

Riverhill School



Policy Handbook

Revised August 2009

Riverhill School

Founded 1980

**Pre-Kindergarten through Eighth Grade
The Shoals Area's only independent,
non-parochial school.**

At Riverhill School we strive for academic excellence. In reaching for excellence in all things, we teach the joy of learning, which sets the stage for a lifetime of educational experiences.

The curriculum at Riverhill School is accelerated and progressive. Standards challenge the most gifted students to reach and maintain a high level of achievement.

We believe that education is more than assimilating facts. We also believe that children learn more when they enjoy what they are learning.

Riverhill School provides a supportive environment and a child-centered educational structure. Great attention is given to the development of individual talents.

Our goal, in promoting academic excellence, is to channel our students to be aware, responsible, productive citizens with solid values and a positive self-image.

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Riverhill's Mission

We are committed to providing a child-centered, academic environment whereby we empower our students to become informed, responsible, productive, life-long learners with solid values and positive self-images.

Our Beliefs

Each member of the Riverhill community should embrace the following for our students:

- Development of positive self-concept, encouragement of acceptable manners and discipline, and strengthening of socialization skills.
- Students should be encouraged to seek answers to questions and to learn new ways of acquiring information.
- Education includes the teaching of computer skills and of the role and benefits of technology in our lives.
- The curriculum which translates Riverhill's philosophy into reality must be student-centered so that the role of each student is an active one.
- It is important for the school to create an atmosphere that facilitates learning and fosters respect of one's self and the rights of others.
- Each child is important and in a constant state of growth and development.

General School Information

Admission

Riverhill School seeks students who are willing and able to progress at an average or above average ability level. No one is denied admission because of race, sex, creed, or national origin. Candidates are admitted to Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade on the basis of achievement scores on a screening test administered by a certified professional. In some cases, a student's previous standardized scores may be used to determine admittance. There is a non-refundable application fee.

Hours

The School Day

Pre-Kindergarten	8:00 a.m. - 1:00 or 3:00 p.m.
Kindergarten - Grade 8	8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

The doors to the gym will be opened at 7:30 a.m. Students are not allowed to arrive at school before 7:30 a.m. Students will congregate in a designated spot in the gym under the supervision of a staff member. They will be dismissed to their classrooms at 7:50 a.m. The other school buildings will be unlocked at 7:50 a.m.

Students arriving after 8:05 a.m. will be considered tardy. Punctuality is a virtue that the school endorses wholeheartedly. Students are expected to be in homeroom at 8:00 a.m. When the homeroom commences at 8:00 a.m., each student should be in his/her seat and ready for the taking of attendance. Occasionally, morning tardiness will be excused for all students due to inclement weather or other extenuating circumstances.

Procedure for lateness: If a student is late to school, he or she should report to the front desk and sign in. Then the student should report to the assigned class, even if it is near the end of the period.

If tardiness results in a missed test, quiz, or other in-class graded exercise, it must be completed during the same school day. Only the teacher may waive this requirement.

Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grades dismiss at 3:00 p.m. Teachers will remain with their students for 15 minutes. At 3:15 p.m., students who are still remaining on campus will be taken to the Extended Day Enrichment Program and a fee will be charged.

Attendance

Regular attendance is essential to the satisfactory completion of the year's work. Regular attendance promotes academic success; tardiness and absence promote academic difficulty. Parents are discouraged from scheduling outside appointments during the school day and are asked to consider with extraordinary care the withdrawal of a student from school for any period of time. The school's vacations are generous in both number and length. Therefore, Riverhill expects parents and students to observe the dates of attendance specified on the school calendar.

Attendance Procedures

A parent should inform the school by phone if a student is going to be absent from school because of illness or a medical/family emergency. Parents should inform the school in advance of scheduled appointments. *The school must have parental confirmation regarding all absences.*

Excused Absences

An excused absence applies to illness, medical appointments, and approved requests. Students absent from school for reasons other than illness or school-approved trips must complete all school work within one week of their return to school. Failure to complete work missed will result in a grade of zero. The responsibility for the completion of make-up work is left to the student and parents. While every effort will be made to assist any student in covering work missed during absences, teachers are instructed not to penalize other students during class time or extra help sessions by spending a disproportionate amount of time on review for the returning student.

Unexcused Absences

An unauthorized absence from school (or class) is considered a serious breach of discipline. No work may be made up with the exception of tests or major papers. No additional teacher time can be expected. Missed tests should be taken, with points deducted from grades. Staying home to do papers or to prepare for tests will be considered an unexcused absence.

Suspensions will be considered unexcused absences.

Trips will be considered unexcused unless cleared with the principal or her designee in advance.

A student who has missed more than 20% of the school days in any semester will receive an incomplete for that semester until strategies for completion have been determined.

Leaving Campus

All students are required to be on campus for the entire school day. It is important to understand that the school feels a legal and moral responsibility to act in the place of a parent during the time parents have entrusted children to us.

A student who leaves campus for any reason must sign out at the front desk. *No student is allowed to leave the school without his or her parent's knowledge or permission.*

Disciplinary Consequences for Cutting Classes or Skipping School

A student who has missed a day of school without permission and without the school's knowledge or the parent's knowledge will be suspended and will be placed on disciplinary probation. In addition, that student will be subject to academic penalties described above and will be subject to the loss of privileges for a period of not less than four weeks.

A student who cuts a class will be placed on disciplinary warning, and will lose privileges for a period of at least two weeks. In addition, academic penalties described above will apply.

Beginning in the Fall of 2009, the following will apply:

- 20 absences per year could result in failure
- 3 unexcused tardies = 1 unexcused absence
- 3 unexcused check-outs = 1 unexcused absence
- > 5 unexcused absences per term = Detention

School Closing Due to Inclement Weather

Riverhill will announce school closings due to weather or other emergency conditions through its parent alert system and on the local TV and radio stations. On days when the public schools close early because of weather conditions, Riverhill will remain on a normal schedule. However, in that case, any parent is welcome to pick up a child before the regular close of the school day. In an emergency situation, local TV and radio stations will be informed of our procedures and the web-site and phone message will be updated.

Dismissal

All students are expected to stay with their teacher in a designated area. Students should notify their teacher when their "ride" arrives. Children will not be allowed to cross a parking lot without adult supervision. If a parent has parked, he or she may meet the child and escort him or her back to the car. Middle School parents are encouraged to remain in their cars and to drive through to pick up children.

Meals

Students may purchase breakfast items from 7:30 a.m. until 9:30 a.m. in the cafeteria.

Students are to bring lunch from home or purchase one from the cafeteria for \$4.00. Students will eat during a supervised lunch period either outside in the picnic area or in their classroom. Students in grades 4 - 8 will be allowed to warm their lunch in a microwave.

Delivered lunches should be labeled with the student's name and left at the front desk. Parents are invited to eat lunch with their child. Please always check-in at the front desk.

Snacks

Snacks may be purchased in the cafeteria or may be brought from home.

Immunization Forms

Alabama State Immunization forms are required of all entering students. Students entering Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, First grade, or Sixth grade are also required to turn in an additional Alabama State Immunization form regarding MMR inoculations. Students entering Kindergarten must provide documentation of immunization for chicken pox (or documentation of having had the disease).

First Aid

The school maintains a First Aid cabinet. Parents will be informed of all injuries beyond minor scratches. Parental permission must be presented before any medication can be administered. Faculty members are discouraged from providing or administering over-the-counter medications. Children who register a fever during the school day are to be picked up from school immediately. *Children must be free of fever for 24 hours before returning to school.*

Community Service

Community service is a vital part of the Riverhill program. There will be scheduled community service projects at various times during the year.

Lockers

Each student (grades 5 - 8) is assigned a hall locker and is responsible for keeping the locker orderly and clean both outside and inside. To ensure privacy, students are provided a combination lock. Students are not allowed to enter another's locker without permission. Periodic locker checks are conducted to insure lockers are used properly.

Lost and Found

All lost and found items will be kept on a shelf at the entrance of the girls' bathroom in the main building. The Middle School has a lost and found box in the teacher's lounge. Clothing and other items will be "advertised" twice a year. Unclaimed items will be donated to a community service organization at the end of each semester.

Sexual Harassment Policy

Riverhill School is committed to providing a learning and working environment for all students, faculty, and staff that supports, nurtures, and rewards career and educational advancement on the basis of ability and performance. Harassment of any kind undermines the character and purpose of the school. Sexual harassment is a part of the school's general policy against harassment: i.e., racial, religious, ethnic, gender, or background.

Riverhill has a detailed policy regarding sexual harassment. For a complete copy, please contact Mrs. Kelso, the Business Manager.

Visitors

The school is open to visitors who have legitimate business at the school. All visitors must report to the front desk for permission to be in the school building.

Dress Code

Riverhill believes that requiring both neatness and appropriateness in clothing encourages an atmosphere conducive to learning, work and discipline. Respect for school and self is influenced by appearance. There are many ways of dressing outside of school which are appropriate, fun, and creative. However, they may not be appropriate to the school setting. *Dress which is neat and functional, which does not draw unusual attention to the wearer, is likely to fall within the school's dress code.* The following guidelines should be followed:

- Outfits should be durable.
- Shorts should reach below the palms of hands when arms are resting at the body's side and skirts should reach below the finger-tips. Cut-off and boxer style shorts are not acceptable.
- No bare midriffs.
- No strapless or halter tops or dresses. Shirts must be worn under jerseys and tank tops with straps less than two inches wide.
- Fashionable sweat suits and jogging type outfits are permitted during the winter months.
- Pants, shorts, and shirts are not allowed to be oversized in their fit. *Sagging* is inappropriate.
- Presentable footwear is expected. Sandals may be worn, but students must have gym shoes to wear to P.E. and recess.
- T-shirts with inappropriate printing or graphics are not acceptable.
- Hats and sunglasses are *not to be worn inside the buildings.*
- Hair is expected to be neatly trimmed and combed. No rainbow hair colors.

The Academic Program

Supplies

Books and supplies are distributed to students at the start of the school year and throughout the year in the classroom. Students will be expected to replace or pay for damaged or lost supplies and books. Middle School students will be expected to maintain their own supply of pencils and paper after the first three months of school.

Grade Reporting

Academic progress reports can be accessed through ParentsWeb™, a secure database retrieved through the internet. Grades and comments are mailed home at the end of each marking period (four times per year).

Grading Scale:

A	=	S	=	92	-	100
B	=	S	=	82	-	91
C	=	S	=	73	-	81
D	=	N	=	65	-	72
F	=	U	=	0	-	64

Students may be placed on academic probation at the end of the quarter or the semester. Those failing to improve upon deficient performance may not be invited to return to Riverhill and will not be promoted to the next grade level. Students placed on academic probation will not be issued a re-enrollment contract until the end-of-year review of grades indicates appropriate improvement. Students placed on academic probation will not be allowed to participate in sports or cheerleading activities.

Exams

- 1) Every student in grades 6 – 8 will be required to take first semester exams and second semester exams for any class only one semester in length (i.e., Geography).
- 2) Every teacher teaching in a core subject area in grades 6-8 will give a written semester exam.
- 3) Students in grades 6 - 8 who meet the following criteria may exempt a second semester exam:
 - a) A cumulative class average of 90 or above and no unexcused absences in that class for the semester, and
 - b) No discipline referrals resulting in in-school or out-of-school suspension, and
 - c) Satisfactory citizenship in all classes.
- 4) Students meeting the above criteria may elect to take the exam to improve their grade.
- 5) Exams will count one-fifth of the student's semester grade.
- 6) On an individual basis, the following circumstances may be considered to waive an absence for exemption criteria:
 - a) Certain doctor/medical excuses which must be verified.
 - b) Legal summonses or obligations limited to probation hearing, divorce/custody hearing, or a summons/subpoena hearing.

Testing

In addition to the normal testing carried out by classroom teachers in the course of the year, each student in Kindergarten through Eighth Grade will take the Stanford Achievement Test at school. The Stanford Achievement Test will be administered in April and results will be shared with the parents.

Homework

The assignment of homework shall be a meaningful extension of the school's instructional program and shall be designed to benefit students. Teachers are reasonable in assigning homework and consider such factors as: the ability of the student, the difficulty of the assignment, the availability of resources needed, and the amount of time necessary for completing the task.

Library Books

Students may check books out from the library during their scheduled class time or through special arrangement with the teacher. Students must return all books, or pay for a lost book, before report cards can be issued.

Logging on to Renweb for the First Time

1. Put this link <https://www.renweb.com/login.htm> in your web browser.
2. Use the district code **RH-AL**. (This district code will be needed for future logins.)
3. Type in the email address you have submitted to the school.
4. Click on the "New Parent Login" button. A password will be sent to your email address.
5. Log in again using the password you just received.
6. Change your password to one you can remember.

Publications and Communications

The Bear Facts is published weekly to include pertinent information about the school and upcoming events. The newsletter is distributed to the entire Riverhill School community and posted on ParentsWeb™.

Our website (www.riverhillschool.org) contains information regarding school programs and activities. In particular, each class syllabus and a list of classroom activities can be accessed on the class's information page on ParentsWeb™. ParentsWeb™ lists the e-mail address of each staff member and a school-wide directory.

The Bear Pause is a magazine that is sent to all constituents of the school. It is published twice a year.

Paw Prints is the school's annual yearbook. It is available to every student. The book is prepared by a staff of middle school students, a faculty sponsor, and parent volunteers.

Phone Tree is an automated phone calling system that will notify families of upcoming events. After a message has been recorded, the computer begins dialing from a specified list. The computer is programmed not to call after 8:30 p.m. Notify the principal in writing if you wish to be removed from this system.

ParentAlert™ is an automated system designed to instantaneously notify the parent body in case of a school emergency. It will be put into operation during the 2008-2009 school year.

Telephone Calls

Students may use the Business Manager's phone with a teacher's permission. The school will make every effort to communicate messages to students during the school day, but will avoid interrupting the normal instruction period except in the case of an emergency.

Internet Acceptable Use

It is the policy of Riverhill School to offer access to the Internet. The Internet is a global network made up of many smaller contributing networks connecting thousands of computers throughout the world and millions of individual subscribers. While there is an abundance of valuable information, with this access comes the availability of material that may not be considered of educational value in the context of the school setting.

Through the Internet, students can explore thousands of libraries, databases, museums, and other resources. They can exchange personal communication with other users around the world. While the use of the Internet is primarily instructional in nature to reach an educational goal, some students may find ways to access other materials. Unfortunately, some of these resources contain items that are illegal, defamatory, inaccurate, or potentially offensive. Most educators believe that benefits to students from access to the Internet exceed the disadvantages. Parents of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards their children should follow when using resources. Therefore, we respect each family's right to decide whether or not to use Internet access. Please notify the school in writing if you wish for internet access to be denied your child.

The Internet should be used for research and education through the provision of unique resources and opportunities for collaboration among students, teachers, and administrators. Use of the Internet must be in support of this and consistent with the educational objectives of our school.

Students are responsible for appropriate behavior while using the Internet. Additionally, students are responsible for their actions while using the equipment and the resources. Use is a privilege, not a right, and may be revoked if abused. Vandalism of equipment or programs will result in punishment.

Fielding Complaints

Parents of Riverhill students are encouraged to express concerns to our staff. Every effort will be made to accommodate your family's needs.

The administration of Riverhill School maintains an "open door policy" and welcomes students, parents, and teachers who wish to discuss items of concern privately and confidentially.

Appeal protocol:

Teacher > Principal > Executive Committee > Board of Trustees

When Calling About.... (764-8200)

Absences, messages for a student or staff member:

Mrs. Janette Wilkinson, Secretary

Academics, curriculum:

Mrs. Treva Lester

Admissions:

Mrs. Mary Jane Fowler/Mrs. Beth Keyse

Athletic policy or information:

Mrs. Lori McGee

Classroom procedures or instruction:

Teacher

Counseling services:

Mrs. Treva Lester

Development:

Mrs. Beth Keyse

School policy or personal concerns:

Mrs. Treva Lester

Student services, parent relations:

Mrs. Treva Lester

Tuition or account information:

Mrs. Sue Kelso, Business Manager

School Programs and Special Events

Assemblies

A Flag Ceremony will be held most Fridays at 8:10 a.m. in front of the school or in the gym.

Periodically, a sing-a-long will be held in the gym for grades Pre-K through 5.

An elementary musical presentation will be given each year.

The Middle School Show Choir will occasionally present a program.

Riverhill Buddies

At various times during the year, a lower grade class and an upper grade class may work together. The teachers of the following groups will coordinate activities:

Pre-Kindergarten and Grade 4

Kindergarten and Grade 6

Grade 1 and Grade 5

Grade 2 and Grade 7-8

Grade 3 and Grade 7-8

Arranging Special Events

Parents who wish to schedule special events should speak first with the principal.

Trips

A Riverhill School trip must be sponsored by a faculty member and must have prior approval of the principal. Teachers accept the responsibility of acting *in loco parentis*. During trips, school regulations apply. Students who violate school regulations may be sent home immediately at the parent's expense. Upon the return of that student, all major infractions of behavior or conduct will be subject to consideration for further disciplinary review by the principal.

Recess

Weather permitting, recess will be held outdoors all year. In cold winter months, please be sure that students come to school dressed appropriately. The school discourages requests for students to be excused from recess unless there has been an extended illness.

Birthday Celebrations and Other Parties

Class parties are encouraged only at a few specific times in the school year (e.g. Christmas, Valentine's Day). A parent wishing to bring a birthday snack to school should notify the homeroom teacher in advance. Special attention and respect should be given to students with food allergies. Parents wishing to invite an entire homeroom to a party outside of school may bring invitations to school; but, in those cases in which only some children will be invited, parents are asked not to extend invitations through or in the classroom.

Athletics

Students in grades 3 through 6 participate in a wide variety of sports. Competitive team sports and intramural activities are planned by the Physical Education Department to allow all interested students the opportunity to play. Schedules will be distributed during each season. At his sole discretion, the Athletic Director will periodically ask younger players to “play up” in order to fill a team and have enough to play.

In grades 7 - 8, competitive team and individual play is coordinated through membership in the Alabama High School Athletic Association. Therefore, in an effort to prepare our players for athletics at the next level, equal playing time is not guaranteed. Attendance and a commitment to practice with the team or squad are expected.

A banquet or other event will be scheduled to honor the Riverhill athletes and cheerleaders.

Fees

A fee is collected for participation in each sport. The fees help pay for officials and maintain uniforms. Parents of players and cheerleaders are expected to assist in selling concessions, keeping the clock and playbook, and collecting entrance fees at the gate.

Fund Raising

The Board of Trustees authorizes all fund raising activities at and for Riverhill School. Any group that wishes to conduct fund raising activities must present plans to the principal or her designee.

Parent Volunteer Groups

Parental involvement is an integral and welcome component of Riverhill School. The Riverhill Association of Parents and Staff (RAPS), Friends of the Library, and Volunteers in Private Schools (VIPS) are the parental support groups. Through various fund raising events, RAPS provides valuable equipment and educational materials to be used by classroom teachers. The VIPS work with the teachers to copy, create, and assemble teaching handouts and materials for use during the instructional day. The Friends of the Library coordinate library events and donate their time helping during the day.

The Riverhill Foundation

The Riverhill Foundation was organized as a nonprofit corporation established to operate exclusively for the benefit of Riverhill School. The Foundation is directed by a board of trustees.

The purpose of the Riverhill Foundation is to seek the assistance of parents, alumni, and friends in providing the supplementary funds needed to achieve our goals. Gifts to the Foundation are made by cash, living trusts, bequests, real estate, and memorials. The Board of Trustees welcomes the opportunity to assist prospective donors or their legal advisors.

The Teacher Appreciation Fund

The Teacher Appreciation Fund is administered by the secretary, in cooperation with the school's accountant. Contributions can be made in honor of a staff member. The staff member receives a card informing them that a contribution has been made (not an amount). Contributions are acknowledged by the staff member. At Christmas and/or the end of the year, the fund is divided among the staff members in the form of a bonus check.

Discipline

The atmosphere at Riverhill is supportive and caring. Faculty members encourage motivation toward learning, thoughtfulness, consideration for others, respect for authority and acceptance of individual differences. An emphasis is placed on increasing self-discipline, good manners, and acceptable behavior. Students must realize that no one has the right to interfere with the learning of another student or with the purpose of an activity. As members of our community, students must respect the property, rights and feelings of others.

In each classroom, a specific disciplinary system is utilized to help children comprehend and be accountable for the consequences of non-productive interactions. If a student's misbehavior is serious or chronic, the principal will inform the parents and carry out an appropriate disciplinary response.

Suspension is a very serious step which should signal to the student and to the parent that the school has begun to question the appropriateness of the student's continued enrollment in Riverhill School. A suspension may last from one to five days. A suspended student is placed on disciplinary probation. A suspended student may not participate in any school activity during the period of his or her suspension.

Due Process

Students will be adequately informed of disciplinary charges made against him/her. The accused has an opportunity to challenge the testimony given by presenting information on his/her behalf. The concept of due process stipulates that all policies will be equally

enforced and that all students subject to rules and policies will be given fair play.

School Rules

Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco

The possession or use of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco while under the jurisdiction of the school is prohibited.

Entering the jurisdiction of the school while under the influence of drugs or alcohol is prohibited. Any violation of the rules with regard to drugs and alcohol will result in a suspension from school and disciplinary probation for no less than one calendar year. The sale of drugs or alcohol may bring immediate expulsion.

The possession or use of tobacco products during the school day, at any school function on or off campus or on school property at any time is prohibited. A violation of the school's policy with regard to tobacco will result in a suspension and disciplinary probation of no less than one semester.

A subsequent violation will result in expulsion from Riverhill School.

Hazing or Bullying

Bullying or hazing of any sort is prohibited. A student guilty of intimidating or degrading another student may be suspended. If suspended, that student will be placed on disciplinary probation for a period of at least one semester.

Violence

Physical violence or the threat of physical violence will not be tolerated. Those who use physical violence may be suspended and may be placed on probation for a period of at least one semester. Any student who is seen as a threat to the welfare of others may be expelled.

Profanity

Swearing, obscene language, and obscene gestures are not tolerated at any time. Those who use profanity may be placed on disciplinary warning for a period of at least two weeks.

Stealing

Stealing is not tolerated at any time. Those who steal the belongings of others may be suspended and may be placed on probation for a period of at least one semester. Subsequent violations may result in expulsion from Riverhill School.

Cellular phones, beepers, pagers

Students may not use cellular telephones, beepers, or pagers on school grounds or at school functions without permission from a staff member. Cellular phones and beepers should be turned 'off' when not in use.

Student Behavior

Students should always respect the rights, feelings, belongings, and safety of others. Showing courtesy, consideration, and friendliness to others ensures an atmosphere in which both students and faculty can work best. The following are areas in which students need to take responsibility for their behavior:

1. Showing respect for others.
2. Using appropriate language. Profanity is unbecoming of the person who uses it and is offensive to others. It is not appropriate at Riverhill.
3. Maintaining a degree of physical self-control that does not disturb or endanger others. No disruptive behaviors during class.
4. Showing courtesy to adults, both faculty and visitors. When passing guests in the halls or on campus, students should make them feel welcome by speaking, smiling, and offering directions or help. At doorways students should hold the door and allow adults to go through first.
5. Maintaining attractive surroundings by helping to keep the buildings and grounds as neat and clean as possible. Lockers and the locker area should also be kept neat.
6. Adhering to the dress code.
7. Exhibiting appropriate behavior in assemblies. Always give the speaker/performer your undivided attention. Talking, cutting up, or disturbing others is rude and disrespectful to others.
8. Appropriate use of computers and the Internet.

Maintaining a Neat Building and Grounds

Litter and personal articles should not be left on the floors in the classrooms, restrooms, around the locker areas, or on the school grounds. Food will not be allowed around any computer station or stored in desks or lockers. Please dispose of all trash properly. An awareness and appreciation for our environment demands that we dispose of litter properly.

Caring for School Property

Students are expected to care for school property and the property of others. There should be no marking of any kind on desks, textbooks, bulletin boards, lockers, walls, etc. Students who do not abide by this request will be required to clean off the marks they have made and/or replace the property that has been damaged.

