

HAMPTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHEERLEADER

HANDBOOK

2018-2019



Thank you for your interest in Hampton Middle School Cheerleading. If you have any questions or concerns, please see the coaches.

Head Coach **Octavia Sledge** Email:octavia.sledge@henry.k12.ga.us

**OUR MISSION**

Cheerleading is an important part of the community that comprises Hampton Middle School and exists in order to promote tradition, spirit, and excellence. For participants, cheerleading exists to provide students opportunities for leadership, a sense of family, and opportunities to exhibit sportsmanship. These opportunities help students to grow and mature, both physically and emotionally, resulting in well-rounded community members.

**BEFORE YOU COMMIT…**

As a cheerleader, HMS expects your very best. You are a representative of the school, and it is up to you to represent HMS to the best of your ability. You are making a commitment of your time. Once you’ve accepted the responsibilities of being a cheerleader that should take priority. Work and other school-related activities you decide to participate in after making the squad should not interfere with practices or games. It is your responsibility to dedicate the necessary time to the squad. Other are depending on you.

**EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBLITIES**

**All cheerleaders will:**

* Support and promote school spirit and pride through example.
* Develop a sense of good sportsmanship in herself/himself, the squad, and the school.
* Be familiar with the sports for which she/he cheers.
* Conduct herself/himself in a manner that is positive for the school and county.
* Follow all school and county rules and regulations.
* Attend all scheduled practices, games, and events.
* Cooperate with each other and follow the instructions of the cheerleading coaches.
* Participate in all areas (developing cheers/stunts/dances, organizing pep rally participation, fundraising, making signs, etc.)
* Be a “team player” and accept constructive criticism for the good of the squad.
* Treat representatives of other schools and sports officials with respect.
* Keep all cheer-related gear clean, attractive, and in good condition. No part of a cheerleading uniform or gear should be worn by anyone other than an HMS cheerleader. This includes camp/practice wear, jackets, warm-ups, etc. Loss of/damage to any part of the uniform must be replaced/repaired at the expense of the cheerleader.
* Be committed to the squad. Cheerleading is an honor that requires hard work and dedication. Being part of the cheer program is a year-round commitment. Any cheerleader wishing to resign his/her position must meet with the coaches and submit a letter of resignation. All school-owed cheerleading materials must be returned at this meeting. Any outstanding financial obligations should be remitted at this meeting as well.
* Be expected to participate in any scheduled condition to ensure the safety of all cheerleaders throughout the year. Physical conditioning may include, but is not limited to, running, push-ups, crunches, etc.
* Be aware that Hampton Middle School Cheer commitments will come first. Outside cheer teams, etc. need to be considered before trying out for HMS cheerleading. Any outside commitment will not be considered as a reason to miss any cheer event. Absences related to outside commitments will result in action taken in the Cheerleader Discipline Process.

**ACADEMICS**

* Cheerleaders are expected to remain in good academic standing (***75 or higher in all classes***) and will follow all academic eligibility guidelines set forth by Hampton Middle School. Inability to maintain good academic standing will result in the cheerleader sitting out until good academic standing is (re)established.

**PRACTICES -- PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT!**

* Cheerleading is a team sport, and a cheerleader’s absence affects the whole squad. All scheduled practices are mandatory.
* Be on time and ready to practice (wearing the proper attire.) The state of Georgia has set safety guidelines that we must follow. These include:
  + Hair must be properly pulled up into a secure ponytail. Hair should be secured in a ponytail and completely out of the face before practice or arriving to games/events. Unnatural hair colors are not allowed.
  + No artificial or long nails, and no nail polish. Fingernails should not extend beyond the end of the finger more than ⅛ inch for safety reasons. Artificial nails are prohibited at all times during the cheerleading season.
  + No jewelry of any kind. If you have to ask if it’s jewelry, it is.
* Be respectful of your teammates.  Focus on cheerleading and not distractions. All cell phones should be silenced or turned off. Practice is not a social time. Be respectful of other squad members and the coaches.
* Water and sports drinks are allowed. For safety reasons, please do not chew gum or eat during practices/events.
* If at all possible, please schedule all doctor/dental appointments so they don’t interfere with practices/events.
* Unscheduled practices may be called as necessary. Every effort will be made to give ample notice. Previously scheduled activities by squad members will be taken into consideration when calling an unscheduled practice/meeting.
* Practices are closed (no spectators)
* Report and injuries to the coaches immediately.
* Give 100% at practice.
* Be an active listener and be willing to accept constructive criticism.
* All cheerleaders are expected to help in rolling out and rolling mats during each practice.
* No stunting or tumbling is allowed without a coach present. Be safe!
* Cheerleaders are expected to leave practice **PROMPTLY.** Parents should not be more than be 20 minutes late picking up your child. Your ride should be at the school at the designated ending time. The **third** late pick-up will result in your child being suspended from practices and/or games. After the third late pick up, your child is subject to removal from the team with the coaching staff’s discretion.

**GAMES/EVENTS**

* Games/events are your time to show off your hard work! All scheduled games are mandatory. This includes play-off and/or tournament games.
* Cheerleaders should arrive and be ready to cheer (warm-up and stretching completed) at least 30 minutes before game time or a designated by the coaches.
* Only uniform attire will be worn at games. Uniforms should be clean and in good repair.
  + Proper uniform attire includes ALL PIECES of the uniform. Uniforms socks, hair bows, and bloomers are all required. Failure to wear complete uniform attire will result in immediate benching.
* Each cheerleader should bring the cheer bag to games with any necessary personal items inside.
* The state of Georgia has safety guidelines that we must follow. These include:
  + For safety reasons, hairstyles should be such that they don’t interfere with the cheerleader’s ability to move freely and perform tumbling and stunts safely. Hair must be properly pulled up into a secure ponytail. Unnatural hair colors are not allowed.
  + No artificial or long nails, and no nail polish. Fingernails should not extend beyond the end of the finger more than ⅛ inch for safety reasons. Artificial nails are prohibited at all times during the cheerleading season.
  + No jewelry of any kind. If you have to ask if it’s jewelry, it is.
* For safety reasons, no gum or eating during performances.
* All cheers/chats are expected to be executed correctly. Cheerleaders are constantly being watched. You should be attentive to what is going on in the game. Work together to lead and control the crowd during games.
* Stay in the cheer area at all times unless you have permission of the coaches to leave.
* All cheerleaders are to report to their designated area at the time designated by the coaches, whether it be at the start of the game or return from halftime.
* Make sure cheers/chats are appropriate to what is going on in the game.
* No stunting, jumping, or tumbling without a coach present. Be safe!
* Display good sportsmanship at all times. Cheering should not include jeers/unsportsmanlike conduct toward the opposing team or game officials.
* Cheerleaders are expected to leave games and events **PROMPTLY.** Parents should not be more than be 20 minutes late picking up your child. Your ride should be at the school at the designated ending time. The **third** late pick-up will result in your child being suspended from practices and/or games. After the third late pick up, your child is subject to removal from the team with the coaching staff’s discretion.

**ABSENCES/TARDIES/LEAVING EARLY**

Cheerleading is time consuming. When one member is absent, the whole squad is affected. **Please notify the coaches at least 24 hours in advance of any absence (unless an emergency).**  Evidence (i.e. doctor’s note) may be required. The coach will determine if the absence is excused or unexcused. No messages will be accepted by other squad members. You (or your parent/guardian) must contact the coaches personally if a problem arises (ex., family emergency). Parent notification to the coaches should be done through e-mail or phone call.

No outside activities should interfere with a cheerleader’s attendance at practices, games or events. Cheer or sports activities outside of HMS are NOT EXCUSED (ex. All-Star cheerleading does not excuse you from HMS cheer activities). Remember, you choose to tryout and, therefore, are expected to be in attendance and be the best you can be. Examples include but are not limited to:

* Excused absences/tardy/leaving early - A signed note from your parent/doctor is needed
  + You were absent from school or left early due to illness.
  + Medical/dental appointments that couldn’t be scheduled any other time (required notification from parents at least 2 weeks prior to absence.)
* Unexcused absence/tardy/leaving early
  + Commitments that could have been rescheduled.
  + Disciplinary action at school (i.e., OSS)
  + Work-related activities.
  + Need to complete school assignments

**CONDUCT**

As a cheerleader, you are in the public eye and are being watched. You are considered by many to be a role model. You are a representatives of the school and county. These rules and regulations are designed to help you positively represent yourself, your school, and your county. You should behave as though you are the only individual a person will ever meet or see from our school, we want them to have the best possible impression.

*\*\*\*DISRESPECT to any team member or coaching staff at any time warrants dismissal from the team. There will be NO talking back or rude comments allowed. THERE WILL BE NO REFUND GIVEN.*

MAJOR MISCONDUCT

* Follow all school and county rules as outlined in the handbooks (to include, but not limited to: drinking, smoking, illegal drug use, stealing, destruction of property, acts of extreme insubordination or disrespect).
* Violations of school and county rules will be handled as outlined in the handbooks.

MINOR MISCONDUCT

* Unexcused absence/tardy/leaving early
* Unprepared for practice/games/event
* Conduct considered inappropriate by the coaches, athletic director, principal, or other administrator
* Failure to notify a coach if unable to attend a scheduled event/game/practice
* Failure to follow any of the guidelines included in the cheerleading handbook

All disciplinary procedures will be documented by the coach and initialed by the student in violation. These may include (but are not limited to):

**Warning:** A verbal warning is issued to the student.

**Physical Conditioning:** The student is given extra physical conditioning (jumping jacks, pushing-ups, running, lunges)

**Benched:** The student is unable to participate in an event (game, pep rally, competition). The student must attend the event in uniform and sit with the coaches, having no interaction with others.

**Suspended:**  The student is unable to participate in practice or events. The student must attend all practices and events, but may not dress out. The student must sit with the coaches at all the events and have no interactions with others. The length of suspension will be determined by the coaches.

**Dismissal:** The student is dismissed from the squad with no chance of returning. A replacement cheerleader may assume the dismissed cheerleader’s position for the remainder of the season.

Disciplinary action may be taken if a cheerleader does not meet the expectations set forth. Action will be taken based on the severity of the occurrence. Since it is impossible to foresee all problems, disciplinary action will be assigned based on the coaches and/or administrators judgment. A cheerleader may be placed in ISS once during the school year with punishment. However, if they are assigned ISS more than once or suspended (OSS), then they will automatically be removed from the squad. THERE WILL BE NO REFUND GIVEN.

If, at any time, a parent has a question concerning the handling of discipline problems, please make an appointment with the coaches to discuss the problem. The first step to handling a concern is to speak with the coaches.

**FINANCIAL OBLIGATION**

* A payment schedule will be set for all payments due.
* Financial obligations are the responsibility of the cheerleader and his/her parent/guardian and must be paid by the designated due dates during the season. Failure to pay for cheer costs may result in the student not receiving items/services. As a result, the student will not be able to participate until the money is paid. In the event that a cheer account is not current, permanent suspension may result at the direction of the coaches and administration. In that case, the cheer member will still be responsible for the amount due to the program.
* Cheer members who owe a balance on their account will not be eligible to try out the following year until the amount is paid in full.
* Once a student has made the squad and all merchandise for the season has been ordered, it is the responsibility of the cheerleader and parent/guardian to pay any outstanding money owed whether the student stays on the squad, is injured, benched, suspended, dismissed, or quits. Any school-owed items that are lost, stolen, or damaged will be replaced by the cheerleader.
* No part of cheerleading funds will be reimbursed due to academic ineligibility.
* There will be no refund given at any time. All payments are final.

**TRANSPORTATION**

The cheer squad will ride together as a group to and from all games or activities with the coaches in the cases where buses will be provided. Requests to return home by any other means must be submitted in writing to the coaches 24 hours prior to departure. The cheer coaches will decide if the request is reasonable. If no request is made, the member will return on the bus with the coaches.

**COMMUNICATION**

For Hampton Middle School to have a successful cheer program, it is important that communication be open among cheerleaders, coaches, and parents. Parents are encouraged to communicate directly with the coaches about concerns related to their cheerleaders at the appropriate time and place. Such issues may include, but are not limited to: safety, conduct, and clarification of cheer handbook.

Parents should expect the coaches to communicate appropriately about:

* Requirements/expectations for the cheerleader and the squad
* Locations, dates, and times of practice, games, and other events
* Requirements of special equipment, uniform, rules and consequences, and transportation
* Safety procedures in the event of injuries during practices, games, or other events
* Other issues as deemed appropriate by the coach or administration

If a parent feels he/she needs to discuss an issue with a coach, please follow these guidelines:

* Set up an appointment with the cheer coach. Clarify the purpose of the conference.
* Please do not approach the coaches before, during, or after practices, games, or events. Coaching duties begin before such events and continue after such events. Coaches may not be able to give the issue the appropriate attention. Meeting during a scheduled time when all parties can rationally discuss the situation will promote a more positive outcome.
* If the meeting with the coach does not provide a satisfactory resolution to the issue, the parent may wish to meet with the HMS Athletic Director and the coach to discuss the situation further. If the issue is still not resolved satisfactorily, the parent may wish to contact the HMS administration.

**SAFETY**

* All participants must have a current physical form on file to participate.
* Cheerleading can be dangerous. While stunting, cheerleaders should be completely focused on the stunt. No playing around, laughing, or general socializing will be permitted during any stunt/practice session.
* Be sure to remove any and all jewelry before events.
* No tumbling or building of any stunts is permitted unless a cheer coach is present. Because of the increased athleticism of today’s cheerleaders and the complexity of some stunts performed, there is always risk involved (as in any athletic sport) of serious injury.

**This handbook is a living document. If an incident should arise that is not specifically addressed in this document, the coaches and/or school administrators will address the incident on an individual basis. Additionally, in order to benefit the cheer program, the coaches and/or administrators reserve the right to revise this handbook at any time.**

**CHEERLEADER AND CHEER PARENT CONTACT**

I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the guidelines, expectations, and regulations outlined in the HMS Cheerleading Handbook. I am aware that the coaches reserve the right to make additions or revise this handbook at any time. The HMS Cheerleading Handbook is not meant to punish but to promote dedication and excellence. In the event a situation occurs not specifically addressed in these documents, it is understood I will agree to and abide by the ruling of the coaches and administration. I also agree that the information below is accurate.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Student’s Name** |  |
| **Student’s Address** |  |
| **Home Phone #** |  |
| **Student’s Cell #** |  |
| **Student’s Email** |  |
| **Student’s Birthdate** |  |
| **Parent’s Names** |  |
| **Parent’s Cell #** |  |
| **Parent’s Email** |  |

**Cheerleader’s Signature Date**

**Cheer Parent’s Signature Date**