

# Student Handbook 2020/2021



SMYRNA  
CHURCH OF CHRIST  
and  
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

302-653-4556

[school@smyrnachurchofchrist.com](mailto:school@smyrnachurchofchrist.com)

[www.smyrnachristianschool.com](http://www.smyrnachristianschool.com)

**Lisa Jones, Principal**

(School Board)

Jim Marr	Charlie Ross
Jim Tompkins	Dave Hall
Jeff Hougentogler	Kim Rash
Wally Slattery	

*A Ministry of Smyrna Church of Christ*

[www.smyrnachurchofchrist.com](http://www.smyrnachurchofchrist.com)

# Table of Contents

Principal’s Welcome.....	Page 3
Statement of Faith.....	Page 4
Mission Statement and Philosophy of Education.....	Page 5
Admissions Policy.....	Page 6
Admission Process	
Special Admission requirement for kindergarten	
Re-Enrollment for current students	
Student Forms	
Attendance Policy.....	Page 8
Tardiness	
Code of Conduct.....	Page 9
Matthew 18 Principle	General Classroom Rules
Standard of Christian Conduct	Discipline Policy
Social Media and Public Statements	Dress Code
Financial Information.....	Page 15
Fee Schedule	Past Due Accounts
Fundraising Credit	Withdrawal Penalty
Payment Plans	Extended Care Services
Multi-Student Discount	
Academic Polices.....	Page 17
Curriculum	Report Cards
Homework	Grading Policy
Progress Reports	Academic Excellence Awards
Cheating/Academic Dishonesty	Homeschool Program
General Polices.....	Page 23
Health and Safety	Parent Chaperones
Illness During School	Parent-Teacher Conferences
Electronic Devices	School Calendar
Field Trips	School Closings
Lockers	School Day
Lost and Found	Visitors
Lost/Damaged Books	Extended Care Services
Lunch	Student Picture
Communication	



Dear Parents:

We thank you for your interest in Smyrna Christian School and we are looking forward to the coming year. We are excited about the positive things that are happening this year and expect next year to be even better.

The members of the Smyrna Church of Christ believe that there is a strong need for a good education given in a loving Christian atmosphere. For that reason we have chosen Smyrna Christian School as one of our ministries.

Our faculty and staff are committed to upholding this belief. They seek daily to make their classroom a place where the curriculum is Bible-based and God is honored. Our faculty and staff desire to give students the best opportunity to achieve their very best.

This handbook will answer most of your questions, but we realize that there will always be other questions. I encourage you to feel free to contact us for anything that you do not fully understand.

Sincerely,  
Lisa Jones

Lisa Jones  
Principal  
[lisa.jones@smyrnachurchofchrist.com](mailto:lisa.jones@smyrnachurchofchrist.com)  
302-653-4556 (Office)

## STATEMENT OF FAITH

1. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative, inerrant Word of God (II Timothy 3:15; II Peter 1:21).
2. We believe there is one God, eternally existent in three persons- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:1; Matthew 28:19; John 10:30).
3. We believe in the deity of Christ (John 10:33);  
His virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:35);  
His sinless life (Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 7:26);  
His miracles (John 2:11);  
His vicarious and atoning death (I Corinthians 15:3; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 2:9);  
His resurrection (John 11:25; I Corinthians 15:4);  
His ascension to the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19); and  
His personal return in power and glory (Acts 1:11; Revelation 19:11).
4. We believe in the removal of sins via the blood of Jesus and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. We believe that all men choose to sin when they reach the age of accountability, for Romans 3:23 teaches, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God". We believe that "without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). We believe God's grace is made available to anyone who wishes to take the free gift. We believe in order for one to take the gift of grace he/she must Hear (Romans 10:17), Believe (John 3:16), Repent (Luke 13:3, Acts 2:38), Confess the Lordship of Christ (Matthew 10:32, Matthew 16:16), be Immersed (I Peter 3:21, Acts 2:38, Matthew 28:19 and 20) and arise to walk in newness of life.
5. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved to the resurrection of life, and they that are lost to the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29).
6. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:9; I Corinthians 12:12-13; Galatians 3:26-28).
7. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life (Romans 8:13-14; I Corinthians 3:16; I Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 4:30; Ephesians 5:18).

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

We at the Smyrna Church of Christ believe that faith in Christ needs to be applied to all areas of life. As an educational institution, our goal is to present Christ in all aspects of the student's training so that they will develop with Christ as the focal point in their life.

We seek to educate our students so they may grow and mature into perceptive and caring Christians who will become productive citizens that have the ability to transform and influence the world for Christ.

## **PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

We believe there are three essential components for the successful education of the student. These three components are listed in order of responsibility to God for the training of godly young men and women.

- 1. Parents-** The God-given primary responsibility for the training and education of children is that of the parents.
- 2. Church-** Next in importance is the ministry of the local church in the life of the family. We strongly encourage every family to be committed, through the attendance and participation, to a "Biblical" church. A "Biblical" church is a church that adheres to the fundamentals of the Christian faith and endeavors to keep itself pure from worldly practices.
- 3. School-** Finally, and in proper order, is the school that the parents have chosen to help them with the education of their children. The school will never be able to stand in place of the parents or church. However, in proper order these three components play a stabilizing role in the education and development of a child.

When these three are in agreement in philosophy, standards, and convictions, the outcome will be the development of young men and women who are firmly grounded in Truth and able to function faithfully in the world around them. When there is inconsistency and disagreement in these three, there is propensity toward disrespect for one of these authorities and may result in rebellion to authority in the life of the child.

Smyrna Christian School is a ministry of Smyrna Church of Christ and is the extension of the Christian home. We believe there is a biblical perspective for every academic discipline. We believe that the true knowledge can be gained only as each discipline is taught and learned from the perspective of the principles of God's Word. At Smyrna Christian School, we believe that an academic education is finite, but an education in God's truth is infinite.

## **ADMISSIONS POLICY**

Smyrna Christian School seeks to enroll students who desire a distinctly Christian environment and educational experience. While the school is a ministry of the Restoration Movement, we welcome students from varying Christian faith traditions. Furthermore, the school welcomes students regardless of race, color, nationality, or ethnic origin to apply for admission.

Smyrna Christian School offers an early childhood Education program for 3 and 4 year olds, an Elementary program for Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, a Middle School program for 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and a homeschool program.

### **NEW Student Admission Process**

1. Complete an application for enrollment and pay the non-refundable \$20 application fee. If the student is accepted the \$20 fee will be applied to the registration fee.
2. Interview with the principal. This interview helps determine whether a given student is a suitable match for the school. Particularly, that the parents desire a Christian education for their child. The student should be present for this interview.
3. Complete a registration packet.
4. Payment of \$200 nonrefundable registration fee. Student will not be considered to be enrolled or allowed to attend classes until the registration fee is paid in full.

*Required for students enrolling in 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade.*

1. Placement Testing. All applicants to this school will be tested before admission. Final acceptance is contingent upon result of testing and placement of student.
2. Review of Student File, including the student's academic and health records from the previous school (when applicable).

*Requirement for Early Childhood Education and Kindergarten Students*

1. All students must be fully trained to use the restroom on their own. Furthermore, the students must be able to perform all bathroom duties by him/herself (buttons, zippers, wiping, washing, etc.).
2. Students must be of appropriate age (3,4,5) by October 31<sup>st</sup> to be considered for their respective program.

Perspective students will be informed in writing of the admissions decision. All applicants are tentatively accepted on a six (6) week probationary period. This six-week period is used to further ensure that a student is the right fit and to allow records to arrive. The school will communicate with the parents throughout this time.

### **Re-Enrollment for Present Student Body**

Students currently enrolled are not automatically enrolled for the new school year. Each returning student must re-enroll each year to assure placement in class. Beyond this, it's first come, first served. Enrollment for the next school year is encouraged upon notification of date during the second half of the school year. Early registration will receive priority consideration for class placement. At the time of enrollment, you will need to fill out the forms and pay the

registration fee. Do not delay registration. We will begin accepting new students immediately after the re-enrollment period.

**Student Forms**

The school must have on file for every student a copy of their birth certificate, court or custody documents (if applicable), and Forms 1 through 9. Forms may be obtained from the school office, through email, or downloaded at [www.smyrnachristianschool.com](http://www.smyrnachristianschool.com).

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Attendance is an important part of your student's education. It is important that your student be present and on-time for school each day.

If a student is going to be absent, please call the school office and leave a message by 10 AM to inform us of the absence. Following any absences, the parent must provide a note to the school office. If a student is out of school for three (3) days or more the parents must provide a doctor's note to the school office.

Absences are marked as excused or unexcused and shall be determined by the school principal. Typically, absences will be excused for student illness, doctors' appointments, death in the immediate family, and other emergency situations. Each absence is reviewed on a case-by-case basis and while this list is not comprehensive it is a good guideline. An absence determined to be unexcused will result in a "0" for all work for that school day. An absence will also affect their formative and diagnostic grade, please refer to our academic policies for further explanation. Detention could also be issued in some cases. Additionally, the teacher is not obligated to accept or to provide any make-up work in relation to that day.

When an absence is determined to be excused the student is allowed the number of days absent to complete the missed work. Example: If a student misses four (4) days, the student will have four (4) days upon the student's return to make up all work (homework, quizzes, and tests). If work is not made up, there will be a zero given for the day.

A student who is absent twenty (20) days or more, whether the absence is excused or unexcused will not be promoted to the next grade. In some rare cases the school board may grant an exception to this rule. However, there must be a documentable extenuating circumstance.

Family vacations or extended absences for other such reasons are strongly discouraged, but in some cases they may be excused if the principal is given advance notice. Missed homework or tests should be made up in cooperation with the teacher prior to the absence.

### **Tardiness**

Arriving late can greatly affect the student's academic welfare. Students must make every effort to be on-time and ready to learn when they arrive. Leaving early can also harm the students' progress and should be done so on a limited basis.

Four (4) tardies will constitute one unexcused absence. As mentioned previously absences accumulate and can result in failing the present grade. Additionally, excessive tardiness can result in expulsion from the school.

Students who arrive before 8:15 AM must report to Before Care or remain in the auditorium with their parent.



## CODE OF CONDUCT

All students are expected to conduct themselves in such a manner as to reflect a Christian attitude (thoughtfulness, courtesy, consideration, kindness). They must adhere to all the policies of the school and be respectfully obedient to all in authority. This conduct is expected at all times the student is under the care of the school (extended care, field trips, special events). Students will be taught to look to Jesus as the perfect example for their conduct.

### The Matthew 18 Principle

We, at Smyrna Church of Christ and Christian School, strive and encourage others to obey the teachings of Christ. Those teachings include the 2nd greatest commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22: 37-39). In spite of our efforts, there are times when people have different views or perceive situations differently. Jesus, in His perfect wisdom, knew we would need instruction for these situations and provided this wisdom in Matthew 18:15-17. When differences of opinion cause conflict, it is Smyrna Church of Christ and Christian School's policy to practice "The Matthew 18 Principle." Using this scripture passage as our guide, we have listed the appropriate steps that are to be taken by students, parents, teachers, and staff in the event of a misunderstanding or disagreement:

1. *Keep the matter confidential.* "With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbor..." (Proverbs 11:9a). Only share the problem with those directly involved in an effort to ensure confidentiality.
2. *Keep the circle small.* "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you" (Matthew 18:15). The first step and most often the only step needed in solving a person-to-person problem is for one of the two people involved to initiate a face-to-face dialogue. Most problems are solved at the two-people level.
3. *State your concern clearly and concisely.* "...tell him his fault..." (Matthew 18:15). Jesus tells us to be forthright and to love honestly. Sometimes it is difficult to be straightforward and tell someone the very heart of the matter. But restoration and improvement can only come when the issues are lovingly yet clearly presented. Going to the person is not an option; it is a command.
4. *Be forgiving.* "If he listens to you, you have won your brother over" (Matthew 18:15b). This implies that once the matter is resolved we should wholeheartedly forgive and restore the person whose fault has offended us.

As mentioned earlier, most problems are resolved at the two-people level. Forgiveness and restoration are the normal and happy conclusions. However, there are unfortunate times when an individual will not "hear" you or will openly disagree with your version of the problem. The next step is:

5. *You and the other individual should go together to share the matter with the school principal.* "...take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses' " (Matthew 18:16). Each person should come to the meeting with a humble and prayerful attitude, willing to submit to the Lord's will and also be willing to submit to discipline or correction if needed.

In summary, "The Matthew 18 Principle" requires that parents talk to teachers about student problems before talking to anyone else including the administrator, other students, or parents. If unresolved at the two-people level, the matter is prayerfully and in an orderly fashion moved upward in the school organizational structure.

A Christian school is a ministry in Christ's name. Everything that is done in the context of the school must be done His way. Satan would love to destroy the normal flow of friendships and peace found in Christian school education through gossip and slander. But if all of us follow Christ's way of "The Matthew 18 Principle," the Christian education experience for students, parents, teachers, and staff will be one of consistent harmony. "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble." (1 Peter 3:8).

### **Standards of Christian Conduct**

The students receive a code of conduct grade each quarter; this grade is based upon these 11 standards. The following items exemplify the standards of Christian conduct, which will help us have a school that is Godly and orderly:

1. Whether at the school or away from school, the student's goal should be to "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16) Christians should desire to honor the Lord and to maintain a testimony of love for the Lord. Therefore, we should be alert to do things that please the Lord (Phil. 2:13, I Thess. 4:1) and desire to think like Christ (Phil. 2:5)
2. Students should show respect for those in authority over them (Eph. 6:5-8:1; I Tim. 5:1; I Pet 2:17, 18).
3. The student will show respect for the feelings and property of others (Phil. 2:3).
4. Every student should allow the Holy Spirit to rule his tongue. He will strive to avoid offending and hurting others by careless and thoughtless words, words that may be a stumbling block, gossip, backbiting, or slander (Prov. 10:1, 25:9; Rom. 1:29, 30).
5. Students should recognize that using the tongue for cursing, vulgarity, profanity and lying has no place in the life of a Christian. Students are encouraged to address teachers with "Yes Ma'am/Sir" or "No Ma'am/Sir."
6. Stealing and cheating are condemned by God's Word and therefore will not be tolerated at Smyrna Christian School (Ex. 20:15; Eph. 4:28).
7. Students should follow biblical standards of conduct toward members of the opposite sex. No inappropriate touching or behavior as defined by Smyrna Christian School staff will be tolerated.
8. Students should practice sexual purity in word and deed. Sexual intimacy should be reserved for a faithful, life-long marriage of one man and one woman. Christians should oppose all forms of sexual immorality, including premarital sex, adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. (Gen. 1:27-28, 2:18-24, 19:1-7; Lev. 18:22, 20:13; Prov. 5; Matt. 5:27-32, 19:9; Rom. 1:24-32; I Cor. 6:9-10, 7:1-5).
9. No student will use, have in his possession, or make pretense of using, possessing, or encouraging others to use weapons, illegal drugs, tobacco, beer, or other alcoholic beverages at or away from the School. Violations of this nature will result in automatic suspension or dismissal from the School.
10. Students are expected to maintain Christian standards of courtesy and kindness as well as a pleasant spirit and a constructive attitude (Num. 11:1; Ps. 142:2; John 16:33).
11. A disagreement with a faculty or staff member should be approached in a scriptural manner. The offended party should attempt to reconcile the difference with the other party before bringing in a higher authority (Matt. 18:15-17).

High standards of conduct are required of all those associated with the School. The School expects that its students live above reproach showing respect to God, country, family, faculty, and fellow students. Therefore, lying, cheating, theft, and profanity will not be tolerated.

Constructive suggestions are welcome, but griping will not be tolerated. Anyone who will not cooperate spiritually, morally, or scholastically will be required to withdraw.

Smyrna Christian School does not accept or retain faculty, staff, or students who profess or practice a homosexual lifestyle.

A student living in violation of one of the aforementioned standards displays an area of need in his life. A teacher or administrator aware of the need may therefore point out the problem to the student and communicate the sphere of concern to the parents. At the time, those involved in counseling may consider it necessary to discharge some form of discipline to help the student mature in a given area. If the problem persists, more severe discipline may be in order.

### **Social Media and Public Statements**

As a ministry of Smyrna Church of Christ, the Smyrna Christian School is a picture of what we “stand for” and “who we are”. It is crucial that school staff and students speak in a kind and honest manner concerning the ministry of the school and church. This is not something that can be compartmentalized and adhered to only during certain blocks of time, but is something that is 24/7.

Perverse, accusatory, destructive, or defamatory conversation or comments about the church, school or staff and students, will be grounds for discipline ranging in severity from a detention to dismissal.

What one says in any context, be it email, Facebook or any social communication media, gives a picture into a person’s real heart. Remember: once it’s out there you cannot take it back. If one has a problem with the school, a teacher/staff member, or a student, then we are required by God to use a very specific means to rectify our problems. Please refer to Matthew 18:15-17. If one needs help in this process, please see the principal. You will be held accountable for what you say, print, launch or type regardless of the time of day.

Matthew 12:34b-37

*For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

### **General Classroom Rules**

These six rules are part of what a teacher looks at when she figures your daily formative grade.

1. Be in your seat at all times while in the classroom unless otherwise directed by your teacher.
2. Failure to have paper, pencils, or books will be the same as not having an assignment completed on time.
3. Raise your hand for permission to speak unless blanket permission has been given.
4. Get permission from teacher before leaving your desk or room.
5. During assemblies, the rules of the classroom are in effect.
6. Students must have permission from the office before leaving school. Dismissal from school will only be into the custody of parents or other adult as signified by information on file from parent. Identification will be required for non-parental release.

## **Discipline Policy**

Discipline is used for the protection of our students and the orderly operation of our school. We believe discipline is a learning experience. Therefore, our primary motive is to train for correction. Discipline will be administered loving and consistently.

When a student's attitude is not in accordance with the policies or principles of the school, the following discipline procedure will be followed. Disciplinary actions will be divided into groups with assorted consequences.

### Level One

The teachers will manage misbehavior at this level. Violations at this level will result in Time-outs. The first time-out will be equal to half the student's age in minutes, the second and third time-outs will be equal to the student's age in minutes. If the behavior has not been corrected after three time-outs it becomes a level two offence. Level one infractions include, but are not limited to: tardiness, being unprepared for class, dress code violations, and disturbing the class.

### Level Two

Misbehavior at this level will be managed by the principal and will involve a parent contact. Administrative time-outs (time-outs in the office for longer periods) may be used if the student's misbehavior is preventing the class from being productive. Students in 1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade may be issued up to two hours of detention. Level two infractions include, but are not limited to: excessive level one violation, disobedience, disrespect, deceitfulness, destruction of property, cheating/academic dishonesty, and inappropriate physical contact.

### Level Three

If a student's misbehaviors reach beyond level one and two they are considered to be very serious. They will be managed by the principal, will involve a parent contact, and could involve a member of the school board. This level offense will result in up to three days suspension. This suspension could be served in school or out of school. Level three infractions include, but are not limited to: excessive level one and/or two violations and any behavior that threatens the safety of other students or staff in the school.

### Level Four

If a student's behavior reaches this level they will be suspended pending a school board hearing. The school board will then render a decision in regard to the student's discipline. This can include extended suspension or expulsion from the school. Level four infractions include, but are not limited to: excessive level one, two and/or three violations and 2<sup>nd</sup> occurrence of any behavior that threatens the safety of other students or staff in the school. Any behavior that threatens the safety of the students or staff deemed to be severe enough to bypass level three.

A written record of the date of any discipline beyond time-out will be placed in the student's file. A copy of this report will be sent home to be signed and returned the following day by a parent.

## Dress Code

The Bible teaches that we honor God with our lives when we are modest. In 1 Peter 3:3–4 Peter speaks to the concept of modesty. “<sup>3</sup> Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. <sup>4</sup> Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.” Here at the school we want to teach the concept of modesty in the lives of our students. We believe that modesty is manifested in the way we act, think and dress. Therefore, this is a concept that is taught throughout your student’s experience at the school. However, we do find it necessary to create a dress code which creates some boundaries for how our students should dress. While the Bible does not give a detailed definition of what a modest appearance is, we do believe that these guidelines are consistent with a Biblical sense of modesty.

We are concerned for student’s health, safety and comfort as well as their appearance. We expect neatness, modesty and good judgment to be used by both students and parents. Homeroom teachers will have the responsibility of supervising compliance with the dress code.

Students are to wear the standard uniform unless otherwise instructed by the principal.

Lands’ End Outfitters is our school uniform provider. You must purchase the polos and gym uniforms from Lands’ End. Other items may be purchased at the store of your choosing. However, Lands’ End guaranteed all of their clothing. You may go to [landsend.com](http://landsend.com) and use our school code which is 900180662.

Follow these steps:

- Online: Go to [landsend.com/school](http://landsend.com/school) and create or sign in to your account. Include your student and school information in My Account (or find your School using the Preferred School Number Search: 900180662).
- Phone: Call 1-800-469-2222 and reference your student’s Preferred School Number 900180662, grade level and gender. Lands’ End’s team of consultants are available 24/7 for assistance.
- In-Store: Visit your local Lands’ End at Sears store. An associate can help you with sizing information and you can place your Preferred School order online via the store kiosk. Please note, Lands’ End at Sears stores may have a limited product assortment (no logo’d merchandise is available in the store).
  - Prices Corner Shopping Center; 3240 Kirkwood Hwy Wilmington DE 19808 (302) 995-9277

DON’T FORGET TO SIGN UP ON [LANDSEND.COM/SCHOOL](http://LANDSEND.COM/SCHOOL) FOR EMAIL UPDATES FROM LANDS’ END.

## General Dress Guidelines

1. Polo Shirt must be purchased from the aforementioned retailer. The shirt may be maroon, light blue or hunter green. The shirt must also have the school logo embroidered on it. The shirt must fit the student properly and be worn properly (i.e. not oversized/tight etc.)
2. Sweaters are not required but if they are worn must be black or maroon. Fleece jackets in black or maroon purchased through Lands’ End with logo may be worn in the classroom. All other jackets and hoodies are not to be worn in the classroom.

3. Dress Pants or Shorts may be purchased at the store of your choosing but are also available from Lands' End with their money back guarantee. They must be black, navy or khaki and dress in style. The pants must be worn and fit properly. Shorts must be knee length. (i.e. no sagging, no leggings, etc.)
4. Skirts may be worn by female students. They must be black, navy or khaki and long enough to cover the knees while sitting. If desired, a female student may wear tights, but they are not required. If worn they must be solid black, navy or maroon.
5. Shoes are required to be solid black on non-gym days and they may be athletic shoes. On Gym days' students may wear tennis shoes of their choosing provided they otherwise adhere to the dress code.
6. Belts are not required, but if they are worn they must be solid black.
7. Hair must have an over-all clean, neat and trim appearance.
8. Make-up: If female students choose to wear make-up it must be consistent with a modest appearance. If the principal deems a student's use of make-up to be excessive, the student will be required to remove the makeup.
9. Jewelry Female students may wear jewelry which is consistent with a modest appearance. Noisy jewelry that would cause a distraction is not permitted. No visible body piercing except for earrings, less than three per ear. Earrings should be small in size. Male students will be permitted to wear a watch and/or a ring.
10. Gym Uniforms: The gym shirt and shorts must also be purchased from the aforementioned retailer. Sweats and sweatshirts are permitted and can be purchased on your own. These must be grey or navy and the sweatshirts cannot have a hood. The shirt must fit the student properly and be worn properly (i.e. not oversized/tight etc.) Shoes must be athletic and any color. All students wear their gym uniform on gym days.

### **Dress Down Day (DDD)**

Students may wear loose jeans, slacks or shorts. Shorts must be knee length when standing. If skirts or dresses are worn, they must cover the knee. No clothing that advertises or promotes anything inconsistent with the Christian values of the school may be worn. No tank tops or spaghetti straps are allowed. Shirts must completely cover the midriff area. When arms are raised straight over the head, no midriff skin should be visible. No leggings, flip-flops, sandals, ragged/frayed clothing, or clothes with holes are permitted.

### **Note to Parents**

When parents visit the school it is expected that they dress modestly, keeping the concept of Biblical modesty in mind. We can only teach our students to be modest if the adults whom are in our building demonstrate modesty. The following guidelines are given as boundaries to help you understand our expectations. Skirts or shorts should not be shorter than two inches above the knee. No clothing that advertises or promotes anything inconsistent with the Christian values of the school. Shirts must completely cover the midriff area and not have a low neckline. No tank tops or spaghetti straps. Please be careful to not wear tight-fitting clothing in respect to the school dress code for the students.

## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

### **Fee Schedule for School Year 2020/2021**

Tuition (Preschool 3 & 4)	\$4,700.00 per year
Tuition (K-8)	\$4,700.00 per year
Yearly Registration Fee:	\$200.00 (non-refundable)

*Students are considered enrolled for the entire year. Therefore, no reductions can be made for vacations or school holidays. No deductions will be made in tuition for absences during the school year, regardless of the cause of such absences.*

### **Tuition Credit for Volunteer Hours**

We understand that the cost of education can be cumbersome. Therefore, we provide an opportunity for you to receive up to \$250 credit, per student, on your tuition bill through your participation in volunteer hours for the school. You will receive \$6.50 per hour for the hours that you volunteer. If you pay in full at the beginning of the year you will be issued a refund for any monies credited to your student account through this program at the end of the year. If you pay monthly, you will be credited during the last month's payment. In order to volunteer in the school, you must complete a federal background check. This will require you to go to the Delaware Bureau of Identification in Dover. The appropriate paperwork will be provided to those who desire to volunteer, please contact the office. The background check will cost \$69 and is the responsibility of the volunteer. This background check is required by law. If you volunteer a minimum of 25 hours during the course of the school year you will be credited the \$69 background cost.

### **Multi-student Discount**

Multi-student families are offered the following discounts on tuition:  
2<sup>nd</sup> student – 15% off this student and all subsequent students

### **Payment Plans**

Ten-month payment plans are available, beginning August 1st and ending May 1<sup>st</sup>. There is no extra charge for this program. Tuition payments are due on the first of each month.

### **Past Due Accounts**

Payments received after the fifth (5th) are delinquent and a fee of 5½% will be added to the late account. If an account becomes more than 15 days past due, the student will be excluded from school until the balance is paid in full or arrangements have been made with the administrator to pay the account in full at a specified time. This must be recorded on a Payment Modification Form. If an account becomes more than 30 days past due the student will be dismissed from the school.

The following process will be used to contact you about a past due account:

- First Letter: 5 days late and 5½% late fee will be assessed, notification of delinquency sent to parents.
- Second Letter: 10 days late. Notifies parents of delinquency and student exclusion.
- The school will also attempt to make contact by phone.

The fee for returned checks is twenty-five (\$25) dollars.

### **Withdrawal Penalty**

In the event of a withdrawal, transfer, or expulsion, the parents are responsible for 10% of the remaining tuition. Therefore, if a student withdraws in October we will total the remaining monthly payments (7 months = \$3,290.00) and charge 10% (\$329.00) of that amount. This amount will be withheld from your refund if you paid in full. The school reserves the right to withhold report cards and student records until tuition and other fees has been paid in full. By signing the Application for Enrollment, you are authorizing the school to withhold report cards and other records until all fees are paid in full.

### **Extended Care Services**

School hours are 8:30 AM to 3:15 PM daily. Students may arrive and enter the building no earlier than 8:15 AM. Any student dropped off before 8:15 AM must be enrolled in Before Care. School ends at 3:15 PM and all students must be picked up by 3:30 PM. Any student not picked up by 3:30 PM must be enrolled in After Care. The extended care supervisor can be reached at 302-653-4556 ext. 107

Before Care:                    6:45 AM - 8:15 AM     = \$25.00/week or \$5.00 /day

After Care:                    3:30 PM - 4:45 PM     = \$25.00/week or \$5.00/day  
   3:30 PM - 6:00 PM     = \$42.50/week or \$8.50/day

Any student left after 6:00 PM will result in an additional \$14.00 charge for every half hour or portion thereof. Any student who remains in our care after 6 PM more than twice in any one-month period will be charged \$40 per half hour or any portion thereof they remain with us.



## **ACADEMIC POLICES**

### **Curriculum**

Proverbs 10:14 says that “Wise men lay up knowledge”. We believe that the pursuit of knowledge leads us to the wisdom that as Christians we should seek. It is the school’s intention, therefore, to provide a Christ-Centered and Bible-based curriculum. Currently, to accomplish this end we use A Beka Book Curriculum for all grade levels. You can find additional information at [www.abeka.com](http://www.abeka.com).

Believing that no education is complete without the Bible we also have daily Bible class and chapel on Wednesday. We teach your student the truths of the Christian Scriptures and seek to teach them how to apply them in their lives.

### **Homework**

Believing that homework is an integral part of the school’s program, each teacher is at liberty to give homework to aid each student in advancing learning. Therefore, each student is expected to successfully complete all homework assignments. We request the full cooperation and support from the parents to see that homework is completed.

### **Progress Reports**

Progress reports will be sent home during the 4<sup>th</sup> week of each 8-week grading period. They will show all student grades, affirming good work and warning of lacking work. Progress reports must be signed and returned to the school office. Parent Teacher conferences will also be scheduled around this time to discuss student progress. Please see page 22 for more information on parent-teacher conferences.

### **Report Cards**

Report cards will be issued at the end of each 8-week grading period. They will show the students’ progress during that grading period and will be used in determining the student’s final grade for the year.

### **Grading Policy**

Our system of grading is a reflection of the student's progress. The teachers work diligently to determine the student grades. They use tests, class work, class participation, homework, quizzes and special projects as factors in determining the grades.

## Grading Scale

Grades for Preschool 4 and Kindergarten will be on the following system.

Letter Symbol	Grade Range	Description
M-Mastered	90-100	Accomplishes with independence and skill
E- Evident	80-89	Consistently demonstrates skills and concepts for current grading period.
L-Learning/Developing	70-79	Developing skills and concepts for current grading period.
N-Needs More Time	60-69	Skills are beginning, just need more time to develop
I-Insufficient Knowledge	0-59	Not demonstrating skills and concepts for current grading period. Interventions and communications with parents should be documented to support this mark being given.

Grades for 1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> will be on the following system.

Grading Range	Letter Grade	GPA Points	Description
92-100	A	4.0	Outstanding Progress Consistently demonstrates in-depth understanding of concepts, processes and skills
83-91	B	3.0	Above Average Progress Often demonstrates an understanding of major concepts, processes, and skills
74-82	C	2.0	Average Progress Demonstrates a developing understanding of major concepts, processes, and skills
65-73	D	1.0	Lowest Acceptable Progress Demonstrates a beginning understanding of major concepts, processes, and skills
0-64	F	0	Non-completion of important components of tasks Demonstrates little or no understanding of major concepts, processes, and skills
I	Incomplete		In progress toward grade level proficiency in skills and concepts.

## Honor Roll

Students in 1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade whose GPA is 92% or higher in all academic subjects are on the “A” Honor Roll. Students whose GPA is 91%-83% in all academic subjects are on the “A/B” Honor Roll.

## Perfect Attendance Award

Students who have no absences during the school year will receive Perfect Attendance.

### **Academic Excellence Awards**

Certificates are given to students who made the highest grade point average (GPA) by division for the school year. One award is given for the first grade class, one is given for the elementary grades two – five, and one is given for the middle school grades six through eight.

### **Scholar Award**

Certificates are given to students who made the second highest grade point average by division.

### **Bible Award**

Certificates are awarded to the student, in each class, who memorizes the most Bible verses.

### **Conduct Grade**

Conduct grades are meant to measure each student's growth in Biblical character as measured by the school's Code of Conduct and teacher observations.

### **Cheating and Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty is inconsistent with Godly character and is unacceptable. Smyrna Christian School has adopted a zero tolerance policy in regard to cheating.

Plagiarism/Cheating includes:

1. Directly copying the work of another person without using all of the following: (1) quotation marks, (2) proper credit immediately following the quote, and (3) listing any sources on the "works cited" page at the end of the assignment.
2. Paraphrasing the ideas of another person without using all of the following: (1) proper credit immediately following the paraphrase and (2) listing the source on the works cited page at the end of an assignment.
3. Using and failing to properly credit any work or answers that have been written, created, or developed by another person. This includes work or answers that have been generated through electronic translation engines, literary summary sources, and inappropriate collaboration with other students.
4. Recycling previously submitted work. Recycling an assignment is the resubmission of academic work that has been previously submitted by oneself or another student.
5. Using artwork or pictures without proper citation. Students may not use artwork or pictures, including clip art that was created by another person, without proper citation.

Consequences of Cheating/Plagiarism:

According to the student code of conduct in the handbook, plagiarism, cheating, and forgery are level 2 offenses. Below is a list of consequences that will be used at the discretion of the principal in whole or in part.

1. A zero on the assignment
2. Referral to the office
3. Parent Notification
4. A meeting with the principal and parents
5. Conduct grade lowered to a U for the 8 week grading period

6. Detention
7. 1-3 day home suspension

### **Homeschool Programs**

In Delaware, homeschooling families can register with an umbrella school, or as an independent homeschool family -- technically called a non-public school. To register your homeschool independently, contact the [Department of Education](#) and fill out a non-public school registration form. Each year, you are required to complete and submit the registration form in the fall, and a form verifying attendance in the summer. If you choose to register with an umbrella school, such as SCS, the school handles this contact with the Delaware Department of Education.

The purpose of the homeschool programs at SCS is to offer a low cost way for parents to homeschool their children as well as to offer enrichments, field trips, and socialization with other students. Families enrolled in these programs are expected to maintain Christian Character, complete all required administrative functions and promote the integrity of our school. All home educators, parents and students are expected to comply with all rules within the student handbook.

We provide two different pathways to support our homeschool families. They are as follows:

#### **Umbrella School (or Cover School) Program**

- Students are enrolled at SCS, but receive instruction at home.
- Provides assistance and support to home educators and students
- Maintains official records and reporting of attendance to Delaware Department of Education.
- Generates progress reports, report cards, and official transcripts
- Provides standardized testing for grades 2, 4, 6, and 8
- Access to enrichment programs and field trips
- \$1000.00 per year or \$100.00 per month fee

#### **Enrichment Program**

- Students are enrolled in a single family homeschool, but participate in enrichments at SCS
- Access to enrichment programs and field trips
- \$500.00 per year or \$50.00 per month fee

#### **Umbrella School Program**

Home educators enrolling students in the SCS Umbrella School Program must submit an application along with a non-refundable fee of \$20.00. A meeting with the Administrator will then be scheduled to discuss the program and your student's needs. A placement test for new students is required. Students enrolling in the SCS Umbrella Program must have a completed registration packet accompanied by a registration fee of \$200.00. An SCS Umbrella School coordinator will then be assigned to your family. The coordinator will assist you in choosing the appropriate required materials for your student. Home educators are responsible for all material costs

We believe Christian parents are given the responsibility and moral authority by God to direct the educational and spiritual development of their children; therefore, the ultimate responsibility to determine progress and set educational goals rests with parents. At the same time, to meet legal responsibility to the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) that all SCS Umbrella School Program students are receiving "regular and thorough instruction," we have an accountability process each family must meet.

- All students enrolled in the SCS Umbrella School Program must utilize the Abeka curriculum for all core classes.
- Home educators must use the Smyrna Christian School grading scale, located in the student handbook.
- Homeschool educators must maintain accurate attendance records and submit them to the SCS Umbrella School Coordinator one week prior to progress reports or report cards being issued. A school calendar schedule and attendance form will be provided.
- Homeschool educators must maintain a portfolio of all quizzes and tests in all core classes to be reviewed by the SCS Umbrella School coordinator assigned to their student.
- All grades and student portfolios must be submitted to the SCS Umbrella School coordinator one week prior to progress reports and report cards being issued.
- Homeschool educators must teach a Bible course as part of the daily curriculum
- All parents/guardians and students must abide by all rules of the student handbook when participating in onsite activities at SCS.
- Parent/guardian is responsible for chaperoning their own student on all fieldtrips.

Families enrolled in the Umbrella School Program are strongly encouraged to follow the yearly schedule set by SCS. If your student is struggling, or if there are extenuating circumstances, it is your responsibility to inform the SCS Umbrella School coordinator.

### Enrichment Program

Home educators that choose to utilize the Enrichment Program option must register first, online, with the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE). Once you have registered and obtained your Homeschool Acknowledgement Page, you must print it out and include it with your application to SCS along with the \$20.00 non-refundable fee. You will then be scheduled to meet with the Administrator to discuss your homeschool plans. At this time, please be prepared to provide information about the curriculum you will be utilizing. Please note, the Administrator may request an update on your homeschool progress at various times throughout the school year. Students enrolling in the Enrichment Program must have a completed registration packet accompanied by a registration fee of \$200.00.

Responsibilities of home educators enrolled in the Enrichment Program

- Register your homeschool with the Delaware Department of Education.
- Maintain and conduct a clearly recognizable program of education that utilizes appropriate curriculum. Smyrna Christian School does not support "unschooling" or any type of "child led" homeschooling.
- Maintain accurate attendance records and report to the Delaware Department of Education.
- Homeschool educators must teach a Bible course as part of the daily curriculum.

- All parents/guardians and students must abide by all rules of the student handbook when participating in onsite activities at SCS.
- Parent/guardian is responsible for chaperoning their own student(s) on all fieldtrips.

Smyrna Christian School does not maintain records, issue report cards, or provide official transcripts for students enrolled in the Enrichment Program option. SCS will, however, issue grades for enrichments for home educators to record. It is strongly recommended that home educators keep accurate records for attendance and grading.

## GENERAL POLICES

### Student Illness or Injury

The school will take every precaution to ensure the health and safety of all students. It has an obligation to see that all injuries or conditions that threaten the well-being of the student are dealt with immediately and efficiently while at school or at a school activity. In the event of injury or illness the student's parents will be contacted by phone as soon as possible. If necessary, first aid will be administered and emergency services contacted.

If your student is ill, please do not send them to school. We are not equipped to care for sick children. Parents must notify the school by 10 am if a child has a communicable disease and the student must be kept at home for an extended period. Arrangements should be made with the teacher to do home assignments.

If your child is not well enough to remain in school, our office will contact you so you can make arrangements to care for them. Under no circumstances do we want your children to remain in school if they are in poor health.

After an illness, please do not send your child to school until he has been fever-free without taking fever reducing medication for 24-hours.

Parents should report all health problems (psychological or physical) that arise so that proper precautions can be taken. The office should be notified so information may be recorded on the student's file.

### Student Arrival and Dismissal

Students may begin arriving to school at 8:15 AM. If a student arrives before 8:15 AM they must be checked into extended care. Students are expected to put their lunches in the appropriate refrigerator, put their coats and bags on their hook or in their locker, and report to class. Students are to not wander the building during this arrival time. Students should be picked up at 3:15 PM. Students will be held in their classroom until they are picked up. Any student still in our care at 3:30 PM will be checked into extended care.

### Immunization

All students enrolled must have the Delaware Immunization Certification, which is required by the state, submitted before the first day of school. The immunization requirements, as stipulated in the Delaware Annotated Code, follow this section of the handbook. Form 2 should be completed before the first day of school and given to the School secretary. You may obtain a copy of Form 2 from the School office or download at the School website: [www.smyrnachristianschool.com](http://www.smyrnachristianschool.com).

#### *Delaware Annotated Code 7.1.2 and 7.1.3*

*Committee on Immunization Practices' (ACIP) shall determine the vaccines and vaccination schedules acceptable for compliance with this regulation. This provision pertains to all children between the ages of 2 months and 21 years entering or being admitted to a Delaware private school for the first time including, but not limited to, foreign exchange students, immigrants, students from other states and territories and children entering from public schools.*

*2.1.1 Four or more doses of diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (DTaP, DTP, or other approved vaccine) or a combination of these vaccines. A booster dose of Td or Tdap (adult) is recommended by the Division of*

*Public Health for all students at age 11 or five years after the last DTaP, DTP or DT dose was administered whichever is later. Notwithstanding this requirement:*

*2.1.1.1 A child who received a fourth dose prior to his or her fourth birthday shall have a fifth dose;*

*2.1.1.2 A child who received the first dose of Td (adult) at or after age seven may meet this requirement with only three doses of Td or Tdap (adult).*

*2.1.2 Three or more doses of inactivated polio virus (IPV), oral polio vaccine (OPV), or a combination of these vaccines with the following exception: a child who received a third dose prior to the fourth birthday shall have a fourth dose.*

*2.1.3 Two doses of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. The first dose should be administered on or after the age of 12 months. The second dose should be administered after the fourth birthday. Individual combination vaccines of measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) may be used to meet this requirement.*

*2.1.4 Three doses of Hepatitis B vaccine.*

*2.1.4.1 For children 11 to 15 years old age, two doses of a vaccine approved by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) may be used.*

*2.1.5 Varicella vaccine (chicken pox) is required by state law.*

*Any child entering private school must be age-appropriately vaccinated against diseases prior to enrolling in school.*

## **Medication**

Any medication to be taken by a student on school grounds must be administered in the school office by school personnel. This includes over-the-counter meds. School office personnel will administer medication to a student only upon the written request of a physician or parent. All medication must be in a prescription container, properly labeled with the student's name, dosage, times of administration, name of physician, and the name of the pharmacy. All medications must be immediately turned into the office upon the student's arrival at school.

*Medication of any sort must NEVER be put in the student's lunch, desk, locker or backpack. Cough drops must be labeled with the student's name and given to their classroom teacher for disbursement.*

## **Fundraising**

It is our desire to keep the cost to our families as manageable as possible. However, the cost of operating our school is exceptional more than what is generated from tuition. Therefore, it is expected that all students will participate in school organized fundraisers. While there is not a required amount to be raised students should participate in at least 5 separate fundraisers.

## **Electronic Devices**

Students may not use electronic devices during school hours (including extended care). This includes such items as (but not restricted to) MP3 players, electronic games, radios, CD/DVD players, cell phones, etc. Exceptions may be made in rare cases, please see the principal for questions.

## **Field Trips**

Field trips are taken at various times during the school year to places of educational interest. Costs for field trips are not covered by the school or tuition. Students are to maintain the same level of self-discipline away from school as is required at school. For all field trips, students will wear their standard uniform unless an exception is approved by the principal.



## **Lockers**

Lockers, when available, are provided for students in the first through eighth grade. Stickers and markings will not be allowed on exterior or interior surfaces. Magnetic items will not be allowed on exterior surfaces. The student should install a lock on their locker. The teacher must be given a copy of the key or the combination. The school reserves the right to open and search lockers at any time.

Students will use lockers to store the items brought to school each day. Backpacks, book bags, and tote bags may not be stored in the classrooms. Students must respect the contents and privacy of other student lockers. Any unauthorized entry or tampering may be cause for immediate suspension.

## **Lost and Found**

We encourage parents to mark their child's belongings permanently and clearly. This will aid in the return of any misplaced items. Lost and Found items may be claimed in the school office. Lost and found materials are disposed of at the end of each school year.

## **Lost/Damaged Books**

Students are responsible for all textbooks assigned. If textbooks are lost and/or damaged, the student will be assessed a fee based on current prices. All text books are property of the school.

## **Lunch**

All students must bring a lunch. There is a designated refrigerator for student lunches. Students may bring meals that require microwaving; however, they must not take more than three (3) minutes to prepare. If the school provides a lunch, the school reserves the right to invoice the parent a fee of \$5.00. Students should have all needed supplies such as napkins, forks, spoons, and so forth. If a student does not have all the supplies he or she needs and we supply the materials their name will be reported to Mrs. Rash and in excessive cases the principal will speak to the parents. Younger students are "quiet for the first five" minutes of lunch in order to focus on eating before beginning to socialize.

## **Communication**

The school works diligently to keep the lines of communication open between school and parents. There are several ways you can communicate with us. (1) You may email the office at [school@smyrnachurchofchrist.com](mailto:school@smyrnachurchofchrist.com) or you can email teachers by using their first and last names with the @smyrnachurchofchrist.com. (2) You can send a written note in your students' bag/folder. (3) You can call the office at 302-653-4556. (4) You can see us in person before or after school. (5) You can schedule a conference at any time.

We will communicate with you through one of the following methods. (1) Notes sent home in your student's bag/folder. (2) SchoolCast™ is a service that we use to send recorded phone messages, emails, or text messages. (3) Phone calls.

### **Drills-Fire and Possum (Lock Down)**

Fire drills, possum (lock down drills), and other emergency procedures are practiced periodically and in compliance with state mandates.

### **Parent Chaperones**

There are times throughout the school year when parents may be asked to serve as chaperones or will desire to do so. The school requires parents to be a role model in their clothing (see note in Dress Code section, pg. 11) and in their conduct (no smoking or drinking alcoholic beverages). Parents not meeting the standards will not be permitted to act as chaperones. Additionally, all parents who wish to serve as a chaperone must have a background check on file. There is a \$69 fee that is the responsibility of the parent. This will require you to go to the Delaware Bureau of Identification in Dover. The appropriate paperwork will be provided to those who desire to volunteer, please contact the office. If the parent is driving for the trip, he or she must fill out a "Volunteer Driver Form" and proof of insurance.

### **Parent - Teacher Conferences**

The school is an extension of the home. The school recognizes the importance of the home and the school working together to obtain spiritual and academic growth for the child. You may at any time request an appointment with the teacher to discuss your student's academic progress.

### **School Calendar**

The school calendar will be issued monthly. School holidays will also be communicated on this form.

### **School Closings**

The cancellation of school for any purpose is the responsibility of the principal. Cancellations will be announced by SchoolCast™, a notification system that will reach parents by landline and/or cell phone. Please do not contact your child's teacher at home or by their cell phone.

### **School Day**

The length of the school day will be eight thirty (8:30) AM to three fifteen (3:15) PM.

### **Visitors**

All parents are welcome in the school. Please be sure to check into the office and obtain a visitor's pass to wear while in the building. If you wish to talk to your child's teacher, please arrange for a private conference by calling the school office. Teachers are happy to arrange for conferences with parents as needed. Please be considerate of your child's teacher. Lunches, books, homework, and other items may be left in the school office to be delivered to your child.

### **Extended Care Services – Before/After Care**

Before/After Care is a service provided before and after school hours for the benefit of working parents. Hours of operation are from 6:45 AM - 8:15 AM and 3:30 PM - 6:00 PM on school days. Fees for Before/After Care are listed in the financial section of the handbook on page 14. Before and after care fees are due by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the following month. Invoices will be sent each month. All school rules and policies apply during extended care. The extended care supervisor can be reached at 302-932-3641.

**Student Pictures**

Student pictures will be taken in early fall and distributed before Christmas.

**Advancement to the Next Grade**

Advancement to the next grade upon successful completion of any grade level, students will be advanced to the next subsequent grade. If a student has not met the minimum requirements to be promoted (i.e. receiving at least a 65% or higher in each class) they will be retained in the current grade for the next academic school year. If a student has been retained at least one time; they cannot be retained another. Meaning; if a child is unable to advance to the next grade on more than one occasion; parents will need to make alternate arrangements for educating their student. The Abeka curriculum is very rigorous and if a student falls behind it is very difficult to catch up.

DISCLAIMER: Smyrna Christian School reserves the right to change or add any policy at any time as seen fit and at the sole discretion of the administration. If that change occurs during the school year, it will become official policy once the change has been communicated to the parents via official school communication.