



Welcome

The Okeechobee Adventist Christian School welcomes you! We look forward to a successful year as we work together to teach your children and help them grow spiritually, academically, and physically. As supportive families, you are encouraged to participate in and support your child's learning environment by joining field trips, coming to programs, and lending your expertise to our study. We eagerly await the opportunity to include you in our team to help prepare your child for a future in this world and the world to come.

This HANDBOOK explains what you will need to know to make this a successful year. Please take the time to read it and keep it available for a reference throughout the year. **The School Board of the Okeechobee Adventist Christian School reserves the right to make changes to the policies throughout the school year should circumstances warrant. Any changes will be given to you in writing and will be presented at a Home and School meeting.**

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Okeechobee Adventist Christian School is to lead students to love and respect God, others, and themselves, and to prepare students to serve God and their communities with joy and confidence.

Philosophy

The Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of education is Christ-centered. Adventists believe that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God's character and purposes can be understood as revealed in the Bible, in Jesus Christ, and in nature. The distinctive characteristics of Adventist education—derived from the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White—point to the redemptive aim of true education: to restore human beings into the image of their Maker.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that God is infinitely loving, wise, and powerful. He relates to human beings on a personal level, presenting His character as the ultimate norm for human conduct and His grace as the means of restoration.

Adventists recognize, however, that human motives, thinking, and behavior have fallen short of God's ideal. Education in its broadest sense is a means of restoring human beings to their original relationship with God. Working together, homes, schools, and churches cooperate with divine agencies in preparing learners for responsible citizenship in this world and in the world to come.

Adventist education imparts more than academic knowledge. It fosters a balanced development of the whole person—spiritually, intellectually, physically, and socially. Its time dimensions span eternity. It seeks to develop a life of faith in God and respect for the dignity of



all human beings; to build character akin to that of the Creator; to nurture thinkers rather than mere reflectors of others' thoughts; to promote loving service rather than selfish ambition; to ensure maximum development of everyone's potential; and to embrace all that is true, good, and beautiful.

The Seventh-day Adventist Approach to Education

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes God as the ultimate source of existence, truth, and power. In the beginning God created in His image a perfect humanity, a perfection later marred by sin. Education in its broadest sense is a means of returning human beings to their original relationship with God. The distinctive characteristics of this Adventist worldview built around creation, the fall, redemption, and re-creation, are derived from the Bible and the inspired writings of Ellen G. White.

The Aim of true education is to restore human beings into the image of God as revealed by the life of Jesus Christ. Only through the guidance of the Holy Spirit can this be accomplished. It fosters a balanced development of the whole person – spiritual, physical, intellectual, and social-emotional – a process that spans a lifetime. Working together, homes, schools, and churches cooperate with divine agencies to prepare learners to be good citizens in this world and for eternity.

Core Curriculum Goals

1. Learners will choose to accept God as the Creator and Redeemer.
2. Learners will grow in their knowledge and understanding of God's creation.
3. Learners will creatively apply their spiritual, physical, intellectual, and social-emotional knowledge.
4. Learners will demonstrate their commitment to the Creator through service to others.

School Personnel

Principal/Head Teacher: Mr. John Sufficool (863) 610-1291

Mr. Sufficool has been teaching in the Adventist education system for 35+ years. All his experience has been in small multigrade classrooms, 34 years in one-teacher schools. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Southwestern Adventist College (University) in Keene, TX. In addition, he holds a master's degree in Inclusive Education from Southern University in Colliedale, TN.

Substitute Teacher: Mrs. Rita Rou



School Board Chair: Mrs. Teena Nava (954) 825-9427

Treasurer: Mrs. Linda Hancock (863) 763-1776

Pastor: Rafael Fernandez (813) 361-6000

Admission Policy

We believe that no matter your religion or philosophy of life an Adventist education can help your child make better moral decisions and grow to become a trustworthy community leader.

FLCOE NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT June 2020 Florida Conference Seventh-day Adventist schools admit students of any race, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, and sexual orientation. Our schools do not discriminate on the basis of any of the aforementioned categories in decisions for admission, discipline, or application of education policies. We promote a sharp focus on learning and caring while requiring all students to adhere to behavioral expectations set out in a strict code of conduct supported by the Biblical beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Families who agree to abide by the values of The Seventh-day Adventist Church and wish to attend the Okeechobee Adventist Christian School need to fill out an application and provide the school with the following information:

- A copy of a birth certificate.
- A copy of transcripts from the previous school attended.
- Any psycho-educational testing that has been done.
- Up-to-date immunization records or religious exempt forms provided by the Health Department.
- Record of physical examination for new students.
- Two non-family references, one of which should be from the child's last teacher.

Please note that these need to be provided by the parents BEFORE the child is considered for our school.

Home School students will be asked to complete a placement test to make sure they meet the readiness requirements for entering the grade requested. In most cases, this testing will take place in the early summer.

Parents and students will be asked to interview with the teacher and possibly the pastor and/or school board chair prior to acceptance. This information will then go to the School/Church Board for action.



The School Board reserves the right to refuse admittance to any child and to dismiss any child whenever it deems such action necessary for the welfare of the child, other students, or the overall well-being of the school. Students not adhering to the philosophy or the objectives of the school, or not meeting the classroom rules and regulations, or not meeting the scholastic requirements are subject to non-admittance or dismissal.

We strive to help all children, believing that all children can learn and grow. However, **our size and resources may not be suitable for children with severe diagnosed learning disabilities. These will be looked at on a case-by-case basis.** We want to be sure the students end up in the best possible environment for them to learn, even if that is not with us.

Financial Responsibility

The Okeechobee Adventist Christian School seeks to maintain an affordable alternative for families seeking school choice. Due to a very supportive church family, we have been able to keep our tuition costs down. Monthly statements will be mailed to each family. All efforts should be made to make tuition payments monthly.

It is the parents' responsibility to make tuition payments or arrange for scholarships for the students. Failure to do this may result in non-admittance to the school or dismissal from the school. This also includes logging into your step-up account and approving payments. This step MUST be taken before they release the funds to the school.

Please note that unpaid tuition may be reported to the IRS as income.

Entrance Fee: \$500

This covers books, testing materials, student insurance, library fees, technology fees, and other miscellaneous fees we incur for each student.

Field Trip Fee: Gr. 1-8: = \$300

This fee will cover the cost of field trips for the year. **Should the expense exceed \$300, the parents will be asked to provide the difference.**

Tuition:

\$7000 per year = \$700 x 10 months

Financial Aid:

Our school accepts the FTC and FES scholarships administered through stepupforstudents.org or aaascholarship.org.



Transportation

The Okeechobee Adventist Christian School does not operate a bus and is not responsible for student transportation to and from school. Parents/guardians are responsible for having their students to school by 8:00am and picking them up at 3:00pm (**2:00pm on Fridays**)

In the case of field trips, the teacher will contact parents to drive and help chaperone. Anyone transporting students will have to go through the conference screening process and show proof of insurance. The conference insurance requirements are higher than normal. Anyone who does not meet those requirements may not transport children other than their own.

Attendance

Regular and prompt attendance is essential to success in school. The Okeechobee Adventist Christian School is bound by state and federal laws to maintain regular class attendance. Florida school laws place the responsibility on the parent or legal guardian to ensure children are in school. The state requires 180 days of school and only allows 10% absence per year. Excess absences will be reported to the appropriate state agency.

Absences will be considered excusable if:

- The student is sick and designated so in writing by a parent or medical professional.
- The student has an **unavoidable** medical or dental appointment during school hours and provides a note from the doctor.
- There is a death in the immediate family.
- An unavoidable emergency happens. (Example: car breaks down, fire, no electricity)

The parent should call or text the teacher when a student is absent. A written explanation will be expected on the student's return to school.

Students will be allowed to make up missed work due to an excused absence without penalty. Students will be expected to make up missing work due to an unexcused absence, however, 10% will be deducted from the grade for those assignments.

Students **should not be dropped off before 7:30am**, unless special arrangements have been made. The teachers try to get here by 7:00 every morning, but sometimes circumstances cause them to be late. We do not have the additional staff to provide before and after care.

Lunches



Parents are responsible for providing lunches for their children. A refrigerator and a microwave are available. Lunches should be packed to meet the physical needs of the student. A well-rounded meal helps the student's academic performance. Excess sweets should not be included. We also ask that caffeinated beverages to be avoided if possible. These are mind altering drugs that affect the way a student learns.

The Okeechobee Adventist Christian School adheres to the Biblical principles of diet, therefore, only those meats classified as clean should be brought to school. Pork products and certain fish are not acceptable. The requirements for clean and unclean foods can be found in Leviticus 11.

In accordance with the Florida Department of Health, parents should send dishes to heat up food and then take them back home to wash them.

Dress Code

The Okeechobee Adventist Christian School does not require uniforms. We wish to encourage some individuality in the students. Our goal is to have every child dress modestly and, in a manner, where Christ will shine through. To this end, we have adopted the following dress code.

Girls:

- Nice pants/slacks, modest shorts, or skirts (mid-thigh or longer).
- Nice shirts with limited writing or pictures. Shirts with rock groups, TV stars, or other inappropriate writing should not be worn. (Skull and crossbones, walking dead, etc.) Christian shirts are appropriate.
- Jewelry: The Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches that jewelry is unnecessary, and frowns on jewelry other than wedding bands. Therefore, we **Strongly encourage no jewelry be worn**. We understand that some girls have pierced ears and need to keep studs in to keep them from closing. In this case, we ask that they be plain studs designed not to bring attention. Medical bracelets may be worn. We ask that you refrain from rings, necklaces, and other bracelets. Necklaces and bracelets worn to school must stay under the child's clothes.
- Little or no make-up should be worn. If make-up is worn, it should be neutral colors, no bright colors please. Only clear or light nail polish should be worn.

Boys:



- Nice pants or shorts. Please no sweatpants or skintight pants
- Nice shirts with limited writing or pictures. Shirts with rock groups, TV stars, or other **inappropriate writing should not be worn. (Skull and crossbones, walking dead, etc.)** Christian shirts are appropriate.
- Jewelry should not be worn unless it is a medical necklace or bracelet. We ask that you refrain from rings, necklaces, and other bracelets. Necklaces and bracelets worn to school must stay under the child's clothes.

Hair:

- Hair should be kept clean and combed.
- No unusual colors should be used. (Bright reds, pinks, purple, blue, etc.)
- No unusual hairstyles such as mohawks should be worn.

In all cases, the teacher will determine the appropriateness of dress, make-up, and hairstyle. Students will not be sent home, but a note asking that they not wear the items in question will be sent home with the students.

Music

OACS is a Christian school and seeks to promote a positive Christ-centered learning environment. The teacher needs to have the students' attention at all times and listening to music restricts this. For this reason, students are not allowed to listen to personal music during school hours.

Any music listened to at school will be chosen by the teacher and will only be played during music, art, or Bible time as determined by the curriculum.

Communication

Communication is a very important part of education. A good education requires a combined effort between the school and the home. Open communication is an important part of this effort. Parents are encouraged to ask questions about what is happening at school and keep up to date on their student's progress.

To help keep the lines of communication open, the Okeechobee Adventist Christian School will:

- Send home a calendar with important events at the beginning of the year.
- Send home a monthly calendar and a note with information and important dates for that month. Send a written note home when events change or something unexpected comes up.



- Grant parents access to our online grading program, FACTS, so they can check their student's grades.
- Send report cards home at the end of every grading period and supply written progress reports when requested.
- Contact the parents in person or by phone when issues arise and follow that up with a written record of the conversation.

The Parents will:

- Contact the school by phone or text when a child is absent or more than 30 minutes late. They will also provide a written note explaining each tardiness -or absence.
- Provide updated written notes concerning any medication or health problems the student has or may develop over the course of the year.
- Provide written, updated information regarding who may pick the students up from school. Text the teacher the name and a picture, if possible, of any last minute changes in case of an emergency.
- Provide written notes in advance of, and stating the reason, for early pick-up.
- **Attend all Home and School meetings, open houses, school events at the church, or other events that may be called during the year.**
- Provide updated emergency contact information. Phone numbers and people sometimes change during the year.

Student Conduct

OACS is a Christian school and therefore we expect our students to act in a Christ-like manner. We try to teach students about Christ and how He treated people while he was on this earth. We encourage the students to treat others with kindness and respect. This is important to create a safe, loving environment where our students can learn and grow spiritually, physically, and academically.

We encourage:

- Honesty
- Respectfulness
- Positive attitudes
- Hard work and effort
- Teamwork
- Fair play and good sportsmanship

We do not allow:

- Bullying of any kind. This includes name-calling, putting other students down, fighting, or any other physical altercation.
- Disrespectfulness



- Negative attitudes
- Swearing of any kind.

Students will be expected to follow classroom rules and obey teachers, staff, and volunteers at all times. Some students seem to have difficulty with the transition from public school to a Christian school. They do not see the need to act differently, especially if they come from a system or home environment where certain behaviors are allowed or tolerated. We try to be patient with these students. The rules and the reasons behind them will be explained to each student. **However, the student will be expected to follow the rules while they are at school.**

If problems arise, the school will take the following steps to try to solve the issues.

- 1. We will work with the parents to try to correct the behavior.*
- 2. The next step will include school behavior modifications.*
- 3. The third step may include in-school suspension, meaning the student will be separated from the other students when not in class.*
- 4. The final step will be to bring the students' action to the board for disciplinary action. This may include suspension or expulsion.*

To help avoid any misunderstanding, the student and the parents will be asked to sign a behavior contract before being accepted into the Okeechobee Adventist Christian School.

Inclement Weather/other unforeseen circumstances

We live in Florida and have all experienced hurricanes. For these or other inclement weather closures we follow the local public schools. They make their decisions to close schools based on weather forecasts and in partnership with the emergency management for Okeechobee County. We close when they do. **There may be times when we reopen before the public system. Many Public schools are used as shelters and cannot open until days after the storm has passed. We are not a shelter and may open before the public schools if the conditions have improved.**

This same policy will apply to any other unforeseen circumstances or disasters that may occur. We must rely on the safety professionals and elected leaders to help keep our students, staff, and families are safe in this ever-changing world.

Cell Phones:



Cell phone use is **not permitted** at school. The school has a phone, and the teacher usually has a cell phone if an emergency occurs and the teacher or child needs to contact the parent, or if the parent needs to contact the student. Students often try to use their phones inappropriately at school by texting, watching videos, listening to music, etc. To avoid this, we request that cell phones are not sent to school. If the student brings a phone, for use after school, they will be required to put their phones in a basket and not use them during the day. The phones can be retrieved at the end of the day. Failure to do this will result in the phone being confiscated and a note being sent home. **If this happens three times, the child may be subject to suspension.** The length of the suspension will be determined by the student's actions and attitude toward the teacher and/or classmates who may have pointed out the cell phone use.



Okeechobee Adventist Christian School Handbook 2026-2027

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