

Site Review

Renewal – Champlain Valley Christian School

**Independent School - Renewal
General Education**

Site Review Conducted - October 13, 2022

Submitted by Independent School Review Team:
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Site Review Scope of Work and Purpose

Champlain Valley Christian School (CVCS) is located in Vergennes Vermont. It is approved to serve students in grades K – 8 and follows a traditional school year calendar of a minimum 175 days. The Agency of Education’s Independent School Team conducted a general education renewal visit on Thursday, October 13, 2022.

General Education

State Board of Education Rule 2226.2

Members of the Agency’s Independent School Team met with CVCS staff at the school’s campus located 2 Church Street in Vergennes. School staff present for interviews were the head of school, elementary instructors, and middle school instructors.

School Philosophy

CVCS has built its academic program in response to parental requests to enroll their children in a God-centered Christian school that provides a rigorous academic curriculum. The submitted renewal application describes the school’s philosophy as:

“The Champlain Valley Christian School is owned and operated by a society of believers for the purpose of providing education which is directed by scripture as interpreted by the reformed confessions. This society is composed of parents, who have primary responsibility for providing their children with a God-centered education, and all other members of the Christian community who are also called to provide Christian nurture and instruction for covenant children.”

Program Objectives

The school’s specific academic objectives align with its mission statement. Methods for delivery of academic learning and social development includes a specific set of core values infused throughout the curriculum for K – 8th grade. Stated objectives include four elements that form the foundation for curriculum development, teaching standards and support for enrolled students and their families. The four elements are:

“CVCS’s EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES (Policy #103 from the Board Manual)

I. Spiritually To lead all students toward a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. To encourage and challenge each student to develop a love and fear of God and his Word as exemplified by the life of Jesus Christ. To help each student develop a knowledge and appreciation of the Bible and an ability to make daily application to life in order to be a mature and confident living testimony for Jesus Christ.

II. Academically To provide a Biblically based education that offers a thorough and well-rounded instructional program presented through a Christian worldview. To equip students to utilize the tools of learning and communication so that they are able to think clearly, logically,

creatively, and independently. To help each student discover and develop a love for learning, an intellectual curiosity, creative expression, and a motivation to grow.

III. Socially To nurture within each student the moral and spiritual qualities which constitute Christian character. To instruct students to learn and develop healthy emotional awareness and appropriate social interaction. To encourage students to develop respect for themselves, each other, and authority. To challenge students to exercise Christian character as citizens in their community, country, and world.

IV. Physically To develop motor and athletic skills, strength, sportsmanship, and teamwork through organized physical activities. To encourage the practice of good health habits.”

School Enrollment

16 V.S.A. §166(b)(4), State Board of Education Rule 2226.3

The Agency of Education’s Independent School Team confirmed that on the day of the site review forty-seven students were enrolled at CVCS.

Families contact CVCS’s main office, request an application packet and schedule a time to meet with the head of school. Parents fill out a separate questionnaire to provide CVCS’s administration with family demographic information, as well as provide a list of goals and expectations for their child’s Christian education. A pastoral recommendation of both the family and child are a requirement of the application process.

Faculty participate in CVCS’s admissions and enrollment processes, as well. Staff believe that “Children learn best if they are at a level and an environment suitable to them. They must be motivated and challenged, but not frustrated. For this reason, we do not move children from grade to grade regardless of their progress and learning capacity.”

The school’s policies describe that “every student new to Champlain Valley Christian School will be placed at his/her appropriate grade level after being assessed by qualified CVCS faculty members. This screening will take place after the following two steps have [occurred]:

- 1.The Board has reviewed the prospective family’s application.
- 2.The Board has interviewed and accepted the prospective family based on matters other than academics.

After the academic and behavioral screening has been completed, the faculty will make a recommendation to the Board for admission based on the screening results, prior academic records, and other pertinent documentation. The Board will communicate the final enrollment decision to the parents.

During the enrollment process, CVCS’s head of school provides the school’s handbooks to parent/guardians which includes information about CVCS’s admission policies and procedures, including the school’s non-discrimination enrollment polices.

Governance

State Board of Education Rule 2226.4

CVCS's Governance Board is comprised of six members all of which are responsible for a specific service to the school community. Board positions include a chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer, assistant treasurer, and a general adjunct member. The adjunct member has more direct contact with CVCS's head of school.

Minimum Course of Study

16 V.S.A. §166(b), State Board of Education Rule 2226.5

CVCS's instruction is academically appropriate for each grade K – 8. The curriculum is differentiated to meet the needs of students requiring additional supports in core areas as well as providing academic enrichment for students in need of additional learning opportunities.

During classroom observations, the Agency's Independent School Team confirmed that instruction methods supported the school's stated philosophy and academic objectives. Additionally, each class demonstrated methods for addressing appropriate multi-grade, differentiated instruction in both the elementary and middle school programs. Staff deliver curriculum using a variety of modalities that include "individual instruction; small homogeneous groups; small heterogeneous groups; peer coaching; research; whole class guided teaching; Socratic questioning; cooperative learning; textbook reading; hands-on projects; multimedia presentations; role-playing; case studies; handouts and worksheets; guest speakers; school-wide activities to reinforce and celebrate learning; and field trips."

Observed class instruction in both the elementary and middle school verified curriculum and teacher lesson plans integrate Vermont Common Core Standards and assess student learning benchmarks formally and informally.

In addition to core classes, CVCS students have access to classes in physical education, languages, fine arts, music, and a variety of electives. Outdoor and community-based learning activities provide students with a well-rounded school experience.

Professional Staff

State Board of Education Rule 2226.8.1

All of CVCS's instructional staff are qualified to teach in their area of assignment. Some teachers either hold a Vermont educator's license or are working toward completing licensure requirements.

Curriculum development is the product of a collaborative effort of the entire instructional staff under the guidance and direction of the head of school and Governance Board members. Special attention is given to grade level achievement and transition from elementary to middle school and student preparation and transition to high school. Formal classroom observations and review of lesson plans are conducted regularly by the head of school.

The academic program director meets regularly with each teacher to discuss classroom management issues, student needs, discuss problem solving strategies and to establish a thoughtful professional development plan. CVCS's instructional staff are provided with opportunities to attend on-site professional development workshops as well as attend off-site professional course work most relevant to his or her teaching assignment.

Staffing Safeguards & Mandatory Reporting

State Board of Education Rules 2227.12

The Agency's Independent School Team confirmed that all CVCS staff have completed fingerprinting and child/adult registry background checks. Verification forms for each staff member is included in a file in the main office.

CVCS has a published mandatory reporting policy in both the staff and family handbooks which complies with 16 V.S.A. § 251-260. The head of school conducts several in-service refreshers on mandatory reporting, hazing, harassment and bullying and student safety prior to the start of the school year.

Health and Safety, Nursing, and Immunization

State Board of Education Rules 2226.7

CVCS has formal plans in place for fire, active shooter and shelter in place drills which are held monthly.

All staff receive training in First Aid and CPR. First Aid kits are easily accessed through the main office. CVCS does not employ a school nurse and does not administer any prescription student medications. However, during emergencies 911 Emergency services are utilized and the staff follow the school's stated emergency policy.

Student health information is included in student files including parent/guardian medical emergency release forms and current student immunization records. All student files are locked in a secure student filing system.

Hazing, Harassment & Bullying Policies

At the time of review, the Independent School Team members verified that CVCS has adopted the Agency of Education's policies and protocols for hazing, harassment, and bullying. The policy is included in staff and family handbooks. Each policy is reviewed during staff in-service training in August prior to the start of school.

Facilities

State Board of Education Rule 2226.6(3)

CVCS's school building is clean, well-organized, and welcoming. The building includes a main office, a cafeteria, classrooms, art room and a common space used for school-wide activities and student/staff morning meetings. The school has a conference room and a library and offices for the head of school and office administrator.

Emergency exit posters and maps are prominently displayed, at appropriate heights, by grade level, to ensure students can read and understand graphic instructions. The school building is hardwired with fire alarm and sprinkler systems, each of which are inspected annually.

CVCS's heating and HVAC/air exchange system have been inspected and are in good working order. A current Certificate of Occupancy for the school facility is on file at the Agency of Education.

Financial Capacity:

State Board of Education Rule 2226.9

Champlain Valley Christian School submitted a profit/loss statement and a balance sheet, confirming the school has the financial capacity to operate for the period of approval. The mortgage on the school building is paid off, and there are funds set aside for capital improvements and future technology expenses.

Approval Recommendation:

The Agency's Independent School Team recommends a five-year renewal of Champlain Valley Christian School's approval to the Secretary of Education. The school's academic program, facilities and financial standing all meet State Board of Education requirements to operate as a general education independent school for students in kindergarten through the eighth grade.