



# Student Handbook

Note: This handbook covers topics which specifically pertain to Vestavia Hills Elementary East. It is very important for parents to read the District Parent-Student handbook, which is also linked on our website.

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## Letter from Our Principal

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to East! The partnership among students, parents, community members, and our school staff is the major reason that the schools in our community are among the best anywhere. This is evidenced by the academic achievement and growth of our students, but also by the outstanding character of our students.

During the 2021-2022 school year, U.S. News and World Report recognized East as one of the top-ten achieving elementary schools in the state of Alabama, and the highest achieving elementary school in the Birmingham area. That same year, East was named a National School of Character and an Alabama School of Character, both for the second time over the last ten years by Character.org, which is a nationally respected organization advocating for character education within schools.

The 2019-2020 school year was particularly exciting as East returned to its roots as it became a K-5 school again. We also took the opportunity to bring back the East Eagle mascot, which had been the traditional mascot back in the 80s and earlier, incorporating our new core values with it. So, when we talk about East children flying like eagles, we're talking about them exhibiting Empathy, Acceptance, Grit, Love, and Excellence. To make a great home away from home, we always envision a school where children are not only safe and learning, but also happy. To help children feel happy and contented at school, we stress our new EAGLE values, and we have continued our "Friendship Initiative" for its third year, which is an effort to employ intentional strategies to increase positive relationships among students in each classroom. We have seen excellent results!

Please plan on becoming involved at East next year to help us serve our children. The best way to do that is to become a member of our PTO. Through this membership you will find so many ways to support and volunteer here at school. Also, please feel free to contact me if you have any comments, questions, or suggestions this year.

Looking forward to another wonderful year!

Mark Richardson

Email: [richardsonml@vestavia.k12.al.us](mailto:richardsonml@vestavia.k12.al.us)

(205) 402-5204

## **Letter from our Assistant Principal**

Welcome to Vestavia Hills Elementary East! I am so excited about the upcoming school year. Every day I feel so fortunate to be a part of such a fine school built on excellence.

Within this tradition of excellence, I will work hard to continue to support the momentum that has been created in all areas of the curriculum. We have such a talented and devoted group of teachers and staff who work tirelessly to help every child be the best they can be. I am amazed and so appreciative of all the support provided by our PTO. If you haven't done so, please join this group of parent volunteers and look for ways to put your individual talents to use for the benefit of East.

I understand the responsibility that comes with being a part of the East family and will do everything I can to ensure continued success. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can help you in any way.

Sincerely,  
Cindy Echols

E-mail: [echolscn@vestavia.k12.al.us](mailto:echolscn@vestavia.k12.al.us)  
(205) 402-5201

## **Letter from our Guidance Counselors**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are excited to work together with your son/daughter during the 2019-2020 school year! Our goal is to create a positive and supportive environment conducive to learning and success. We will be providing several guidance lessons to each classroom throughout the school year, as well as conducting small groups and counseling individuals as needed.

The elementary years are a time when students begin to develop their academic self-concept as well as their feelings of confidence and competence as learners. They are beginning to develop decision-making, communication and life skills, as well as character values. It is also a time when students develop and acquire attitudes toward school, self, peers, social groups and families. Please know that we will make every effort to ensure that your child receives as much personal assistance as possible to ensure his/her years here at VHEE are successful.

Please feel to contact us at any time if you have any questions or concerns or to set up an appointment to meet with one of us; we are here to assist your child and you! We look forward to having a great school year with you and your children!

Warm Regards,  
*Kelsey M. Brown*  
*Emily Foster*

School Counselors  
(205) 402-5206

### Letter from our PTO President

Welcome from VHEE - PTO! VHEE truly is a special school and community, and we are so excited to welcome your family!

The goal of the VHEE Parent Teacher Organization is to connect you with opportunities to participate in the amazing work VHEE teachers, staff, and administrators are doing by providing ways for you to use your time, talents, and resources to better East! We look forward to serving our awesome school with you!

**Communications with Families**- Our main tool to communicate with families is Membership Tool Kit (MTK). It is important to maintain current/correct email addresses and phone numbers on the MTK app.

**Membership Tool Kit (MTK)** - The PTO's primary communication tool.

PTO will send emails about VHEE activities such as Carnival, Book Fair, May Day Play Day, as well as the monthly newsletter, The East Express, and other school happenings.

MTK allows you to access the online school directory for those families opting to participate. The email address provided during online registration this summer, will also be the address used for all PTO emails. Notify PTO VP of Communications, Anne Michelle Barnett, [barnettannemichelle@gmail.com](mailto:barnettannemichelle@gmail.com), with email changes.

Download the Membership Toolkit mobile app in the App Store or Google Play:



**Social Media Platforms** - Here at VHEE we also use social media to communicate reminders and upcoming events.

Please ensure you are following on Instagram and Facebook and using the hashtag **#VHEE** throughout the year.



@VHEEPTO



@Vestavia Hills Elementary East PTO

**Online Registration**- During the online registration process this summer, you will be able to select where you would like to serve from a list of school events: there is not a limit to the number of events to sign up for, so go for it! Serving in school wide events will connect you with the VHEE community beyond your child's classroom!

**Classroom Volunteer Link**- During the first week of school, you will receive an email with volunteer opportunities for inside your child's classroom. You will easily be able to choose which opportunities best work for you. Insider tip: sign up for your availability throughout the

whole year, and you will receive reminders a few days before your chosen volunteer responsibilities

**PTO Membership**- Formally JOIN the VHEE PTO during the online registration process!

**PTO Membership Dues**- Membership is \$10/per family paid during online registration.

**PTO Meetings**- Traditionally the first Tuesday of each month at 9:15 a.m. (but this year look out for some afternoon times) in the lunchroom, with a virtual attendance option available. All parents are welcome to attend. If you cannot make meetings due to your work schedule - NO WORRIES – many volunteer jobs involve using organization and computer skills that can be done outside of school hours!

**Fundraising**- The PTO sponsors fundraisers that fund technology, professional development, media, playground equipment, and MORE, which all work together to benefit East. It's amazing what the PTO provides for VHEE!

**Gift Wrap Sales**- August 15th-31st, 2022 (100% online sales this year)

**East Spirit Shop**- Seasonal Spirit Shops will go live on the Bandwagon website, with communication prior to the launch date and throughout the shop's open dates. Please look for emails with all Spirit Shop information, including how to begin purchasing your Vestavia and East clothes! Each season will feature new merchandise to purchase.

**All in for East** - September 19th – 23rd, 2022 - Our biggest fundraiser of the year!!

**Carnival**-October 27th, 2022 (evening event)

**Feast for East** – Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 dates TBD – Family meal pick-ups

**Labels for East**- All Year- This includes BoxTops, Publix, & Planet Fundraiser

The above fundraisers as well as gifts from families and local businesses, provide an operating budget of approximately \$160,000 plus extra funds to purchase special requests from our faculty.

All funds are carefully and thoughtfully dispersed with the input of teachers, staff, administrators, and parents to ensure we are following the VHEE way of providing excellent learning tools and experiences for our students and teachers!

I hope you will get involved with PTO this coming year at VHEE – it truly is an amazing school and community! I look forward to serving alongside you and getting to know you!

Go Vestavia East Eagles,

Ashley Groves

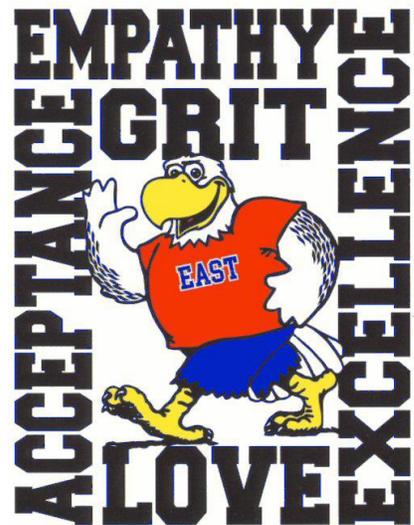
[ashleyabarron@yahoo.com](mailto:ashleyabarron@yahoo.com)

# School Philosophy

## Our Core Values:

The school motto of Vestavia Hills Elementary East is a simple, child-friendly statement of the Golden Rule: "Treat others like you wish to be treated." All of the core values that we emphasize support the teaching of this overarching principle and are values that our young students, from kindergarten through fifth grade, can understand and put into practice. During the 2020-2021 school year, the East E.A.G.L.E. core values were adopted:

- Empathy: We respect others by trying to understand their feelings and needs.
- Acceptance: We care for others, even when they are different from us.
- Grit: We persevere as we put forth our best effort, even if the work is hard.
- Love: We follow the Golden Rule by being kind and acting in the best interest of others.
- Excellence: We are responsible, trustworthy, and always put forth our best effort.



## Our School Vision:

Every Vestavia Hills Elementary East student will learn to his/her potential in a safe environment, while experiencing happiness through social growth at school.

## Our Mission Statement:

The mission of Vestavia Hills City Schools is to ensure each student learns without limits by pursuing knowledge and igniting curiosity about the world through a system distinguished by:

- A safe and nurturing environment
- The courage to be creative
- Unparalleled community support
- Appreciation of diversity
- Multiple paths to a bold future

## Our Objectives:

- Every student will know, understand, and share his or her unique gifts.
- 100% of students will possess confidence to lead positive change.
- 100% of students will achieve personal aspirations at the next level.

- 100% of students are emotionally secure.
- Every student develops, owns, and exercises his or her personal set of values.

**Our Strategies:**

1. We will provide multiple opportunities for students to choose pathways toward achieving their aspirations.
2. We will expose students to an array of opportunities to discover their unique gifts.
3. We will build staff capacity emphasizing individual responsibility.
4. We will create a dynamic of learning and teaching that provokes questioning and honors academic risk taking.
5. We will create a culture of inclusivity and respect.
6. We will customize and create global learning environments to facilitate learning without constraints.
7. We will intentionally cultivate reciprocal relationships with our community.

(The Mission Statement, Objectives, and Strategies are part of the District Strategic Plan that was approved by the Vestavia Hills Board of Education in the Spring of 2015.)

## **Health and Nutrition Issues**

**Asbestos Study**

The asbestos study of the school is on file at the school for anyone wishing to review it.

**School Snacks and Lunches****Snacks**

Children should bring a nutritious snack to school each day. Do not send a beverage, other than a water bottle, for snack time.

**School Lunches and Breakfasts**

All students receive a lunch account to be used in the lunchroom. The account will have an individual I.D. Number.

We encourage our parents to manage their child's lunch account using the PayPAMS online portal (<https://www.paypams.com/>). At Meet the Teacher Day, though, parents can pay with a check or cash to fill the account. Students may use this account to purchase breakfast, lunch, snacks and/or drinks from the cafeteria by entering the number into a computer pad at the cash register. As the account is used, the student will be given, on a regular basis, a computer-generated print-out of the amount left.

Breakfast is offered each morning between 7:15 and 7:45. Since class begins at 7:45, we ask that all students eating breakfast arrive no later than 7:30.

Parents may visit during lunch hours to eat with their children. You simply need to check in at the office prior to lunch, and then meet your child's class at the cafeteria.

Please make sure that snacks and any lunches that you send be items that can be opened by your children. This may be something that you can also practice at home prior to school starting. Also, please do not send bottled or canned beverages. They can be dangerous and difficult to open. Thank you for your consideration!

We encourage students to purchase a school lunch of either soup or sandwich or meat and vegetable as the meals are carefully planned for high nutritional value. Milk may be purchased separately on a daily basis. If a student is allergic to milk and the parent wishes the child to have orange juice as a substitute for milk, the parent must give the teacher a written request from the student's physician.

The lunch menu is published monthly in our PTO newsletter, "East Express," as well as on our school website. Lunch prices for the 2022-2023 school year are: **Students- \$2.50; Teacher/Staff-\$3.75; and Visitors-\$4.75.**

Breakfast also is an available option each day and is served between 7:15 and 7:40 in our lunchroom. Breakfast prices for the 2022-2023 school year are: **Students- \$1.75; Teacher/Staff-\$2.25; and Visitors-\$3.25.**

***(PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE)***

### **Dietary Restrictions**

Vestavia Hills City Schools understand that certain children have special dietary needs and will make all reasonable accommodations for those needs. Any student who requires special dietary needs must have a medical statement on file in their school's Child Nutrition office prior to meals being prepared for the student. Please access the Diet Prescription Form for Meals at School on the left, print, complete, and return it to your child's school.

### **Free and Reduced Application**

Any student in Vestavia Hills City School System is eligible to apply for free or reduced-price meal benefits. A family application is available online each school year AFTER JULY 1st. Applications are also available in the front office of each school. The application should be COMPLETED ENTIRELY and returned to your child's school registrar or Child Nutrition Manager. The completed application may also be returned to the Child Nutrition Department at the Vestavia Hills City Schools central office.

\* ALL sections on the application must be completed to prevent delays in the approval process for your child.

\* A notification letter will be mailed to the student's parents/guardians after the application process is approved.

\* Only one application per family needs to be completed.

\* A new application MUST be completed EACH school year. (The date on the application must correspond to the current school year.)

\* New students applying for free or reduced benefits are responsible for paying regular meal prices until benefits are issued.

### **Wellness Policy**

In accordance with recent federal and state regulations, our school has adopted a local wellness policy. Guidelines are as follows:

#### **Recommendations for Nutrition Guidelines for Foods Served in Classrooms**

##### **Student Birthdays**

- Student birthdays will be celebrated at one time each month.
- Each classroom will have a volunteer parent who will be responsible for coordinating treats for birthday celebrations.
- Sweet treats for birthday celebrations will be limited to one treat per child (example - 1 cupcake, 1 cookie, etc.)

##### **Classroom Parties**

- Party treats will consist of 1 sweet, 1 salty, a drink, and fruit.
- Party favors will be non-edible.
- Games and activities will be emphasized.

##### **Other Recommendations**

- Any snacks other than those for Classroom Birthday Celebrations and Classroom Parties that are provided by the school should be within the guidelines of the current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Alabama State Department of education Wellness Policy.
- Food used for instructional purposes such as graphing or sorting should be limited, as much as possible, to foods that comply with the current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Alabama State Department of education Wellness Policy.

### **Student Illness**

If a student becomes ill at school, parents will be contacted immediately. If we are unable to reach you, it is imperative that we have alternate phone numbers of others authorized to take care of your child. Please update the office immediately if your phone number or any of your emergency contact numbers change.

### **Communicable Contagious Diseases/Conditions**

VHEE follows the Jefferson County Department of Health regulations concerning Communicable diseases. As our community continues to deal with the COVID pandemic, district protocols, which are

based on guidance from the Alabama Department of Health, may change. Parents may access district health and wellness protocols here: <https://www.vestavia.k12.al.us/vhcs>

Please do not allow your child to attend school when he/she has fever or a known communicable illness or condition. Children in this category will not benefit from instruction, and they will certainly jeopardize the health of their fellow students and teacher. Children must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school. Please do not administer fever reducing medication and send children to school. If children have gastrointestinal upsets they should be completely symptom-free before returning to school. In any situation in which the student has vomited, before they return to class, they should be able to eat several normal meals. If your child has been sick the night before and reports that he or she feels better, please do not send them to school. Evaluate them before coming into the classroom. If the student has diarrhea, before returning to the classroom, they should be eating normally and had several normal bowel movements.

Please consult your physician if you have any questions about conditions.

### **Head Lice**

This condition can continue to be a problem if not treated effectively. It can happen to any child, so having head lice is nothing to be embarrassed about. The more you know about head lice, the better prepared you'll be if you encounter them. Check your child periodically through the school year. Notify the school nurse immediately if you find them, and she can help you effectively treat this condition. Our policy is that a child found to have head lice will not be allowed to attend school until all the lice are off the hair. Nits should be removed from the hair as well. Following the instructions on doctor-recommended products will ensure quick entry back to school.

### **Ringworm**

If you suspect ringworm, please treat it with a doctor or pharmacist-recommended product. Keep the area covered for at least 72 hours after treatment.

### **Pinkeye**

If you suspect pinkeye, please consult your pediatrician immediately. Children are not allowed to attend school until treatment has been in effect for at least 24 hours.

### **Topical Skin Infections**

If your student has a skin infection, please keep it covered until the physician has cleared him or her. We want to take every precaution to prevent the spreading of germs. Reminding students to wash their hands frequently is advised during this time.

### **Procedures for Picking up Assignments When a Child is Sick**

1. Parents should contact the office one day in advance.
2. Office personnel will notify the teacher.
3. The teacher will send books and assignments to the office.
4. If brothers, sisters, friends, etc. are to collect assignments, they should pick them up in the office after school.
5. Students who are going out of town should bring a note from home at least one day in advance to request assignments.

Important: If a child is too ill to attend school, he is probably too ill to do homework. Unless the illness exceeds two (2) days, please do not ask for assignments. Children will be allowed to make up work missed due to illness.

## **Instructional Programs ~ Opportunities**

### **Field Trips**

Students should wear their class T-shirt on all field trips. It is the policy of East not to allow siblings to attend field trips with parent chaperones. This is for the safety of all concerned.

### **Health & Physical Education (P.E.)**

Many students are sent to school with notes requesting that they not go to physical education classes.

If students are well enough to come to school, in most cases they are well enough to go to P.E., but not participate in the physical activities. Physical Education time is limited, and a properly dressed child needs this change in his schedule. If a physical activity needs to be limited, the P.E. teachers will be happy to cooperate. Please send a note with your child to his/her teacher if physical activity needs to be limited due to illness.

In accordance with the Alabama Course of Study, published by the State Department of Education, the primary emphasis of the VHEE physical education program is the introduction and development of basic motor skills and an understanding of the concepts which accompany these skills. An example follows: The student will demonstrate progress in the manipulative skill, throwing, and show an understanding for the concept, opposition, by stepping forward on the opposite foot when throwing a tennis ball.

Along with motor skill development students are provided the opportunity for positive social interaction through individual, small group, and large group activities. Emphasis is on cooperation, sharing, and working as a unit toward a common goal. An example follows: The student will demonstrate the dance elements- promenade, do-si-do, and swing in the square dance "Two Head Ladies Cross Over."

Twice yearly, fall and spring, the President's Challenge Fitness Test is administered to all students in grades 1, 2 and 3. National norms have been established by which we can compare the fitness levels of our students with others throughout the United States. The State Department of Education mandates that this test be administered to all students with the results being sent to them. Students who score in the 85th percentile or higher in all five tests administered will receive the Presidential Physical Fitness Award. Various strength, flexibility, agility and cardio-respiratory activities are conducted throughout the entire school year to insure the students are properly prepared for the fitness test.

### **School-Wide Enrichment**

Special care is taken to ensure that all students reach their potential at East! The Schoolwide Enrichment Program at East provides a variety of educational activities to enhance and extend the

students' academic opportunities at every grade level. Classroom teachers collaborate with the school's enrichment coordinator to plan instruction, which is both challenging and appropriate for students who excel in academic areas. This enrichment team also plans for each classroom to have supplemental lessons to support student achievement. Some of the most popular of these have been the Birds of Prey visit from a nearby conservationist camp, visiting renowned book authors, and The McWane Science Center's school outreach program.

All students at VHEE attend weekly Art and Music classes with highly qualified teachers. Several concerts and shows are presented throughout the year; and every grade level participates in authentic experiences in the fine arts.

In addition to these experiences, the Schoolwide Enrichment Coordinator, supported by the committee of dedicated parents and the PTO, facilitates an Annual Enrichment Festival. This week long adventure is a themed event which encompasses all subject areas and involves every student in hands-on learning throughout the week.

The Schoolwide Enrichment Program at East strives to provide every student with motivational, thought provoking and challenging activities.

## **Parent Involvement ~ Policies**

### **Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities**

Any disabled person desiring reasonable accommodations should notify the principal at least five days prior to the meeting so that arrangements for reasonable accommodations can be made.

### **Computer Acceptable Use**

Vestavia Hills City School's Acceptable Use Policy for technology can be found at this link:

[Computer Acceptable Use Policy](#)

### **Invitations/Parties/Gifts**

Party invitations may not be distributed in the classroom unless each child of the same gender in the room receives one. You will agree wholeheartedly with this policy when you consider the heartache and rejection experienced by the child who does not receive an invitation. Likewise, PLEASE DO NOT SEND GIFTS SUCH AS BALLOONS, FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS, ETC. TO THE SCHOOL FOR DELIVERY TO A STUDENT. This creates a distraction and disturbance that interferes with the learning environment.

Also, we ask that latex balloons not be brought to the school due to a significant number of children with latex allergies.

### **Parent-Teacher Conference**

Parent-Teacher conferences are encouraged. If a parent wishes to schedule an in-person or virtual conference with a teacher or the principal, please call the school office for an appointment. Please do not call teachers at home unless it is an emergency that cannot be handled during school hours. Please do not come to see a teacher without a scheduled appointment.

Teachers will offer a conference opportunity to every parent during the first semester. Additional conferences may be called by teachers and parents as needed throughout the school year.

### **Placement Procedure for Vestavia Hills Elementary Schools**

Placing each student in the proper educational setting is time-consuming, but very important. Therefore, we are committed to considering the unique needs of all children and then making the appropriate placement. We believe this process is fair for every child, and we ask for your cooperation.

Each spring, we will give parents an online opportunity to provide information to help us in making these placements. Please know that classrooms are formed for the following school year in late May/early June, so any input you give after June 1<sup>st</sup> is difficult to consider.

### **PTO Meetings**

Our PTO schedules meetings in most cases on the first Tuesday of the month at 9:15am (exceptions to that time noted below). In 2022-2023, these meetings will take place in our cafeteria (except for the May meeting) on the following dates:

August 16  
September 6  
October 4 (at 5:00 pm)  
November 1  
February 7  
March 7 (at 5:00 pm)  
April 4  
May 2 (Location TBD)

### **Report Cards**

Report cards are issued every nine (9) weeks for all grades. Report cards will be sent home the Friday following the end of the nine-week grading period. If your child receives additional services, such as speech, then you should receive a progress report in addition to the report card.

### **Student/Parent Complaints and Grievances**

The Vestavia Hills City Schools Policy Manual addresses "Student/Parent Complaints and Grievances." These policies give the appropriate steps that a parent or student should take to "provide for prompt and equitable resolution of students/parents complaints and grievances."

The policy defines three levels that a student or parent should explore in reaching resolution if informal communication with the immediate teacher or principal does not settle the matter. The first level involves the completion of a Vestavia Hills City Schools Grievance Report to be submitted to the principal.

The above represents a portion of the policy; the entire Board policy is available in the school office and at this address: <http://www.vestavia.k12.al.us/Page/1897>

### **Teacher Appreciation**

You are encouraged to notify your child's teacher of your appreciation for a job well done. Teachers receive quite a boost from this type of verbal or written message. The PTO regularly sponsors such events as a "Welcome Back" coffee for the teachers/administration, and a luncheon during "Teacher Appreciation Week."

### **Visitors—**

Each visitor to the school must first press the button by the front door to be recognized and state the purpose for his or her visit prior to being granted access to the school. Then each visitor must present his/her driver's license in the office during the visit. The license will be scanned, and a "Visitor" sticker will be issued for the visitor to wear at all times while on campus. If a visitor to the school does not bring a driver's license, an administrator must approve his/her visit.

We ask that parents arrange teacher conferences with the teacher ahead of time. If parents show up unexpectedly for a conference, they will be asked to schedule a mutually convenient time with the teacher.

***We ask that parents avoid bringing preschool children during school visits if at all possible.***

### **Policies for Volunteers**

We are fortunate to have many parents who volunteer to work in our school. So that the classroom teacher can continue with his/her regularly planned instructional program, the parent volunteer will pick up work to be done at a designated point, take the work to a work area (i.e.: table in the cafeteria), and return the completed work to the pick-up point. The teacher's lounge is not to be considered a work area.

The above "Policies for Volunteers" does not apply to library aides, professional resource persons, or seasonal and special project helpers. Some tasks a parent volunteer can assist with are cutting letters and patterns, making bulletin board materials, games, and learning center activities, using the copying machine, and typing documents for the teacher.

It is the teacher's responsibility at the beginning of the school year to inform the parents of the designated work areas. The teachers will leave adequate instructions with the work to be done so the teacher can continue uninterrupted in the classroom.

***We ask that parents avoid bringing preschool children when volunteering.***

## **Safety Issues**

### **Before & After School Safety**

We are always concerned about the safety of your child and are especially concerned about students who are on the school grounds without adult supervision. School begins at 7:45 a.m. and dismisses at 2:35 p.m. The Vestavia Hills Extended Day Program (402-5229) provides on-site care at Vestavia-East for the child who needs to remain after 2:55 p.m. The Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church also provides these services.

Important: If arrangements for normal afternoon pickup change, please notify your child's teacher by a note or phone call prior to the day of the change. Please do not call the office with change of carpool pick-up plans if at all possible. These messages are difficult to get to the teachers and children. Teachers cannot take the word of children that pick-up plans have changed. Unless teachers are officially notified, children will be directed to follow regular procedure.

### **Security Requirements When Visiting**

As mentioned previously, we ask for understanding and patience from our visitors as we ask for each person wishing to enter our building to state the purpose for the visit, to state his or her name, and present him or herself to the camera. Once entering the building, every visitor should come straight into the office and present a driver's license before getting instructions for carrying out the purpose of their visit.

### **Morning & Afternoon Carpool Safety and Procedure**

Carpool in the morning and afternoon is a very important time. The safety of your child(ren) is critical. Because of this primary concern, we ask everyone to follow certain rules:

Please take a few minutes to study the map included in this handbook to see how the traffic will flow. A few things to remember: Display your carpool number; proceed with caution; and, please be patient! Please enter the campus from Kentucky Avenue. The Right Lane is for Lower Level drop-off/pick up, and the Left Lane is for Upper Level drop-off/pick up.

The first car in each lane for pick up should wait in the space before the awnings until motioned to pull forward. This allows children to safely move to the upper level before carpool pick up begins. The Tyson Drive entrance should only be used by buses, childcare vans, faculty members, visitors to the park or school, and emergency vehicles during carpool time. (This entrance is not used for a traffic lane for the primary purpose of allowing access to emergency vehicles.) Tyson Drive is a two-way road for visitors, deliveries, and Byrd Park visitors from 8:20 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and after school hours only! During carpool (7:15-8:00 a.m. and 2:30-3:00 p.m.) please treat it as a one-way street, and exit the campus with carpool traffic onto Southwood.

For the safety of our students, we ask for the cooperation of all parents and drivers. The following rules will help to safely expedite traffic:

- All drivers should have a carpool number and should be in a carpool line. Always display your carpool number daily (including rainy day carpool). This number will be given out during registration.
- We ask that all parents in carpool line refrain from using their cell phones while driving through the line. This is an obvious danger as attention is diverted from the many, many young children who are waiting for their rides.
- We request that all parents drive through the carpool line everyday instead of parking and walking to the school to get their children. We particularly discourage parking at Byrd Park. We have had children try to run into the street toward Byrd Park when they see a parent coming

from there to retrieve them. Also, as anyone who drives the carpool line can confirm, our entire carpool line is slowed down when we have large numbers of people using the crosswalk. The carpool safety monitors have been instructed to hold walkers from the Byrd Park parking lot until a group of approximately ten forms before stopping traffic at the crosswalk. On rainy days, please consider always driving through carpool. We cannot stop our car lanes every time someone walks up to the crosswalk, even on rainy days. Finally, walkers are put at risk as cars depart the Byrd Park parking lot (where we have also had fender benders during dismissal time). If you have a special reason to park at Byrd Park during arrival in the morning, we ask that you walk with your child across the crosswalk.

- If you feel that it is necessary to walk up to get your child, we will require you to bring a carpool number (simply take the number from your rear-view mirror). If you do not have a carpool number, then you will need to bring a picture ID. Also, we will ask all parents walking up to retrieve their children after school to wait outside rather than inside the front lobby. The main entryway is very congested, and it is helpful to have parents wait outside. Someone will be on hand to check your number or ID to ensure that the right child is with the right parent.
- Train your children to have their supplies ready when you stop to let them out in the morning. Please try to hand out kisses and goodbyes when you are stopped earlier in the line.
- Teach your children to handle car doors on their own; we prefer that parents not leave their car to open the door for their child (we have workers outside to assist children).
- Unload students from the right side of the vehicle so students may walk to the sidewalk without crossing traffic.
- Stress to your children the importance of watching for you in the afternoon. Students will not be allowed to walk to their carpool vehicle before it arrives at the designated pick-up point. While we want them to quickly walk to their car, we do not want any child to run. If you see your child run before he/she gets into your car, please correct this behavior.
- Study the traffic pattern map which illustrates the proper entrance and exit of school grounds.
- When loading or unloading during carpool, please pull your vehicle up as far as possible so that as many vehicles as possible may load and unload at the same time.
- Do not leave your vehicle unattended.
- Do not block the exit of another parked vehicle.
- If you arrive early in the afternoon before students are dismissed, please turn off your engine while waiting for the line to start moving. This helps protect air quality.
- Please place your car in park while students are loading or unloading.

- If you have a reason to park and come to the school, please set a good example by crossing only at crosswalks.
- In the afternoon, your children will wait inside the building, and their number will be visually displayed in the room where they are waiting. If your child has not arrived outside by the time that you pull around in front of the building, you may be asked to pull up and wait in a parking area that will allow the line to continue to flow. If that happens, someone will be actively looking for your child in order to escort him/her to your vehicle.
- Please observe the speed limit on our campus, which is 5 mph.
- We ask that only children who are within walking distance of their home be classified as walkers. Many parents park off our campus and have children walk to their car. This can turn into a frightening situation when a parent gets caught in traffic and is not there when their child arrives and is left unattended away from campus. Also, we have heard from neighbors, and they have asked that parents not park along neighborhood streets to pick up their children due to safety concerns. Our police department has also informed us that when parents park on both sides of the street, it creates very unsafe conditions. So, please refrain from asking us to send your child as a walker when they are walking to a parked car off campus.
- Parking for school business is allowed in the Byrd Park parking area (upper level) as well as in front of the school between the hours of 8:20 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Please do not block this area during carpool hours. (The lower level as illustrated on the map is designated as Faculty Parking.)
- The exit onto Southwood is one way. Please do not enter the wrong way.

# Carpool Map



### **Information from the "Parent Guide for School Safety and Crisis"**

In accordance with State and Federal guidelines, the Vestavia Hills School System has formulated and implemented a comprehensive safety and crisis management plan. Each school also has developed a detailed school safety and crisis planning manual. The safety of your child is our top priority.

### **Parent Procedures for Early Dismissal Due to Inclement Weather**

The superintendent will notify local school of need and time for early dismissal.

The superintendent will activate the district's VH Connect automatic calling system with information regarding time of dismissal.

Children will be dismissed at the designated time and carpool procedures will be followed.

No children will be dismissed to walk to the Methodist Church.

Parents are discouraged from parking in the upper lot by Byrd Park and using the crosswalk.

No student will be released with anyone unless they are on the individual check-out list.

### **Parent Procedures for Early Dismissal Due to Other Causes**

The superintendent will initiate early dismissal for various crisis situations and communicate with parents via VH Connect.

Community resources will be called upon as the need arises.

In the event that evacuation from the school site is required, parents will be notified as to the site and the time to pick up their child.

Children will only be released to those on their Individual Check-out Lists.

Parents and guardians are not to come to the school unless instructed to do so.

### **Severe Weather**

Severe Weather drills are practiced regularly at school. Weather radio is available in the school office providing weather alerts. Teachers are alerted when we receive a tornado watch signal. If a tornado warning or other severe weather warning is received, students follow the procedures established during drills and move to the safest parts of the school.

If severe weather occurs near the end of the school day, it is recommended that parents come into the building rather than wait in parked cars.

### **Fire Drills**

Carefully planned drills are practiced regularly. The Vestavia Hills Fire Marshall is kind enough to supervise our fire drills. Fire Drill Signal: One continuous bell for 60 seconds. In case of power failure, a continuous blowing of a whistle will signal a fire drill.

## **Special Education ~ Special Services**

### **School Support Team (SST)**

The SST is a school-based, problem-solving team whose members may be composed of regular educators, counselors, administrators and other individuals as needed. This team meets to discuss issues related to specific needs of teachers and students and offers teachers assistance in resolving academic, social and behavioral student issues within the regular classroom setting. The team documents the development of an action plan to remediate the referring concerns and if appropriate, recommend a referral for special education testing following implementation of interventions for a minimum of 30 school days. Staff members and parents may make a referral to the SST any time throughout the school year. If anyone has questions, they may contact the school and ask for the SST facilitator.

### **CHILD FIND**

Vestavia Hills City Board of Education is committed through IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) to identify, locate and evaluate children ages birth through 21, who regardless of the severity of their disability, need special education and related services. These services also apply to private school students located within our city zone as well as migrant and homeless students who are suspected of having a disability and are in need of special education even though they are advancing from grade to grade. For more information contact the Special Education Director at 402-5316.

### **English Language Learners (E.L.L.)**

Once registered, students who have home language listed other than English are screened to determine the type, intensity, and/or amount of English language instruction and other academic support that may be necessary to allow them to be successful in the general education classroom. Recommendations regarding placement and services are developed and implemented by teachers and counselors, working with the parents.

### **Gifted Education Services**

Gifted students are those who perform at, or who have demonstrated the potential to perform at, high levels in academic or creative fields when compared to others of their age, experience, or environment. These students require services not ordinarily provided by the regular school program. Students possessing these abilities can be found in all populations, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor.

Teachers, counselors, administrators, parents or guardians, peers, self, or any other individuals with knowledge of the student's abilities may refer a student. Additionally, all second grade students will be observed as potential gifted referrals using a gifted behavior checklist.

For each student referred, information is gathered in the areas of Aptitude, Characteristics, and Performance. The information is entered on a matrix where points are assigned according to

established criteria. The total number of points earned determines if the student qualifies for gifted services.

To make a referral, contact the guidance counselor at your child's school.

### **Special Education Programs**

Eligibility for special education and related services is based on a referral, diagnosis and the state-wide placement process. To meet the needs of children with exceptionalities certified special education teachers and related service personnel provide services. Anyone can make a referral for special education services regarding a particular student to the School Student Support Team or you may contact the Special Education Director at 402-5316.

### **504**

Section 504 is a general education statute that protects students with disabilities from discrimination. These disabilities are physical or mental impairments that substantially limit one or more major life activities. The impairment(s) must adversely affect educational performance and cause the child to be unable to function as an average child in the general population. The school 504 Committee determines eligibility and whether or not accommodations are needed to prevent or eliminate disability-related discrimination. Parent input and physician recommendations are always considered in decision-making.

## **Student Policies ~ Procedures**

### **Student Clothing**

All clothing should be marked with the child's name, especially sweatshirts, sweaters, coats, jackets, caps, and gloves. A "Lost and Found" rack is located outside the gym. All unclaimed lost and found articles will be donated to charity in January and June.

### **Dress Code**

Vestavia Hills City Schools is a working and learning environment. All VHCS students are encouraged to observe a standard of grooming and dress consistent with the importance of the school's mission of education. The purpose of the dress code is to give students a safe, orderly, and distraction-free learning environment. The Board and administration recognize and appreciate the role of parents in assisting their children in making appropriate choices regarding their clothing while attending school within the boundaries provided by this dress code. The school principal or his/her designee will have the final decision in determining whether apparel meets the system's dress code. Students in violation of the dress code will be required to change immediately. If this requires a student to checkout, the absence will be marked as unexcused. The Code of Conduct will be followed for dress code violations.

### **Kindergarten – 12th Grade**

--Appearance, dress, or grooming style should not cause disruption or interference with the learning environment.

--Students may wear shorts, dresses, skirts, etc. to school as long as they are at least mid-thigh length.

--Clothing must cover under-garments at all times.

--Students must wear appropriate shoes for a school setting at all times. **\*Elementary students should wear shoes that allow them to participate safely in P.E. and recess during school. They should also wear shorts under skirts for P.E. and recess play.**

--Students may not wear hats or sunglasses inside of the building. (Exceptions will be announced in advance.)

--Students may not wear clothing that is inappropriate, offensive, or revealing. This includes the following:

- Clothing that is too baggy
- Clothing that is sheer, see-through, or has holes above mid-thigh
- Undergarments worn as outerwear
- Leggings or tights without a top that covers appropriately
- Bare-midriff, backless, or strapless garments, or tank tops without another shirt that complies with the dress code
- Anything that could be viewed as obscene, vulgar, suggestive, or offensive. This includes clothes that promote violence or drug use; endorse alcohol or tobacco products; or contain messages with any sexual content.

### **Backpacks**

Teachers and parents should work together to ensure that backpacks are not too heavily weighted.

Here are some other guidelines from the National Safety Council regarding backpack safety:

<https://www.nsc.org/home-safety/safety-topics/child-safety/backpacks>

Since we do not send home a great amount of work or textbooks, and we are working together to make sure that backpacks are not too heavily weighted so that wheels are necessary, we ask that parents do NOT purchase the "rolling backpacks" to be used at school. These are noisy, scuff the floor, and can be a danger when swung in the air. Thank you for your help in this matter.

### **Toys and Games**

Please do not send toys/games to school. These items are often expensive and can be lost, taken, or damaged. They are also an educational distraction. Skateboards and roller blades (including shoes with built-in roller skating wheels) are NOT allowed at East.

Any exceptions will be allowed with classroom teacher/ administration permission only, and generally involve special events, such as "Bring Your Own Device" technology projects.

### **Policy for Student Phone Use**

Students will be allowed to use the office phone in case of an emergency. It should not be used for forgotten homework, lunch money, etc. Afternoon transportation plans or social plans should be made prior to the child coming to school.

Our Board policy allows students to bring cell phones to schools:

"Students may possess a cell phone or other electronic communication device on school property but use of such devices during the school day is prohibited except with express permission from the school principal or his or a teacher."

At the elementary grade levels, we do not see a reason for a child to use a cell phone during the day, so we strongly discourage any parent from sending a cell phone to school with their child. If anyone has a question about this policy, please call the principal.

\*Added during the 2012-2013 to our Board code of conduct:

**Use of Digital Device during the Administration of a Secure Test**

The possession of a digital device (including but not limited to cell phones, MP3 players, cameras, or other telecommunication devices capable of capturing or relaying information) is strictly prohibited during the administration of a secure test. If a student is observed in possession of a digital device during the administration of a secure test, the device will be confiscated.

If a student is observed using a digital device during the administration of a secure test, testing for the student will cease, the device will be confiscated and is subject to search, the student will be dismissed from testing, and student's test will be invalidated.

Local education agency (LEA) personnel will make all students, parents, and/or guardians aware of this prohibition through inclusion of this policy in the Student Code of Conduct Handbook and other regularly used modes of communication.