

Virtus Academy Handbook

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1. Welcome to Virtus Academy

Our Mission and Vision

At Virtus Academy, we're not just preparing kids for tests—we're preparing them for life. As a public charter school of choice, we serve families who believe school should be more than just a box to check. Our mission is simple but ambitious: help every student develop the knowledge, character, and habits they'll need to succeed in a free society.

We power student potential through real-world learning, leadership opportunities, and meaningful service. But we never lose sight of what matters most: helping young people become the kind of adults you'd want in your community—capable, honest, and grounded in purpose.

What We Believe About Teaching and Learning

We named our school Virtus because we believe education should be rooted in virtue. Not slogans. Not fads. But the old-fashioned idea that children should grow into thoughtful, self-governing adults. That means we teach responsibility, self-discipline, and courage—not just in words, but in practice.

We believe school should be challenging. We believe ideas matter. And yes, sometimes ideas are controversial. We don't shy away from tough topics—but we won't use our classrooms to preach or push ideology. Our job is to spark curiosity, not conformity. We help students learn how to think, not what to think. And we treat parents like partners, not bystanders.

Our Commitment to Families

You didn't land at Virtus by accident. You chose us—and we don't take that lightly. As a charter school, we work for you. That means clear expectations, strong communication, and a learning environment that's safe, serious, and supportive.

We promise to hold your child to high standards—and to back them up with even higher levels of support. And when questions come up (because they always do), we'll talk. We'll listen. We'll be real with each other.

We're not perfect. But we're committed—to your child's growth, to your family's voice, and to building a school community that lives up to its name.

Note on the Latin Origin of 'Virtus'

Yes, the Latin word *virtus* is the root of the English word virtue. In classical Latin, *virtus* derived from *vir*, meaning man, and originally referred to qualities like manliness, valor, and excellence, especially in civic and military life. Over time, in English, the word *virtue* came to mean moral goodness more narrowly. At Virtus Academy, the term reclaims that fuller, classical sense—emphasizing strength of character, intellectual honesty, and civic responsibility.



2025 - 2026 Academic Calendar

JULY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
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27	28	29	30	31		

August						
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24 31	25	26	27	28	29	30

SEPTEMBER						
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OCTOBER						
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NOVEMBER						
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DECEMBER						
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28	29	30	31			

Make-up Days: May 29th, June 1st, June 2nd

- July**
- 1 First Workday for 222-Day Staff
 - 4 Holiday (Independence Day)
 - 7 First Workday for 210-Day Staff
 - 15 - 17 Registration/Document Drop-off
 - 21 First Workday for 190-Day Staff
 - 28 First Day for Students

- August**
- 27 Interim Reports Issued for Q1
- September**
- 1 Holiday (Labor Day)
 - 29 Last Day of Q1
- October**
- 2 Report Cards Issued for Q1
 - 3 Teacher Workday/Parent Conferences
 - 6-10 Intersession
 - 7 Interim Reports Issued for Q2
 - 24-28 Holiday (Thanksgiving)
- December**
- 16 Last Day of S1/Q2
 - 17-19 Inclement Weather Days
 - 17-31 Holiday (Winter Break)

- January**
- 1-2 Holiday (Winter Break)
 - 5 Staff Professional Development
 - 6 Students Return
 - 7 Report Cards Issued for S1/Q2
 - 19 Holiday (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)
- February**
- 6 Interim Reports Issued for Q3
 - 10 Early Dismissal and Parent Conferences (1PM - 6PM)
 - 18-20 Inclement Weather Days
 - 16-20 Presidents' Day/Intersession
- March**
- 17 Last Day for Q3
 - 20 Report Cards Issued for Q3
- April**
- 3-10 Holiday (Spring Break)
 - 27 Interim Reports Issued for Q4

- May**
- 25 Holiday (Memorial Day)
 - 28 Last Day for S2/Q4
 - 28 Graduation Practice
 - 29 Graduation Day
- June**
- 2 Report Cards Issued for Q4
 - 2 Last Day for 190-Staff
 - 18 Last Day for 210-Staff
 - 30 Last Day for 222-Staff

JANUARY						
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FEBRUARY						
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MARCH						
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APRIL						
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MAY						
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31						

JUNE						
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28	29	30				

Registration
School Day for Students
Teacher Workday
Early Dismissal for Students
Early Dismissal & Parent Conferences
Holiday

2. School Information

Daily Schedule

Instruction begins at 8:00 for students in grades K-6. We ask that they be in class no later than 7:55 to allow for attendance, lunch count, and morning announcements. Monday through Thursday, dismissal is at 3:00, and on Fridays, students in grades K-6 are dismissed at 12:15.

Instruction begins at 8:30 for students in grades 7-12. We ask that they be in class no later than 8:25 to allow for attendance, lunch count, and morning announcements. Monday through Thursday dismissal is at 3:30, and on Fridays, students in grades 7-12 are dismissed at 12:45.

Virtus Academy
2407 Pisgah Road
Florence, SC 29501
(843) 799-4032 (p)
(843) 799-4042 (f)
info@virtusacademysc.org
Office Hours: 7:15 - 4:00 pm, Monday-Friday

Contact Information

Executive Leadership Team

Toni Brandt, Chief Executive Officer
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Jackee Johnston, Chief Operations Officer
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Shonte Grady, Director of Student Culture and Conduct
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Isabella Montgomery
Director of Student Services
imontgomery@virtusacademysc.org, ext. 1206

3. Enrollment Procedures and Attendance Requirements

Our school is open to all students residing in South Carolina. We welcome families committed to academic excellence and strong character development. Enrollment is offered until all seats are filled in each grade level, per our approved enrollment cap. Once a student is accepted, parents must provide all school records from previous schools, if applicable.

To enroll your child:

- **Application:** Complete the official application for admission (available online or at the school).
- **Lottery:** If applications exceed available spaces, a random lottery each spring will determine enrollment.

Documentation: Upon selection, submit the following:

- Proof of South Carolina residency (e.g., utility bill, lease agreement)
- Child's birth certificate or other document suitable as proof of the student's identity
- Immunization records or exemption documentation; Medical documentation specific to the child regarding chronic illness or medical condition, medication, etc.
- Parent/guardian photo ID
- Previous school records (if applicable) including IEP, 504, academic intervention history, attendance records, and discipline records
- If applicable, legal paperwork regarding custody issues

Once enrolled, students are expected to attend school daily, participate fully in our academic program, and adhere to conduct expectations.

Attendance Expectations and Policies

Regular attendance is crucial for academic success. South Carolina law mandates that children between the ages of 5 and 17 attend school regularly.

General Expectations:

- **Daily Attendance:** Students should attend school every day unless they are ill or facing an emergency.
- **School Hours:** School begins promptly at **7:55 for 5K-6th grades** and **8:30 for 7th-12th grades** and ends at **3:00 for 5K-6th grades** and **3:30 for 7th-12th grades**. **Early dismissal on Fridays is at 12:15 for 5K-6th grades** and **12:45 for 7th-12th grades**.
- **Truancy:** A student is considered truant after:
 - Three consecutive unexcused absences, or
More than 10 total unexcused absences during the school year for 5K-8th grade;
More than 5 total unexcused absences during a semester for 9th-12th grade.
 - In cases of chronic unexcused absences, **we are legally required to notify the Department of Social Services**. We make every effort to work with families before reaching this point.

Elementary School Specifics:

- **Absence Limits:** Students may not exceed 10 unexcused absences per year.
Intervention: After five unexcused absences, a parent will be expected to conference with school officials to develop an Attendance Plan.

High School Specifics (4x4 Semester Block Schedule):

- **Course Attendance:** Students must attend at least 85 out of 90 days per semester course.
Credit Denial: Exceeding five unexcused absences in a semester may result in denial of course credit.

Intervention: Similar to elementary, a parent will be expected to conference with school officials to develop an Attendance Plan if truancy becomes an issue.

- **Seat Time Recovery:** The school may offer seat time recovery for high school students in danger of being denied course credit due to hours missed. Due to staffing and budgeting limitations, this recovery time is not guaranteed and when offered will be done after regular school hours or on Saturdays. Seat Time Recovery will not be offered in excess of 10 hours per semester. There will be a charge of Seat Time Recovery of up to \$30 per session.

Excused Absences Include:

Written excuses, either from a parent or physician, **are required for ALL absences**, with the exceptions of sign-ins and sign-outs with the parent's signature. Written excuses must be provided within three days of the absence or the absence(s).

- Personal illness
- Extended Illness– If your child has a chronic condition, please speak with our Student Services Manager as the school will work with you and your child's medical provider to find a solution. **Medical Homebound** forms must be submitted within ten days of the student's first absence from school to be considered. Medical Homebound is designed for students who are unable to attend school due to illness, accident, or other medical condition.
- Medical or dental appointments
- Death or serious illness in the immediate family member
- Religious holidays
- Court appearances

Unexcused Absences Include:

- Family vacations
- Oversleeping
- Transportation issues
- Absences without a valid excuse

We are committed to working with families to address attendance issues and provide support as needed.

Chronic Absenteeism:

<https://ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/student-support/chronic-absenteeism/>

Any student in grade K-12 who misses 50 percent or more of the instructional day *for any reason* for 10 percent (or more) of the enrollment period falls in this category. Chronic absenteeism is reported to the South Carolina Department of Education. Chronic absenteeism can impact the timeline and accuracy of certain academic evaluations and interventions. However, all students remain eligible for evaluation under applicable federal and state law.

All types of absences contribute to chronic absenteeism:

- Excused Absences
- Unexcused Absences

- Suspensions

Students with 10 consecutive unexcused absences will be automatically disenrolled from Virtus Academy. Students would need to reapply for enrollment should they choose to re-enroll.

Tardiness and Early Dismissal Guidelines

Punctuality is important for a successful school day. Students who arrive on time have a better chance of success. Tardiness can cause a loss of valuable learning time for both the student and their classmates.

- **Tardiness:**

- A student is tardy if they arrive *at class* after **8:00 (5K-6th grade) or 8:30 (7th-12th grade)**. Instruction begins promptly at 8:00 and 8:30 respectively. Parents are strongly encouraged to have students in class 5 minutes before instruction starts for the day.
- To ensure proper student supervision as instruction starts, carline closes at 7:50 for 5K-6th grades and at 8:25 for 7th-12th grades. To be marked on time, students should be in the carline before it closes at 7:50 (K-6) or 8:25 (7-12). After these times, please park and escort your child into the office to sign them in.
- Frequent tardiness (more than three times per month) will result in a meeting with school leadership. Student drivers with more than 5 tardies in a quarter will face revocation of campus driving privileges.

- **Early Sign Outs:**

- Early sign outs should be limited to emergencies or essential appointments.
- Notify the front office in advance if your child needs to leave early.
- Only parents/guardians or authorized individuals may pick up a student early.
- Student drivers must provide a written note from their parent for early sign out and the school will verify this is permitted each time.
For student safety, student sign outs must conclude 30 minutes prior to dismissal procedures. This is 2:30 for 5K-6th (11:45 for Friday dismissal) and 3:00 for 7th-12th (12:15 for Friday dismissal). This should not be a measure to avoid carline, but utilized only when necessary for emergencies.
- Parents will need to go to the main office of the building their child attends classes in for sign out, even if signing out children in multiple grade levels.
- Students who miss more than half of the instructional day (K-6) are considered absent for the entire day. Students who miss more than half of an instructional period (7-12) are considered absent for the entire period.

Procedures for Absences and Make-Up Work

We understand that absences may occur. Our goal is to ensure students stay on track with their learning.

- **Notification:** Provide a written note or email explaining the reason for the absence upon your child's return.
- **Make-Up Work:**
 - Teachers will provide assignments missed due to excused absences. Students have the same number of days to complete make-up work as the number of days absent.
 - Students (with support from parents or teachers when appropriate) have the responsibility to turn in missed work to teachers within the specified time frame.

For extended absences (three or more days), please contact your child's teacher to develop a plan for staying current with classwork.

4. VASC K-12 Academic Programs

Curriculum Overview

Virtus Academy offers a rigorous and student-centered K-12 curriculum designed to support the development of well-rounded, college- and career-ready individuals. The curriculum follows a structured and standards-based approach, tailored to prepare students for success in higher education, employment, or the military.

Curriculum Structure

- Elementary School (K-5): Emphasizes foundational skills in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies, along with early exposure to the arts, physical education, and technology.
- Middle School (6-8): Builds on elementary foundations by expanding subject matter, encouraging critical thinking, and offering exploratory opportunities in electives.
- High School (9-12): Offers advanced coursework and electives that allow students to explore their interests and prepare for college and career pathways. High school courses follow a 4x4 block schedule to support deeper learning and credit attainment.

Key Curriculum Features

- Standards-Based: All instruction aligns with South Carolina state standards, ensuring consistent academic expectations.
- Progression: Concepts are introduced in early grades and revisited with increased rigor throughout the student's academic journey.
- Differentiated: Instruction is designed to meet diverse learning needs through scaffolding, small group instruction, and supplemental supports.
- Technology Integration: Technology enhances learning but never replaces teacher-led instruction.
- Assessment Driven: Student learning is continuously monitored through formative and summative assessments, used to guide instruction and measure progress.

Core Subjects: Language Arts | Mathematics | Science | Social Studies

Additional Courses: Physical Education | Visual and Performing Arts | World Languages | Career & Technical Education

Adaptations and Enrichment

- Students requiring additional support receive interventions through the MTSS (see Section 5).
- Advanced students may access high school credit-bearing courses, dual enrollment, or career certification programs.

Grading Policy and Report Cards

This policy outlines the principles and practices for evaluating student academic performance in grades K-12. The primary purpose of this grading policy is to communicate accurately and effectively about student learning and progress towards mastery of content standards.

Core Principles:

- Grades reflect academic achievement: Grades should primarily reflect a student's demonstrated understanding and mastery of course content and learning targets.
- Emphasis on learning: The grading process should support and encourage student learning and growth, allowing for feedback and opportunities to improve.
- Fairness and equity: Grading practices will aim to minimize bias and provide all students with fair opportunities to demonstrate their learning.
- Transparency: Grading criteria, methods, and scales will be clear and understandable to students, parents, and educators.

Grading Components:

- Content Mastery: A significant portion of the grade will be based on assessments that measure a student's understanding of key concepts and skills. This may include:
- Summative Assessments: Tests, quizzes, projects, and papers designed to evaluate understanding after instruction.
- Formative Assessments: Low-stakes opportunities for practice and feedback, such as homework, classwork, and informal quizzes, which may be weighted less than summative assessments.

Grading Scale:

- 10 point Scale: (A: 90-100, B: 80-89, C: 70-79, D: 60-69, F: 59 and below)

Implementation:

- Clear Expectations: Teachers will clearly communicate grading policies, expectations, and criteria to students and parents at the beginning of the school year or course.
- Regular Feedback: Students will receive timely and specific feedback on their progress to help them understand their strengths and areas for improvement.
- Communication: Regular communication with parents and students about grading is encouraged to foster a shared understanding of student progress. Teachers will update grades in PowerSchool at regular intervals, approximately once a week. It is the parents'

responsibility to check PowerSchool for grade updates in between progress notes and report cards.

Reporting:

- Report Cards are used to communicate student grades on a quarterly basis.
- Interim Reports provide progress updates to keep students and parents informed.

Not Yet Grading Policy

1. Incomplete or Missing Work

Students who do not complete an assignment will receive a grade of 0 (zero) or Incomplete until the work is submitted and assessed. Late work (due to being incomplete or missing, not for an approved medical excuse) will not be accepted after Week 8 of a grading quarter.

2. Catch-Up and Tutoring Opportunities

To encourage learning and mastery:

- Students will be given the opportunity to attend up to three (3) assigned tutoring or "Catch-Up" sessions per quarter. These may be scheduled after early release on Fridays or on a Saturday. Families will have ample time to plan for students to attend. These sessions are designed to provide additional support and time for students to complete and improve their work.
- Attendance at these sessions is required to convert a "Not Yet" grade to a passing grade.

3. Late Work and Accountability

While we support second chances, meeting expectations and deadlines is an essential life skill. Therefore:

- Late penalties may be applied to assignments that are turned in after the due date.

4. Mastery with Standards

This policy is not a guarantee of a minimum grade but a structure to help students engage in learning until they demonstrate progress. Final grades will reflect actual mastery of content, effort, and the student's use of available support.

We believe in each student's potential and are committed to providing the necessary support while upholding the values of responsibility, growth, and excellence.

Homework Expectation Policy

I. Purpose of Homework

- Reinforce learning: Homework should extend and reinforce skills and knowledge taught in the classroom.

- Develop responsibility and study habits: Homework promotes independent learning and the development of strong work habits.
- Promote deeper understanding: Homework can encourage students to apply what they've learned in new contexts and foster a love of lifelong learning.
- Improve skills: Homework can help students practice skills such as reading, writing, and math.
- Communicate with parents/guardians: Homework can be a way for parents/guardians to understand the curriculum and support their child's learning.

II. Homework Expectations by Stakeholder

A. Student Expectations:

- Recording assignments: Students should accurately record homework assignments in an agenda or planner.
- Independent work: Students should strive to complete homework independently to the best of their ability, asking for help when needed.
- Communication: Students should communicate with teachers if they are having difficulty with an assignment or need clarification.

B. Parent/Guardian Expectations:

- Support and encouragement: Parents/guardians should provide encouragement and support for their child's homework efforts.
- Monitoring: Parents/guardians should monitor homework completion and time management.
- Encouraging independence: Parents/guardians should encourage their child to complete homework independently, helping only when needed.

C. Teacher Expectations:

- Purposeful assignments: Teachers should assign homework that is purposeful, relevant, and connected to classroom instruction.
- Clear instructions: Teachers should clearly explain assignments and ensure students understand what is expected.
- Timely feedback: Teachers should provide timely and meaningful feedback on homework assignments.
- Communication: Teachers should communicate homework expectations to students and parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year and as needed. Teacher will post homework assignments in Google Classroom.

III. Homework Guidelines

- Quality over quantity: The quality of homework assignments is more important than the quantity.
- No new concepts: Homework should not introduce new concepts but should reinforce existing learning.
- No punishment: Homework should not be used as a form of punishment.
- Long-term projects: Long-term projects should have checkpoints to help students manage their time effectively.

Standardized Testing

Assessments at Virtus Academy

Test Name	Grade	Window
KRA	5K	Summer/August
MAP (Fall)	1st-8th grade	BOY (August/early Sept)
Heggerty	5K-3rd	Used for intervention
mClass (Fall)	1st-5th	BOY (August/early September)
CogAt/IOWA	2nd grade	October
EOCEP (Fall)	Algebra 1, English 2, Biology 1, US History & Constitution	December
MAP (Winter)	1st-8th grade	MOY (November/December)
mClass (Winter)	1st-5th	MOY (November/December)
Access (WIDA)	ELL Students	February
PTA	Roster comes from CIE	February
SC-ALT	Sped	March
WIN (Career Readiness)	11th grade & 12th (who didn't take it the year before)	March
MAP (Spring)	1st-8th grade	EOY (March/April)
mClass (Spring)	1st-5th	EOY (March/April)
PSAT10	10th grade (& early graduates)	April
SAT	11th grade	April
SC Ready	3rd-8th	May
EOCEP (Spring)	Algebra 1, English 2, Biology 1, US History & Constitution	May

CTE	Based on course enrollment	(coming 2025-2026)
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K-12 Student Promotion and Retention Policy:

This policy outlines Virtus Academy principles and procedures guiding student advancement through grade levels in K-12 education, balancing academic progress with individual student needs and well-being.

Philosophy:

Virtus Academy's primary goal is to ensure students demonstrate appropriate academic growth and mastery of grade-level standards, fostering their long-term success. While continuous progress and promotion to the next grade are the standard, retention may be considered when a student's academic performance significantly hinders their ability to succeed at the next level, and targeted interventions have not yielded sufficient improvement.

I. Promotion Criteria:

A. General Promotion:

Students are typically promoted to the next grade level based on achieving passing grades and demonstrating mastery of grade-level standards as outlined in the curriculum.

B. Factors Considered for Promotion:

- Academic Performance: Evaluated through classroom work, grades, scores on standardized tests, and school-based assessments.
- Demonstrated Mastery: Evidence of meeting grade-level learning standards, potentially assessed through standardized assessments and alternative assessments.
- Effort and Attitude: Student effort and engagement in learning are considered.
- Attendance: Consistent attendance is crucial for academic success.
- Teacher Recommendation: Teacher input is a key factor in promotion decisions.
- Individualized Education Programs (IEPs): For students with IEPs, their progress is assessed based on the goals and objectives outlined in their plan, however they are still required to master grade level content for promotion.
- Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS): Documentation from MTSS meetings regarding targeted interventions and student progress is reviewed.

South Carolina High School Promotion Requirements (Carnegie Units):

- Grade 9 to 10: 6 units, including one in English and one in mathematics.
- Grade 10 to 11: 12 units, with at least two in mathematics and two in English cumulatively.
- Grade 11 to 12: 16 units that fulfill state graduation requirements, including at least three in mathematics, three in English, and two in science cumulatively.

Students also need to be taking courses to complete the 24 units for the high school diploma

II. Retention Considerations:

A. Purpose of Retention:

Retention may be considered for students who have not met promotion criteria and where, despite interventions, the school determines it is in the student's best educational interest to remain at their current grade level. Retention should be a last resort.

B. Factors Considered for Retention:

- Failure to Meet Promotion Criteria: Specifically, failing grades in 2 or more core courses and insufficient mastery of grade-level standards. (K-8)
- Lack of Progress with Interventions: Demonstrated lack of sufficient improvement despite targeted interventions and support.
- Attendance: Excessive absenteeism will be a factor.
- Social and Emotional Development: Consideration of the student's social and emotional readiness for the next grade level.
- Recommendations from Special Education: For students with IEPs, recommendations from the Committee on Special Education are considered.

III. Appeals Process:

Parents/legal guardians who disagree with a retention decision may submit a written request for reconsideration to the Executive Director.

IV. Parent and Student Communication:

The school is committed to open communication with parents/guardians and students regarding the promotion and retention policy. Information will be shared through various channels, including handbooks, newsletters, and parent square.

5. Student Support Services

Virtus Academy is committed to ensuring that all students receive the support they need to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. Our Student Support Services team works with families, teachers, and external partners to provide a network of care.

Special Education Services (IDEA)

Students who qualify for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) receive an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Our Child Find process actively identifies students with potential disabilities. Evaluations may be initiated by teachers, parents, or administrators. To initiate an evaluation or ask questions about Special Education services, contact Isabella Montgomery at imontgomery@virtusacademysc.org.

504 Plans

Students with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit one or more major life activities may qualify for a 504 Plan. These plans provide accommodations that ensure equal access to education. To learn more or request an evaluation, contact Tricia Moran at tmoran@virtusacademysc.org or your child's school counselor.

Response to Intervention (RTI) / Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

The goal of RTI is to: identify struggling students early, provide timely, research-based interventions, monitor progress closely and make informed decisions to improve student outcomes. Virtus Academy uses a tiered system of support to identify and address academic or behavioral challenges:

- Tier 1: Quality core instruction for all students
- Tier 2: Targeted small group interventions
- Tier 3: Intensive individualized interventions

Progress is monitored, and students may be referred for further evaluation if they do not respond to interventions. Contact: MTSS Liaison – India Brown at ibrown@virtusacademysc.org

Multi-Language Learners (MLL)

Students who speak a language other than English at home may qualify for English language support services. Based on the WIDA Access assessment, eligible students receive small-group, pull-out instruction. Translations and interpreters are available for families. Contact: Tricia Moran, MLL Coordinator

School Counseling and Mental Health Services

Virtus Academy provides short-term, school-based counseling focused on academics, social skills, and emotional well-being. Counselors also support crisis response and connect families to community mental health resources through SCYAP (South Carolina Youth Advocate Program). Confidentiality is respected, with exceptions for safety concerns or legal requirements. To speak with a counselor, contact:

- K-4: Kate Lawhon – klawhon@virtusacademysc.org
- 5-8: Aaron Chapman – achapman@virtusacademysc.org
- 9-12: Victoria Walton – vwalton@virtusacademysc.org

Medical Homebound

Medical homebound instruction is a specific service offered to students who, due to a medical condition, are unable to attend school but are well enough to benefit from instruction at home or in a hospital. Medical homebound is not homeschooling or virtual school, but a formal support system designed to help students stay connected academically when their health prevents school attendance. Services are generally intended for short-term interruptions. Eligibility requires a licensed physician (or nurse practitioner/PA) to certify that the student cannot attend school and approval from a school convened medical homebound team. Please contact Tricia Moran, Student Services Manager for more information and documentation requirements at tmoran@virtusacademysc.org.

Health Services and Medication Policies

Virtus Academy has a licensed nurse on staff to assist with illness, injuries, and medication needs. Parents must notify the nurse of any medical conditions that may need to be treated during school hours.

When to Stay Home:

- Fever 100.4°F or higher
- Vomiting/diarrhea within 24 hours
- Contagious illness (e.g., strep, flu, COVID-19)

When a child is sick at 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 after 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 are encouraged to alert the school if a student has a contagious condition.

In case of a serious medical emergency, 911 will be called, and the parent/guardian will be notified immediately.

Medication at School:

- Requires a Medication Authorization Form signed by both parent and healthcare provider. Any medication updates must be submitted on a new Medication Authorization Form.
- Medication must be in original packaging
- Emergency medications (e.g., EpiPen, inhaler) should be kept up-to-date

Immunizations: All students must meet South Carolina immunization requirements or provide valid exemption documentation.

Contact: Nurse Carmen Witherspoon at cwitherspoon@virtusacademysc.org

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.

6. Code of Conduct

At Virtus Academy, we believe that effective discipline is foundational to academic success, a strong school culture, and the social-emotional learning of every student.

Our disciplinary approach is grounded in care, respect, and a belief in the potential of every student. We strive to earn the respect of our students by demonstrating that we care deeply about their well-being and growth. In our experience, students respond positively to this kind of leadership. We are committed to consistency, fairness, and restorative practices, and we aim to maintain a culture where students are safe, supported, and focused on learning. When behavioral expectations are not

maintained, the learning environment is compromised, making it difficult for all students to engage and achieve at high levels. Correcting behavior is a vital part of helping students develop self-awareness, emotional regulation, and responsible decision-making. Through a restorative approach aligned with our commitment to social-emotional learning (SEL), we guide students in reflecting on their actions, understanding their impact on others, and actively restoring relationships.

Our school community includes administrators, teachers, counselors, and student coaches. These team members work collaboratively to support positive student behavior. Most behavioral concerns are addressed through clear communication, positive reinforcement, and proactive classroom management. When necessary, a structured and restorative approach is used to guide students toward improvement.

Student Behavior Expectations

Students are expected to:

- Treat others with kindness and respect
- Follow all school rules and classroom procedures
- Maintain a safe environment for learning
- Use respectful language and demonstrate self-control
- Take responsibility for their actions

Discipline Procedures and Support Systems

Our system is structured to address student behavior promptly and fairly while focusing on teaching and guiding students through restorative practices. We aim to support student growth, maintain a safe environment, and reinforce positive choices through consistent, proactive measures.

Our Vision for School Culture

Our goal is to foster a school environment where students feel safe, supported, and motivated to learn and grow. We proactively manage this environment by clearly communicating expectations, building relationships, and modeling respectful behavior.

Our system is structured to address student behavior promptly and fairly, while focusing on teaching and guiding students through restorative practices.

Key Supports in Our Behavior Framework

- **Director of Student Culture and Conduct**

The Director of Student Conduct and Culture oversees all aspects of student behavior management across grade levels, ensuring consistency in discipline and restorative practices. This role includes supporting teachers with behavior contracts, coordinating tiered interventions, and managing serious infractions that may lead to suspension or a recommendation for expulsion.

- **Student Coaches**

Assigned by grade level, Student Coaches are the first point of contact for behavioral incidents that extend beyond classroom-managed issues. They meet with students to conference about behavior, reinforce school-wide expectations, and support students in developing strategies for improvement. Coaches play a key role in behavior documentation and restorative follow-up.

- **School Counselors**

Counselors support the social-emotional needs that often underlie student behavior. They provide guidance, facilitate check-ins, and partner with teachers and families to develop and monitor intervention plans that promote student success and well-being.

Chronic Behavioral Concerns

Students who receive disciplinary action more than twice in one month or accumulate five office referrals per quarter will be referred to a support team that includes:

- The Chief Academic Officer
- The Director of Student Conduct and Culture
- The assigned Student Coach
- The School Counselor
- A Teacher Representative/Grade Level Team Member
- The student's Parent or Guardian

This team will develop a behavior contract tailored to the student's needs. The team will meet regularly to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and make adjustments to better support the student's behavioral and academic success.

Most students respond positively to these proactive measures. However, there are occasions when disciplinary consequences are necessary to uphold the integrity of our learning environment. The following tables outline the range of interventions and consequences used to address student behavior when expectations are not met. This table is not exhaustive and administrators will use their best judgment.

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
Cheating	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. 34
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 beginning 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. 34
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 beginning on p. 6
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. Further disciplinary action, including recommendation for 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 Student Coach/Counselor
- Service to school
- Conflict Resolution
- Referral to community organization
- Calling a special meeting of the IEP or 504 team
- Confiscate material/equipment
- Loss of driving privileges (High School)
- 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
- Calling a special meeting of the IEP or 504 team
- 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
- Referral to substance abuse counseling
- Referral to community organization
- Restorative practices including community service within the school setting
- Behavior contract
- Referral to community organization such as Circle Park
- Loss of driving privileges
- Other interventions identified by staff
- Law enforcement contact and/or Charges filed with local authorities
- Recommendation for Expulsion

Bullying Prevention and Reporting

Virtus Academy maintains a zero-tolerance policy for bullying. All students have the right to be free from bullying, harassment, or intimidation. Virtus Academy is committed to providing a safe, productive, and inclusive learning environment. Bullying problems are symptomatic of relationship problems best addressed holistically by students, schools, parents/caregivers, and the entire community. Virtus Academy should be a place where students are surrounded by caring adults who encourage students to treat others with kindness and empathy, while helping to build a relationship-focused, welcoming, supportive school environment, fostering academic and personal growth for every student.

Virtus Academy establishes that "harassment, intimidation, or bullying" means a gesture, an electronic communication, or a written, verbal, physical, or sexual act that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function where the school is responsible for the child, as follows:

- a. Bullying is unwanted, demeaning behavior among students that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or is highly likely to be repeated, over time. To be considered bullying, the behavior must meet all three points in the Three Point Criteria:
 - Did **Harm or Threat of Harm** Occur?

- Is the Action **Unwelcome**?
- Is the Action **Severe, Persistent, or Pervasive**?

b. The term “bullying” includes, without limitation:

- Repeated or pervasive taunting, name-calling, belittling, mocking or use of put-downs or demeaning humor regarding any distinguishing characteristic or background of a person;
- Behavior that is intended to harm another person by damaging or manipulating his or her relationships with others by conduct that includes, without limitation, spreading false rumors;
- Repeated or pervasive nonverbal threats or intimidation, such as the use of aggressive, menacing, or disrespectful gestures;
- Threats of harm to a person, to his or her possessions, or to other persons, whether such threats are transmitted verbally, electronically, or in writing;
- Blackmail, extortion, or demands for protection money or involuntary loans or donations;
- Blocking access to any property or facility of a school;
- Stalking;
- Physically harmful contact with or injury to another person or his or her property.

c. Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through texting, apps, or online via social media, forums, or gaming, where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or hurtful content about another student. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else, causing embarrassment or humiliation.

d. Discrimination based on any distinguishing characteristic of a student that causes harm or creates a hostile work or learning environment, which may include, without limitation, jokes, threats, physical altercation, or intimidation.

e. Harassment is unwelcome conduct that is based on any distinguishing characteristic or background of a person, or association of a person with another person having one or more of those actual or perceived characteristics.

f. Intimidation is any communication or action directed against another student that threatens or induces a sense of fear and/or inferiority. Retaliation may be considered a form of intimidation.

Students and families are encouraged to report bullying through:

- In-person reports to staff
- Anonymous reporting forms
- Bullying Boxes available at multiple locations across campus
- Direct communication with counselors or administrators

All reports are thoroughly investigated, and appropriate actions are taken to protect student safety. For comprehensive information on our bullying reporting procedures, please refer to the [Bullying Information Packet](#).

Dress Code Guidelines

Students are expected to dress appropriately and in a manner that supports a focused learning environment. This includes:

- Use of a clear backpack
- Royal blue, white, navy, or gray polo-style shirt with or without the school crest embroidered on the left side of the chest.
- Virtus Spirit Shirts are also acceptable any day of the week.
- Khaki, black, or navy skirts, shorts, pants, or blue jeans
- Closed-toe shoes that children can play in and use in the gym
- Shorts and skirts worn to school need to be finger-tip length or longer; students should not be able to touch the skin when hands extend by the side. Garments should be of adequate length to ensure 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 is not permitted. This includes shirts, jeans, shorts, skirts, and fishnet stockings.
- 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 must be worn only under dresses or tunic-length tops. Bottoms must be appropriately covered at all times. Leggings and tights must be solid blue, black, grey, or white.
- Pants must be worn at the natural waistline, and undergarments are not to 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 Leadership Team has sole discretion on what is acceptable.
- Wearing PE-appropriate attire when required
- Keeping hats, hoods, and sunglasses off inside buildings unless permitted for documented religious or medical reasons.

Dress Code Violations

Students who arrive out of dress code will be provided with a temporary, school-issued shirt to ensure they do not miss any instructional time. Parents may bring appropriate clothing during the day, and students will be allowed to change. Dress code violations are considered a Level 1 behavioral infraction and will be addressed accordingly through the school's discipline procedures.

Technology Use and Internet Safety

At Virtus Academy, we are committed to preparing students for a digital world by promoting the responsible, ethical, and safe use of technology. The use of school-issued devices and internet access is a privilege that comes with clear expectations and accountability. Students are expected to:

- Use devices for educational purposes only, including completing assignments, conducting research, and accessing approved learning platforms.
- Avoid accessing inappropriate websites, engaging in online bullying, or using disrespectful language through messaging or digital communication.
- Respect the privacy of others by not sharing personal information, passwords, or accessing accounts that are not their own.
- Honor copyright and intellectual property rights, giving proper credit when using or referencing digital materials.
- Immediately report any misuse of technology or concerning digital behavior to a teacher, staff member, or administrator.
- All digital activity on school networks and devices is subject to monitoring through GoGuardian to ensure safe and appropriate use. Violations of the technology use policy may result in disciplinary action, loss of technology privileges, or additional administrative consequences.

7. Parent and Family Engagement

At Virtus Academy, we believe that families are our most important partners. When families and schools work together, students grow stronger, happier, and more successful. We welcome and encourage parent and family involvement in many ways throughout the school year.

Communication Between Home and School

We work hard to keep you informed and involved in your child's learning. We use phone calls, emails, notes home, Parent Square, and our school website and social media to share updates. Teachers will update PowerSchool with grades and comments, if applicable, weekly. If you ever have questions or concerns, you can call the school or request a meeting at any time. Parents are strongly encouraged to utilize Parent Square as that is the primary means of home-school communication.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

We hold parent-teacher conferences at least two times each year. These meetings are a chance to talk one-on-one with your child's teacher about their progress, strengths, and areas for growth. Your voice matters, and we want to hear from you. We will provide sign-ups ahead of time and offer flexible scheduling to fit your needs. If you need more than the allotted time on Parent-Teacher Conference Day/Night, please set up an appointment.

Volunteer Opportunities

We invite families to help out in the school in big and small ways. Whether you can help in a classroom, assist at an event, or lend a hand in the office, we appreciate your time and energy. All volunteers must follow school guidelines, including a background check. Please speak with the school Volunteer Coordinator if you are interested.

Family Events and Workshops

Throughout the year, we host fun and helpful events for families. These may include Family Literacy Night, Math Games Night, Career Day, and Parent Workshops. These events are meant to support you and help you connect with other families and staff. We'll send home flyers and reminders so you can plan ahead.

Parent Input Opportunities

Your ideas and feedback help us grow. We invite parents to join special committees like our Title 1 Parent Committee, School Improvement Council, and Anti-Bullying Team. These groups meet to talk about ways to make our school better and safer for all students. All parents are welcome. Let us know if you'd like to join.

Thank You for Being a Partner in Your Child's Success!

We believe that when school and families work together, there is no limit to what our students can achieve. Thank you for **choosing** Virtus Academy of South Carolina—we're proud to be on this journey with you

8. Extracurricular Activities

At Virtus Academy, we believe learning doesn't stop when the school day ends. Our extracurricular programs help students build confidence, discover new passions, and grow as leaders. Whether your child is joining a club, playing on a sports team, or attending an educational trip, these opportunities are designed to support the whole child—mind, body, and character.

Clubs and Organizations

Virtus offers a range of staff-supported clubs designed to inspire leadership, creativity, and teamwork. Clubs are open to all students who meet the following eligibility criteria:

- **Good Standing in Behavior:** Students must follow school rules and demonstrate respectful behavior in classrooms and common areas.
- **Good Standing in Attendance:** Students must maintain regular attendance and limit tardies to be eligible for participation.

Club offerings may include:

- National Junior Beta Club
- Student Council
- Art, Music, and Drama Clubs
- STEM and Lego Clubs
- Gardening, Yearbook, Chess, Sports Fundamentals and more

Clubs generally meet on weeks 2, 4, 6, and 8 of each quarter unless otherwise announced. New clubs may be formed based on student interest and staff availability. In order to allow multiple students to have new experiences, club membership will change each quarter.

Athletics and Sports Teams

Virtus Academy believes in the power of sports to teach discipline, responsibility, and perseverance. Our athletic program focuses on effort, sportsmanship, and personal growth—on and off the field.

To be eligible to join and remain on a school athletic team, students must meet the **minimum eligibility standards set by the South Carolina High School League (SCHSL)**, which include:

- Maintaining a passing academic average (as defined by SCHSL)
- Demonstrating respectful and responsible behavior in all school settings
- Meeting school and SCHSL attendance requirements

In addition to these minimum standards, students must be in good standing in both behavior and attendance to participate in any Virtus-sponsored athletic program. Failure to meet these expectations may result in probation, suspension, or removal from the team.

Athletics may include:

- Basketball
- Volleyball
- Cheerleading
- Cross Country/Track & Field

Coaches and school leaders will communicate expectations clearly at the start of each season.

Field Trips and Educational Outings

Learning at Virtus extends beyond the classroom. Field trips give students hands-on experiences that support our curriculum and enrich their worldviews. Destinations may include:

- Museums and historic landmarks
- Colleges and universities
- Zoos and science centers
- Community and cultural events

All trips are supervised by certified staff and require signed parent/guardian permission slips. **Students must be in good behavioral and attendance standing** to attend off-campus trips. Inappropriate conduct or excessive absences/tardies may result in exclusion from school-sponsored outings. Trip costs, if any, will be shared in advance, and financial assistance may be available.

In lieu of off-site field trips, Virtus Academy may offer on-site field trips with the learning attraction coming to the school. Information will be provided ahead of time for these learning opportunities.

After-School Program–Vista Care

Our after-school program is designed to support families and offer students a safe, structured, and enriching space after the regular school day. Program activities may include:

- Homework help and tutoring

- Reading and math games
- Snack Time
- Fitness and outdoor play

Registration is required, and spaces may be limited. Attendance and behavior expectations for after-school programs are the same as during the school day. Students who do not meet expectations may be removed from the program. Contact the Vista Care Coordinator for up-to-date pricing and program information.

Participation in extracurricular activities at Virtus is a privilege, not a right. We expect all students who participate to represent Virtus with pride, integrity, and excellence.

For questions about specific programs or eligibility, please contact the school leadership team or activity sponsors. We are here to support every student in finding their voice, their path, and their passion.

9. Safety and Emergency Procedures

At Virtus Academy, keeping our students, staff, and families safe is our highest responsibility. We take this work very seriously and want you to know what steps we take each day to protect your child while they are in our care.

Emergency Drills and Evacuation Plans

We prepare our students and staff for emergencies by practicing different kinds of drills throughout the school year. These include:

- Fire Drills
- Lockdown Drills
- Tornado and Severe Weather Drills
- Earthquake Drills
- Active Threat Drills (age-appropriate)

These drills are done on a schedule that meets or exceeds South Carolina state law. Practicing these drills helps everyone know exactly what to do if an emergency ever happens.

For safety reasons, we do not share the full details of our evacuation plans and emergency procedures in this handbook or with the public. This protects our students and staff. However, these plans are carefully created and regularly reviewed with local emergency officials, the Virtus Academy Board, and our authorizer, the Charter Institute at Erskine. All of our staff receive training on these safety plans to make sure we are ready to respond.

Visitor Policies

Virtus Academy is a welcoming place, but we also take the safety of our students very seriously. To help us protect everyone on campus:

- All visitors must check in at the front office when they arrive.
- A valid photo ID is required for all visitors.
- Visitors will receive a visitor badge that must be worn while on campus.
- Visitors may not enter student areas unless accompanied by a staff member.

- Classroom visits must be scheduled ahead of time with school leadership.
- Unapproved or unexpected visitors may be asked to leave.

We appreciate your understanding and support in following these procedures.

Student Pick-Up and Drop-Off Procedures

We have clear routines to keep arrival and dismissal safe and orderly:

- Students must be dropped off and picked up only at the designated locations.
- Staff will be outside to supervise during drop-off and pick-up times.
- Drivers should stay in their vehicles during the carline, unless directed otherwise by staff.
- Only adults listed on your child's approved pick-up list may pick up your child. Staff may ask for a photo ID at any time.
- If you need to change your child's dismissal plan for the day, please contact the front office before 12:00 PM.
- Last-minute changes after dismissal has started may not be possible to ensure safety.

Before the school year starts, we will send out maps and specific directions for drop-off and pick-up to make the process as smooth as possible for everyone.

Weather-Related Closures

In the event of dangerous weather, we work closely with local authorities to make the best decision for everyone's safety. If we need to delay opening, dismiss early, or close school, we will notify families through:

- Automated phone calls
- Text messages
- Emails
- The school website and social media

Please make sure the school always has your most up-to-date contact information.

If a closure is expected to last more than one day, we may shift to an eLearning Day to help students continue learning from home.

10. School Policies and Procedures

At Virtus Academy, we believe that strong policies create a safe, fair, and supportive environment where every student can learn and grow. Below are important policies every family should know. These policies are written to meet legal requirements while being easy to understand.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Virtus Academy of South Carolina complies fully with all federal and state non-discrimination laws, including:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (race, color, national origin)

- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (sex, sexual orientation, gender identity)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (disability)
- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (disability)
- Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (age)
- South Carolina Human Affairs Law

We do not discriminate in admission, employment, or educational programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, or any other protected category under law.

If you believe you or your child have experienced discrimination or harassment, please contact the Executive Director or complete a Student Grievance Form in compliance with the Student Grievance Policy.

Use of School Property

We expect all students to take care of school property, including:

- Classrooms
- Chromebooks, iPads, and technology devices
- Textbooks
- Furniture
- Sports equipment
- Playground structures

Damage or Loss:

If school property is lost or damaged beyond normal wear and tear, parents may be charged a replacement or repair fee. Intentional destruction of school property may result in both disciplinary action and financial responsibility for damages as allowed by state law.

Lost and Found Procedures

- The school maintains a lost and found location near the front office.
- Items will be held for approximately 30 days before being donated or discarded.
- We strongly recommend labeling personal items with your child's name.
- The school is not responsible for lost personal property.

Cell Phone Policy

The purpose of this policy is to create a phone-free school environment that fosters a positive learning experience free from electronic distractions. By prohibiting the use of personal electronic devices during the school day, this policy aims to provide an environment that enhances focus and engagement, allowing students to develop the college and career-ready skills outlined in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. Students will have more opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions, collaborate with peers, and cultivate the essential skills necessary for success in college, careers, and life.

Virtus Academy's policy is based on The Model Policy Prohibiting the Use of Personal Electronic Devices during the School Day which was developed in compliance with the General Appropriations Bill, H. 5100 of 2024, Proviso 1.103.

Definitions:

- A. "Personal electronic device," hereinafter referred to as "device," means any device utilized to access the internet, wi-fi, cellular telephone signals, or to capture images or video. This includes, but is not limited to, cell phones, smart watches, tablets, and gaming devices.
- B. "Personal Electronic Device accessories," hereinafter referred to as "device accessories," include any wired or wireless accessory or wearable technology that connects to a device and any other accessory commonly used in conjunction with a personal electronic device.
- C. "School day" is defined as the period of time that a student is present on the school campus from their arrival (i.e., tardy bell) until afternoon dismissal at the end of the instructional day. This policy may also apply to school buses, field trips, and athletic events.
- D. "Access" is defined as viewing, holding, wearing, or otherwise using a device for the purpose of communication, internet access, gaming, recording, or any other function commonly associated with devices. During the school day, devices should be powered off and stored as directed by the school district. Exceptions granted for medical necessity, authorized for classroom use, or other authorized reasons should be in writing and are not considered violations of this definition.
- E. "Authorized for Classroom Use" is defined as the use of a personal electronic device that is explicitly approved by the Executive Director or his/her designee in writing. The approval must include alignment with a standards-aligned educational objective that cannot be reasonably achieved using district-owned devices. Students must be provided with clear instructions on the appropriate use of devices and ensure that their use aligns with the approved educational objectives. The Executive Director or his/her designee may revoke approval at any time if it is determined that their use does not meet the intended educational objectives or is causing disruptions.

Policy Implementation and Enforcement

- A. During the school day, students are prohibited from accessing their personal electronic devices, unless authorized for classroom use. Students may not wear or access device accessories during the school day. Students must store their devices and device accessories in lockers, backpacks, or otherwise as directed by the school during the school day. Virtus Academy may forbid student possession of devices and device accessories on school property.
- B. If explicitly required by a student's IEP, Medical Plan, or 504 plan, the student shall be allowed to access their personal electronic device for medically or

educationally necessary purposes described and required for administration of the IEP, Medical Plan or 504 plan.

- C. A student who is a member of a volunteer firefighting organization or emergency organization may be authorized to carry a device with written permission from the Executive Director or his/her designee.
- D. If a student violates the preceding rules during the school day, the student will be subject to progressive consequences in the student code of conduct and disciplinary enforcement

Grievance Policy (Complaint Resolution Process)

Virtus Academy encourages open communication to resolve concerns as quickly as possible. We require that concerns follow the proper **Chain of Command** to allow each issue to be addressed at the closest level to where it occurred.

For Academic or Behavior Concerns Affecting Instruction:

- Classroom Teacher
- Student Coach
- Director of Student Culture and Conduct
- Chief Academic Officer
- Executive Director

For Athletic or Sports-Related Concerns:

- Team Coach
- Athletic Director
- Chief Operations Officer
- Executive Director

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear and efficient process for reviewing and resolving student grievances, which may be filed and pursued by a student's parent or guardian. VASC will keep all grievance proceedings confidential to the extent permitted by law.

The VASC student grievance process may be used by VASC students or their parents or guardians as follows:

1. To address an alleged violation of applicable law or regulations that directly affects the student.
 2. To address an alleged violation of VASC Board Policy that directly affects the student.
 3. To address an alleged violation of VASC charter compliance that directly affects the student.
 4. To address alleged discrimination or harassment against the student.
- A student who files a grievance has the right to be represented by legal counsel at the student's own expense.

If the timelines set forth herein are not met, the grievance may be deemed waived by the VASC

official(s) charged with investigating and deciding the grievance. The VASC official(s) charged with investigating and deciding grievances are entitled to extend the timelines herein for investigating and issuing decisions if necessary to conduct a thorough and complete investigation into a grievance or appeal.

Step One: Informal Discussion

Subject to the following paragraph, the aggrieved student must first initiate an informal discussion with the other person(s) involved in the incident giving rise to the grievance within ten (10) school days of the incident or when the aggrieved student learned of the incident for the purpose of attempting to resolve the grievance.

If the grievance includes allegations of discrimination or harassment against the student, the student is not required to initiate an informal discussion with the person(s) allegedly discriminating against or harassing the student, and the student may proceed immediately to Step Two.

Step Two: Submit a Written Grievance to the Principal

If the informal discussion does not resolve the student's concerns, the student may within ten (10) school days after the informal discussion submit a written Grievance Form to the VASC Principal. If the grievance includes allegations of discrimination or harassment, the student shall submit a written Grievance Form within ten (10) school days of the incident or when the student learned of the incident to the VASC Principal, or to the VASC Board of Directors pursuant to Step Three if such allegations are against the Principal. The student must include in the Grievance Form a description of the grievance, the actions already taken by the student to attempt to resolve the grievance, and the relief requested. A Grievance Form that does not contain such information will be deemed incomplete and returned to the student to complete within the required timeline. Submission of an incomplete Grievance

Form does not extend the required timeline. Only the issues set forth in the written Grievance Form shall be considered thereafter.

Upon receipt of a Grievance Form, within fifteen (15) school days the Principal shall schedule a conference with the student and any other individual(s) deemed necessary by the Principal to discuss the allegations. The Principal shall issue a written decision to the student within ten (10) school days of the conclusion of the conference(s).

Step Three: Final Appeal to the VASC Board of Directors

If a student is not satisfied with the Principal's written decision, the student may submit a written appeal to the VASC Board of Directors within ten (10) school days of receiving the Principal's written decision, which can be accomplished by submitting the written appeal to the VASC Board Chair. The written appeal must include a copy of the original written Grievance Form, a copy of the Principal's written decision, and a written description of why the student was not satisfied with the Principal's written decision. An appeal that does not contain such information will be deemed incomplete and returned to the student to complete within the required timeline. Submission of an incomplete appeal does not extend the required timeline. Within thirty (30) days of receipt of a written appeal (or the original Grievance Form if the grievance involves allegations of discrimination or harassment against the Principal and is filed directly with the Board), the VASC Board of Directors will schedule a hearing date and provide the student with notice of the hearing date and the procedures for the hearing. All hearings conducted pursuant to this Grievance Policy are considered non-adversarial. After the hearing, the VASC Board of Directors will issue a written decision within ten (10) business days, which will be final and binding. The VASC Board of Directors is entitled to extend these timelines if necessary for the purpose of conducting a thorough and complete investigation.

Legal Reference(s):
S.C. Code Ann., 1976, as amended:
Section 59-4-60(F)(13) – Charter School Grievance Procedure

In accordance with South Carolina charter school law, if a complaint remains unresolved after following this process, families may submit a written appeal to the Board of Directors. The Board will follow its established complaint resolution policy, which ensures compliance with state and federal law.

Virtus Academy complies with all applicable federal, state, and local laws to ensure the safety, well-being, and rights of our students and staff. We ask for every family's partnership in following these policies to help us provide an excellent educational experience for your child.

11. Acknowledgements and Agreements

At Virtus Academy, strong partnership between school, students, and families is central to our mission. Please review the following agreements carefully. Your signatures acknowledge your understanding and agreement to support these policies as members of the Virtus community.

Parent/Student Handbook Agreement Form

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the Virtus Academy Parent/Student Handbook. I agree to follow the expectations, policies, and procedures contained in this handbook. I understand that my family's commitment to these policies is essential to my child's success at Virtus Academy.

- I have reviewed this handbook with my child.
- I understand that failure to follow these policies may result in appropriate consequences as outlined herein.
- I acknowledge my responsibility to communicate any questions or concerns to school leadership in a timely and respectful manner.

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Student Name: _____

Student Signature (if applicable): _____

Date: _____

Media Release Consent

Throughout the school year, Virtus Academy may take photographs or video recordings of students during school activities for use in school publications, social media, marketing materials, or media coverage.

☐ **I give permission** for my child to be photographed, videotaped, or recorded for school-approved purposes.

☐ **I do NOT give permission** for my child to be photographed, videotaped, or recorded.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Technology Use Agreement

Technology Policy Agreement Between Parents/Guardians and Students

Purpose:

This agreement outlines the responsibilities and expectations for the use of school-issued electronic devices. It is designed to promote accountability, care, and proper usage by students while ensuring clear communication between the school and families.

Student & Parent/Guardian Agreement

By signing this agreement, you acknowledge and agree to the following terms:

1. Device Issuance & Ownership

- Each student will be issued a school-owned device and charger.
- The device remains the property of the school and is provided for educational use only.

2. Initial Technology Fee

- A \$40 non-refundable technology fee is required upon receiving the device.
- This fee covers a one-time basic repair (e.g., cracked screen, keyboard replacement, software issues).
- This coverage is void if the damage is due to intentional misuse or negligence.
- While not paying the \$40 will not disqualify a student from being issued a device, the student will only be allowed to use the device at school and will not be permitted to take it home, as the device will not be under the school warranty. Students who do not pay the \$40 Chromebook insurance fee will be responsible for the full market price of any repairs or replacements needed for their assigned device.

3. Subsequent Damage or Loss

- After the one-time repair, any further damage, loss, or defacement of the device or accessories becomes the financial responsibility of the parent/guardian.
- Replacement or repair costs will be billed based on actual repair estimates or the replacement value of the device.

4. Charger Policy

- Each device is issued with one (1) charger.
- Students have 3 calendar days after receiving their charger to report any issues or defects.
- After 3 days, students are fully responsible for the care, maintenance, and replacement cost of the charger.

5. Student Responsibilities

- Use the device only for school-related activities.

- Keep the device and charger in good condition and report any problems immediately.
- Do not deface, decorate, or place stickers on the device.
- Do not loan or borrow devices or chargers.
- Do not make any modifications to the device or its software, including taking apart the device, attempting repairs, hacking, or installing unauthorized software.
- Follow all school policies and teacher instructions regarding appropriate device use.

6. Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Monitor your child's device usage at home.
- Encourage proper care and reporting of technical issues.
- Accept financial responsibility as outlined in this agreement.

Acknowledgment and Signatures

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and agree to the terms of this Technology Policy Agreement. I understand that failure to comply may result in disciplinary action and/or financial liability.

Student Name: _____

Grade: _____

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Google Workspace for Education Acknowledgement

Virtus Academy uses Google Workspace for Education to provide productivity and collaboration tools for students and staff. Student accounts are managed and monitored by the school in compliance with federal and state laws, including the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

By signing below, I grant permission for Virtus Academy to create and manage a Google Workspace for Education account for my child. I understand that:

- My child's data will be stored in a secure environment.
- School staff will monitor account use for educational appropriateness.
- Information shared through Google Workspace is subject to the school's privacy and technology policies.

For more information about Google Workspace for Education's privacy policy, please visit: https://workspace.google.com/terms/education_privacy.html

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Virtus Academy of South Carolina is committed to legal compliance with all applicable state and federal laws governing student privacy, data security, and parental rights. If you have any questions about these agreements, please contact the school administration.

