

RIVERSIDE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
HANDBOOK

Revised August 2019

**Riverside School
58 Riverside Drive
Princeton, New Jersey 08540
(609) 806-4260
School Office Hours: 8:00am-4:00pm**

PARENT HANDBOOK

Dear Riverside Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to Riverside Elementary School – a creative and caring community devoted to meaningful and engaging learning opportunities, well-rounded excellence, and a strong commitment to equity and inclusion. Riverside's home-school partnership grows stronger every year, and we are proud of the community effort which continues to nourish our commitment and approach to teaching and learning. One of our most important goals is to create a stimulating and supportive environment in which our students feel secure to take risks as they meet academic challenges, and our school is dedicated to the academic and social success of all students. We enthusiastically encourage parents to work with us and to support us in our educational efforts for all of our children individually and collectively.

We are pleased to provide this handbook as one of many links in communication between home and school. Please take a few moments to become familiar with the policies and procedures that help guide our work every day, and please call on us should you have questions about any part of the school experience. We are delighted that you are part of this fabulous community.

Sincerely,

Mark Shelley
Principal

GENERAL INFORMATION

School Hours: 8:25 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Homeroom begins at 8:25 a.m.)

Visitor Passes:

All adults entering Riverside Elementary School must immediately stop in the main office to sign in and receive a visitor pass, and our procedures will be a bit different this year with the introduction of a new “guest management” system that the district is implementing in all of our schools as part of our security upgrades that were funded in the recent referendum. Most notably, on the initial visit, adults will have to share a photo ID which will be scanned into our system and onto the visitor badge, and this photograph will then be utilized for creating new visitor badges upon signing-in on all subsequent visits. Adults who are visiting should wear this badge in a way that it is visible at all times to Riverside’s staff and students, and upon leaving the building, visitors need to sign out in the main office and return their “Visitor Pass”.

These procedures are essential in helping us to maintain a safe and secure environment for all of our children. Please help us reach that goal by following these guidelines.

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

We are making every effort to ensure that students safely arrive at and depart from school. School crossing guards are on duty from 8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. and from 2:50 p.m. - 3:20 p.m. to assist children in their safe travel. The Princeton Township Police Department determines the placement of crossing guards for Riverside School.

Please refer to our Arrival & Dismissal handout (linked on the school’s website) for specific guidelines and expectations related to our morning and afternoon routines. Our overriding goals include maintaining a strong sense of community while prioritizing safety, security, and efficiency.

Late Arrival and late passes: (After 8:25 a.m.)

We must have an accurate count of every child in Riverside School starting at 8:25 am, because, should an emergency arise, we need to have full knowledge of the whereabouts of our children. If your child arrives late (after 8:25 a.m. when the gym and cafeteria doors have been closed), a parent/guardian needs to walk with the child to the office to sign him/her in and to get a late pass which will then be given to the child’s classroom teacher. This check-in procedure in the main office is an important piece of the attendance puzzle that we stitch together every day.

Early Dismissals:

The school district calendar identifies several days for early dismissals when school will end at 1:00 pm so we ask parents/guardians to be sure to make appropriate arrangements for your children on those occasions. We will still serve lunch on these days.

Children who are being picked up before the end of any school day will only be released to the custody of a parent or guardian unless prior arrangements have been made in writing with the classroom teacher or the Main Office staff. When picking up your child, please report to the Main Office, and a member of our staff will arrange for your child to meet you there.

Changes in Dismissal Routines:

Teachers should be notified in writing if there will be any changes in a child's regular dismissal routine – such as your child will be walking home to another child's house or will be picked up by another parent – and please be advised that we need such notification on each day that the dismissal plan varies from the original paperwork completed at the beginning of the school year. We have forms for this purpose in the main office and will also post a link on our website. Please remember that children may not ride home on any bus other than the one to which they are assigned. In addition, we will release children only to those adults identified by the child's parent as provided on the child's emergency card.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL DELAYS/CLOSINGS

Because of unforeseen emergencies, usually related to weather, school may be delayed, closed early, or closed entirely. If the forecast indicates the possibility of a delay or closing, you should listen to the radio *WHWH (1350 AM); NJ 101.5 WKXW FM, check television WPVI.TV Channel 6 Action News; WCAU Channel 10 NBC; Comcast Channel 25, online at www.prs.k12.nj.us or by calling Princeton Regional School's Emergency Closing Message at 609-806-4202*. You will also receive an automated call notifying you of the change in schedule.

Parents/guardians should make alternative child care arrangements well in advance of such occurrences. With early closings, room parents will attempt to contact parents/guardians prior to dismissal, and you will receive an automated call. Yet, we urge each family to plan with youngsters for this type of emergency.

ABSENCES

Whenever a student has been absent, he/she should bring a written excuse to the classroom teacher stating the reason for the absence and signed by his/her parent or guardian.

Our nurse or one of our administrative assistants will call parents/guardians after their child has been absent for three consecutive days. If you know that your child will be absent for any extended period of time, please send a note to the classroom teacher and the Main Office prior to the absence.

Reporting Student Absence:

Our school district has a student absence call-in line for grades Pre-k through 8, and we request that parents/guardians call this “Student Absence Line” at 609-806-4266 (Press 4 for RS) before 8:45 a.m. on the day of absence with the following information: your child’s first/last name, your child’s grade, your child’s home address, the date(s) your child will be absent, and the reason for your child’s absence.

The school will match your call with the absentee reporting system. If there is no record of a call to report your child’s absence, we will contact you regarding your child’s absence. Thus, please be sure to call 609-806-4266 whenever your child will be late to or absent from school.

RECESS & LUNCH**Recess Before Lunch:**

All of our students in grades K-5 will have recess before lunch this year, and our teachers will be working with their students to understand the time frame, logistics, and expectations for what to expect on a daily basis – including days when we need to have “indoor recess” due to inclement weather. We will have recess and lunch on early dismissal days, though the time for each – particularly recess – will be compressed.

General Recess Expectations:

Our recess/lunch staff members are present with the children to supervise play and to do all that is possible to maintain a safe play environment. If a student fails to follow the rules and expectations for safe and appropriate play, our lunch/recess assistants will work through progressive discipline – including a loss of privileges and contacting the child’s teacher, the principal, and/or the parents.

On the Playground:

While we want for our students to have fun on the playground, we also have to emphasize safety – particularly when we have lots of kids sharing this space and equipment. There are several key rules that students must follow:

- 1. Our playground has a "no contact games" rule. Simply stated, this means tackle football, aggressive games, or the like cannot be part of a student's play at Riverside.*
- 2. We ask instead, that students play small group or team games that do not require physical contact. We encourage individual and cooperative activities, and our staff will provide necessary equipment for creative and interactive play.*
- 3. The opportunity to play soccer and/or Gaga is a privilege that can be revoked for individuals or entire grade levels due to rough play, unsportsmanlike conduct, and/or an unwillingness to follow basic rules and expectations for fair play.*

Ms. Alison Unkert, our physical education teacher, devotes numerous class periods each year toward educating students in the proper and safe use of all play equipment, and classroom teachers, the building principal, and lunchtime staff all support this effort. We teach the students how to use each piece of equipment safely, to stay out of areas that are heavily wooded and/or near heavy machinery, and to avoid interfering with other students who are climbing or negotiating various parts of the playground. Ms. Unkert and our other staff members will also remind all of our students to wear sneakers or rubber-soled shoes while on the playground as we stress that proper footwear is particularly important when playing on the asphalt areas or climbing structures.

Each year we also emphasize that "gangs", "cliques", and "teams" that organize and chase others about the playground are NOT permitted. While the students involved may see it as fun, such activity usually becomes disturbing to others and causes problems.

Indoor Recess:

On days with inclement weather, we will hold recess in the classroom where our recess/lunch staff will supervise the children as they engage in quiet games and activities.

School Lunches:

Our cafeteria staff serves lunch each day – including half days. You can find lunch menus posted on the district website, and we also distribute hard copies on a monthly basis to help you and your child determine when to buy and when to prepare a lunch at home.

Every student has a district-issued PIN number account. You may prepay your child's lunch by depositing funds into your child's lunch account by sending a check to Riverside (payable to the Princeton Public Schools) or by setting up an account by accessing the website: www.myschoolbucks.com. You may stop by the cafeteria during school hours to pay in person if you wish, but please note that the Main Office does not loan lunch money.

In conjunction with Nutriserve, our district has adopted a new policy that prohibits students with a deficit in their lunch account from purchasing a la carte items. Rather, while we will still serve lunches to students whose account is "in the red," their choices are limited to the primary lunch option of the day.

Students may purchase ice cream and snack food with cash only – and may only buy one of these items per day.

Eligibility for free and reduced lunches is determined by filling out the appropriate application available in the main office so please see one of our administrative assistants if you need that information.

Lunch Behavior:

We encourage proper table manners within an informal and friendly atmosphere, and we will work with our students to understand our expectations for appropriate and safe behaviour – including cleaning up their trash and leaving the eating area clean for the next person. We have various assistants available to assist and monitor children in the cafeteria and on the playground, and we stagger our lunch/recess shifts in order to reduce the number of students in these locations at any one time.

BUS TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY RULES

The Board policy on transportation reflects the district's concern for the safety of its children. The district provides transportation to and from school for elementary students who live more than two miles from school or if a route has been designated as hazardous. For further information, please call the Transportation Coordinator, Donna Bradin, at 806-4209.

Students who misbehave or compromise the safety of others will be disciplined by both the bus driver and the principal. Troublesome behavior that is particularly severe or frequent can result in a loss of riding privileges so please discuss proper bus conduct with your child. If your son or daughter experiences a problem on the bus, we hope that you will notify the bus driver, their teacher, and the principal.

HEALTH SERVICES



The school nurse facilitates positive student responses to normal development; promotes health and safety, intervenes with actual and potential health problems; provide case management services, and actively collaborate with others to build student and family capacity for adaptation, self- management, self-advocacy and learning.

Physical exams, Immunizations and Health Screenings

All students entering and enrolled in the Princeton Public School district require Immunizations and physical exams. Please see the District website:

<https://www.princetonk12.org/offices/health-services> for these requirements.

Health screenings are conducted to assess factors that may impact student education.

The following screenings are done in grades K-5. Referrals are made when indicated.

1. Evaluation of growth pattern by height, weight, and blood pressure annually.
2. Vision acuity biennially- grades 1, 3, and 5.
3. Hearing (auditory) acuity annually- grades K, 1, 2, and 3.
4. Scoliosis screening is mandated in the State of NJ for students ages 10 – 18. At Riverside, this is conducted in the spring of 5th grade. A parent has the option of exempting their child from this exam.

Health screenings are not diagnostic, but are a practical approach to identifying children needing professional services.

Emergency Contact Information

It is essential that emergency contact information, specifically active phone numbers and responsible adults remain updated so that communication can be swift when a student needs immediate assistance. Students will only be released to adults named on the emergency contact form. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the school promptly of any changes in telephone numbers or contact in order to keep this information up to date. Parent/Guardian should be available within 1 hour of receiving a call to pick up their student, we do not allow sick students to walk home; nor are we equipped to keep ill students in school for an extended time.

Injuries and Illness during school hours and at home

The school nurse administers first aid for injury or illness occurring during school hours, according to medical protocol as approved by the school physician. In case of student injury or illness the parent/guardian will be notified promptly. There are times when a student should remain at home for his/her own welfare and the protection of other students.

A student should not be in attendance and will be sent home with any of the following:

- Uncontrollable and/or productive cough
- Fever over 100.0 degrees
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Sore throat and swollen glands
- Undiagnosed rash or skin eruptions
- Earache, severe headache, or drainage from eyes

Students should remain home for 24 hours after an acute illness or after starting medication for a diagnosed illness. Student may return to school when free of above symptom(s) for 24 hours without any fever-reducing medication or other medication to relieve symptom(s). Children who are recovering from illness should not return to school until they have the stamina to participate in all of their daily activities. If a student is absent due to illness for 5 or more days, please send in a medical clearance note to return to school.

Please consult with your physician prior to giving aspirin for illness.

Sick children should not be sent to school for diagnosis, your private physician is the person to address these concerns.

Communicable diseases/conditions

All communicable diseases/conditions such as chicken pox, strep throat, pink eye, impetigo and head lice are to be reported to the school nurse as soon as diagnosed. Students presented to the school nurse with any symptoms of other potential communicable or contagious conditions may be excluded from school until the potentially contagious condition resolves or they present a note from their physician stating the diagnosis and that this condition is not communicable.

Injuries at home

If a student injures themselves outside of school hours and requires sutures (stitches) or support of an ace bandage, cast, sling, boot, crutches, or wheelchair, please stop by the health office upon entry with a physician note regarding treatment plan and school limitations. This medical note should contain the diagnosis, limitations/restrictions (if any) and the length of time the limitations/ restrictions are to remain in effect.

Medication Policies: prescribed or over the counter

The nurse is the only school employee permitted by state law to administer medications to your child during the school day. No over the counter medications such as anti-histamines, eye drops, etc, will be given without following the protocol noted below.

Daily Medication

In order to ensure the health and safety of children requiring medication during the school day, the following forms must be completed and returned to the nurse before medication is given at school:

1. A signed consent by the parent/guardian for the nurse to give the medication
2. A medication order signed by the child's physician.

These must be renewed as needed and at the beginning of each academic year.

The accurate dose will be sent in a container labeled by the pharmacy with the following information:

1. Student's name
2. Name of prescribing physician
3. Date of prescription
4. Name and telephone number of the pharmacy
5. Name of medication, dosage, route, and time of administration

An adult should deliver the medicines directly to the school nurse in a pharmacy or manufacturer-labeled container. They cannot be sent in with your child nor in their backpack. If needed, please ask your pharmacist to provide separate bottles for school and home.

Short term medications

There may be a circumstance when your child requires medication be given at school following a procedure or illness. The parents are first requested to ask the physician if it is possible to take the medication other than during school hours (e.g. before school, after school and at bedtime). If the physician feels it is necessary to receive in school, please follow the "daily medication" protocol.

Emergency medications for allergies, asthma, seizures or other medical conditions

If your child has a condition that may require emergency intervention, please notify the nurse PRIOR to the first day of school to fill out the appropriate medication form, an Emergency Action Plan, and or Individual Healthcare Plan.

Riverside School cannot guarantee to provide an allergen-free environment for all students with life threatening allergies. The goal is to minimize the risk of exposure to food allergens that pose a threat to those students, educate the community, and maintain and regularly update a system-wide protocol for responding to their needs. A system-wide effort requires the cooperation of all groups of people within the system. The goal of Riverside school regarding life threatening allergies is to engage in a system-wide effort to:

- Prevent exposure to the student's specific allergen thus decreasing risk of an allergic reactions
- Prepare for any allergic reactions
- Respond appropriately to any allergy emergencies that arise

Parental notes regarding student illness

Teachers are not in a position to monitor your child's health status during the school day. If you have health concerns parents are urged to communicate with the school nurse regarding any changes in their child's health status. This includes but is not limited to food allergies, daily medications taken at home, illnesses or other special health needs that may need attention during the school day.

Insurance covering accidents during school

The Board of Education provides an insurance plan that covers student injuries during school hours. This coverage is full-excess coverage. Parents must first submit claims to their own health insurance carrier. Any expenses not covered by your insurance will be submitted for reimbursement.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION

Problems, Questions, Concerns:

Parents should contact **teachers** when they have any problems, questions, or concerns regarding their child's educational program or needs. It is important that issues regarding student performance and/or concerns about classroom decisions be discussed first with the teacher. In these situations, please initially email the teacher or call the main office at 806-4260 to request a teacher conference while you can contact the principal with more generalized or follow-up concerns

Telephone Calls:

Students are permitted to contact home in an emergency or when given permission by a staff member. Students should report to the main office where the office staff will place the call. Parents can send messages to their children by calling the main office (806-4260) as one of our staff members will then relay that information to the student.

We have adopted a new policy related to the possession and use of cell phones and other electronic devices at Riverside and on all school trips. We have sent this document home for all students and parents to sign, and it is also posted on our website.

Weekly Newsletter:

Every Friday, we will email the *Riverside Reporter*, our school newsletter, to all parents who are registered with PowerSchool, and we will also post it on the Riverside website. Since the *Riverside Reporter* contains information on school, PTO, and community events and meetings, as well as important information about school programs, we encourage you to check your email and the Riverside website for this information. We make every effort to coordinate information for the newsletter in an effective manner, and the main office has copies of the newsletter available if you do not have a computer.

If you or your organization has an item you believe will be of interest to the RS community, please submit it to our main office staff at least one week prior to the requested publication date. We will forward your request to the district offices at Valley Road, and upon the District's approval of the item, we will be pleased to publish it for you.

Lost and Found:

Led by the efforts of the PTO, we gather Lost and Found items in bins and on hangers in our cafeteria so that you or your child can reclaim them. We inevitably accumulate a large assortment of mittens, hats, lunch boxes, and other items throughout the year, and we donate unclaimed items to charity at the end of the school year.

SCHOLASTIC INFORMATION

Homework:

Homework has two primary purposes: to encourage critical thinking and problem solving – and – to reinforce classroom learning. Our teachers vary their homework expectations based on the grade and academic level of each child, and we certainly believe in a healthy and appropriate school-home balance. Parents with any concerns about the nature or quantity of homework should contact their child's teacher.

Communication about Student Learning and Progress:

Following a year-long analysis and review process, our school district has significantly changed our report card format and process as the 180 day school year will now be divided into five periods of 36 days each, and we will hold parent-teacher conferences in the fall and spring (at the end of the 1st and 3rd marking periods) while issuing report cards following the 2nd, 4th, and 5th marking periods.

A committee of educators and administrators has been working diligently to overhaul our traditional elementary report card format, resulting in a new, more detailed “standards-based” report card that will hopefully provide parents and guardians with more detailed insight into their child’s academic and social development.

As noted above, our district calendar creates opportunities for parent conferences in the fall and the spring, and your child’s teacher will be in touch at the appropriate time to schedule a date and time for you to come to the school and to talk about your child’s learning, progress, and any concerns that you and/or the teacher may have.

We encourage additional conferences between parents and teachers whenever either party feels that it is necessary or would be beneficial. Our office staff will convey any messages from parent phone calls to the teachers who will return those calls as soon as possible, and please be aware that we cannot guarantee or expect conferences immediately as we have to find a mutually agreeable date and time for both you and the teacher.

Back to School Night:

We will host Back to School Night on the evening of Thursday, September 12 in an effort to provide parents/guardians with the opportunity to meet their child’s teachers and other support staff. Our teachers will offer an overview of their curriculum and programs while discussing such topics as related to classroom procedures, homework, and field trip. Please note that Back to School Night is not the time for discussions about individual students; should you have those concerns, please reach out to the teacher for a conference as outlined above.

Placement Procedure:

As many of you are aware, we significantly transformed our class placement process this past spring – specifically focusing on securing more insight from parents and on including more educational professionals (from our guidance counselor to members of the Child Study Team to classroom teachers to support professionals to specials teachers) in this complex process. Our goal at each grade level is always to focus on the needs of all children – both individually and collectively – and we strive to create truly heterogeneous classrooms that are well-balanced in terms of the students’ academic ability, behavioral challenges, gender, ethnicity, personalities, and learning styles. We make sure that each student has at least one friend in his/her class, but we do not automatically place younger siblings with the same teacher that an older brother or sister had in that given grade level. Most significantly, we seek the best “fit” for all of our children academically and socially, and though our teachers may differ in their general approach, they are all outstanding and caring educators who are experts at what they do.

School Records:

Our school and district maintain student records -- including name, address, birth date, attendance, health history, academic performance, and any other pertinent information. Parents/guardians are welcome to review these records upon request, and a member of our school staff will help to interpret and explain these documents.

“Specials”:

In addition to the traditional classroom curriculum and experiences, all of our students have weekly opportunities to take general music, PE, art, health, and science lab. The number and duration of these weekly lessons varies somewhat between grade levels, but all of our students will have this slate of opportunities every week.

Support Services:

In addition to our classroom teachers, we are fortunate to have a number of other professionals who provide important support and enrichment for our students. Among these support personnel and programs:

*** Child Study Team:**

A group of certified professionals collectively known as the Child Study Team (CST) work diligently and collaboratively with parents/guardians and staff members to help all students be successful learners.

The core team includes a psychologist, a learning consultant, and a social worker, and they work together to provide a wide range of services for all the school's students. The psychologist consults with staff and parents, counsels students, and provides crisis intervention services. The learning consultant dialogues with teachers and administrators, reviews and modifies certain areas of the curriculum, and provides information on resources to ensure each child's academic success. The social worker counsels students and parents/guardians, establishes liaisons with community agencies, and consults with school staff members.

The Child Study Team meets regularly with staff members to find ways to help individual children become more successful in their learning, and they investigate and explore a variety of general education and special education options as appropriate. Whenever our CST professionals might consider special education as an option, they will obtain parental permission in advance of any formal assessment, and they will work in partnership with caregivers to design and monitor appropriate programming for students who become eligible for special education and related services.

Another key support structure is the Intervention and Referral Services (I & RS) Team led by the guidance counselor in partnership with the principal, teachers, and CST members. This group meets monthly with a problem-solving mindset – specifically designed to help staff members develop strategies and interventions to meet the academic and social needs of individual children. We will notify parents/guardians prior to any discussion of their student by the I & RS team, and you may direct any questions about this process to the guidance counselor.

*** World Languages:**

Our school provides Spanish instruction for all students in grades 2-5 as pupils in these classes will have four 30-minute classes per week.

*** English as a Second Language (ESL):**

Our ESL teacher offers classes at three levels of instruction (Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced) for students whose primary language is not English. Classes meet in small groups each day for thirty minutes in an effort to support the academic skills and curriculum from the regular classroom.

*** Accelerated Intervention Services Program:**

Students in need of support in the areas of literacy (phonemic awareness, reading, writing) and/or mathematics are eligible to receive instruction and/or support from the Riverside Accelerated Intervention Services team (AIS). We determine children's eligibility for AIS through multiple measures – including the student's performance on daily classwork, teacher recommendation, and benchmark assessments or state assessments. One of our AIS teachers or the child's classroom teacher will notify parents/guardians when their children become eligible for AIS instruction or support, and these services might include one or more of several models (in-class support, pull-out small group instruction, or one-to-one instruction). Typically, students receive a combination of these supports, and the AIS teachers and general education classroom teachers cooperatively develop an ISAP (Individual Student Acceleration Plan) which outlines the level of support and frequency of instruction. Our staff members monitor student progress and update these plans frequently, and children who demonstrate an improved level of proficiency to perform at "grade-level" in the classroom will receive increasingly reduced levels of support until both the AIS teachers and the classroom teacher feel the student will maintain current levels of success without these continued interventions.

Field Trips:

Our students experience a variety of out-of-class activities throughout their years at Riverside, and teachers will send field trip permission forms for you to sign whenever a bus trip is planned for outside the district. For most of our trips, staff members fulfil all of the supervisory responsibilities, but occasionally we may ask for parents/guardians who would like to assist as a chaperone. Please feel free to let your child's teacher know if you are interested in chaperoning a trip should that opportunity arise, but please understand that we cannot make promises to anyone nor can we allow parents to bring younger siblings along when serving as a chaperone.

Library Policy:

Our school library is open daily, and students, staff and parents may borrow books for a two-week lending period with renewals possible. While we do not apply fines for overdue books, please be considerate of others by returning library books promptly. The library website provides links to online resources including our library catalog, ebook sites, and databases. Students who need additional reading material or assistance with research may visit the library during non-instructional time with permission of their teacher. We also invite parents to support the library as part of our "volunteer" team; please contact our librarian to discuss your interests.

Vacations:

The Princeton Public Schools district calendar provides opportunities for families to vacation during the school year without interruption of the learning program. We encourage our parents/guardians to plan vacations with the calendar in mind. Should family vacations conflict with the academic calendar, we recommend that the student's learning program be a combination of the family experiences and the opportunities created at the vacation site. There is no obligation for teachers to prepare a "home-study" program when students are vacationing.

Parent-Teacher Organization:

Riverside's PTO is a thriving and active organization that does so much to support the students and the broader school community. Please look for the "PTO Survival Guide" on the school website for more information about what the PTO does for Riverside and how you can get involved.