

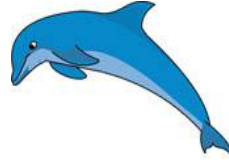
# Spirit Creek Middle School Parent-Student Handbook 2015 – 2016



**Dr. Melissa Shepard**  
**Principal**

**Mr. Jonavon Harris**  
**Assistant Principal**  
**Mr. Cordaryl Middleton**  
**Assistant Principal**

**115 Dolphin Way**  
**Hephzibah, GA 30815**  
**Phone-706-592-3987**  
**Fax- 706-592-3999**



# Spirit Creek Middle School

## **Vision Statement**

Spirit Creek Middle School is a school community where the quest for excellence is both a motivator and a source of pride. Student learning is our chief priority, and we are united in our efforts to ensure that all students learn at their optimum level of ability. Mutual respect among staff, faculty, and students form a strong foundation for discipline, communication, support, and learning. Our ultimate goal is to help students become self-sufficient adults who contribute to their local and global community; therefore, they will lead productive and rewarding lives.

## **Mission Statement**

The Mission of Spirit Creek Middle School is to educate students to become self-sufficient adults who contribute to their local and global community.

## **Belief Statements**

1. Student learning is our priority and primary focus of all decisions.
2. Educational growth can be encouraged through motivation and high expectations.
3. A safe and orderly environment promotes student learning.
4. Faculty, staff, and the community share the responsibility for promoting student success.
5. Tolerance is developed through the teaching of understanding and respect for all people and cultures.
6. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices should emphasize problem solving skills while incorporating a variety of learning activities related to the real world to accommodate all learners.

## **School Colors**

Royal Blue-White-Kelly Green

## **School Mascot**

Dolphin

## **School Motto**

Catch the spirit of learning!

## School Song- "Spirit Creek Forevermore"

Learning how to live each day,  
Knowing that we will lead the way,  
Blazing the Trail that others seek,  
We will be strong and help the weak.  
Explorers of the world unite,  
Together we will win the fight,  
With spirits high our souls will soar  
Spirit Creek forevermore  
With spirits high our souls will soar,  
Spirit Creek forevermore.



Dear Spirit Creek Parents and Students,

Welcome to the 2015-2016 school year. We look forward to meeting all of our new students and seeing all of our returning students. I sincerely hope that you will find this year challenging, exciting and rewarding. Our goal is to provide our students rigorous instruction in a safe and orderly learning environment that prepares them for high school. All students are expected to aim high and focus on learning. In order to accomplish this goal, we need the support of students, parents and our community.

I strongly believe that with dedication and determination, our students will reach their highest learning potential. We encourage parents to become advocates for their children by participating in the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA), visiting our parent resource center and communicating with teachers. We also encourage students to become involved by participating in the variety of activities that will occur this year. Please take the time to review the rules and procedures in this handbook and the **Code of Student Conduct and Discipline** booklet. The two resources will ensure that your experience at school is positive, productive and safe.

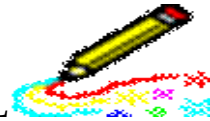
Again, welcome to the 2015-2016 school year. If you have any questions or concerns at any time please contact me. Our Spirit Creek family is proud to have you with us!

Sincerely,

Dr. Melissa W. Shepard

Principal

## INSTRUCTION IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL



The middle school program shall provide meaningful learning experiences in:

- Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- Health
- Physical Education
- Connections

The middle school program shall be organized to allow for:

- Flexible use of instructional time and space
- A variety of exploratory experiences
- A broad offering of intramural activities
- Opportunities to facilitate transition from the elementary school to the high school
- Teaming concepts
- Use of all school resources in supporting individual students and school programs

All students at Spirit Creek Middle School will participate in connections courses for a semester. The courses offered for the 2015-2016 academic year are:

- Drama
- Band
- Computer Literacy
- Spanish
- Music Appreciation
- Physical Education
- Health
- Math/Reading Enrichment



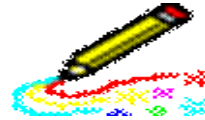
## REGISTRATION

The first step in developing a strong school program is the registration of students. This gives us essential information to work successfully with each student.

New students register in our guidance office and returning students are required to turn in all registration material by the third day of school. All new and returning students are required to show proof of residency. Failure to do this may result in your child being withdrawn from school.

The student's age, address, telephone number and emergency health information are very important. We must be able to reach you in case of an emergency and use it to develop adequate school records. Please help us by being accurate and updating any changes throughout the year. If you do not have a telephone, please leave the number of a neighbor or close friend.

## ARRIVAL PROCEDURES



The academic school day begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 4:00 p.m. We encourage all students to take advantage of our free breakfast that begins at 8:30 a.m. Car riders and walkers must arrive by 8:40 a.m. to participate in our breakfast program.

**Walkers and car riders** will be dropped off at the front door of the school building and should not arrive before 8:30 a.m. Walkers and car riders will not be permitted to enter the building before 8:30 a.m. and there is no outside supervision before this time. **Bus riders** will be dropped off on the side of the school in the covered area.

Students arriving to school **after 9:00 a.m. are tardy** and must report to the front office to receive a pass to class. Please note that students who are tardy to school are subject to the guidelines outlined in the Richmond County Student Code of Conduct and Discipline.

All students are to drop off their book bag outside their homeroom teacher's classroom and report directly to their respective commons area. Students are not permitted in any other areas of the building.

## DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

We will begin afternoon announcements and our dismissal procedures at 3:50 p.m. daily.

**Walkers and car riders** will exit the building through the front door. All car riders are expected to be picked up by 4:15 p.m. Walkers are not permitted to linger around the building to socialize with friends. For safety reasons, walkers and car riders are not permitted back in the building beyond the front office area.

**Bus riders** will exit on the side of the school. Students need to listen for their bus number and walk orderly in the hallway to their designated area. When students enter the bus area, they are expected to quickly get on their bus. We will not hold buses for students to socialize. Students who wish to ride the bus home with another student must have a signed note by a parent or guardian. The note should be turned in to the

office in the morning before 9:30 a.m. for verification. If a student leaves their classroom before their bus is called to visit with friends, he/she will not be permitted on their bus.



## **BUS CONDUCT**

The following rules are for the safety, health, and welfare of all students who ride school buses. Parents are requested to impress on their children the importance of obeying these rules. We have a large number of bus students and good conduct is vital.

### **SCHOOL BUS RULES AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. The driver is in charge of the bus and pupils aboard. Obey the driver promptly and cheerfully.
2. Be on time. The driver cannot wait beyond his/her regular schedule for those who are late.
3. Wait in an orderly line off the street or road.
4. Cross in front of the bus only when the road is clear and at a safe distance in front of the bus in order to be seen by the driver.
5. Do NOT run toward the bus when it is in motion.
6. Ride only the bus assigned by school officials.
7. Do not try to get on or off the bus or move about inside while it is in motion.
8. Pupils must occupy seats assigned to them by the bus driver or school officials and remain seated when the bus is moving. Ride three to a seat, if necessary, and do not exchange seats unless given permission by the driver. If all seats are occupied stand to the rear of the white line as long as the bus is in motion.
9. Behave on the bus as you are expected to behave in the classroom. Insolence, disobedience, vulgarity, profanity, fighting, pushing or similar offensive acts will not be tolerated.
10. Do not engage in any activity which might divert the driver's attention and cause an accident such as:
  - a. Loud talking or laughing
  - b. Unnecessary talking with the driver
  - c. Extending any part of the body out of the windows or doors
11. Students may not open or close windows without permission of the driver, nor shall they regulate or operate any part of the bus.
12. Do not engage in any activity that may damage or litter the bus or other property. The following actions are prohibited at all times:
  - a. Smoking or eating on the bus.
  - b. Spitting or throwing anything on or from the bus.
  - c. Possessing knives or sharp objects on the bus.
  - d. Bringing animals on the bus.

- e. Tampering with mechanical equipment, accessories, or controls of the bus.
13. Students will not leave the bus while going to or from school without permission of the driver. The driver will not give permission except in case of personal emergency, or upon request of the principal or the student's parents.
  14. Pupils must be courteous to the driver, fellow students and passers-by at all times.
  15. Report promptly to the driver any damage done to the bus. Persons causing damage will be expected to cover all costs.

**Bus violations** are subject to the same disciplinary actions as misconduct at school. When necessary, the principal may suspend or revoke riding privileges. In most situations, the first offense will result in a verbal warning. The second offense will result in a phone call to the parent/guardian. The third offense will result in a three day suspension of riding privileges. The fourth offense will result in a five day suspension and the fifth offense will result in a ten day suspension. Any further offenses may cause the loss of riding privileges for the remainder of the school year.

## GRADING

In an effort to align our county grading system with other schools and colleges the following scale has been adopted:

**A = 90 - 100**

**B = 80 - 89**

**C = 75 - 79**

**D = 70 - 74**

**F = Below 70**

All parents are strongly encouraged to register for our computerized Infinite Campus parent portal system to review grades weekly. If you have concerns about your child's grade, please do not wait until report cards to contact the teacher.



## HONORS

We recognize and encourage student achievement each grading period. We will specially recognize areas of achievement at the end of the school year for all grade levels. The areas we recognize are:

1. Distinguished Scholars
2. All A and B Honor Roll
3. A Average
4. Perfect Attendance
5. A in Conduct



Our end-of-the-year honors program is set by RCBOE board policy.

**The Trailblazer Award** is a unique tradition at Spirit Creek Middle School. A trailblazer is one who leads the way, who demands his or her own personal best effort and one who has concern for those who follow. This award will be given to one student from each team who best exemplifies these qualities in academics, extracurricular activities, and interpersonal relationships during our end of the year honors program.

Athletic and extracurricular activities will be recognized at a special ceremony at the end of the school year.



### **WITHDRAWING STUDENTS**

If you plan to withdraw your child from school, please give us notice **at least 24 hours in advance**. We cannot stop instruction to complete necessary forms. This information is necessary for you to enroll your child in another school.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Students who are absent from school are required to bring an excuse for the absence their first day back at school. \* **An absence is either excused or unexcused.** If a note is not received within 24 hours of the absence or the next school day, that absence will be automatically considered unexcused. It is the policy of the Richmond County Board of Education that unexcused absences are not permitted. Class work missed due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up. Any student who serves a short term suspension out of school shall be allowed to make up missed assignments and tests. Absences that are lawful and therefore excusable shall be governed in accordance with the laws of the state of Georgia and local policy. Lawful excuses include:

- a) Personal illness.
- b) Family death and funeral.
- c) Medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled outside school hours.
- d) Attendance of non-school activities or functions authorized by the superintendent or principal.
- e) Special and recognized religious holidays observed by the student's faith.
- f) Mandate or order of a governmental agency.
- g) Extreme circumstances that cannot be resolved outside school hours; parents or guardian must request and receive approval from the principal or his designated representative.

## EARLY DISMISSAL

Early dismissal interrupts our instructional environment and is strongly discouraged. Students will not be dismissed early after 3:30 p.m. because of the amount of activity in the front office. We will only release students to the parent/guardian or authorized persons listed on the student's registration form. **We do not take this information by phone. No exceptions!** There is no way to verify information or the authenticity of the person calling over the phone. We are sorry if this causes any inconvenience, but it is entirely in the safety interests of your children that we follow this policy. Early dismissals for unexcused reasons are subject to the same disciplinary procedures as tardies.



## TARDY POLICY

Please read Rule 12 of the Uniform Code of Conduct and Discipline for the Richmond County Board of Education. It states:

Rule 12: Tardiness (Grades K-12)

The accumulation of unlawful tardies each semester will warrant disciplinary action. The accumulation of lawful tardies will not warrant disciplinary action; however, there are very few excuses for tardiness, which will be accepted as a valid reason for tardiness. The lawful excuses for tardiness are:

- a) Where the student has a medical or dental appointment, which cannot be reasonably scheduled outside the school day, a signed written statement from the appropriate physician or dentist shall be required to validate a tardy for medical reason.
- b) Appearance before a court – when required by subpoena, a copy of said subpoena to be furnished to the school to validate tardiness caused by a court appearance.
- c) In special circumstances-rarely happen but are NOT likely to reoccur (such as when a parent brings a student to school, if the Principal agrees with the circumstances.) Oversleeping is considered unlawful.

Tardiness to school has been a major problem for Spirit Creek Middle School. Chronic tardiness is often a good indication that the student is living out-of-zone and as such will be referred to Social Services for a zone verification visit to the parent's home (Code of Conduct rule #12). Excessive tardies must be referred to the Department of Family and Children's services for parental neglect.



## **Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT)**

We will participate in the BYOT initiative this year. Students will only be permitted to use their technology to supplement instruction with teacher approval. The use of technology outside of the classroom will be prohibited and disciplinary actions outlined in the Richmond County Code of Conduct will be enforced. Parents must review the BYOT information and sign consent before a student is permitted to use their personal technology in the classroom. If your child's technology is lost, stolen or damaged, the Richmond County School System will not be responsible.

## **Parent/School Communication**

The faculty is working hard to provide various avenues to communicate with parents. All teachers will update grades in our parent portal and class information on our school website weekly. We encourage all parents to contact teachers and/or administration anytime through email or telephone. We will return phone calls and emails within 24 hours.

To celebrate our successes and share important school information, administration will send a telephone message to all parents each month. We will also share information through our Spirit Creek Facebook page and Twitter account. If you wish to receive text reminders please subscribe by sending a text to (571) 335-7403 with the message @drshepar.

## **Parent Notification Requirements**

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act requires that parents be notified that they may request information about teacher qualifications. If your child's core academic teacher is not "highly qualified", you will receive a letter within the first four consecutive weeks of instruction.

## **DRESS CODE**

Spirit Creek Middle School follows the Richmond County Dress & Grooming Code of Conduct Policy Rule #14. We encourage parents to read the policy with students. In general, the following policies seem to be violated most frequently:

1. No earrings (males) and body piercings (males and females)
2. No extreme hair styles or colors

3. No holes in pants/jeans - NOT EVEN WITH A PATCH!
4. No gym shorts or jogging suits (unless dressed out for PE)
5. No shoes without a back strap (flip flops, etc)
6. No leggings unless covered with an appropriate (knee length) shirt/dress
7. No tank tops or midriff tops. Girls should not show cleavage.
8. No oversized coats (THIS INCLUDES THE WEARING OF BLANKETS)
9. No hoods/hats/scarves should be worn on the head during school hours.
10. No sagging pants (males and females) or oversized shirts (males)
11. No bedroom slippers/sports slides

Students in violation of our dress code policy will be asked to call home for a change of clothing. If they are unable to reach a parent/guardian, the student will be placed in our individualized learning center (ILC) for the remainder of the school day.



## ATHLETICS

Spirit Creek Middle School is proud of its diverse athletic program. The sports offered at Spirit Creek Are:

Football

Track and Field

Basketball (boys and girls)

Cheerleading

Students in each grade level may try out for athletic teams if they have:

Proof of insurance

A current physical examination on file (good for one year)

Parent permission form

Athlete roster form

Clearance form

All students who participate in athletics are required to meet academic eligibility requirements as mandated by the state of Georgia Department of Education. Grade evaluations are based on the previous semester report. 7th and 8th graders can only fail 1 class in order to be eligible.

Student insurance will be available to all students on an optional basis. Student insurance is required of all participants in middle school athletics and cheerleading. This insurance must be purchased before the student tries out for a particular activity.

Information concerning tryouts and schedules for a particular sport will be available on our website and announced to students during morning announcements at appropriate times during the school year.

### **GUIDANCE SERVICES**

Our school guidance services help students grow emotionally and socially. The counselor is available to all students and parents. The guidance counselor provides the following services:

- Individual guidance
- Classroom guidance
- Small group support
- Academic advisement and planning
- Career exploration
- Liaison between school, family and community
- Community resource person
- Middle school orientation/support



### **CLINIC AND SCHOOL NURSE SERVICES**

The purpose of our clinic is to care for students who become ill or receive injuries at school. A certified nurse is assigned to the school one half of the school day. Below is general clinic information:

1. An Administration of Medication form is required for prescription and nonprescription medication to be dispensed at school.
2. All medication must be in the original container.
3. A student with a temperature over 100 will not be permitted to remain at school.

### **MEDIA SERVICES**

The media center is open daily during the school day for use by students, faculty and parents. Students must have a pass to enter the media center and have a purpose for being there. Students will be given an orientation to the media center at the beginning of the school year. We have a parent center in our media center and parents are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the parent area.

Students are responsible for the materials he/she checks out from the media center. If a student loses or damages a book or a computer disk, it must be paid for before the student may check out additional materials.

Textbooks supplied by the State of Georgia will be issued to students through our media center. This is a loan and all textbooks should be treated as borrowed property. In the event of loss or abuse of textbooks, whether accidental or purposeful, students

must pay for the book(s) at replacement cost in accordance with Georgia State Law. It is recommended that books be covered to reduce wear.

## **PARENT CONFERENCES**

Parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators may request a conference to address academic or discipline issues. Conferences should be arranged through the homeroom teacher and scheduled during the teachers' planning time. The school will make all efforts to accommodate parent's schedule.

## **PERSONAL PROPERTY**

Students are responsible for safeguarding and securing their personal property. It is recommended that all personal items be labeled with the students' name.

Students are cautioned not to bring unnecessary money or valuable belongings to school. Please review the Code of Student Conduct and Discipline rule 1(r) for disciplinary actions.



## **POLICY FOR ACCESS TO THE INTERNET**

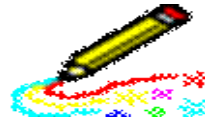
Access to material that may be considered objectionable in a school setting comes with internet connectivity. The value of access to educational information and interaction on the internet cannot be overstated. Internet access from Spirit Creek Middle School shall be efficient, ethical and legal and in compliance district policy.

### **Acceptable Use Policy**

1. Internet access is authorized only in support of the instructional program and the curriculum as outlined in the Richmond County Curriculum Guides.
2. Transmission of any material in violation of any U.S. or state regulation is prohibited, including material for which there is a Copy Right, threatening or obscene material, or material protected by trade secret.
3. Commercial activities use is prohibited. Inappropriate use will result in cancellation of privileges and may result in disciplinary action. Internet usage is a privilege, not a right.
4. Vandalism is defined as any attempt to harm or destroy hardware, software, or data belonging to another user, agency, or owner. Vandalism will result in the immediate cancellation of privileges and disciplinary action.

Students who abuse the internet policy will have their internet privileges revoked and disciplined according to the guidelines in our Code of Student Conduct and Discipline handbook.

## PROMOTION AND RETENTION POLICY



The Richmond County Board of Education policy requires that students must earn a passing grade (70 and above) in Language Arts **and** mathematics; science **or** social studies; and an **overall** passing average in all connections courses to be promoted to the next grade. Please refer to the Richmond County Promotion and Retention Policy you received at registration for more information.

## SELLING AND SOLICITING

Students are not permitted to sell any items at school such as candy, gum, commercial products, etc. for profit. Any items intended for sale or sold for profit will be taken from students and will not be returned.

## STUDENT FOOD SERVICES

Our school food program is designed to provide a well-balanced breakfast and lunch every day. Breakfast and lunch are free to all students.

If bringing lunch from home, students may include a drink or get milk from the lunchroom. Sports (squeeze) bottles, canned drinks and glass containers are not permitted in the lunchroom. We do have drink machines in each commons area for students to purchase a noncarbonated drink. Food from area restaurants are only permitted if they are in a personal container or bag.



## TELEPHONES AND MESSAGES

There is a telephone in the office designated for student use. Students are not permitted to use the phone during instructional time unless it is an emergency. Forgetting gym shorts, lunch money, books and asking to go home with a friend are not considered emergencies. Please make arrangements for participating in extra-curricular activities before leaving for school.

The front office staff will deliver telephone messages to students for emergencies only during the instructional day. We will not interrupt instructional time to deliver messages related to transportation changes. These types of messages will be delivered at the end of the school day.

## **FIRE, TORNADO AND SAFETY DRILLS**

Fire drills are required by law once a month and are an important safety precaution. The alarm is sounded and it is essential that everyone obeys promptly and clears the building by their assigned route as quickly as possible. Students should refrain from loud talking and remain outside until they are given the signal to return to the building.

Tornado and safety drills are equally important. We will conduct one tornado drill during the school year. Our school has a safety plan that will be reviewed with faculty, staff and students at the beginning of the school year. The principal will review the safety plan with parents during open house and our first PTSO meeting. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend these meetings to ensure they are aware of our safety procedures. We will conduct three safety drills throughout the school year to ensure we are prepared in case of an emergency.

## **GIFTED PROGRAM**

New regulations as established by the Georgia Board of Education now require multiple criteria for the identification of students for the gifted program. Please contact our counselor, Mr. Utley, for specific qualification and guidelines.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the school. Let's have a successful 2014-2015 school year.

