the school; some are provided to the school by the parents (such as birth certificates), and some will be provided by your child's previous school, when applicable.

- [Virtus Application](#)
- Enrollment Forms (these are completed after the student has been accepted)
- Birth Certificate
- Proof of Residence (with the exception of homeless students, a current utility bill, lease, etc., showing a SC physical address is required)
- Immunization Records (contact SC Dept. of Health regarding waiver information)
- Records from former school (excluding students entering Kindergarten) indicating that the student withdrew in good standing
- A signature that the parent has received a copy of this handbook
- Enrollment in our emergency response system

Dual Enrollment

High school students are eligible for dual enrollment college courses through Florence-Darlington Technical College. These courses must be approved by Virtus Academy. For more information about dual enrollment, contact Ms. Jackee Johnston at jjohnston@virtusacademysc.org.

Voluntary Disenrollment

As a school of choice, any parent may withdraw their student at any time by completing a withdrawal form (available upon request), however, we ask that parents provide at least two business days advance notice to allow staff adequate time to complete all required records before the student's last day. The school will provide parents with a transfer form, outlining the instructional materials the child is currently using. This form can be given to the new school for proper placement.

The new school will initiate a request for the student's records, however, parents may also request a copy. Parents also have a right to request an amendment to the records if they believe they contain inaccurate information or violate the student's rights to privacy.

School owned technology, textbooks, and any other school property issued to the student must be returned to the school at the time of withdrawal or the parent will be billed.

Involuntary Disenrollment

Because Virtus Academy is a school of choice, in the event of habitual non-compliance with school policies, Virtus Academy reserves the right to cause parents to involuntarily disenroll their students. (This policy can be applied to cases where expulsion does not necessarily apply.)

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act is a federal law that protects the privacy of students. Because Virtus Academy receives federal funds, we are required to comply with this law. For more information regarding FERPA, please [click here](#).

Arrival

Arrival-Grades K-8

The K-8 building opens to students beginning at 7:15 a.m., at which time breakfast begins. (Breakfast is available free of charge to all students.)

All students arriving between 7:15 a.m. and 7:45 a.m. will be required to go to the cafeteria, regardless of whether or not they are eating breakfast at the school. Students arriving to class after 7:50 a.m. will be marked tardy.

All students must be dropped off through the carline between 7:15 a.m. and 7:45 a.m. (The carline is a double lane that moves under the direction of school personnel.) Carline ends at 7:45 a.m., after which, parents will be directed to park and come into the main office to sign in their child.

For the safety of all children and staff, it is imperative that all parents and students follow the directions of school personnel at all times during the carline. Failure to follow arrival and dismissal policies and/or staff directions may result in involuntary disenrollment.

Arrival-High School

The building opens to students beginning at 7:45 a.m. Carline ends at 8:10 a.m. 1st period begins at 8:15 a.m. Students who are not in their first period class by 8:15 a.m. will be marked tardy. Upon entering the building, students must report to their 1st period class. There will be no visits to the drink machines before class.

Students are not to congregate in the parking lot. Student drivers as well as all other students are expected to enter the building immediately upon arrival. Breakfast is also available to high school students free of charge. (Orders must be placed the day before.)

Dismissal

Dismissal-Grades K-8

The K-8 building begins dismissal at 3:00 p.m., Monday - Thursday and 12:15 p.m. on Fridays. Families are issued a four-digit number. In order for students to be released, the car rider number must be displayed in the front windshield. Only share this number to those who you give permission to pick up your child from the carline. Those who do not display the number will be asked to park and come inside the main office to verify identification.

Any car rider who is not picked up by parents or the assigned after-care program by 3:45 p.m. will be sent to Vistacare and invoiced for \$18/day.

Dismissal High School

High school students are dismissed from school at 3:15 p.m. Monday - Friday. Student drivers may not return to their vehicles until the end of the school day.

Any car rider who is not picked up by parents or the assigned after-care program by 3:45 p.m. will be sent to Vistacare and invoiced for \$18/day.

Attendance Guidelines and Policies

There are 180 days in the school year. To receive credit and/or avoid truancy court, students must be present no less than 170 days, as required by state law. Attendance is counted differently, depending on grade level, as shown below:

Grades Kindergarten through 6th are counted daily and must be here at least 4 hours out of the school day to be counted present. Again, it's required by state law.

Grades 7th - 10th have meeting attendance, which means students must be present for each class for at least 45 minutes in order to be counted as such.

Grades 9th - 10th - Same as grades six through ten, except that if a student misses more than five days in a quarter class or 10 days in a semester class, state law prohibits them from receiving credit.

Truancy Monitoring

- When a student has accrued three unlawful absences, a letter will be mailed/sent home.
- When a student has accrued five unlawful absences, a second reminder letter will be mailed/sent home.
- When a student has accrued three consecutive unlawful absences or a total five unlawful absences, a mandatory truancy meeting will be scheduled with the parent, student, and school staff. In this meeting, an intervention plan will be put into place. If this plan is not followed by the parent, Virtus Academy is required by the State to report the matter to Florence County Family Court.

Excused requests can be emailed to excuses@virtusacademysc.org or given to the student's homeroom teacher.

Requests to Leave School: If a student needs to leave school prior to the end of the day, permission from the parents and the school is required. Any student who departs without said permissions will be marked absent for classes missed and will incur a disciplinary infraction.

Co-curricular activities

Virtus students represent themselves and the school in a variety of athletic and academic activities. When participating in such activities, students are not considered absent, however, they are expected to make up all missed assignments. Students must attend school on the day of an extracurricular activity in order to be eligible to participate.

Virtus Academy Tardy Policy

Students who arrive on time have a better chance of academic success and are cultivating a habit which will serve them well later in life. Moreover, when a student arrives late to class, it often causes a distraction for other students because of missed directions for activities, etc. See the section titled "Arrival Policies" for more information on start times, etc.

Consequences for Habitual Tardiness

Attendance requirements vary under state law, depending on grade level. Broadly speaking, elementary students are required to be marked present or absent at the start of the instructional day, whereas, middle and high school students are required to be marked present or absent at the start of *each class period*. Nevertheless, the following consequences for habitual tardiness apply across all grade levels at Virtus:

- First three tardies: Parents will receive an automated notification via phone from the school's attendance system.
- 4th tardy: The parents will be contacted by the administration.
- 5th tardy: The parent must bring the student to school and have a conference with administration prior to the student being readmitted to class.
- 6th tardy: The student may receive a one-day reverse suspension (i.e., a parent will be required to attend class with their student), or out-of-school suspension (OSS). Either of these may be a half-day or full-day as determined by administration.
- 7th-11th tardy: School administration will attempt to assist the parents in resolving the habitual nature of the problem.
- 12 tardy: An administrative hearing will be held, at which time, formal notice will be provided to the parent stating that the student will be involuntarily withdrawn at the 15th tardy.

Procedure for Signing Out Early

Students will not be dismissed within 60 minutes of the regular end-of-the-day dismissal time.

All parents and other caregivers, in addition to being on the student contact list (which is approved by the parent), must present a current government issued photo I.D. and scan it through the Ident-A-Kid system in order for the school to release their student prior to the end of a school day. As an added precaution, the school requires all parents picking up their child from Vistacare to follow the same procedure as outlined above.

If signing your child out after lunch, at the conclusion of a school event, or the return of a field trip, you must follow the same procedures at the front office. If the need to sign out early is known in advance, please send a note to the school.

Make-Up Work Policy

If a student receives a suspension, signs in or out of school, and misses a pre-scheduled test, the student is required to make up the test on the day the student returns or at the teacher's convenience. When students return to school after an excused absence, they must make up any required work (including tests and homework) within five days. The teacher may decide the day and time. This policy applies except in cases of extenuating circumstances. Students who know they will be absent must check with their teachers to determine what assignments are due. This policy applies to all school-sponsored activities and any other pre-arranged absences.

Student Leadership Development

Virtus students in grades K-8 participate in [Leader in Me \(LIM\)](#), a FranklinCovey Company program based on Stephen Covey's international bestseller, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Leader in Me is premised on the idea that everyone can be a leader. This evidence-based approach empowers students by developing leadership and life skills they need to thrive in the 21st century.

Parents can also participate by:

- Attending school-sponsored leadership events
- Joining our Parent and Community Lighthouse Team
- Sponsoring a schoolwide leadership role or club
- Supporting one of our service-learning projects
- Exploring Leader in Me Family Development opportunities

Conferences and Communication

Teacher Conference and Classroom Visitation Policy

Parent/Teacher conferences occur at various times throughout the year. Additional meetings may be arranged with the child's teacher before or after school. Parents wishing to meet with teachers to observe the classroom environment during the school day must schedule an appointment. The principal or assistant principal will meet with you if you have more immediate concerns.

Mass Communication

There are two instances in which the school engages in schoolwide mass communication: (1) routine announcements, and (2) campuswide emergencies. Our primary technology for both is an app called ParentSquare which parents have the option of downloading as an app to their phones. (The school is exploring additional technology at the time we put this handbook into circulation in August 2023. We will announce changes, if any, on our website and through ParentSquare.)

In the event of a campus emergency announcement, please do not call the school for additional information. This can tie up phone lines and distract staff from focusing on responding to an actual emergency. The school will communicate further instructions as the situation dictates and in as timely a manner as possible. Moreover, no information beyond what was stated in the ParentSquare announcement will be available.

Virtus Academy also maintains a school website at www.virtusacademysc.org on which you will find information such as ongoing events and activities, board meeting dates, and staff information. We also maintain a school Facebook page at facebook.com/virtusacademyofsouthcarolina.

Individual Communication

To communicate with school staff on an individual basis, we recommend sending an email (staff emails appear on our webpage). We will generally respond within one business day, often on the same day as the message, though after school hours.

Additionally, parents may regularly check their student's grades using PowerSchool and email teachers directly to schedule a conference.

Change of Address or Phone Number

Keeping your contact information updated is critically important for routine communication and emergencies. If there is a change to your phone number or address, please notify our Powerschool Administrator, Ms. Runyan at mrnyan@virtusacademysc.org. (If your number is unlisted, please inform the school staff.)

Discipline Policies

Sound discipline within a school is critical for two reasons: (1) Without it, learning is impeded. (2) A large part of teaching students is inculcating and transmitting disciplined thought and disciplined action, both of which will serve them well throughout their lives.

Ultimately, our approach is to try to earn the respect of our students by demonstrating that we care deeply for their well-being. In our collective experience, we find that most students respond positively to this kind of leadership. Moreover, we strive to maintain even-handedness in all instances of student discipline, and we embrace the principles of a restorative approach.

In general, we are trying to create a school culture in which students are happy, safe, and focused on growth and achievement. We do this largely by proactively managing the school environment by communicating our expectations. Most of the time, this suffices, however, there are instances where student penalties are necessary. The following tables outline such instances.

LEVEL I: Level I disciplinary infractions are those addressed by the teacher or staff member responsible for the student's supervision when the infraction(s) occur(s). Teachers/staff may exercise discretion in responding to LEVEL I infractions.

Abusive/Inappropriate Language/Gestures	The use of intimidating language, foul language, or gestures that are meant to threaten, harass, harm, embarrass or bully another student
Misconduct	Conduct that intentionally or unintentionally that is inherently disrespectful to other people or the property of other people or conduct that impedes a safe and orderly environment.
Classroom Misconduct	Conduct in class that includes, but is not limited to: behavior that disrupts the learning environment such as general horseplay
Dishonesty	Includes but is not limited to submitting another's work as one's own, making false allegations regarding the conduct of another or misrepresenting one's own actions or words
Inappropriate Attire	Wearing clothes (or the lack thereof) that are unacceptable for school or school sponsored events;

	appearing at school in a manner that disrupts the learning environment; violation of school uniform policy
Unacceptable use of personal electronic device	See the school's cell phone policy on p. 37
Insubordination (Level I)	Refusing a reasonable directive from a staff member

LEVEL II: Level II disciplinary infractions are those addressed by administration. School-based alternatives, suspension, intervention, may be imposed. Further disciplinary action shall be optional.

Continued Level I Infractions	Continued Level I infractions
Failure to perform a Level I or Level II Discipline Consequence	Failure to complete a disciplinary consequence assigned by a staff member for a Level I or Level II behavior violation
Abusive Language toward Staff	The use of foul language toward a staff member
Bullying	See the school's harassment, intimidation, and bullying policy on p. 24
Misconduct	Conduct that intentionally or unintentionally that is inherently disrespectful to other people or the property of other people or conduct that impedes a safe and orderly environment.
Defacing School Property	Intentionally and maliciously damaging or vandalizing any surface, structure, or object that belongs to or is associated with the school. This can include graffiti, scratching or carving into surfaces, breaking or destroying objects, or any other form of deliberate destruction or alteration of school property.
Drug Offense: Schedule IV or V Substances	The purchase, distribution, or sale, on school grounds or at school sponsored-activities, of a schedule IV (drugs, substances, or chemicals with a low potential for abuse and low risk of dependence) or V (drugs, substances, or chemicals with lower potential for abuse than Schedule IV and consist of preparations containing limited quantities of certain narcotics)

Fighting	Physical altercation between two or more students that does not result in serious injury or hospitalization
Gambling	Participation in games or activities for the exchange of money or other valuables
Harassment (non - criminal)	Persistent, unwanted behavior or actions that cause emotional distress, annoyance, or fear in an individual.
Inadvertent Possession of a Standard Weapon	The unintentional or accidental possession of a standard weapon
Inappropriate Use of Personal Electronic Device	See cell phone policy on p. 37
Insubordination - Level II	The act of willfully or deliberately disobeying or refusing to comply with a reasonable directive from a staff member.
Physical Mistreatment of Another Student	The physical mistreatment of another student, on school grounds or at school-sponsored events, that does not warrant fighting, bullying, Level III violent acts, or violent acts prohibited by law.
Possession of Fireworks	The act of having fireworks on school property or at school-sponsored events
Possession or Distribution of Obscene or Harmful Materials	The possession or distribution of materials, on school grounds or at school-sponsored events, that slanders, defames, harms another, or is obscene to the educational environment
Theft	Willfully taking the property of another without permission
Tobacco	The unlawful possession or use of tobacco or nicotine delivery devices (such as vapes) on school property or at school-sponsored events
Unauthorized Leaving Campus	Leaving school campus without permission
Unexcused Absences/Truancy	See attendance policy on pp. 14-15
Violation of the Acceptable Use Agreement - Level II	Violation of the <i>Acceptable Use Agreement</i> . Behaviors include but are not limited to possession or loading of unauthorized software; theft or destruction of technology; altering workstation(s) configuration, or using a school computer for harm

LEVEL III: Level III disciplinary infractions must be addressed by administration and for which suspension shall be mandatory. Further disciplinary action, including expulsion and involvement of law enforcement, may be imposed. *Level III disciplinary infractions are behaviors considered material and substantial disruptions to the learning environment. They will be presumed to be initiated, willful, and overt on the part of the student.*

Continued Level II Infractions	Continued/documented Level II Infractions (Similar Level II Disciplinary Infraction)
Any Act Prohibited by Federal, State, or Local Law	Behavior that violates federal, state, or local law, including but not limited to: false alarms, malicious mischief, traffic violations occurring on school property, any type of direct or implied threat to secure money or any favor from a fellow student (extortion), use of fireworks or interference with staff and faculty.
Alcohol	The possession, purchase, use, or distribution of substances that contain any amount of alcohol on school grounds or during school-sponsored events.
Assault - Third Degree	The commission of an act by a student that would be third-degree assault, if committed by an adult; when a person knowingly or recklessly causes bodily injury to another person
Damage to Property	Damage to school property or the personal property of a Virtus employee, on school grounds, at school events, or off of school property where the behavior is detrimental to the welfare or safety of the school, students, or school personnel.
Drug Offense: Marijuana/ Drug Paraphernalia,	The possession, purchase, sale, distribution or use of marijuana or drug paraphernalia on school grounds or during school-sponsored events.
False Allegations Against Staff/Students	The knowingly false allegation of child abuse, bullying, harassment, or misconduct against an employee or student.
Habitually Disruptive Student	Any student who causes a material and substantial disruption on school grounds, in a school vehicle, or at a school activity or sanctioned event three or more

	times during a school year.
Harassment - Criminal	The harassment of a student or staff member. A pattern of repeated harassment toward another student.
Menacing	Threats against another student that are malignant and hostile; threat with a weapon
Physical Mistreatment of Another Student	The physical mistreatment of another student, on school grounds or at school-sponsored events, that does not warrant assault, fighting, or other acts prohibited by law.
Pornography	The possession, reproduction, purchase, or transmission of pornography, regardless of means.
Violation of the Acceptable Use Agreement - Level III	Violation of the Acceptable Use Agreement. Behaviors include but are not limited to: use of hacker utilities; possession of personal data without consent; installing audio, video, or music servers; or transmitting, accessing, or possessing inappropriate/harmful material.
Weapons Infraction: Standard	The carrying, bringing or possession of a standard weapon or a weapon facsimile on school grounds or at school-sponsored events.

Level I Discipline Possible Classroom Interventions and Responses: These interventions aim to teach correct and alternative behavior so students can learn and demonstrate safe and respectful behavior.

- Verbal warning/reprimand/correction/redirect
- Parent contact
- Parent/student/teacher conference
- Seat change
- Student Reflection
- Compensation for damage
- Loss of privileges/participation in extracurricular or school sponsored activities
- Other school-based alternatives
- Loss of academic credit (for plagiarism/academic dishonesty)
- School-based community service
- Classroom behavior plan/discipline plan

Level I Discipline Possible School Support Interventions and Responses: These interventions often involve support staff, both school based and within the broader community, and aim to engage the student's support system to ensure successful learning and consistency of interventions and to change the conditions that contribute to the student's inappropriate or disruptive behavior.

- Parent notification
- Restorative Practices including community conferencing
- Mentoring
- Detention
- Peer Mediation
- Referral to Dean of Culture
- Service to school
- Conflict Resolution
- Referral to community organization
- IEP or 504 team
- Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP)
- Confiscate material/equipment
- Loss of driving privileges (High School)
- Expulsion
- Other interventions identified by staff

Level II Discipline Possible Administrative Staff Intervention and Responses: These interventions can involve the school administration and aim to correct behavior by stressing the seriousness of the behavior while keeping the student in school.

- Parent or guardian notification
- Change in schedule or class
- Loss of privileges
- Restitution
- Conflict Resolution
- Peer mediation
- Reprimand by appropriate administrator
- Referral to school counselor
- Referral to IEP or 504 team
- Development of FBA or BIP
- Overnight Suspension
- In-School suspension
- Mentoring
- Referral to substance abuse counseling
- Confiscate material/equipment
- Loss of driving privileges (High School)
- Law enforcement contact
- Other interventions identified by staff

LEVEL 3 Suspension and Referral Responses: These interventions may involve the removal of a student from the school environment for up to three days because of the severity of the behavior. The duration of the suspension, if issued, is to be limited as much as practicable while adequately addressing the behavior.

Level III Discipline Responses:

- Parent or guardian notification
- Suspension
- Reverse Suspension (Parent comes in to spend the day with student)
- Loss of privileges/participation in extracurricular or school-sponsored activities
- Compensation for damages
- Parent/guardian conference following suspension for the purpose of discussing re-entry, recommendation for transfer, or expulsion
- Exclusion from ceremonies, activities, and commencement exercises
- Expulsion
- Parent or guardian notification
- Referral to substance abuse counseling
- Referral to community organization
- Restorative practices including community
- Referral to ABE
- Behavior contract
- Referral to IEP team for manifestation
- Referral to community organization (e.g., In-school suspension mentoring programs)
- Referral to Circle Park
- Loss of driving privileges
- Revision to IEP or 504 plan
- Development of FBA and BIP
- Other interventions identified by staff
- Law enforcement contact
- Charges filed with local authorities

Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying

Virtus Academy prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying of a student by another student or students, staff, or third parties that interferes with or disrupts a student's ability to learn and the school's responsibility to educate its students in a safe and orderly environment whether in a classroom, on school premises, at a school-sponsored activity or event, whether or not it is held on school premises, or at another program or function where the school is responsible for the student.

“Harassment, intimidation, or bullying” is define as a gesture, an electronic communication or a written, verbal, physical, or sexual act that a reasonable person should know will have the effect of either of the following:

Harming a student, physically or emotionally, or damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of personal harm or damage to his/her property
Insulting or demeaning a student or group of students in such a way as to cause

substantial disruption in or substantial interference with the orderly operation of the school. It is usually, but not necessarily, repeated over time.

Sexual Harassment

Inappropriate verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature is prohibited. Sexual harassment is prohibited against members of the same or opposite sex. Any student who experiences sexually offensive comments or actions by another student or adult at school or school-sponsored function is strongly encouraged to tell a parent, teacher, or administrator. Parents who believe their child has experienced sexual harassment should immediately report it to Mr. Famon Whitfield III, Title IX Coordinator, at fwhitfield@virtusacademysc.org.

Emergency School Closings & Preparedness

School Closings

When inclement weather occurs, school administrators make decisions about school closings, delayed openings, and emergency dismissals. Local TV and radio stations are informed as early as possible.

Communications regarding school closure will be sent to parents via ParentSquare notification and shared via social media and the Virtus Academy website.

Parents will be notified if evacuation to the emergency shelter is required. In the event of an early dismissal from school, please discuss a contingency plan with your child for these unexpected situations, such as neighbors they may call for help. Please understand that in these situations, phone communication is difficult.

Emergency Preparedness

In the event of a school emergency, it is vital for the school and each family to have a communication plan to reunite safely. In such situations, it is the school's priority to ensure the safety of all students. Once students are safe and accounted for, the school will work with local responding agencies to facilitate communication with parents about student pick-up.

What Are My Responsibilities as a Parent/Guardian?

- Ensure all contact information remains updated.
- The number listed as your "HOME" phone on our information forms is the one that will be called with instructions during an emergency.
- Include as an emergency contact ANYONE who might pick up your child from school. (Students WILL ONLY be released to people on our list).
- Wait for official communication from the school before coming on site.
- Once on site, be patient and follow the directions of emergency personnel.
- Do not try to contact your student by cell phone. Cell channels should be kept free for use by emergency and first responders and can crash if overloaded by too many people in a small area vying for usage.

Communication From The School

- Communication from the school to parents in an emergency situation will be initiated through our automated parent contact system.
- Our automated phone system will call your primary “home” phone number listed in Powerschool. If you would like to update your contact information, please contact us.
- After the original message, a repeat call will go out 15 minutes later. These messages will contain directions only.
- Once all students have been accounted for and safely picked up, a statement will be released in conjunction with responding authorities containing more information about the incident.
- It is essential for parents to note that during an emergency, school personnel will not be at their desks and therefore unable to answer their phones. Information necessary to guide you through the process of picking up your child will be delivered via automated messages.

Reunification

- Parents will wait to receive instructions on how to proceed to the area where they will pick up their student(s) before coming on site. Depending on the emergency, it may be a site other than the school.
- Emergency personnel will be positioned at each school entry point. It is imperative to follow their instructions.

Only people listed in PowerSchool as emergency contacts will be allowed to pick up students. Please be patient; our overarching goal is 100% safety and successful reunification.

School-Wide Procedures

School-wide procedures are our expectations for student behavior. Procedures differ from rules in that they explain what and how. The student’s teacher will provide more specific instructions.

Uniforms

The school uniform is a royal blue, white, navy, or gray polo-style shirt with the school crest embroidered on the left side of the chest. Pants should be khaki, black, or navy skirts, shorts, pants, or blue jeans. Closed-toe shoes that children can play in and use in the gym complete the uniform. Jackets or sweaters intended to be worn in the building should be black, gray, navy, or white, either with or without the school crest.

On Friday, students may wear blue jeans that adhere to the dress code and school spirit T-shirts or college apparel (on designated days). The principal will announce designated days. When not wearing the school uniform, students should dress in a manner that will not disrupt learning.

- Shorts, skirts, etc., must be long enough so that the student does not touch

the skin when hands extend by the side. Shorts and skirts worn to school need to be finger-tip length or longer. Garments should be of adequate length to assure modesty when the student is seated or engaged in school activities.

- Students are not permitted to wear clothing or accessories with offensive or inappropriate symbols or words or advertising alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.
- Cleats are not permitted.
- Clothing with rips, tears, or holes are not permitted.
- Bare midriffs, halter tops, tank tops, and see-through shirts are not permitted.
- Students are not permitted to wear hats/kerchiefs in the building unless the hat is part of a class project, school spirit day, or the student has a documented health problem.
- Leggings and tights are only to be worn under dresses or tunic shirts.
- Gang colors, symbols, and attire will not be permitted.
- Pants must be worn at the natural waistline, and undergarments are not to be visible.
- Pockets on pants/skirts/shorts must always be visible. Wearing accessories or clothing that could pose a safety threat to oneself or others will not be allowed.
- All clothing must be worn appropriately and as designed.
- There are no restrictions on hair dye color or cosmetics unless it disrupts the learning environment. The principal has sole discretion on what is acceptable.

Parents will be contacted if a child comes to school inappropriately dressed so that appropriate attire may be brought to the school. The administration will make a final judgment on the appropriateness of dress and reserves the right to prohibit students from wearing any articles of clothing or accessories which may disrupt the school environment.

Field Studies

Field Studies are an extension of the classroom to provide real-world experience. The parents or guardians must give written permission for a child to participate in an out-of-school excursion. Parents wishing to chaperone will be required to have a background check. This process takes about two weeks and must be reapplied for every year. Due to supervision and safety issues, children such as siblings, friends, or relatives are not allowed to attend field trips with parent chaperones. Please keep in mind there is limited space available for field trip chaperones due to transportation and visiting site requirements.

Chaperones are selected on a first-come, first-served basis. For the safety of students, we require all adults participating in a field trip to have an approved volunteer form with a criminal background check on record.

Safe and Secure School Bus Transportation

The safety and security of our students, staff, and school is a top priority for Virtus Academy. To ensure a safe bus ride for all students, the school has made the following provisions: Bus Safety Rules must be followed at all times while on a School Bus, Activity Bus, or other school vehicle used to transport students to or from school, or school-sponsored events such as field studies. There will be consequences for violation of these rules.

Textbooks

Most textbooks (even consumables) are provided free of charge to students. However, once books have been issued to students, they become their responsibility. Students will be held accountable for the careful maintenance of these books. Lost and damaged textbooks must be replaced; therefore, the parents will be notified of the amount charged for repair or replacement. Occasionally, a lost book that has been paid for will be found. When this occurs, we will refund the fee within the school year; however, we will not be able to refund it after the school year ends.

If paying with a check, be sure it includes your full name, street address, and phone number. When you provide a check as payment, you authorize us to use the information from the check to process the payment as a check transaction. You will be charged a \$35.00 collection fee if your payment is returned unpaid. This procedure applies to checks payable to Virtus Academy, the PTO, and other school-sponsored programs/events. We accept online payments via the school website at www.virtusacademysc.org.

Parent Accountability

Parent involvement is encouraged in all areas of student life and is essential to a student's success. Virtus Academy deems mutual respect, trust, and effective communication between school and home fundamental to that success. The following guidelines will be observed:

- Parents of students experiencing academic difficulty will be notified by the school. When applicable, information will be provided regarding workshops and seminars relating to parental assistance and guidance at home.
- Parents of disruptive students will be notified by a teacher or administrator as soon as possible. In cases of severe classroom disruptions, parents may be asked by a school administrator to come to the school to remove the student.
- Parents may be given a choice to shadow students for a day instead of certain suspensions from school. The school administrator can offer this option, and certain infractions will not be applicable as determined by the principal.
- Parents and students will attend a conference with administrators and staff before the student is allowed to return to school on probationary status following an out-of-school suspension.

Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)

The PTO is a service organization composed of parents, teachers, and administration who work together to support the school and students. PTO is an excellent way to get involved. PTO officers meet monthly (August-Nov. and Jan.-May), and the PTO hosts a quarterly general meeting.

Parties and Invitations

To protect valuable instructional time, we limit classroom “parties” to certain times of the year. Birthday parties are prohibited, but you can send treats for lunchtime with prior approval from the homeroom teacher and a time they designate. Students may bring party invitations to school but only if every class member is invited. We do not release names, addresses, or phone numbers.

Parent Involvement and Volunteers

Parents, guardians, and grandparents are encouraged to get involved with the school. Volunteers are needed to help read aloud in classrooms, attend lunches and recess, and assist with special activities.

Our school’s PTO offers opportunities to participate in special programs and events and will solicit volunteers at the beginning of the school year.

Virtus Academy welcomes input and suggestions from our community and parents concerning Title I programs and funding. We will distribute a survey annually and hold a public meeting to gather feedback.

Parent Involvement/Confidentiality Policy

The school recognizes each parent/guardian as their child’s first teacher and acknowledges the powerful influence of parents on their child’s life. The school, therefore, is committed to developing a family-friendly school and programs to welcome and serve parents and families in a positive and supportive environment. We invite parents to participate in the school review and improvement process by being part of a planning team that evaluates school policies affecting parent involvement. We will conduct an annual evaluation of the effectiveness of parent involvement.

- As a matter of professional ethics, volunteers do not discuss teacher, student, or school affairs with other people. Confidentiality must be upheld at all times, including social media channels.
- The school and parents will build the capacity for strong parental involvement. Efforts to increase parent involvement will include annual conferences, literacy, and parenting programs to accommodate varied family schedules. In addition, we will hold an annual meeting for parents/families of students to provide information on Title I legislation, instructional programs, and desired outcomes for students.
- We will offer supplemental educational services utilizing tutorials before and after school and during Academic Assistance on Fridays.

Personal Property

Toys, pets, electronic devices, and extra money are not allowed at school. These items can interfere with teaching and learning. These items are subject to being confiscated if brought to school without the permission of a teacher or administrator. This policy is enforced to maintain an environment conducive to teaching and learning and prevent the theft of costly items. The school will not be responsible for lost, misplaced, or stolen items.

Water Bottles

Students are permitted to bring water bottles to school. Research shows that hydration plays an important role in brain function and, therefore, learning. Please send your child to school daily with a water bottle filled with water only.

Students will be permitted to keep water bottles at their desks as long as it is not a distraction. Water bottles that pose a distraction (used to squirt others, etc.) will be confiscated by the teacher. In such cases, parents will be contacted. Students without water bottles will be allowed appropriate access to water fountains.

Please label your child's water bottle with a permanent marker. Students with health issues or taking medication that requires a snack will be accommodated by the school nurse in coordination with the teacher and parent/guardian.

Snacks for all age groups for special occasions or as part of lessons/demonstrations will be permitted based on teacher discretion.

Student Health and Safety

The Health Room is operated daily under the supervision of a registered nurse. The school nurse is responsible for maintaining the health records of all students. The Health Room is an emergency station to care for minor illnesses or injuries at school. Injuries or health concerns that occur outside of school should be treated at home or by your healthcare provider. The school nurse cannot diagnose or prescribe treatment.

Fever Only

- Keep your child home for a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher by mouth or 100 degrees if taken under the arm. Your child can return to school or childcare with a parent note when the fever is gone for at least 24 hours without using fever-reducing medications.

Diarrhea

- For most kinds of diarrhea (defined as 3 or more loose stools in 24 hours), children should stay home until diarrhea stops for 24 hours or until a health care provider clears the child to return to school. Your child can return with a parent note.

Vomiting

- Keep young children home when vomiting has occurred 2 or more times in 24 hours or for vomiting and fever (101°F or higher). All children should stay home for any green or bloody vomit. If the child is vomiting and has not urinated for 8 hours, the child should stay home. Your child may return with a parent note.

A parent should notify the school nurse if a student develops an infectious disease. Notification will allow the nurse to alert the teachers to observe other students for symptoms and to notify the appropriate people. Parents should also notify the school nurse of any special health needs. If a student becomes ill or injured and needs to go home, the individuals listed on the health card will be contacted and expected to come for the child immediately. For this reason, the school should be kept up-to-date on any changes in phone numbers of those persons to be contacted in an emergency.

For other conditions requiring your student to remain home, please see DHEC's "School Exclusion List" for students in 1st through 12th grade and DHEC's "Childcare Exclusion List" for students in K3, K4, K5, or who are medically fragile. If you would like a hard copy of the Exclusion list, contact Ms. Carmen Witherspoon, School Nurse, at cwitherspoon@virtusacademysc.org.

Medications

Prescription Medication

- Medications taken during school hours must be brought to school and delivered to the school nurse or designated adult in the ORIGINAL container with the label intact.
- All medications must be accompanied by written parental permission.
- Prescription medications also require written authorization from the prescribing physician or health care provider.

Over-the-Counter Medication

- Over-the-counter medication will be given according to the appropriate age/weight as directed on the bottle.
- Additional dosages require physician authorization.
- Herbals, food supplements, alternative medicinal products, and other items that do not have FDA approval require a written order from a prescribing health care provider.
- Because of the relationship of Reye's syndrome to aspirin, products containing aspirin or salicylates will not be administered at school without a written prescription from a health care provider.

Permission forms for both over-the-counter medications and prescription medications are available in the front office or from the school nurse. A record of all medications administered at school will be kept on each student. All other medications will be kept at school and must be picked up by a responsible adult when the medication is discontinued, expired, or at the end of the school year. Medications are not sent home with students. At the time a prescription is filled, ask your pharmacist to prepare a separate bottle labeled for school use. If medication is needed on a field trip, the parent is responsible for providing this medication in the original pharmacy-labeled or manufactured-labeled container with only the dosage(s) needed for the trip. The nurse cannot repackage any medications. For prescription medication, consult your pharmacist about providing a labeled container with the proper dosage for your child's field study.

Students must be symptom-free, properly treated for 24 hours, and medically cleared by their healthcare provider before returning to school. If your child is sent home from school for any of the above reasons, you must provide a doctor's note if they return to school less than 24 hours from being sent home sick. If you do not provide a doctor's note, we will ask you to return to school to pick up your child. We expect parents to pick up their child within 30 minutes of being notified of initial symptoms. Parents must alert the school if a student has a contagious condition such as, but not limited to, chicken pox, head lice, or pink eye. You can do this by sending an email to Carmen Witherspoon, School Nurse, at cwitherspoon@virtusacademysc.org.

Immunization Requirements

The Department of Health and Environment Control (DHEC) has designated immunization/shot requirements for school-age children. If your child's immunizations do not meet DHEC requirements, they will not be allowed to attend school. Please consult the attendance clerk/registrar or the school nurse if you need additional information.

Special Services

Services Available to Students with Special Health Care Needs

Parent Notice (IHPs, 504, IDEA, Homebound): Required by S.C. Code Ann. Section 59-63-90 (Supp. 2005)

Many health care services are available to students to keep them at school where they can learn and participate with other students. Our goal is to provide information to parents and legal guardians about some of the services and programs available for addressing the health care needs of students during the school day to help students succeed in school. The necessary health care information must be shared with the appropriate people, such as teachers on duty during recess and other school support staff to ensure that the student's needs are met throughout the school day.

Individual Health Care Plans or Individual Health Plans (IHPs)

Individual health care plans and individual health plans are known as IHPs. School nurses who are registered nurses write IHPs to guide how a student's health care needs will be met while at school. The nurse works with the student's parents or legal guardians, health care provider, and other school staff to write the plan. IHPs are written for students who have special health care needs that must be met by school staff during the school day. IHPs are also written for students the school has approved to self-medicate or self-monitor. To learn more about IHPs, talk with your child's school nurse.

Erin's Law

The South Carolina Code of Law, Section 59-32-30(G), has been amended to provide instruction "beginning with the 2015-16 school year, districts annually shall provide age-appropriate instruction in sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention to all students in four-year-old kindergarten, where offered, through twelfth grade. This instruction must be based on the units developed by the board (South Carolina Board of Education), through the department (South Carolina Department of Education), according to Section 59-32-20(B)."

At the elementary level, instruction includes topics such as being unique, understanding feelings, being a friend, bathing suits cover private parts, good touch/bad touch, stranger danger, getting adult help, general safety rules for home and school, technology safety, and understanding peer pressure and media influences. These topics are aligned with the South Carolina Health and Safety

Education Standards and the Erin's Law Resource Guide provided by the South Carolina Department of Education. These topics may be covered in many parts of the curriculum, including the developmental guidance counselor classroom instruction program, academic classes, physical education classes, and school-wide programs.

Cell Phone Policy

Due to the ubiquitous nature of cell phones, they have become a very large part of all of our lives. In school settings, however, they have become more of a distraction. Therefore, the use of cellphones in school is a privilege that must be used in an ethical manner. We reserve the right to limit or suspend cell phone usage to any student who violates the following school cell phone policy.

*Virtus Academy provides access to computers and the internet during the school day. Furthermore, students who need to call their parents should do so using the phone in the main office.

Acceptable Uses:

K-8

Elementary and middle school students may not display or use a personal device while on school property or attending a school-related activity, whether on or off school property, during the regular school day. The student-owned device must be powered off and placed in their book bag during the school day.

High school

Students may possess or use personal electronic devices on school property, or at school-sponsored events only as follows:

- The personal electronic device may be used before school until the beginning school day bell. The device may be used during the student lunch period. The device will also be allowed after school denoted by the ending school day bell.

Unacceptable Uses:

Misuse includes but is not limited to:

- Cell phone use in the hallways, cafeteria, and classrooms without the teacher's permission.
- Recording students and/or faculty.
- Sending or seeking to receive messages that contain inappropriate content.
- Browsing, posting, or uploading content on social media during the school day.
- Responding to calls or texts.
- Sending messages or videos about students and/or faculty.
- The use of cell phones to cause a distraction in class or in the hallways.
- Harassing and/or bullying students or faculty.

Consequences for cell phone related offenses will be addressed in ways that include but are not limited to:

- If students use their cell phones without permission, teachers may confiscate the cell phone immediately. Failure to cooperate will result in a discipline referral.
- Filming or taking pictures of students and staff will result in an in/out of school suspension. This includes using the phone to film other students fighting or doing something inappropriate.
- Posting or sharing pictures or videos of students and staff will result in an out of school suspension.

Any cell phone brought to school by students will be the responsibility of the student. Administration and teachers will not assume responsibility for damaged, lost or stolen cell phones.

Parent and Student Handbook Acknowledgement

Greetings Parents:

Parents **must sign** a notification form and return it to their student’s homeroom teacher, acknowledging they have been informed of school rules, expectations, procedures, and parent/student rights.

Please read the Parent and Student Handbook, discuss it with your student(s), and complete the form below. Please return the Acknowledgement Form to the homeroom teacher by the 5th day of attendance.



PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK REVIEW OF ANNUAL NOTIFICATION FORM

I acknowledge, with my signature below, that I have reviewed the annual notification of school rules, expectations, procedures, and parent/student rights on behalf of my child. I agree to support the rules and procedures as provided.

Please PRINT the name, birth date, and grade

of your child. Student’s Name: _____

Birthdate: ____/____/_____

Grade: K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: ____/____/_____