



**VAN HOUSTON**  
**ACADEMY**

Student Handbook  
2023 - 2024

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## Mission Statement

The mission of Van Houston is to create a learning community that promotes educational excellence, personal responsibility, intellectual, social, and physical growth. We seek to develop the whole person in preparation for a lifetime of personal fulfillment and contribution to society. Through small class settings, rigorous and innovative curriculum, and strong relationship building, we challenge students to reason analytically, think creatively, and argue critically. Our school's supportive environment fosters independence, maturity, strength of character, self-motivation, and lifetime pursuit of knowledge.

## Core Values

Family

Accountability

Compassion

Excellence

Van Houston Students always put their best **FACE** forward!

## Van Houston Academy Pledge

I pledge to do my best on this day,

To honor myself and others,

To show respect and fairness to all I know,

To be honest and fair to all I know,

To be responsible for my own learning and work hard each day of the week.

To exercise integrity and leadership,

To prepare myself for college at every opportunity.

For me, mediocrity is not an option;

I expect the best in all I do.

Who I am matters.

What I think matters.

Who I will become matters to the world.

## Attendance Policy

### Absenteeism Policy

Because attendance is so critical for the quality of your child's education, students are expected to be present at school unless they have a medical or religious excuse.

1. Excused Absences
  - a. A doctor's note is required if the absence is greater than 3 days.
  - b. A parent's note is sufficient for absences of less than 3 days.
2. Unexcused absences
  - a. Unexcused absences include unapproved family trips, vacations, or non-school-related activities.
  - b. Four (4) unexcused absences will result in a truancy notice.
3. Students who accumulate more than 10 absences (excused or unexcused) during the school year will be placed on attendance probation.
4. Attendance Probation
  - a. Upon being placed on attendance probation, a meeting between the student's parents, teachers, and the principal will be held to discuss the terms of the probation. Additionally, students on probation cannot participate in any extracurricular activities. If the student does not meet the terms of the probation, the student may lose credit for that class and will have to take 5 weeks of credit recovery during summer school or repeat the grade level.
5. It is the student's responsibility to complete any and all makeup work.
6. Students who need to be excused from Physical Education for one class period will be required to provide the P.E. teacher with a written, signed excuse from a physician.

## **Late Arrivals/Tardiness**

Students are expected to arrive at school on time at 8:30 am. Students are considered tardy when they arrive after the start of class. If the student is not present for the first 15 minutes of class, the student is considered absent. Students must have a valid excuse note if they are to be tardy for any class. Unexcused absences and tardies will be recorded on the report cards and permanent records.

1. 1st unexcused tardy: Students will receive a verbal warning.
2. 2nd unexcused tardy: Students will receive lunch detention.
3. 3rd unexcused tardy: Administrators will set up a conference with the parent/guardian, and the student will receive after-school detention.
4. 4th unexcused tardy and up: Students will receive in-school suspension (ISS) on Friday.

## **Parking Policy**

Students with a valid driver's license are allowed to drive themselves to school and park in open spots past Khang Sandwich near Saigon Quan that are not designated for other businesses. Students are not allowed to park in the spots left reserved for Van Houston Academy either, due to operational reasons. Parents utilize the reserved spots for pick up so these spots must remain open. If you are to park in a VHA reserved spot, remain for no longer than 5 minutes at a time as a courtesy to others.

Any accidents/damages that may occur in the parking lot or anywhere on Van Houston property is not the responsibility of Van Houston Academy. Students who choose to use the parking lot do so at their own risk.

Students who wish to use their own cars agree to keep the cars exterior and interior school appropriate. Cars that do not follow this rule will be asked to either remove the inappropriate element or change the car that they use if they park in front of the school area. If they refuse to remove inappropriate elements, they must park in the parking area near the beauty salon past Khang Sandwich.

# Behavioral Expectations

## School Rules

1. Follow directions the first time given.
2. Be punctual.
3. Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
4. Use indoor voices.
5. Teasing, name calling, and foul language are not acceptable: electronically or physically.
6. Walk quietly when entering or leaving the building. Running in the halls is not permitted.
7. Demonstrate courtesy and respect for others, especially other students and school personnel.
8. Show respect for school property. Destruction of school property will lead to fines and severe consequences.
9. Students are not allowed to leave the building without explicit permission from Mr. Van and ONLY Mr. Van, no exceptions.
10. Hats and hoods are not to be worn in the building.
11. Complete all assignments on time.

## Electronic Devices

Unauthorized electronic devices (cell phones/tablets/iPads) are not permitted in classes or restrooms. Laptop usage is permitted when given teacher instruction, however, the student must remain on task at all times. Students who are caught using their devices inappropriately during these times will be subject to disciplinary actions.

1. The 1st time a device is confiscated, the teacher will keep the device for the class period.
2. The 2nd time a device is confiscated, the device will be given to the principal until a parent/guardian picks up the device with a fine.
3. The 3rd time a device is confiscated, the device will be given to the principal to keep for a week and then picked up with a fine.
4. The first time a device is confiscated and turned in to the principal, the pickup fine is \$10, the second time is \$15, the third time is \$20, and each additional time after that is an additional \$5.

## **Restroom**

Restroom breaks are a privilege, teachers are not required to let students use the restroom at their leisure. Furthermore, teachers may limit the amount of time students are allowed to go to the restroom. If frequent trips to the restroom are necessary due to medical reasons, please get parents/guardians to submit a doctor's note. Information provided will be verified. When students use the restroom, there are some rules that should be followed:

1. The sole purpose of going to the restroom is to USE the restroom.
2. To limit time spent in the restroom and free from distractions, phones should not be taken with you into the restroom. If caught, consequences will follow.
3. When entering the restroom stall, make sure you close and lock the door.
4. Flush the toilet after you are done.
5. Clean up the area if accidents or messes have occurred.
6. Wash your hands with soap.
7. Go directly back to class.

The restroom is not a place to hang out or play around in. If caught, consequences will follow.

Teachers will walk students in K-3rd grade for restroom breaks.

## **Dress Code**

Students must be in school uniform every day of the week as soon as they set foot in the building; Monday through Friday. All attire must be clean, presentable, and wrinkle-free.

1. Girls are expected to wear their shirts with skirts, shorts, or pants.
2. Boys are expected to wear their shirts with either pants or shorts.
3. Regular shirts, sweaters, tops are not allowed to be worn over their uniform shirts.
4. Hoodies and jackets are allowed if they are made by Van Houston Academy.
  - a. Underneath the hoodie, the uniform is expected to be worn completely and will be checked.
5. Leggings/tights can be worn under skirts if they are conservative colors.

6. Closed-toe shoes should be worn at all times and must follow dress code standards as outlined above.

## **Bottoms**

1. Pants must be pulled up with no undergarments exposed.
2. Material may not have holes, rips, or tears.
3. All Bottoms must be opaque, nothing sheer, transparent, or semi-transparent.
4. Skirts and shorts must be at a reasonable and modest length, 3 inches right above the knee. If they are above the knee, leggings must be worn underneath to avoid any exposure incidents.
5. Leggings and other skin-tight bottoms are not allowed unless they are under a skirt or dress.
6. No pajamas or sweatpants.

## **Shoes**

1. Closed-toe shoes should be worn at all times.
2. No slippers, sandals, slides, or flip-flops.
3. For Physical activity classes, students must be in compliance with the instructor's choice of shoes.

## **Fridays**

1. Students must wear the Van Houston Academy Spirit shirt or hoodie every Friday.
  - a. If a hoodie is worn, the shirt beneath it must be a VHA shirt or the hoodie has to stay on the entire day.
2. Shirts must be in good condition, clean, and wrinkle-free.
3. All other clothing items must be in compliance with the dress code.

## **Physical Education/Elective/Club Wear**

1. If students are required to change their clothing due to physical activity/electives/club requirements, students must follow all instructions that their teachers provide them.
2. There are some requirements that students must follow no matter what course they're taking:
  - a. All shorts must be fingertip length or longer

- b. No muscle tanks, tank tops, spaghetti straps, or other forms of sleeveless dress.
- c. No crop tops or shirts that ride up when the student lifts their arms.
- d. All clothing must be conservative.
  - i. No rips, nor tears, the shirts and pants must cover the body.
  - ii. No mesh, semi-opaque, or see-through clothing.
  - iii. Underwear must be covered at all times.
- e. Shoes must be appropriate to the course as directed by the instructor.
  - i. No slippers, sandals, flip-flops, or Crocs.
- f. Long hair must be tied back.
- g. Clothes must be cleaned after each class.
- h. Students must change back to school-appropriate attire for the remainder of the day.

## **Backpacks, Accessories, and Jewelry**

- 1. Backpacks
  - a. Clear/ mesh backpacks are preferred for the safety of our students.
  - b. Students can bring in other types of backpacks as long as they are conservative and appropriate for school use.
  - c. Backpacks can contain cartoon or graphical images as long as those images are school appropriate.
    - i. No backpacks with lettering or drawings which depict violent or sexually suggestive expressions, themes and/or actions, profanity, obscenity, guns, drugs, alcohol, or tobacco shall be worn. This includes backpacks that display other languages.
  - d. Backpacks must be in good condition and contain no holes, rips, or tears.
  - e. Backpacks must be kept clean at all times.
- 2. Accessories and Jewelry
  - a. For uniforms, no alterations can be made to the base design.
    - i. Some accessories can be worn on uniform days such as headbands, headscarves, bowties, neckties, watches, necklaces, earrings, rings, bracelets, ascots, and belts.



- ii. Accessories on uniform day must be conservative colors and school appropriate.
    - iii. All accessories must follow the guidelines outlined below.
    - iv. On non-uniform days, accessories do not have to be conservative colors or prints as long as they are school appropriate.
  - b. Necklaces must be simple and lightweight.
    - i. No heavy, long, and/or excessive chains and accessories.
  - c. Earrings must be conservative.
    - i. No dangly, huge hoops, or chain earrings allowed.
    - ii. Earrings must be pierced on the earlobe.
  - d. No visible piercings are allowed unless it is an earring.
  - e. No visible tattoos are allowed.
  - f. Accessories must be school appropriate and not contain any allusions to violent, obscene, sexual, or graphic imagery.
  - g. Accessories must not have any gang affiliation whatsoever.
- 3. Hair
  - a. Hair color must be a natural color.
    - i. Allowed: Black, blonde, brown, auburn, ginger.
    - ii. Not allowed: pink, red, green, blue, orange, neon yellow, purple, etc.
  - b. Hair should be clean and groomed properly every day.
  - c. Hats and hoods must not be worn inside the building.
  - d. Facial hair must be kept clean and well-groomed.
- 4. Hygiene Requirements
  - a. Take a bath every day.
  - b. Brush your teeth twice a day, every day, once in the morning, and once at night.
  - c. Use deodorant/antiperspirant to minimize body odors.
  - d. No heavily scented perfumes, colognes, or lotions.
  - e. Fingernails must be clean and trimmed.
  - f. Nail polish is allowed.

- i. However, long nail styles are not allowed.
- ii. Designs must be conservative.

1st Offense: Students will receive a warning and must obtain a change of clothing or they will be forced to change from the lost and found.

2nd Offense: Students will be assigned 1 day of lunch detention. If it's a club day, they will lose their club day entirely. They must acquire appropriate clothing or they will be forced to change from the lost and found. They also have the option to buy a new uniform shirt from school.

3rd Offense: Students will be assigned ISS and 3 days of lunch detention.

4th Offense and beyond: One week of lunch school detention and a conversation with Mr. Van.

## Lunch

1. A Lunch is located in the cafeteria for students K-7th grade from 11:30am-12:15pm.
2. B Lunch is located in the cafeteria for students 8th-12th grade from 12:15pm-1:00pm.
3. Off-campus lunch is only allowed to students in 10th-12th grade.
4. Students are not allowed to have lunch in any of the classrooms for any reason at all. If caught, consequences will follow.

## Permission Slips/Paperwork

All permission slips and school paperwork must be signed by parents or guardians. If students forge signatures, all future permissions will be vetoed.

## Disciplinary Actions

Any student may be subject to disciplinary action, including Friday detention if his/her actions on campus are disruptive or are in violation of school rules and regulations. In cases involving disciplinary action, the student will have access to established appeals procedures with the school's administrators. Any offenses listed below can qualify for higher levels of consequences (never lower level).

1. Level One Offenses

- a. Running in the hallways.
- b. Disruptive/Disrespectful Behavior.
- c. Leaving classrooms/electives/lunch without permission.
- d. Playing around in the restroom.
- e. Failure to maintain an indoor voice as instructed.
- f. Profanity.
- g. Missing homework or classwork.
- h. Sleeping in class.
- i. Leaving trash inside of desks or the classroom.
- j. Having inappropriate images or words on/in the car.
- k. Using electronic devices without permission in class.
- l. Not in appliance with uniform dress code.

2. Level Two Offense

- a. Any PDA.
- b. Late to Detention.
- c. Minor Destruction of School Property.
- d. Cheating.
- e. Bullying.
- f. Low Level Verbal Threats.
- g. 3 level one offenses.

3. Level Three Offense

- a. Skipping Detention.
- b. Stealing.
- c. Gambling.
- d. Minor Physical Altercations.
- e. Continuous Misbehavior.

- f. High-Level Threats Verbal, Electronic, or Physical.
  - g. Major Destruction of School Property.
  - h. Skipping Class.
  - i. Leaving the Building without Permission.
  - j. Distribution of inappropriate materials.
  - k. Inappropriate jokes/gestures of any nature.
  - l. 3 level two offenses.
4. Level Four Offense
- a. Physical Altercations.
  - b. Stealing from students and or the school.
  - c. Significant Destruction of School Property.
  - d. In Possession of Drugs.
  - e. Consumption of Drugs /Being Under the Influence of Drugs.
  - f. In Possession of Knives.
  - g. 3 level three offenses.
5. Level Five Offense
- a. In Possession of Guns
  - b. Sexual Assault of any form.
  - c. Gang Affiliation of any kind.
  - d. Criminal Offenses under Texas State Laws.
  - e. Distribution of prohibited items (drugs, weapons, unauthorized sales).
  - f. 2 level four offenses.

Level 1 Consequences:

1. The first offense will result in a verbal warning.
2. Additional consequences may include lunch detention, Friday ISS, parent conferences with Mr. Van.

Level 2 Consequences:

1. Instant lunch detention upon noticing of the behavior.
2. Additional consequences may include: Friday ISS, a parent conference with Mr. Van, and a week's worth of after-school detention for continued cases.

### Level 3 Consequences:

1. Instant 1 week of lunch detention and Friday ISS.
2. Additional consequences may include: Parent conference with Mr. Van and additional weeks of punishment depending on the severity of the offense.

### Level 4 Consequences:

1. 3 days of suspension from school.

### Level 5 Consequences:

2. Instant expulsion from the school.

## Prohibited Conduct

**These behaviors are banned from the school and will be punished accordingly:**

1. Profanity, using offensive language, name-calling, ethnic, racial, or gender slurs, other derogatory statements, or yelling.
2. Disrespectful behavior towards other students and faculty.
3. Failure to follow instructions.
4. Disruption of instruction or other school activities or operations.
5. Unexcused or excessive tardiness.
6. Bullying (including cyberbullying) or targeting other students.
7. Sexual Harassment.

## Academic Standards

**Van Houston Academy's grading scale is as follows:**

1. A: 90 - 100
2. B: 80 - 89
3. C: 75 - 79
4. D: 70 - 74
5. F: Below 70

## Homework

Homework is assigned as a tool for a better understanding of the subject matter and as a study skill in commitment to short and long-range responsibilities. It is graduated by grade level in the average length of time expected. Homework is considered the student's responsibility.

## Report Cards

Report Cards are issued every nine weeks in accordance with the school calendar. All students are issued a Report Card.

## Academic Integrity

Van Houston Academy requires all students to abide by the following guidelines regarding academic integrity, cheating, and plagiarism:

1. Using, obtaining, or possessing, as well as giving or receiving, unauthorized materials in a testing situation.
2. Giving or sharing information on a test, quiz, homework, project, etc...
3. Copying work from another author (student, website, book, etc).
4. Passing on or receiving definite answers to test or quiz questions.
5. Turning in work for credit that is not one's own (This includes, but is not limited to, information from the internet).
6. Submitting text that has been cut-and-paste from the internet without attribution.
7. Sharing or copying information from another student's computer or mobile device.

Plagiarism without properly given recognizing the original source is also considered plagiarism

The following consequences will apply when violations occur:

1. A documented referral to the Principal will be added to the student's behavior file.
2. Consequences will be assigned to the behavior record.

3. A score of “Zero” will be given for the test or the assignment involved.

## High School (9th-12th) Graduation Requirements

English	4 credits
Mathematics	4 credits
Science	4 credits
Social Studies	4 credits
Electives	3.5 credits
Foreign Language	2 credits
Physical Education	0.5 credits
Health	0.5 credits
Technology	0.5 credits
Fine Arts	0.5 credits

## Conclusion

The Student Handbook explains your school’s guidelines on attendance, absences, tardies, behavior, and behavior. Becoming familiar with the school’s policies will help you manage your child’s attendance, academics, and behavior. This is to ensure that they are following our policies.

## Handbook Signature Page

The student and parent/guardian handbook is for your information. All students are expected to abide by all of the regulations and standards. Failure to abide by the student handbook will result in the consequences as outlined in the book. Please sign and return this page to the school for our records.

I have read the 2022-2023 student handbook and agree to abide by its regulations and standards.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## **≠Academic Integrity: Cheating and Plagiarism Policy**

Signing this policy indicates that the student and parent/guardian understand the rationale for the policy, the definition of cheating and plagiarism, and the penalty for violating this policy. A signature indicates that neither the student nor the parent/guardian will attempt to explain or justify a cheating or plagiarism offense with the argument that the student was unaware of the policy or did not understand that he or she was violating the Academic Integrity Policy.

I have read the policy and I understand it. My parent/guardian has reviewed this policy with me and has given me a chance to ask questions about it. I understand that it applies to all of my assignments in all of my classes all year long, including any summer reading assignments.

Print Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read the policy and I understand it. I will support it by discussing it with my child and agree that my child will abide by it. I will do my best to ensure his or her accountability in his or her school work.

Print Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_