

FALMOUTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FAMILY HANDBOOK



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Falmouth, Virginia 22405
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LEARN with passion * LEAD with confidence * LIVE with character

SCHOOL HOURS

Normal school hours for students are 9:00 a.m. to 3:40 p.m. Children who are brought to school by parents in the morning may not arrive before 8:30 a.m. Students must be picked up no later than 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon.

WELCOME

Falmouth Elementary School's vision is to be a place where students, staff, and the community work together to create a safe environment where students achieve at their highest level through a full commitment to effort based belief. Our commitment is to learn with passion, lead with confidence and live with character.

Falmouth Elementary provides a caring, accepting and safe environment to motivate and challenge students to become lifelong learners and responsible citizens.

SCHOOL BEHAVIOR PLAN

Falmouth staff members believe it is important for students to take responsibility for their own behavior. Students and parents have the right to expect that our schools are safe and provide an environment which is conducive to learning. Each teacher will send home an individual classroom discipline plan and the school-wide plan during the first weeks of school. Falmouth uses the Responsive Classroom program to encourage children and adults to be supportive of others. Copies of the Student Code of Conduct will also be provided at the beginning of the school year. An acknowledgement of receipt is to be signed by parents and students and returned to your child's teacher. Our goal is to work hand in hand with students and parents to ensure our Falmouth Falcons are good citizens.

FALMOUTH BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

A Falmouth Falcon:

1. Respects his/herself, other people, and property
2. Follows all directions and rules
3. Keeps hands, feet, and objects to themselves

FALMOUTH PLEDGE

Today is a new day!
I will act in a safe and healthy way.
I will respect the rights of others.
I will take responsibility for my learning.
Today I will be the best I can be.
I am proud to be a student at Falmouth Elementary!

DRESS CODE

The SCPS Dress Code is outlined in the Code of Conduct. Children must wear clothing and shoes appropriate for physical education and outdoor play. Shirts or t-shirts promoting drug, alcohol, or tobacco products, as well as shirts with vulgar or suggestive statements, are not allowed. Clothing must cover all undergarments and not be deemed disruptive to the learning environment. Sleeveless shirts that have large armholes or that are too tight may not be worn. Midriffs must be covered. Pants will be worn around the waist and all underclothes must be covered. Headgear (hats, bandanas, etc.) is not allowed for boys or girls.

TELEPHONE CALLS

In order to protect instructional time parents calling the school requesting to speak to teachers will be asked to leave a voicemail message for the teacher. When a parent leaves a message, the teacher is asked to return the call within 24 hours. Children are allowed to use the office telephone only in the case of an emergency. The policy on cell phone use is listed in the Code of Conduct and can be found in this handbook.

VISITORS/VOLUNTEERS

Falmouth Elementary welcomes visitors to our school but has the following procedures in place to ensure the safety of our students and staff. Visitors must use the AIPhone button by the front door to notify the office that they want to enter the building. Once you are cleared to enter, you will proceed to the main office. Per SCPS School Board Policy, all visitors must sign in and must present picture ID immediately upon entering the building. Items brought to school by parents to be given to students (supplies, etc.) must be left in the office to be delivered by school staff. All visitors must wear a Visitor's Badge, indicating the location you are visiting, while they are in the building. Volunteers at Falmouth Elementary are a critical part of our school family as there are a number of ways our volunteers help in the school. **Volunteers who supervise children will be required to have a back ground check.** Please contact your child's teacher, our PTO, or the school office if you wish to volunteer. All adults who volunteer in the school are asked to follow our Dress Code and Cell Phone guidelines. Volunteers must have an updated volunteer agreement on file prior to assisting within the school.

PTO

Falmouth Elementary has an active PTO. Every parent is automatically a PTO member, and there are no dues. The members of this organization work to support students and staff through fundraising and special events. PTO Board meetings are held monthly and all parents are invited to attend. Falmouth's PTO is a wonderful organization which needs your support and enthusiasm.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

FOCUS is Stafford County's program for students who have been identified as talented and gifted. The Student Education Committee is also available for students who may be struggling academically. If you feel that your child needs to be referred for either of these services, please contact your child's teacher or the school administrators.

SENDING MONEY TO SCHOOL

There are many instances where students need to bring money to school – field trips, fundraisers, yearbook orders, meal money, etc. All money sent to school should be placed in a sealed envelope. **The front of the envelope should be labeled with the student's name, teacher, and the purpose of the money.** If you have questions about sending money to school, please contact our school office.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

The citizens of Stafford County have chosen to provide bus transportation for our children. Because bus transportation is not required, riding a bus to and from school is a privilege. Insuring student safety is the primary goal of bus rules and regulations. For that reason, students are expected to behave properly and follow the rules at all times.

Should a student be reported to the school principal or assistant principal, disciplinary action will be taken. Parents will be responsible for the transportation of students who have lost school bus transportation privileges.

Parents needing to discuss a bus problem should contact the school administrators at 373-7458 or the Transportation Department at 373-6095. Your cooperation in the safe transportation of your child and others is appreciated.

BUS ROUTES, STOPS, AND TIMES CAN NOW BE ACCESSED ONLINE AT: <http://versatrans.staffordschools.net>

WAITING FOR THE BUS

Students are to be at the bus stop at least five (5) minutes before the regular pickup time, but no earlier than ten (10) minutes before this time. Students are to wait quietly in a safe, designated place well off the traveled portion of the roadway until the bus has come to a complete stop. Most bus problems either occur or start at the bus stop. Parents are encouraged to accompany their children to and from the bus stop. Parent supervision during the time that the students wait for their bus to arrive could prevent a serious accident.

Versatrans – MY STOP

Transportation's Versatrans Routing and Planning software allows parents to see GPS information on the location of your child's bus.

There are two ways to access My Stop:

1) The web address is: mystop.staffordschools.net

2) Smart phone users can find an "app" titled "Versatrans My Stop" and you will need to use your child's student's ID number for the user name and password.

APPROPRIATE BUS BEHAVIOR

Students are expected to follow the bus driver's instructions. They are to board the bus in an orderly manner and should be seated immediately. Students are to remain seated at all times when the bus is moving. Students are required to share seats equally and to be courteous and respectful of others' property. A student is not allowed to put hands or head out of the bus window. The aisles of the bus must be kept clear at all times. Good conduct on the bus is critical to safe transportation. Students are not allowed to bring large objects, animals, sound systems, or glass items onto the bus. Eating and drinking on the bus are prohibited.

LEAVING THE BUS

Students must remain seated until the bus comes to a complete stop and the driver opens the door. Students are to leave the bus in an orderly manner with those in the front seats leaving first. In accordance with sound safety practices, students should leave the bus stop area as soon as possible. If a student must cross a highway, the students must walk to a distance of at least ten feet from the bus. The student is not to cross the highway until the driver has signaled that it is safe to do so.

RIDING A DIFFERENT BUS

In order to ride a bus other than the one regularly assigned, a child must have written permission from the parent. Please send a note specifying which bus, where the child will be going, and what date(s) he/she will be riding that bus. If a child is riding the bus home with a friend, we must have a note from the parents of both children giving permission for the visit.

If a parent wishes for their child to make a permanent bus or bus stop change, an ADDITIONAL BUS ASSIGNMENT form must be completed and returned to school. The Additional Bus Assignment form can be obtained from our school office or can be found on the school and county websites. This request is subject to approval of the school principal and the transportation department and can take up to 5 days to be in effect. Bus drivers must receive notification by the school office when approval is given to a student to make a change of this type.

VEHICULAR TRAFFIC



The blue arrows represent the traffic flow for car riders. The car rider student drop-off/pickup area is on the north side of FES.

Passenger vehicles will enter the south entrance of FES and remain in a single line until the student has been delivered/picked up on the north side of FES. Then the driver will continue to follow the flow of traffic to exit either northbound or southbound on Forbes Street.

Visitors will be directed to park in the upper blacktop area (basketball court) if visiting the school during arrival (8:30 a.m.-9:00 a.m.) or dismissal (3:15 p.m.-4:00 p.m.). Otherwise, visitors may park to the left of the building.

*The yellow arrows denote buses and will be given the right-of-way during arrival and dismissal.

SCHOOL NURSE

We have a school nurse on duty most school days. If your child is ill or has suffered a serious injury, the nurse will contact you. Please keep in mind that our school nurse cannot diagnose or prescribe. In the case of questionable bumps, rashes, swellings, etc., please contact your doctor. The nurse can only call you to come pick up your child.

Please be sure that you provide us with your home phone number, a work phone number, and the name and number of at least two additional people who can be contacted in case of an emergency. In case of an emergency, it is important that we be able to reach you as soon as possible. Please be sure to update your child's school emergency information if you change jobs, change babysitters, or if your phone number changes at any time during the school year.

Students with a fever, who are vomiting, or who have an infection should not be sent to school. Any student who needs to use crutches or a wheelchair due to a sprain or broken bone must have a doctor's note.

If there is any special information the nurse and/or school needs to know about your child, please contact us so we can make a plan for your child's safety at school. Our school nurse is willing and available to work with you at any time!

MEDICATION

If a physician prescribes medication that must be administered to your child during the school day, the school requires that the original prescription container and a medication request form be sent to our nurse. The medication form can be obtained from the school or on the district's website. Both the physician and the parent should sign the medication request. This will allow school staff members to give your child the medication as prescribed on the form. Short term medications, (10-12 days) such as antibiotics, need only the parent signature and the original prescription container.

Non-prescription drugs should be administered at home. School personnel have no authority to give aspirins, cough syrup, decongestants, etc. to children. Parents who feel that a non-prescription medication must be given can (a) ask a doctor to sign the medication request form to authorize it or (b) come to the school to personally administer the medication to their child.

Do not send unmarked medication to school with your child. This practice could place your child or another student in danger. Do not instruct your child to take medication on his own. For the safety of our students, all medications are kept in the clinic and are administered by an adult.

CHILDREN WHO ARE ABSENT

As required by state law, the school will try to contact the parents of students who are absent from school. This is done as a safety precaution to verify that the parent is aware of the absence. If your child is going to be absent, please call 373-7458 before 9:15 a.m. to report the absence or complete the absence form on-line.

When your child returns to school, he/she must bring a written excuse stating the date(s) of the absence and the reason for the absence. Make-up work will be provided to the student upon returning from an absence.

CHILDREN WHO ARE TARDY

For students arriving at school after 9:00 a.m., parents are required to bring their child into the office to sign in and receive a tardy slip. Tardies will be tracked and a letter will be sent to parents if they become excessive.

ATTENDANCE/ ATTENDANCE RECORDS

All children are expected to attend school every day unless they are ill or there is some type of family emergency. Parents should try to schedule outside appointments for times other than during school hours. Falmouth's Attendance Team reviews attendance monthly and letters are sent out to parents when a student's attendance reaches limits determined by SCPS to potentially have a negative impact on learning.

Please check your child's report card each nine-weeks to verify the accuracy of the attendance information. After the report cards are issued for a marking period, the parent/student has five school days in which to report any attendance errors for the marking period to the school attendance personnel. After the five-day period, all attendance is considered correct for the marking period. Attendance errors not reported within five days from issuance of report cards will not be corrected and will remain on the student's permanent record.

EARLY PICK UPS/STUDENT SIGN OUT

Please refrain from picking your child up early, as learning is taking place right up until dismissal at 3:40 p.m. When picking up your child, please report to the office to sign him/her out. **Anyone picking up a student must present a picture ID.** Your child will be called to meet you in the office. *For the safety of all students, children will not be released to parents at the classroom door.* When custody papers or special situations exist, the office must be informed and a copy of any official documents should be provided for our files. Early pick-ups will be tracked and a letter will be sent to parents if they become excessive.

MAKE UP WORK

You may request to pick up work your child misses as a result of an absence. Please contact the school by noon, and the work may be picked up after 4:00 p.m. on the day of the absence. In the event of an extended absence, work may be picked up regularly or will be available when your child returns to school.

CAFETERIA

Breakfast and lunch are available daily in our school cafeteria. We encourage you to use Myschoolbucks.com, a computerized accounting system which allows you to deposit money electronically for your child's meals, as this makes prepaid meals an easy option for parents and students. Students may also purchase meals by the day, week, or month. Checks should be made payable to **Stafford County Food Service**. Additionally, children may pack a lunch from home if they prefer. Milk or juice may be purchased to go with the packed lunch, but dessert can only be purchased with a school meal.

If a student forgets his/her lunch or lunch money, that student will be allowed to charge a lunch. If your child must charge lunch, that amount must be repaid the following day. This is a courtesy extended to our students. Failure to repay lunch charges could place this benefit in jeopardy. Dessert may not be charged.

ALLERGIES/SNACKS

The staff of Falmouth Elementary is proud to put the safety of **our** students first. This school year we have several students with severe nut allergies. FES, recognizing that food allergies may be severe and even life threatening, has implemented a ***Nut-Free Classroom Policy***. We ask that no nuts of any kind be brought **into, or**, consumed in our classrooms for any reason. Foods sent in for snack and class events should be carefully checked to make sure they are nut-free. Families can help ensure that our classrooms stay nut-free by reading packaging labels and reminding children not to share food with other children at school. We need to make sure that there is little opportunity for a child to be exposed to foods that could harm him/her. A list of suggested peanut and nut-free snacks and treat ideas can be found in your child's welcome

back **to school** packet. Keep in mind that all items **to be consumed (child's birthday, party, etc.)** within the classroom must be purchased from a store, be prepackaged and have the list of ingredients attached to the original packaging. Please be aware that food **items** sent or brought into classrooms that do not follow these guidelines will not be accepted. Students may bring foods containing nuts to lunch; however, please note there will be Nut-Free Tables labeled within the cafeteria.

INVITATIONS

Birthday invitations may be sent in to be distributed to the class only if there is an invitation for every child in the classroom. Invitations must be sent at least five (5) days prior to the event to ensure the teacher has adequate time to send them home with students. The best day to send invitations is Monday, as they will be put in the Weekly School Folder with other important school information.

ADJUSTED SCHOOL HOURS

When school hours are changed, information is posted on the SCPS website (www.staffordschools.net) and is announced via Blackboard Connect. It will also be announced on local TV and radio stations.

The media will be notified by 6:00 a.m. when school will be closed for the day. In cases of early dismissals, notification will be sent through the same channels as listed above.

It is essential that your contact and emergency contact information be kept up to date at all times.

EMERGENCY DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

On some occasions (i.e. snow, ice, power failure, etc.) it becomes necessary to alter school hours. The safety of our students is vital to all of us and we realize that since many of our parents commute to work, an emergency dismissal can be unsettling for everyone involved. Although we would like to be able to personally contact each parent or babysitter, this is simply not possible.

It is important that you make plans for emergency dismissals which do not require personal contact from the school. If circumstances make this impossible, please contact either the principal or assistant principal to develop an alternative plan.

In September of each year, we ask that you verify paperwork with Emergency Contact Information. We will refer to this for information about your family's plan for emergency dismissals. It is important you review your plan with your child(ren) and you inform the school of any changes.

CELL PHONE POLICY

The Stafford County Code of Conduct states that while they are allowed in school, at the elementary level **student cell phones may not be turned on or visible during school hours**. Consequences vary from a warning to suspension from school for repeated offenses.

POLICY ON WEAPONS AT SCHOOL

No student is allowed to bring a weapon of any kind on school grounds or on school bus. This includes pocketknives, any other type of knife, guns, laser pens/laser pointers, and/or explosives. Students are also prohibited from bringing toys that look like weapons, e.g. cap guns, dart guns, water pistols.

Please be aware that NO REAL WEAPONS OR TOY WEAPONS ARE ACCEPTABLE AT SCHOOL.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

State law requires two fire drills in schools during the first twenty (20) days of each school session. During the remainder of the school year, fire drills are required monthly. In addition, we will conduct other practice drills (tornado, lockdown) during the year. Teachers will instruct their classes on proper conduct and procedures during these drills.

COMMUNICATION

- **Phone calls:** Parents are invited to call their child's teacher if they have questions about school work, homework, or classroom interactions. Each teacher has a voicemail account, so parents calling during the school day requesting to speak to a teacher will be asked to leave a voicemail message, as this protects instructional time. When a parent leaves a message, the teacher is asked to return the call within 24 hours. Children are allowed to use the office telephone only in the case of an emergency. The policy on cell phone use is listed in the Code of Conduct and can be found in this handbook. Calls can also be made to the principal or assistant principal, but parents will be referred to the teacher if they have not already spoken with him/her prior to talking to an administrator.

- **Email:** Each staff member has a school email account which can be found on the school webpage. All school-related email correspondence must be conducted via this account. Emails will be answered within 48 hours.

- **Notes/Agenda:** Each family will receive a Notes to School pad in the First Day Folder. This is a great way to send attendance notes, dismissal changes, and other important information. Additionally, students in grades 2-5 have Agendas are sent home daily with homework and other class information.

- **Weekly School Folder:** This folder is sent home each Monday. It will contain important notices (Falcon Flyers, PTO Newsletters) and important school items (Interim Reports, weekly school work). Many of these items require parent action, so please look for the School Folder each Monday. Parents are asked to return it to school the next day, as it is reused each week.

- **School Website:** Falmouth's website contains important schools dates and activities. It can be accessed at <http://fes.staffordschools.net>

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are planned for students as an extension of the curriculum, so most of our classes will make a field trip at some time during the school year. In order for your child to participate in such a trip, you must sign and return a **permission slip**. This does not relieve us of our responsibility for taking proper care of your child, but simply verifies that you wish your child to leave the school building to participate in this activity. Without your written permission, your child will remain at the school with work and under supervision. All students attending a field trip must travel to and from school on the school bus or charter bus provided.

Chaperones: We often ask a few parents to accompany a class on a field trip to provide more supervision for the children. We encourage parents to participate in this learning activity with their child but must sometimes limit parent participation due to available seating or admission restrictions placed by the hosting facility. Teachers will ask for parent volunteers who are willing and able to chaperone and will notify the parents whether or not they have been chosen to participate. Because chaperones are needed to implement learning activities and to provide supervision, we are not able to approve requests for participation of siblings. It will be necessary for you to make other arrangements for childcare if you are going to accompany one of our classes on a field trip. **Parents who chaperone will be asked to complete the fingerprint process and submit to a background check.** Additionally, chaperones are asked to follow the FES Dress Code.

GRADING

All students in grades K-5 will receive a **Report Card** at the end of each nine-week period. Progress will be indicated in the following manner:

- 4- Exceeds Standard
- 3- Meets Standard
- 2- Works Toward Standard
- 1 – Performs Below Standard

A Parent-Teacher Conference will be held at the end of the first grading period, and conferences will also be held at the end of the third nine weeks. Teachers are available to conference as requested and may contact parents to set up a conference at other times during the year.

Interim Reports will be sent home mid-way through each nine week marking period for students in 1st-5th grades. Kindergarten students do not receive Interims.

Dates for Report Cards and Interims can be found on the SCPS website.

HOMEWORK GUIDELINES

Homework is not new work, but rather is a practice or extension of what was covered in class. Our philosophy at Falmouth Elementary is that students should be able to complete homework independently. If your child has difficulty doing this, please contact your child's teacher. Any time you have questions or concerns about homework, please let the teacher know. In addition to other homework, all Falcons are expected to read for 20 minutes at home each evening.

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD DO WELL IN SCHOOL

- Ensure your child wakes up in time to dress and eat breakfast.
- Check to see all necessities, such as lunch money, school supplies, and homework, are carried to school.
- Read with your child and encourage the use of school and public libraries.
- Praise your child for working hard at a task and for not giving up when things get difficult.
- Provide opportunities for your child to be independent and responsible at home.
- Avoid comparisons with other children.
- Encourage positive peer relationships at home and in the community.
- Help your child to understand the teachers, administrators, and other adults at school are there to help.
- Provide an opportunity for your child to read at home each day.
- Get to know your child's teacher and help the teacher understand some of the experiences your child has had which may impact success in school.

At Falmouth Elementary we truly believe, and research proves, teaching your child to have a **GROWTH MINDSET** and that his/her **EFFORT MATTERS** are the factors which make the most difference in success. Students with a Growth Mindset understand anyone can improve in any area if they are willing to work hard and practice. Teachers and parents working together can ensure all our students are successful when they show effort!

Notification of Non-discrimination

The Stafford County School Board does not unlawfully discriminate against any person on the basis of race, sex, age, color, religion, national origin, political affiliation, or disability. This policy covers all programs, services, policies, and procedures of Stafford County Public Schools, including all educational programs and employment. Inquiries regarding non-discrimination should be directed to the Executive Director of Human Resources, Stafford County Public Schools, 31 Stafford Avenue, Stafford, VA 22554. (540) 659-6570. Reasonable accommodation available upon request.