



## Staff Handbook – 2021/22

### MISSION STATEMENT

We exist to provide a Christ-centered education for the children who attend our school so that they are prepared to passionately serve God in whatever He has planned for their life after high school graduation. Because of this, we call ourselves a “Kingdom Preparatory” school, not simply a “college preparatory” school. Our ultimate goal is to bring honor and glory to the Lord through our teaching and discipleship of the students we serve.

### CURRICULUM

GSFIS is an “American” school, which means we are aligned with American standards for grade-level expectations and overall educational outcomes. We use a variety of publishers and curricula. Some of our texts are “Christian” while others are secular. We see the text as a tool to be implemented by a wise and discerning teacher and therefore the curriculum does not “drive” the course. You, as the teacher, are the guide and have the freedom, in consultation with your administrator, to use whichever materials will best aid learning.

### DAILY SCHEDULE

School begins at 8:45am with a “morning meeting.” Students may arrive up to fifteen minutes before the beginning of the school day, so staff need to arrive by 8:30. The school day ends at different times for different teachers depending on their schedule. The last classes of the day will be finished at 3:30. Friday is a distance learning day for students. Fridays are a teacher work day and will often be used for faculty meetings; teachers should not make any commitments which would interfere with these meetings. Teachers are expected to help with supervision of students during breaks and lunch. A schedule will be created so that each teacher has some breaks “on” and others “off.”

### ATTENDANCE/SICK POLICY

Though our small class sizes have many benefits, one of the drawbacks is that illness spreads much faster with how closely we all work together. We also have students who come from many different backgrounds, which means that some may have more severe reactions to illness than that of the average child.

With this in mind, we ask that if you are sick, that you please stay home until you are certain you are not contagious. Generally speaking, the guidelines for many illnesses are 24 hours fever-free without fever-reducing medicine and 24 hours without vomiting and/or diarrhea, again, without medicine aiding in this.

For an illness such as a cold, we understand that it can be long-lasting, and we certainly do not expect you to stay home that entire duration. We also recognize that certain illnesses, including malaria and bilharzia, are not contagious even with the above symptoms present. Please use your discretion in these circumstances.

If you are going to be absent due to illness or otherwise, please contact your administrator *as soon as possible* to inform them and provide lesson plans. If your administrator is not reachable, please contact one of the other administrators.

Personal days / days off will be allotted according to individual contracts.

## CALENDAR

The school year will consist of four quarters for elementary and middle school classes and two semesters for high school classes. We will divide the school year in half around Christmas break, so that following first semester exams (high school) the students can have a true “Sabbath.” We will begin the school year in late July or early August, end in late May or early June, constituting a total of 180 school days. We will try to take Ugandan holidays into account as we schedule the school year, but we cannot guarantee that these days will be “off.”

## DRESS CODE

Please dress modestly and professionally. Female staff members are required to wear skirts that reach the knee or are longer and must wear tops with straps that are at least two fingers wide. Male staff members must wear pants, not shorts. This dress code is subject to change for special activities, with administrative approval. We operate under the broader rules of GSF which is in a “village” context, and we need to respect the more traditional views that this entails. Thank you!

## TEACHER ELECTRONICS USE

Technology is a gift from God and we believe, if used appropriately it can be a great asset to the learning environment. We endeavor to teach our students (and ourselves) what it means to use technology in a God-honoring way. We encourage teachers to use breaks for personal interaction rather than staring at a screen, but we recognize that there may be legitimate need for using a device. As teachers, let us be good examples to our students of how to use technology. Teachers should never view inappropriate content on their phones or laptops. All content that is used for instruction should be previewed by the teacher to determine its’ appropriateness.

## ACCREDITATION

GSF International School is not accredited by any organization. We are a “member school” of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and are working toward accreditation with this organization. Starting in the 2020/2021 school year we expect that teachers will all assist in the process of achieving accreditation for our school. Currently we submit transcripts to colleges as a “homeschool.” This is one reason why standardized testing is essential for our students who wish to apply to various colleges and universities. A College Board administered test such as the SAT serves as an independent reference point from which to view a student’s GPA and high school transcript.

## ACHIEVEMENT TESTING

In the fourth quarter of each school year, we will conduct achievement testing in order to help evaluate a student’s progress through the curriculum and as accountability for our own educational performance as teachers. The results of these tests will be available for parents and teachers, but they are not used for any outside purposes or reported to any outside agency. We are currently using the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS).

## GRADES

In the elementary school (K-5<sup>th</sup>) we will use the following grading scale:

- N:** Needs improvement
- S:** Satisfactory
- E:** Excellent

In the middle and high school, we will use the following grading scale:

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Numerical Grade</b>	<b>Grade point</b>
A+	97-100	4.00
A	93-96	4.00
A-	90-92	3.67
B+	87-89	3.33
B	83-86	3.00
B-	80-82	2.67
C+	77-79	2.33
C	73-76	2.00
C-	70-72	1.67
D+	67-69	1.33
D	63-66	1.00
D-	60-62	0.67
F	Below 60	0.00

All teachers are expected to keep accurate records of student grades and student attendance. These records should be kept current and, if kept digitally, should be backed-up regularly to prevent their being lost due to computer failure.

#### DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE

We commit to address outward behavior as well as internal “heart” problems from a loving and biblical perspective in partnership with the parents. Thus, we require at least one parent to be a professing Christian who agrees with the Global Outreach Statement of Faith which can be found at <https://globaloutreach.org/about#statement-of-beliefs>. Initial problems will be addressed by the teacher in the classroom. Should this not prove adequate, the appropriate administrator will be included in the conversation. At this point a conversation with the parents will occur in order to make sure we are all proceeding in unison.

#### PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

You will meet twice a year with the parents of each of your students to discuss each student’s progress. These conferences will occur at the end of the first quarter (usually October) and at the end of the third quarter (usually March). Parents or teachers may schedule meetings in addition to these as needed. If it is necessary to meet with a parent, the teacher should request a meeting time that is good for both the teacher and parent(s). If necessary, the appropriate department head or administrator may be included in the meeting to assist with resolving the issue. We should all proceed with an attitude of humility, assuming the best about the other person and not gossiping to others about an issue. We want to follow the pattern that Jesus describes in Matthew 18:15-17.

#### ABUSE PREVENTION/ STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

If you become aware of any violation of the following policy please let an administrator or teacher know immediately.

Abuse of any kind is not permitted. This would include verbal, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. We are to treat one another with kindness as we would want to be treated. Conversations should avoid gossip, vulgar or profane language, sexual joking or other inappropriate ways of speaking.

Students and teachers should avoid inappropriate physical contact. Students and teachers are asked to treat one another with respect and dignity as each student is an image bearer of God. Abuse takes many shapes and forms. For the purpose of this document, abuse is identified as the maltreatment of any child, often in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power, which endangers or impairs the health or welfare of that child. Child abuse can occur with or without the consent of the victim. In the context of this policy, definitions include sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.

## **Bullying**

GSFIS does not tolerate bullying of any kind. Students engaged in any form of bullying will be subject to disciplinary action as laid out in the Discipline Procedure section above.

“Bullying occurs when a person or group is intimidated, frightened, excluded or hurt by a pattern of reoccurring behaviors directed at them by others.” “Bullying in Schools – The Hidden Curriculum” Greg Griffiths 2003

Some actions when present in an ongoing form that constitute bullying are:

- Physical aggression (including hitting, punching, kicking)
- Teasing or verbal abuse (including insults, name calling, racial remarks)
- Discrimination based on characteristics such as age, race, ethnicity, religion, sex, family status, physical or mental abilities
- Intentional exclusion of others from activities or friendship groups
- Putting others in humiliating situations or insulting experiences
- Damaging a person’s property/possessions or taking them without permission
- Threatening a person or his/her belongings through gestures, actions, or words
- Written/verbal/electronic messages that contain threats, putdowns, gossip or slander
- Cyberbullying through social media sites, instant messages, email or other electronic means. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. Cyberbullying also includes using electronic means to harass, threaten, or intimidate someone.

## **Sexual Harassment**

GSFIS has adopted the following definition of sexual harassment:

“Sexual harassment means any conduct, comment, gesture or contact of a sexual nature, whether on a one-time basis or in a continuous series of incidents, that might reasonably: (a) be expected to cause offense or humiliation to any individual; or (b) be perceived by the individual as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or on any opportunity for training or promotion, academic status or academic accreditation; (c) interfere with an individual’s work or academic performance or create an intimidating, hostile or offensive working, academic or residence environment.” Federal Govt. Policy on Harassment in the Work Place, 1991, Canada

If behavior is identified that raises concerns regarding the treatment and social interactions of a child, but does not meet GSFIS’s definition of sexual harassment, a conclusion of inappropriate behavior will be reached.

## **DISTANCE LEARNING**

As a result of the 2020 pandemic, we have been forced to learn new ways of conducting school. As we have learned this new technology, we have become convinced that some of these techniques need to become a permanent part of how we educate our students. Starting in the 2020/2021 school

year, all students/teachers will be enrolled in “virtual classrooms” and should be able to participate in “video conferences.” When school is meeting in our physical location, these features will merely supplement our teaching. However, when physically meeting together is not possible due to pandemic, political unrest, or prolonged student illness, etc., we will rely heavily on these platforms for instruction, assessment and communication. We will work with teachers to learn these new technologies and to ensure that every teacher has the means with which to use these programs.

#### STUDENT PRIVACY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Out of respect and privacy of the students and their families, we ask that you not share identifiable images of students on social media unless the parent/guardian has indicated “YES” on the GSFIS Media Consent Form for “Public Platforms.” Social media includes, but is not limited to, your personal Instagram, Facebook, blogs, newsletters, e-newsletters.

Please do not share student information, such as student name(s), history, or grades on social media.