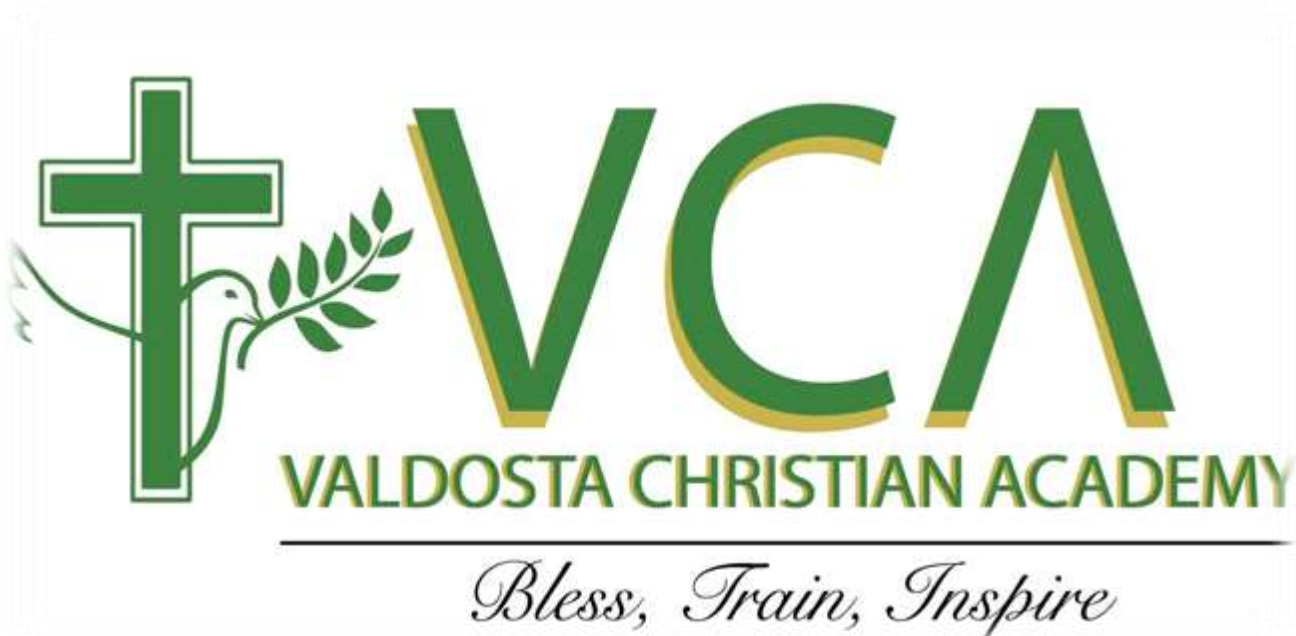


# School Handbook

*Updated June 2019*



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Valdosta, GA 31602

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## **SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY**

Education in its broadest sense begins at birth and continues throughout life. Education includes every experience that a person has and influences how a person acts. Many agencies both public and private contribute to the education of a person.

In a more narrow sense, education involves the courses and curriculum taught in a school. The school's responsibility is to teach the accumulated culture to its students and provide opportunities for growth, personality and character development. The school cooperates with other agencies to provide an environment that is conducive to the fullest development of its students.

At creation, man was perfect and had limitless possibilities for development. Man reflected the image of his Creator; however, since sin entered into the world, the purpose of true education has been to restore the image of God in man, and to bring man back into perfect harmony with God. True education seeks to prepare youth, not only for the privileges and responsibilities of life on this Earth, but also for eternal life.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Valdosta Christian Academy (VCA) is operated for the purpose of training and developing well-rounded students for service to God and man focusing on their physical, mental, and spiritual needs using Biblical principles as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHOOL**

The objectives of Valdosta Christian Academy are to assist in the development of:

- a Christ-like character through a Christ-centered curriculum.
- habits of accuracy, discernment, and sound judgment.
- physical fitness and health.
- God given talents, desirable personality traits, and discovering and cultivating new interests and hobbies.
- mental abilities through appropriate school activities.
- academic readiness for higher education.

## **ADMISSION POLICIES**

VCA is operated for anyone who desires a Christian education. Students of good character, who show respect and reverence for the Word of God, who maintain a reverent attitude during religious exercises, and who will observe all the regulations of the school may be admitted, all students are admitted to the school by action of the school board. Students are admitted without regard to race, color, or national origin. All registration paperwork for new and returning students must be complete before acceptance is granted for the school year. For a list of required registration documents, please visit the school office to obtain a registration packet.

The school may test incoming applicants for placement or acceptance at the school. Students may not register for the first grade unless they are six years old by August 15 of the enrollment year. Exceptions to this policy can be made only by the Georgia-Cumberland Conference education department. The minimum probationary period for new students is 6 weeks. All students must have current immunization and physical exam records.

## **INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (IDEA)**

IDEA is not required in private/parochial schools. If you desire information regarding IDEA, please refer to the following websites for more information:

<https://www.wrightslaw.com>,

[www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii/nonpublic/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii/nonpublic/index.html),

[www.smartkidswithld.org](http://www.smartkidswithld.org)

## **ATTENDANCE POLICIES**

State law requires regularity and promptness in school attendance. A student is considered present if they are physically seen in the school building or at a school sponsored function. A student should have no more than 5 unexcused absences in a school year. Repeated tardiness will not be accepted. Students with a record of repeated absences will be referred to the school board for disciplinary action. Students will be required to attend all extra-curricular activities and church programs, unless prior arrangements have been made. Students will be graded on their participation and attendance. The attendance record, citizenship marks and grades all become a part of the student's permanent record and will be listed on their transcript.

Excused absences are given only for illnesses, medical, dental, optometry services, bereavement at the loss of an immediate family member or an official SDA event. Written excuses signed by the parent, guardian or doctor should be presented to the teacher within 3 days of the student returning to school. (Extenuating circumstances will be reviewed and voted on by the board before the event.)

Family vacations are not considered excused absences. All work missed will be considered unexcused unless prior arrangements are made with the teacher. It is the responsibility of the student and his/her parents to find out what assignments have been missed and to complete the work within the time period allotted by the teacher.

Students are not permitted to leave the school grounds without special permission.

## **GRADING POLICY**

Report cards are issued three times a year. Progress reports are issued two to three weeks prior to the formal report card. Grades are derived from: class work, tests, quizzes, and projects. In order to move into the next leveled subject, students must pass with at least a sixty percent. Proficiency testing in language arts and math will indicate necessity of more time needed at a given level or grade. Student must achieve at least a "D" in all core subjects. Otherwise, summer school tutoring is required or more time needed at a given level or grade.

### *Achievement Code*

<u>Grades 1-2</u>	<u>Grades 3-8</u>
I - Independently working with no assistance	A 100 - 95
P - Progressing into independent work	A- 94 - 90
N - Needs improvement/Not passing	B 89 - 85
	B- 84 - 80
	C 79 - 75
	C- 74 - 70
	D 69 - 65
	D- 64-60
	F 59>

## **CITIZENSHIP**

Student citizenship will be evaluated each quarter, along with their academic subjects. They will be evaluated in the following areas: respect, courtesy, attitude, obedience, self-control, and responsibility.

## **IMPORTANT DATES, SPECIAL EVENTS, AND PROGRAMS**

There are many special days and events celebrated at VCA, and we invite parents to join us for these events. Some are sponsored for the entire school community, and some are specifically catered to students. Please check the school calendar to note the actual dates of these events.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Bulletins, notices, etc. are posted on the school website, and a hard copy is sent home with students, as they arise. School staff will work diligently to keep families informed of important information, and communicate any notes at least one week in advance. Student backpacks should be checked daily for any school communication forms. When responses are requested, please meet the deadline. Money should be sent in a clearly marked envelope. Please send separate checks for separate items (e.g., pictures, field trips, etc.) Tuition statements and other sensitive communications are mailed.

## **PERSONAL PROPERTY**

The school is not responsible for personal property left in the school building or anywhere on the school premises. All property should be labeled with the owner's name.

## **SCHOOL EQUIPMENT**

The use of school equipment; including the phone, copier, and computer must be authorized by a teacher.

## **STUDENT TECHNOLOGY**

The purpose of technology used in the classroom is to provide excellence in education, and opportunities to learn for today and the future. With this educational opportunity also comes responsibility. All students and parents must read and sign a statement stating that they have read the policy and agree to the guidelines set forth (See Registration Packet). Access and use of the Internet, local area networks, computers and related equipment is a privilege. When one individual vandalizes or misuses this privilege, the entire program is negatively impacted.

## **DIGITAL DEVICES AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

Any recording device, including but not limited to video and digital cameras and camera phones to take videos or still pictures, may not be used to slander, bully, or denigrate any student, visitor, staff member, faculty member or administrator on or off the campus at any time. Furthermore, digital devices must be stowed away in the school office during school hours and may only be used if authorized by the teacher.

All messages or postings on the internet on or off the campus at any time (notes, emails, newsgroups, bulletin boards, wikis, or other interactive forms of communication such as instant messaging) should be educationally

purposeful and appropriate. Hate mail, harassment, discriminatory remarks, vulgarity, swearwords, other antisocial behaviors, chain letters, and threats of any kind are prohibited by VCA students.

Students making inappropriate reference about the school and/or its students, faculty, staff, or administrators on any internet site, chat room, or other electronic media will be subject to disciplinary action that will be determined by the VCA school board and could include suspension or expulsion.

**NOTE TO PARENTS:** Information found on the Internet may not always be correct or accurate. VCA will be responsible for teaching students about these guidelines and for supervising and guiding student access to the Internet. However, parents and guardians are advised that VCA does not have total control of the information on the internet. Therefore, parents are urged to establish guidelines for internet use at home that is consistent with the school's philosophy.

### **SCHOOL LUNCH POLICY**

Nutritious lunches should be brought from home. Healthy snacks such as fruits, vegetables and nuts are recommended. It is also recommended that junk foods and desserts be used on a limited basis. Lunches and snacks should abide by the guidelines in Leviticus 11. A microwave oven, eating utensils, and a refrigerator are available for use by students.

### **MEDICATION**

The head teacher will dispense medication only if there is written and signed authorization from a parent, signed by a physician. Medication will be kept in a locked compartment and administered in the school office. Medication must be in the original container (including inhalers) or a duplicate container with a prescription label. Please make sure correct name, dose, frequency, and date is on the label.

Parent must pick up any unused medication at end of school year. If not picked up, medication will be mailed

### **STUDENT CONDUCT**

Responsibilities of the student include:

- Being quiet and orderly in the classroom and being attentive to instruction
- Supporting the teachers, principal, classmates and school in word and action
- Behaving courteously and respectfully toward any adult or student
- Walking quietly inside the school building at all times
- Eating only at designated times and places
- Completing daily classroom assignments, projects and homework on time
- Keeping items in order around his/her own desk

Prohibited activities include:

- Leaving the school grounds without permission
- Using profane language or gestures
- Engaging in any type of fighting or potentially dangerous activity or encouraging others to do so

- Intimidating, harassing or threatening other students
- Taking or misusing another's property
- Engaging in body contact sports
- Bringing knives, matches, cigarette lighters, or any other dangerous items to school
- Chewing gum anywhere on school property
- Using or possessing tobacco in all its forms, alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs or any controlled substance
- Defacing or destroying school property or buildings
- Open defiance of teachers or other adults in authority
- Cheating on assignments, quizzes, and tests or helping others to do so

Valdosta Christian academy shall maintain a learning environment that is free from bullying, racial, religious, or sexual harassment or violence. The school board prohibits any form of hazing, bullying, or racial, religious, disability, sexual harassment, or violence.

It shall be a violation of this policy for any student to inflict any form of harassment or violence upon any student.

### **DRESS CODE**

Uniforms will be required every day; unless students and parents are notified by the teacher for special occasions. Students not wearing uniforms will be subject to disciplinary action by the teacher and/or school board.

1. Uniforms for the girls include black, navy-blue, gray, or khaki skirts, skorts, long shorts, jumpers, or slacks and any solid-colored Polo-style, dress shirts with no emblem, or VCA t-shirts.
2. Uniforms for the boys include black, navy blue, gray, or khaki slacks or shorts and any solid-colored Polo-style, dress shirts with no emblem, or VCA t-shirts.

***Consequences of not following the dress code:***

- 1<sup>st</sup> offense – note sent home
- 2<sup>nd</sup> offense – call to parents
- 3<sup>rd</sup> offense – parent will pick up child immediately

***General Dress Code guidelines are as follows:***

1. Students are to be neat, clean, well-groomed and modest.
2. Tank tops, sleeveless or short blouses, sheer net or muscle shirts, or off the shoulder tops are not to be worn.
3. Shorts and skirts, no shorter than two inches above the knee in a sitting position, may be worn during the hot weather season. No bicycle shorts or cut off shorts are allowed. All shorts, skirts, skorts, and pants must have a proper hem. Girls should wear shorts under skirts.
4. All clothing must not be too tight or loose.
5. No words or pictures should be on clothing, unless it is the school logo.
6. Hairstyles should not be extravagant as to attract attention (including unnatural hair color). Hair should be brushed, clean, and neat.

7. Makeup should not be noticeable as to attract attention. Nails are to be naturally colored, clean, and short. Artificial nails/fashion nails are not permitted.
8. Jewelry is not permitted at the school or during school functions.
9. Closed toe shoes or sandals with a back strap are to be worn at all times. Students need to also bring tennis shoes and socks for play time and Physical Education.
10. No jeans should be worn, unless special permission has been given for special occasions.
11. All students should keep a clean uniform in their locker.

### **SUSPENSION-EXPULSION POLICIES**

It must be understood that every student who is enrolled in the school thereby pledges to observe all of its regulations and to uphold the Christian principles upon which the school is operated both on campus and off campus. It is also a part of the student's contract that he/she perform all duties assigned to him/her in connection with the school to the best of his/her ability.

If misconduct or unwholesome attitudes continue after repeated counsel and warnings, suspension or dismissal from the school may result. A second suspension for the same or different misconduct could be cause for automatic expulsion.

### **HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATION**

VCA Home and School Association has as its mission:

- to help parents and teachers acquire an appreciation for VCA's philosophy
- to promote cooperation between parents and teachers for the benefit of the children
- to provide information sessions on curriculum, parenting, and other topics
- to raise funds for the school.

The Home and School Association also holds various events and fundraisers throughout the school year.

### **VOLUNTEERING**

Parents are invited and encouraged to volunteer their services at the school. Any volunteer would have to complete Verify Volunteer BEFORE being in the classroom, assisting students, or chaperoning on field trips. The opportunities for involvement are endless from serving on a board or committee to making posters, baking for a sale, or helping in the classroom. The benefits for parents are many: becoming acquainted with aspects of the school program and operations as well as experiencing the VCA Family. The benefits for the school are numerous as well: assisting teachers thereby relieving them for instruction, and by contributing talents making fund raisers and other activities happen for the wellbeing of the children. We count on parent help in the way that best fits his/her schedule and talents.

### **VISITOR'S POLICY**

The classroom is a place where consistency, security, and comfort are critical. For these reasons, classroom visitations will be minimal and must be planned. Classroom visits may be arranged by phoning the office at least a day in advance. Annual visitations are regularly planned throughout the school year. (Refer to the School Calendar) For the safety of the students, all visitors (including parents) must report to the school office

and sign in. Furthermore, all visitors, including parents, must inform the head teacher before entering any classroom unexpectedly.

### **SCHOOL HOURS**

School hours are Monday – Thursday 8:30am-3:15pm and Friday 8:30am-1:50pm.

### **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

Students should not arrive on school grounds more than 15 minutes before classes begin and should leave within 15 minutes after school is dismissed. Georgia law requires that students vacate the premises within 30 minutes after school is dismissed. Students that remain in the building 30 minutes after school dismissal will be charged a fee of \$1 for every minute for late pick up.

### **INCLEMENT WEATHER PROCEDURES**

If parents are concerned about the weather conditions, please call the school. If unable to contact by telephone, tune into your local radio station for information. VCA generally follows the school closing plans for Lowndes County Schools. Parents will be notified of school closures.

### **TUITION, REGISTRATION AND APPLICATION FEES**

Application fee is \$25 per student for new students.

Registration fees for the 2018-2019 school year are \$300 per student. The registration fee includes achievement testing, library expenses, student insurance, textbooks, workbooks, and administrative expenses. The registration fee will not be discounted, and is non-refundable. (See the Financial Agreement form for additional information.)

Tuition for grades 1-4 is \$330 and 5-8 is \$355. Discounts are available for more than one student per family.

### **PAST DUE ACCOUNTS**

Tuition is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. It is important to understand that there must be financial support for every child who attends our school. The school has many monthly budget obligations to remain financially sound; therefore student tuition must be paid promptly. Following the established protocol can be difficult at times, but to simply excuse the fees or let them accumulate into huge debts is unfair to the family, the school, and to the other parents who sacrifice to pay monthly.

Students with outstanding balances from the previous month's statement will not be allowed to attend classes until the past due balance has been paid or arrangements have been made with the VCA Treasurer.

Communication is vital in this area.

It is the policy of the Valdosta Christian Academy that student accounts are paid-in-full before any student will be allowed to register for the next school year. No student will be allowed to start school with an unpaid balance unless specifically approved by the VCA School Board.

Transcripts of academic credit or diplomas will be issued only after the student account is paid in full.

### **GRIEVANCE POLICY**



Should there be conflict with a member of the school staff, this policy is set forth to be mindful of due process and is founded on the Biblical principles of Matthew 18. Please take note of the necessary steps to follow.

Step 1: Complainant is to meet with the teacher alone or as a family to deal with the issue/complaint. Under no circumstance is the issue/complaint to be discussed with any other party.

Step 2: If the complaint remains unresolved after Step 1, the unresolved complaint is to be taken to the school principal/head teacher for the purpose of securing assistance in finding resolution. A meeting among the three parties (principal, complainant and teacher) is to be held; with the principal chairing the meeting. The principal is to keep minutes of the meeting including all relevant issues and/or agreements discussed. The minutes are to be reviewed by all parties prior to the completion of the meeting. Should the grievance involve the school principal - skip to Step 3.

Step 3: At each instance in which a complaint is registered, the principal/teacher have the right to address the complaint directly. If the complaint remains unresolved then the complaint will be referred to the School Board Chair. At this point, the Office of Education is to be directly involved.

Step 4: If, after the aforementioned steps prove unsuccessful, and the complaint remains unresolved, a final appeal of the issue can be made to the School Board. In order to insure fairness, the teacher is to be present at this meeting. A representative from the Office of Education will be invited by the school board chairman to participate in the discussion of the issues. Should the complainant be a member of the school board, he/she will remove himself/herself from the decision-making process relative to the issue at hand. A final resolution to the complaint will be acted upon at this level. All parties are to be officially notified, in writing, of the school board's decision.

### **ASBESTOS NOTIFICATION**

In October 1986, the U.S. Congress enacted the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response act (AHERA). Under this law, comprehensive regulations were developed to address asbestos problems in public and private schools. VCA is an asbestos free school. The safety officer will work diligently to ensure the building is inspected on a regular basis and is kept asbestos free.

### **RIGHT TO AMEND THE HANDBOOK**

Valdosta Christian Academy reserves the right to amend the Parent/Student Handbook and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be notified of any changes made. This Parent/Student Handbook is an informative booklet for parents and students setting forth the rules and policies of the school and is not intended as an expressed or implied contract.

### **STAFF, FACULTY AND BOARD MEMBERS**

Principal/Teacher – Janice Reyes 386-219-8068

Assistant Teacher – Ginger Williams

Pastor/Physical Education teacher/Chaplain – Marlon Seifert 508-345-6054

Board Chair – Sharon Hilton 229-460-8877, Treasurer – Hazel Branch 229-482-3984 Church Treasurer – Brenda McConville, board members: Elizabeth Hoey, Mable Mohead, Ginger Williams



## **MISSION**

Educators delivering **GREAT** education that is:

- **G**od-centered
- **R**esults-oriented, in an
- **E**nvironment that nurtures
- **A**ligned with Adventist and national standards, and a
- **T**eam effort

## **VISION**

*Every student a success.*

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Our philosophy is to meet the needs of the whole child, Adventist EDGE teachers honor the natural cycle of learning. The natural cycle begins by connecting with the child's experience, moving on to provide information and practice finally culminating with a celebration of new learning. In keeping with the Seventh-day Adventists philosophy of encouraging students to be "thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men's thoughts", Adventist EDGE teachers follow a constructivist philosophy\*. This encourages students to use active techniques (experiments, real-world problem solving) to expand their knowledge and enhance their understanding of the world. Dialogue and collaboration are crucial to the process. In Adventist EDGE classrooms, children talk about what they are doing and reflect on how their understanding is changing.