



**STUDENT HANDBOOK
2024 - 2025**

ADMISSIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

ACCEPTANCE TO GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Grace Christian School exists *primarily* to serve Christian parents who desire to train up their children in godliness, firmly establishing them in the doctrine of Scripture. As such, we prefer that any parent(s) with whom the student resides be an active attendee at a local Christian church (unless hindered by their employment) and to sign our Statement of Faith, acknowledging that you have read it and understand that these doctrinal principles are foundational for classroom instruction and curriculum. We require that any parent that resides with the student to sign the Family Covenant, stating that they agree to support our behavioral expectations. While we do accept students whose parent(s) are not confessing Christians or active attendees at a local church, our hope is that your family will desire to grow in faith and fellowship through attendance at a local church. Members of First Baptist Church of Inverness will have the Registration Fee waived.

In general, we desire that students admitted to GCS possess the following characteristics:

1. A respect for God's Word
2. An attitude of submission and respect for those in authority
3. A teachable spirit and courteous, polite behavior
4. An ability to admit and accept responsibility for wrongs committed
5. A record of good behavior from their previous school
6. A desire to be taught in a manner that acknowledges that Jesus is Lord
7. Not reported to engage in bullying or drug use

As a policy, we also require that the family notify GCS if any member of the immediate household has been convicted of a felony crime. At any point after initial acceptance of a student, if a felony conviction occurs for any member of the household, GCS must be notified so that we can help safeguard the situation as it relates to our students and campus. Failure to notify the Director of a felony can result in immediate withdrawal of the student from GCS.

The school admits and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship, and loan programs and athletic and other school administered programs.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process for acceptance into Grace Christian begins with the initial online application. Once the application has been received, along with the application fee, the school Director will call for an interview with the parent(s) and prospective students. No child will be admitted to GCS without this initial interview and a records request from the previous school. Once these steps have been completed, the school will inform the family of its decision regarding acceptance. Parents are responsible to inform themselves regarding the educational philosophy and methodology of the classical and Charlotte Mason approach. Several informational meetings will be held during the spring and

summer to inform and answer questions about this specific methodology and how GCS will implement it into the curriculum of our school.

Diagnostic testing will be administered for math and reading proficiency before admittance to Grace Christian School so that we may verify our ability to meet your child’s educational needs. The Director will work with parents to administer these tests.

If the family is accepted for enrollment, it is imperative to turn in necessary paperwork as soon as possible. Students cannot begin the school year without a birth certificate, immunization form, and a school health physical form signed by a doctor, dated within one year of first day of school. Other documents, such as the Internet Usage Agreement, Family Agreement, and Emergency Medical Form, if unable to apply online, should be completed and handed in to the Director in a timely manner.

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Each grade level has specific core classes that will be fulfilled by every student, including a language arts course, math, science, social studies, and Bible. The School Board of Grace Christian School will be the sole decider for curriculum. The Board has spent countless hours in consideration of how to create life-long learners and seekers of God’s truth. All truth is God’s truth, and we are eager to fashion students who truly desire to engage in learning and who can examine their world and culture, ultimately concluding that God’s Word is our best and only true guide toward truth and wisdom.

Math instruction is designed as a unique hybrid scenario. The curriculum allows students to begin at the level they are capable of successfully completing. That level may be above, below, or right at grade level. Because our math curriculum is online, GCS can help students “catch up” if needed – or plow ahead of their classmates if able. Our math instructor is available to help any student with a problem or concept.

Middle school students will be required to redo any daily assignment in math and some other subjects that is lower than a C, except on a test, quiz, or special project. Middle school students receive standard letter grades on their report card.

The middle school grading scale is as follows: (This aligns with the Florida public school/ university scale.) The credit designations apply only to high school courses taken while in middle school.

<u>Numerical Equivalent</u>	<u>Reg</u>	<u>Honors</u>	<u>AP</u>	<u>1/2 credit</u>	
90-100	A	4.0	4.83	5.33	2.16
80-89	B	3.0	3.50	4.00	1.50
70-79	C	2.0	2.50	3.00	1.00
60-69	D	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.67
Below 60	F	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

FINANCIAL POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Registration and Enrollment/Re-enrollment fees are due with the completed application and may be paid through the Grace Christian SchoolWorx platform. The fees must be received before a student is officially enrolled at GCS.

The Technology Fee is due by July 15 of the preceding summer or immediately upon enrollment after that. Tuition may be paid in one payment with a 5% discount by July 31 -- or in 10 monthly installments. All tuition is due on the 15th of each month from August 2024 through May 2025. If payment is not received by the 20th of each month, a late fee of 5% of the monthly tuition payment will be assessed. An additional 5% will be added for each week the payment is late. Payment may be made in cash or check. Payment can also be made through the SchoolWorx portal. If your family finds itself in an unexpected financial situation making it difficult to pay your monthly payment on time, please talk to the Director immediately to work out a plan for payment.

Students receiving scholarship through the Florida scholarship program should discuss tuition and fees with the Director. GCS has attempted to designate our fees so that most expenses are completely covered by a family that is receiving a full scholarship. However, expenses may arise for which families are responsible, such as uniforms, field trips, etc. Grace Christian School accepts the Florida Tax Credit (FTC), Florida Empowerment – Education Opportunities (FES-EO), and the Hope Scholarship.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Compulsory attendance is required for all students between the ages of 6 and 16 in the state of Florida (FS 1003.21). Any student who has more than 10 unexcused absences in a 90 day school period may be referred to the judicial system for possible truancy. Personal or vacation days are not considered excused absences according to state law. However, if permission has been granted by Administration before an absence which is deemed to be educational in nature and if the student attempts to continue progressing through the assigned curriculum, those days will not be considered as unexcused absences.

Excused Absences

Your child will be excused from school for illness, unavoidable student medical appointments, and urgent family emergencies. To have the absence excused, the parent must present a written excuse to the school which includes the reason for the child's absence, the date, and parent signature. Children absent more than four continuous days due to illness should present a doctor's excuse. GCS will require that course work be made up at home.

Unexcused Absences

All absences not mentioned above will be counted as unexcused. Students should expect to work at home to make up for missed days.

Pre-Arranged Absences

It may be necessary for a student to miss school for a scheduled family event. Parents are asked to notify the Director regarding any pre-arranged absence by submitting a written notice no later than 1 week in advance of the anticipated absence. Approval for these pre-arranged absences are not guaranteed to be considered as excused.

Tardies/Late Arrivals

Parents are expected to make sure that their child is on time. Students not in their seats and ready to begin class at 8:30 will be considered tardy. In the morning, late arrivals due to an excused reason (see excused absences and including car problems) are not considered to be an unexcused tardy. All late arrival students must present a written excuse. Medical appointments will be excused by a form from the medical provider. Every 5 unexcused tardies will result in a fee of \$5. Our morning gathering/devotional time should be considered very important to the students' education, and every effort should be made to be at school on time.

Early Dismissal

When a child is dismissed from school before 11:00 AM without returning again, the student will be considered absent for the entire day. Students must be signed out and signed back in if they return the same day. A note would be appreciated to alert the teachers that the child will be leaving early. No child will be dismissed to leave with anyone other than the child's parent/guardian or an approved Pick Up person unless advance permission is received in writing from the parent/guardian. If an unforeseen event happens and the child must be picked up early or at school dismissal time by an individual not included on the list, a phone call must be made to the school office. Texts are not approved for this type of dismissal. Identification will be required from anyone other than the parent/guardian/regular pick up person at the time of pick-up.

GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Transportation

Grace Christian School does not provide transportation to and from school at this time; however, we will do our best to help parents connect with each other to solve transportation issues. If you can help provide transportation for another student in your area, please contact Administration.

Inclement Weather

GCS may occasionally need to cancel school due to inclement weather. This would be a severe weather event, not a predicted thunderstorm that will pass. In general, GCS will follow the lead of the Citrus County Public School System's decision to cancel schools, which will be announced through local media outlets. Also, if our area of Citrus County is under a tornado **warning** in the morning BEFORE school begins, parents should stay home until the tornado threat has been lifted. Note: this does not include a

tornado “watch” (Parents should use their own wisdom about the safety of leaving their homes. Excused tardies will be given to late students in this situation.)

In the event that a tornado warning is posted during a school day, students will be moved to the interior hallway away from all windows. Administration asks that parents NOT attempt to pick up a student from school during a tornado warning.

In the event that school is cancelled due to inclement weather, other school days may be added at the end of the year as “make up” days as required by County officials.

Pick-up Procedures

At 3:00, a teacher will be placed on duty at the pick-up location. Vehicles can line up to receive their children. Students will be dismissed at 3:00 from the classroom or outside area to come to your car. If your child is not ready to leave (for example, has not finished cleaning his/her area), you will be asked to park until he/she is ready.) Any parents who need to speak to a faculty member should park and come in. We do not want to hold up other parents for extended conversations.

Children will be allowed to leave with any residential parents/ guardians and any adult listed in SchoolWorx as having permission to pick up the student. However, ANY OTHER adult or licensed driver must have prior authorization to leave with a student in their care. Please let someone on staff know at the beginning of the day if a change in pick up is expected. In the event that arrangements for pick up must be made during the day that were not anticipated before school, a phone call to the school must be made by a residential parent/ guardian AND the driver MUST SHOW photo identification. Parents may be asked to speak to their child at the time of the phone call and inform them that arrangements have changed.

Student Phones

Students (of any age) are permitted to have their phones while on campus. However, all phones should be completely turned off and will be collected by the teachers in the morning to be returned at dismissal time. Occasionally, an instructor may want the students to use their phone in class to login to different apps that are approved for supplemental learning. Any phones that are found to be in the possession of a student will be confiscated and returned only to a parent. However, we don't want to discourage communication between a parent and their child. If a parent finds it necessary to contact their child during the day, he/she should call the GCS office phone number. Administration will give you immediate access to your child via our school phone. Please keep these communications strictly to important and necessary conversations.

Smart watches may be used only when the phone is turned off. Only students with a Dexcom monitor or another medically necessary device connected to an app will be allowed to carry their phones with them in their backpack.

If Administration or an instructor feels the student needs to contact his parents for any reason, students will be given access to their phone to call home. This will be preceded by a phone call from a staff member on the GCS phone line to explain the need to call and the conversation will take place in a private area away from other students. The student will be visually monitored as they make the phone call.

Visits to Campus

Parents/ Guardians and other family members are encouraged to visit the campus during scheduled events for which a parent invitation has been sent. Parents are also welcome to visit their student at lunch time to sit and eat with them. Unscheduled visits are not permitted due to the legal considerations of monitoring adults who have not been fingerprinted as a volunteer. No student who is not enrolled at Grace Christian is allowed to visit the campus with a GCS student during the school day except on a special Friend Day.

Food Items

Grace Christian does not prepare or cater snack time or lunch. Food items are brought from home only, except for Fridays when 1 soda option can be purchased as a fundraiser for GCS.

Students are given a morning snack time. We prefer that food items be nutritional choices (i.e. granola bars, cheese sticks, fruit, nuts, etc.) We discourage candy/chocolate as an option for morning snack time. Snacks should not require extensive clean-up. Students are required to carry a no-spill/leak water bottle with them throughout the day. Plastic water bottles will be allowed to be opened only during lunch time. This is to prevent spilling water on important papers or technical equipment.

Lunches should comprise of options that do not require use of a microwave. GCS is not licensed to provide access to a microwave. Lunches should be brought in insulated lunchboxes with a cool pack which should not generally require refrigeration.

Food items that are NOT permitted:

- any food items/ beverages in a glass container for storage
- no soda or energy drink for any student (except what can be purchased on Fridays)
- no excessive snack items in the lunch box

If your student forgets his lunch and a parent is unable to bring it to him, our staff will provide a lunch such as canned ravioli, etc.

Backpacks and Lunchboxes

Because different families consider the appropriateness of certain media promotions differently, GCS has determined that no logo or licensed character of a television show, video game, book series, toy, card game, or musical group may be displayed on lunchboxes, water bottles, apparel, or backpacks. Students who arrive with a lunchbox or backpack that does not follow this policy will have one day to find a new one.

Care of Furniture, Fixtures, Facilities, and Grounds

Students are expected to share the responsibility of caring for and preserving the school's furniture, fixtures, facilities, and grounds. GCS will not allow students to destroy desks, deface walls, etc. Students who choose to destroy the property of the school or of other students will be given demerits and required to pay for the items destroyed or defaced.

Students are also expected to share in keeping the lunchroom, classrooms, and outside grounds clean. Daily responsibilities may include wiping counters, tables, and vacuuming. Students are responsible for keeping the area immediately around their desks clean.

Computers/ Laptops/ Tablets/ Other Devices

Please see the *Technology Usage Agreement* for specific policies and procedures regarding most issues concerning technology.

A Chromebook will be provided for every student at the beginning of the school year. This Chromebook is provided for the exclusive use of school work. The math curriculum and other enriching activities, such as writing, will be completed on these Chromebooks.

It should be considered that students are "checking out" these devices at the beginning of the year. Students should be careful not to damage any part of the device. Chromebooks should always be transported in its zipped protective sleeve, even between classes. While it is reasonable to expect some wear and tear on the devices, it is possible that unnecessary damage on the part of the student will result in financial compensation required from the parents.

Accidents/ Medical Emergency

If a student is injured at any time during the school day or at any school-sponsored event, the following procedure will be utilized:

1. Student should report the accident to the nearest teacher or staff member.
2. Staff will determine if immediate professional medical attention is needed. Emergency medical services will be called if deemed necessary. Parents will be called immediately.
3. Minor accidents will be treated by staff, and an accident report will be filled out and sent home if needed or the parent will be advised upon pick-up. Any questions about the injury can be addressed with GCS staff.

Medications

No student can be in possession of a prescribed or over-the-counter medication. This includes aspirin or other pain relievers, cough syrup, inhalers, or epi-pens. Inhalers and EpiPens are considered a prescribed medication and must be turned in with the label attached to the box.

Parents may send written permission for a GCS faculty member to administer over-the-counter (OTC) cold, cough, and pain relievers. Faculty cannot legally administer a dosage that is not specifically designated by written direction on the label without a doctor's prescription. GCS cannot be held liable for failure to administer OTC products. Cough drops may be kept in the students' possession.

A Prescription Medication Form should be filled out and information should be entered into the School Worx account for regularly prescribed medications that must be taken at school. Any such medication will be administered by staff according to specific label instructions, and it should be noted that GCS does not employ a nurse.

Illness

Students who are found to have a fever of 100 + or any student who vomits will be sent home immediately. In addition, any students who are found to have lice will be sent home until the situation is resolved. **HCS requires that no student be sent to school unless they have been without a fever or vomiting for at least 24 hours. Failure to comply with this policy will result in possible disciplinary action for the family.**

DRESS CODE POLICY

It is our desire that this dress code will be affordable and convenient for families while at the same time honoring to God and helpful in keeping distractions away from the students.

Applicable to Boys

- Polo-style shirt with school logo – gray, navy blue, baby blue, yellow, or pink.
- Shirts must not show any skin on stomach or back when both arms are raised above the head or bending over.
- Tan, navy blue, gray, or black pants or shorts. Pants and shorts should not be frayed, have holes, worn thin, or ragged and sagging. Length should be proper as to not pile up on shoes or drag the floor. Pants should fit properly at the waist without sagging.
- Hair must not hang over eyebrows, ears or collars. Haircuts must not cause distraction because of style.
- NO sweatpants, gym shorts, or pajama pants.
- No hats or sunglasses may be worn inside.
- Jackets with no questionable or offensive writing or pictures may be worn over a collared shirt inside if needed. Solid colored sweatshirts/hoodies **with no writing** may be worn over a polo shirt also. All shirts worn under jackets or sweatshirts must meet dress code standards. Students can not pull up the hood on hoodies while inside the building.
- No piercings, visible tattoos, or facial hair growth (no hand drawn/sticker tattoos permitted either).
- No jewelry other than a Christian necklace or bracelet.

Applicable to Girls

- Polo-style shirt with school logo – gray, navy blue, baby blue, yellow, or pink.
- Shirts must not show any skin on stomach or back when both arms are raised above the head or bending over. Must be buttoned appropriately and modestly. All shirts worn under jackets or sweaters must meet dress code standards.
- Tan, navy blue, gray, or black pants or shorts. Pants are to be straight cut/ regular fit/ boot-cut fit or slightly flared pant leg. **NO skinny cut.** Pants must have the ability to be gently pulled away from the skin. No ankle slits. Length should be proper so as not pile up on shoes or drag the floor. All clothing should fit properly at the waist without sagging.
- NO sweatpants, yoga pants, gym shorts, leggings, or pajama pants.
- Undergarments are not allowed to be seen through the material or visible at the neckline.
- Shorts must be “Bermuda style” – generally not shorter than 3 inches above the top of the knee when standing.
- Clothing may not be excessively tight.
- Hair must not cause distraction because of color (only natural shades acceptable.)
- Girls are not permitted to wear nose jewelry or other facial piercing other than earrings (no more than 2 per ear)
- Jackets or sweaters with NO questionable or offensive writing or pictures may be worn. Sweatshirts/hoodies in solid colors with no writing may also be worn. Dress code polo shirts must be worn under a sweatshirt/hoodie. Students can not pull up the hood on hoodies while inside the building.

Applicable to all

- Closed-toed shoes only
- No backless shoes
- No heels higher than 2”
- Any color/ style of socks is permitted
- Attire must not be disruptive or distractive to the learning environment.
- NO stretchy/ spandex/ form fitting materials

DISCIPLINE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

When parents enroll their student at Grace Christian School they are choosing for their child a higher standard of conduct. Parents and students must accept the responsibility of upholding these high standards while at school and, to some extent, also in non-school activities. Regardless of the type of activity or location, our students are representatives of a Christian school, and even more, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Most children require instruction and discipline – and a lot of love and mercy -- as they grow toward maturity and self-regulation. GCS has developed a demerit system to help children become aware of behaviors that are unacceptable. This system will be utilized for most disciplinary infractions.

Students can expect to be warned of inappropriate behavior and given the opportunity to change their behavior before receiving a demerit. With the accumulation of 5 demerits, a written essay which examines the student's behavior in light of Scripture will be assigned. This essay must be completed at home before returning to school the next day. Specific requirements for the essay will be given on an individual basis. After two essays have been written (10 demerits accumulated), the student will be required to perform a work service project for GCS, First Baptist Church of Inverness, the student's church, or another non-profit entity. This service project must be done at the convenience of the organization and at a time other than school time. At the beginning of 2nd semester, the student will start fresh with no demerits.

Response to Discipline

When students are disciplined, they should never argue the problem with the teacher in front of the other students. If the student feels a misunderstanding exists, he should obey the teacher without protest and take the following steps to rectify the matter:

1. Go to the teacher after class and ask for a time to discuss the matter privately.
2. Talk the problem over with parents and ask parents to contact teacher for discussion and clarification.
3. If the issue cannot be resolved with the teacher, the parent may request assistance from the Director to discuss the matter privately.

Immediate Suspension or Expulsion

Depending on the significance of any misconduct and its impact on the Christian environment of the school, students engaging in certain misconduct will be in jeopardy of immediate expulsion.

Behaviors worthy of suspension/expulsion:

1. Fighting on school property
2. Flagrantly abusive or obscene language or gestures, bullying, racial disrespect
3. Possession of weapons, including knives (Police will be involved.)
4. Leaving school without permission
5. Harassment, threats, assault or battery of a teacher or other student in person or through social media avenues.
6. Moral misconduct -- inappropriate sexual conduct or conversations in person or via text or internet, even when the text or internet interaction occurs off campus.
7. Possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia (Police will be involved.)
8. Possession of vape or tobacco products

Searches

The Administration reserves the right to search individual students and their possessions, including desks, backpacks, and electronics for items which are dangerous or violate other policies addressed in this Handbook. GCS students will never be physically touched by a staff member in a search. Failure to cooperate with instructions will result in an immediate phone call to the parents. If a situation is reported to be extremely dangerous, the police will be called. Every attempt will be made by the Director and teachers to work with parents in helping their child succeed at GCS.

Suspected Abuse

All employees of Grace Christian School have an affirmative duty to report all actual or suspected cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Serious abuse usually involves a combination of factors. While a single sign may not be significant, a pattern of physical or behavioral signs is a serious indicator and must be reported.

Reporting Suspected Misconduct by GCS Personnel

All employees and administrators have an obligation to report misconduct by instructional personnel and school administrators which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student. Examples of misconduct include obscene language, drug and alcohol use, disparaging comments, prejudice or bigotry, sexual innuendo, cheating or testing violations, physical aggression, and accepting or offering favors.

Reports of misconduct of employees should be made to the acting Director of Grace Christian School. Reports of misconduct committed by the acting Director should be made to the Pastor of First Baptist Church of Inverness or the Chairperson of the School Committee. Please see the Parent page on the GCS website for current contact information.

Legally sufficient allegations of misconduct by Florida certified educators will be reported to the Office of Professional Practices Services. Policies and procedures for reporting misconduct by instructional personnel or school administrators which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student are posted in the Standards of Ethical Conduct, posted on our website at www.GraceChristianInverness.org.

EXTRA CURRICULAR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Sports

Grace Christian School students are permitted by law to participate in competitive sports at their locally zoned public school. (Sideline cheerleading requires approval by each specific school.) A simple notarized form is all that is required to be handed in to the public school. Parents are responsible for arranging for their child to participate in a sport. Playing a sport for another private school is an often-changing law within the state of Florida. Please speak with the other school's administration/ coaches for clarification whether that is allowed.

Students may miss school for a game, but prior written notice is required. A copy of the season's game schedule will serve as written notice.

Students may leave up to a half hour early for practice. However, if any core curriculum has not been completed for that day, it must be completed at home for homework.

As Grace Christian School grows, we anticipate providing an active sports program with opportunities to participate in several different sports.

Student Employment

No middle school student may leave campus early to work, even at a family business.

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Administration and faculty will primarily utilize the SchoolWorx software (app and parent dashboard) for communication of important information, including but not limited to calendar events, discipline, attendance, academic progress, and homework assignments. Parents MUST access their personal SchoolWorx account on a regular basis. Grace Christian School cannot be held liable for information that is not received by the parents in any other way, although we will try to pass on important announcements using other methods, as well, specifically through the private GCS Parent Facebook group. Any technical problems with your SchoolWorx account should be addressed with SchoolWorx directly, including password reset and account information. A text may be sent school-wide if necessary.

PHYSICIAN EVALUATION FORMS

Grace Christian School faculty and administration are happy to help physicians and therapists evaluate your child using their specific evaluation forms. Important to the process of these evaluations is the idea that your child may behave in a different way in different places and situations; therefore, it is important that the evaluating physician have information from GCS that has not been influenced by the parent. To insure this happens appropriately, physician forms will be mailed directly to the evaluating physician upon completion. Parents will NOT be allowed access to these. An addressed envelope would be appreciated in these cases.

Grace Christian School reserves the right to change the contents of this Student Handbook at any time in regard to legal, financial, or practical purposes. Changes will be immediately effective and parents will be notified immediately.