

Family Handbook

2024-2025

Woodcrest Elementary School



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Attendance

Woodcrest maintains high expectations for attendance and punctuality. Regular attendance and punctuality enables students to benefit from instructional activities, including classroom discussions, presentations and collaborative activities. These shared academic experiences are integral to the learning process and cannot be recreated or replicated. In order to reach the goal of maximum educational benefit for each child, the process of education requires continuity of instruction, classroom participation, learning experiences and study.

Attendance and punctuality plan a significant role in a student's success at school. However, the overwhelming majority of children become ill at some point during the school year. Given that we do not want to add an additional stressor to those who may be sick, we will not recognize students for perfect attendance. In many cases, promoting perfect attendance results in sick students attending school and potentially spreading illness to others.

TARDY: A child not in the classroom by 9:00 AM is considered late. When your child is going to be tardy, please call the Woodcrest absentee line at 856-429-2058 (select prompt 1). Students who are tardy to school should report to the school office upon arrival.

Please note that adult supervision is not available prior to 8:45 each morning.

ABSENCE: When your child is going to be absent, please call Woodcrest absentee line at 856-429-2058 (select prompt 1). It will be necessary for school staff to call home and/or work if a note or phone call from a parent/guardian does not verify a child's absence. A note with a parent's/guardian's signature explaining the nature of the absence is requested upon the first day of return.

MAKE-UP WORK FOR ABSENCES: When your child is out sick, we encourage you to request make-up work and/or homework; however, please make the request as early as possible. Given the time required to organize make-up work, requests received after 11:30 AM cannot be guaranteed.

TRUANCY/EXCESSIVE ABSENTEEISM: Referrals for truancy, or excessive absenteeism, will be made to the district Attendance Compliance Office who will investigate the nature and cause of the attendance patterns and take the appropriate action.

School Hours

Regular Day:	9:00 AM to 3:30 PM
Early Dismissal:	9:00 AM to 1:00 PM
Two-Hour Delay:	11:00 AM to 3:30 PM

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Arrival Procedures

Parents dropping off their child to school during the supervised window of time of 8:45-9:00 should drop their child off at the new wing entrance in the front of the building. **Due to serious safety concerns with bus and staff parking traffic, please do not drop off students in the rear of the building.**

Any child arriving after 9:00 AM is considered late and must be escorted by a parent/guardian to the main office to be signed in.

Dismissal Procedures

Children are dismissed as follows:

Bus Students	Bus Transportation	From their classrooms
	Parent Pickup	Main Office
*Walkers	Kindergarten and First Grade Students	Gated area to the left of the main entrance
	Students in Grades 2-5 being picked up in front of building	New wing front doors
	Walkers who live near Haddonfield-Berlin Rd	New Wing Front Doors
	Walkers who live behind the school	New Wing Back Doors

*Parents wishing to meet their children along Cranford Drive (by the swim club) are asked to send in a note to make this request.

Student Pickup

For parents of bus students, if you plan to pick your child up at dismissal, it is imperative that a note be sent in to the teacher to ensure your child does not ride the bus. You will be required to sign your child out; please be prepared to present identification.

For parents of walkers planning to meet or pick up their child, please refer to the dismissal chart.

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Early Pickup

As a general guideline, children should not leave during school hours except for an emergency. We do recognize that scheduling a doctor or dentist appointment during the school day is sometimes unavoidable. In such cases, a note should be sent to the child's teacher on that day, and the parent must come to the main office to sign the child out of school. For security purposes, we ask that parents be prepared to present identification to the office staff.

Emergency Closure and Two-Hour Delay Information

If adverse weather conditions cause a cancellation of school, the district emergency phone system will be activated to provide automated phone messages to the primary phone number you provided. Word of the closing will also be sent to local Philadelphia radio (KYW 1060) and television stations (Comcast-19 and FIOS-24) for announcement. Each school district is assigned a code number; Cherry Hill's code number is **551**.

For two-hour delays, all grade levels (K-5) will follow an 11:00 AM -3:30 PM schedule. When determining your child's amended bus stop pick up time, simply add two hours to the regularly scheduled time.

Closing school early due to inclement weather is avoided as much as possible. However, please discuss your family's emergency plan with your children just in case safety dictated an unanticipated early dismissal. We will attempt to make contact with parents/guardians through our automated phone system. Children whose parents/guardians cannot be reached will remain at school until an emergency adult contact is notified.

Transfers/Withdrawals

Please contact the offices as soon as possible when planning to move. We will provide you with the information on how to proceed to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Academic Program

All students in every classroom at every grade level are nurtured and encouraged to learn and grow to their full potential. Please visit the district website, chclc.org, to view our curriculum.

The elementary curriculum emphasizes total child development: cognitive, affective, social and physical. The curriculum is directed by a five-year plan which ensures that all programs are reviewed and updated cyclically. This plan considers the New Jersey Student Learning Standards approved by the New Jersey Department of Education. It is developed and implemented through input from teachers and administrators, ensuring that all programs represent current theory and practice, and reflect high expectations for students.

Classroom Assignments

The Cherry Hill School District cannot honor requests from parents/guardians for placement with a particular teacher or in a particular class. However, each spring, parents are encouraged to provide the principal with written feedback outlining their child's strengths, areas of need, and optimal classroom environment for learning. At the end of each school year, teachers and staff members work diligently to develop class lists that create a balanced classroom community.

Reporting Progress

Trimester report cards, interim progress reports, and parent-teacher conferences are the primary means by which to inform parents of a child's progress in school.

Scheduled Parent-Teacher conferences are conducted shortly after Thanksgiving. Additional conferences may be requested as needed by parents or teachers throughout the year. If you think your child is experiencing academic, social or emotional issues, please do not wait for the regularly scheduled conferences - contact your child's teacher as soon as possible.

Please note that arrangements for conferences should be made in advance. Upon arrival for a scheduled conference, please report to the main office. When the need arises to informally contact the teacher, email and voicemail are the most expedient.

Homework

Homework is the opportunity for students to practice specific skills, to extend or remediate learning, to provide enrichment, and to make up assignments not completed in class. Furthermore, it is important for students to develop a sense of responsibility for their learning. Teachers and parents are important partners in helping students learn this responsibility. Taking into consideration the benefits of regular homework and how it can enhance student learning, Woodcrest Elementary is committed to setting clear expectations for homework and communicating those expectations to students and their families.

MAKE-UP HOMEWORK FOR ABSENCES: When your child is out sick, we encourage you to request make-up work and/or homework; however, please make the request as early as possible. Given the time required to organize make-up work, requests received after 11:30 AM cannot be guaranteed.

NO HOMEWORK FAMILY NIGHTS: There are times when students and families need to collectively take a break from the responsibilities of homework. Starting in October, the first Monday of each month is designated as Family Night at Woodcrest (the only exceptions include the months of December and April due to winter and spring breaks). On Family Nights, no homework is assigned, which provides our Woodcrest families with the opportunity to spend time together relaxing, enjoying outdoor activities, sporting events, and so on.

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Field Trips

Field trips are planned to enrich, enhance and extend our academic programs. Equitable measures (e.g., lotteries) will be used to select interested chaperones. *All students attending field trips must ride district-appointed transportation to and from the field trip destination. Parents may only sign children out from the school after they return from the field trip.* If you elect to keep your child home on the day of a field trip, per state statute, the absence is unexcused.

Character Education

Character education is a lifelong developmental process by which children learn about and apply shared values and ethics to their lives. Woodcrest is proud to have earned the distinction of being named as a State and National School of Character based on our best practices and integrated programming.

The Cherry Hill School District utilizes the Second Step Social Emotional Learning Program. This program employs animated lessons to have students discuss growth mindset, conflict resolution, problem solving, goal creation, respectfulness, and many other developmentally appropriate topics.

Art

Creative expression is a universal component of human culture. Art education addresses the needs of the whole child. Exposing students to rich and artistic works will enable them to celebrate and appreciate cultural differences and similarities. The art program at Woodcrest will encourage problem solving, concentration, self-discipline, cooperation, and individuality. Children are afforded verbal and nonverbal avenues for communication and choices for self-expression.

Computer Science

The Cherry Hill School District is committed to the infusion of technology in all aspects of the educational program, making the use of technology natural to the educational experience and inherent to the way students work and think in and beyond the classroom. In Computer Science class, students develop needed technological skills as well as supplement in-class instruction with integrated units of study.

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Music

Music is an academic discipline in which students simultaneously develop cognitive and physical abilities as well as social skills. The vast research on the discipline of music includes the following educational benefits:

- Sharpens students attentiveness
- Strengthens perseverance
- Supports better study habits and self-esteem
- Improves recall and retention of verbal information
- Advances math enrichment
- Boosts reading and English Language Arts skills
- Enhances fine motor skills
- Fosters superior working memory
- Cultivates better thinking skills

General Music Classes at Woodcrest expose every child to a musical learning environment that is positive and encourages creativity. Students receive age-appropriate lessons that consist of kinesthetic, visual and aural experiences. Through the playing of instruments, reading of music and other multi-tasking abilities, students learn to work together as a team to achieve a common goal. These experiences provide our children with an enriching appreciation for the arts as well as a positive outlet for individual growth.

Woodcrest Chorus is open to all of our fifth graders.

Instrumental Music serves to raise the self-esteem of and improve academic performance - just to name a couple of the many benefits! It is offered to all fourth and fifth grade students who desire to learn an instrument. Group lessons are provided on a weekly basis, and this program culminates in Winter and Spring Concert performances for all to appreciate and enjoy.

Library and Media Center

The Woodcrest Media Center is an exciting haven where books and media come alive! Children are encouraged to explore the library independently, use research skills to answer questions about the world around them, and appreciate different genres of literature. Information literate individuals are responsible, independent, lifelong users of information, capable of accessing, organizing, evaluating, synthesizing and communicating information in all its forms.

Physical Education

All students are afforded the opportunity to participate in physical and health-related activities that improve health, fitness, motor skill development, safety practices, positive social skills, team building and sportsmanship - just to name a few areas of emphasis!

Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS)

Woodcrest Elementary School operates a multidisciplinary I&RS Committee composed of a cross-section of professional faculty members. The I&RS Committee offers teachers and parents a means of drawing upon the resources of both the individual school and the district in an effort to assist students experiencing academic, behavioral, health, social or emotional difficulties. Any staff member or parent may request that a child's needs be considered by the I&RS Committee. This process is a mechanism by which district educational support services can be accessed to assist in providing success for all students.

Talented and Gifted (TAG) Program

In general, many Woodcrest students have an elevated achievement level, so most of their needs are met within the regular classroom. A variety of adaptations and accommodations are made by the classroom teacher, including tiered assignments, differentiated expectations, flexible ability group and enrichment opportunities.

Beginning in the third grade, children who qualify for the TAG program through an array of assessments have their unique needs met through a specialized curriculum study.

Child Study Team Services

The Child Study Team (CST) is a group of specialists employed by Cherry Hill Public Schools to provide consultative, evaluative and prescriptive services to teachers, parents and students. The CST, along with the school principal and the I&RS Committee, makes recommendations for programs and placements that best address the unique needs of students who experience school-related difficulties.

Counseling Services

Our counselor, Mrs. LaGamba, implements a comprehensive developmental program that focuses on educating the whole child - living in family, school and community systems - to produce positive educational outcomes.

Child Abuse and/or Neglect

Any knowledge or suspicion of child abuse and/or neglect must be reported immediately to the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (formerly the Division of Youth and Family Services). Failure of a staff member to make a report is a violation of the law. All information is kept confidential. The building principal, school nurse, and school counselor have further information relating to this process.

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Health Services

Mrs. Olin, our school nurse, is available if your child becomes sick or injured during the school day. Parents will be notified if the situation cannot be remedied by simple first aid. It is very important that all the information on the student data sheets and in Genesis are accurate so that parents can be contacted promptly in an emergency. If any of the contact information changes, particularly parents' work numbers, please notify the school nurse and the main office of the new phone number so that we may reach you when you are needed.

Any medication, including over-the-counter medications, that need to be taken during the school hours must be in its original container and *requires written authorization from the parent/guardian and a physician*. **All medication must be delivered to the nurse by a parent or guardian.**

Physical exams are required of all new enrollees, as well as students entering kindergarten. Physical must be completed by the student's family physician.

Your child will be screened yearly in height, weight, blood pressure, sight and hearing. Deviations from the norm will be screened a second time. If a deviation is noted again, the parent will be notified. All ten-year olds will also be screened for scoliosis.

School Citizenship

The goal of our school discipline system is to help children learn to regulate their own behavior. We try to take into account the developmental level of students and explicitly teach certain behaviors to our younger students. Mistakes are an opportunity for our students to learn more about themselves and their place in the world; positive behavior is an opportunity for recognition. By the time our students reach fifth grade, personal responsibility for good behavior should be deeply ingrained.

We seek to develop in students a sense of responsibility that causes them to interact appropriately with one another in a way that provides a safe environment for all. In turn, a safe environment creates a climate that is conducive to learning. Our concern for safety is not limited to their physical environment, but includes caring for others and fostering social competency, positive values and a positive identity.

We utilize restorative and reflective practices to help resolve student conflict.

STUDENT DRESS: The most sensible guideline for parents/guardians to consider is clothes that are appropriate, modest and safe. Clothing must be suitable for all scheduled school activities, including physical education, science labs and recess. Examples of inappropriate and/or unsafe dress include open-toed shoes, shoes without heel straps, and t-shirts with provocative images or slogans.

The Cherry Hill School District's Student Codes of Conduct can be accessed in its entirety at <https://www.chclc.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=1068>.

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UNSAFE/INAPPROPRIATE ITEMS: Items that are deemed unsafe or may cause a distraction from the learning process *are not permitted in the school.*

- Dangerous items include razors, penknives, matches, lighters, fireworks, or anything that common sense would dictate as being unsafe for children in a school setting
- Items of value that are often lost or damaged include, but are not limited to, electronic devices, tablets, and cash exceeding \$10.

Personal Electronic Devices

In our day and age, it is not uncommon for students to have or have access to cellular telephones, e-watches, or other similar electronic devices. If parents/guardians wish to have their child carry an electronic device for emergency purposes, the child may bring the device to school. However, the **personal electronic device must be silenced and put away in the school bag.**

If you have an urgent need to reach your child during school hours, please call the main office. Students may also use the school telephones in the main office for emergencies, such as forgotten lunches, damaged or wet clothing. Forgetting instruments, notes or assignments are not emergencies. Our goal is to help students develop responsibility for gathering the necessary materials required for school prior to coming to school. Students will not be interrupted in class to receive telephone calls.

CHPS recently board approved Policy 5516.01-Wireless Communication Device Policy. Below is pertinent information from the policy:

- Research shows that student use of wireless communication devices in schools, particularly cell phones, has negative effects on academic performance, focus, and mental health.
- **Students shall keep their wireless communication devices silenced and in a secure place, such as the student's locker or a closed backpack, at all times when device use is prohibited; provided, however, that students may wear smart watches at all times, but shall refrain from using the devices for any purpose other than timekeeping during instructional periods.**
- This policy applies to the use of wireless communication devices by students while on school property during school hours. As used in this policy, "wireless communication devices" includes cell phones and other devices that transmit and receive voice or data via electromagnetic signals without the use of wires or cables, including but not limited to ancillary devices such as smart watches, earbuds, and wireless headphones.
- Nothing in this policy shall prohibit a student from using a wireless communication device for a purpose documented in a classified student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a plan developed under section 504 of the "Rehabilitation Act of 1973," 29 U.S.C. 794. A student may use a wireless communication device to monitor or address a health condition, which shall be with prior permission of the School Nurse and documented in the student's Individual Health Plan.
- Pursuant to Policy 5516, students are prohibited from recording audio or video at all times, including when they are otherwise permitted to use their wireless communication devices under this policy.
- Discipline for violation of this policy shall be governed by the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Disclaimer: Bringing a personal electronic device or a wireless communication device to school is at the risk of the parents/guardians. The school and district are not responsible for lost, stolen or damaged electronics.

Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying (HIB)

Per the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (N.J.S.A. 18a:37-24) and Board policy 51341, the Cherry Hill Board of Education prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying of a pupil. A safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. Harassment, intimidation, or bullying, like other disruptive or physically aggressive behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a pupil's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its students in an emotionally and physically safe and disciplined environment.

Transportation and Bus Safety

Transportation provided by the Cherry Hill Board of Education is a privilege, and as such, proper bus behavior is expected and required. Two bus evacuation drills are scheduled during the school year.

Students must ride the bus to which they are assigned. Additionally, the following behaviors are expected:

Be Safe - Be Respectful - Be Responsible	
Be Safe	Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself Keep the aisle clear Remain in your assigned seat
Be Respectful	Obey Bus Driver's instructions Use appropriate language Treat others with kindness and respect
Be Responsible	Report problems Use indoor voice

The Cherry Hill Public Schools Transportation Office can be reached at 856-489-5851.

Bicycles

To ensure student safety, we ask that students walk their bicycles once on school grounds and park them at the rack provided at the front of the building. Helmets are required per state law and locks are recommended to deter theft.

Pupil Records

Your child's records contain only information relevant to their education and is objectively based on personal observation or knowledge of the originator of the records. Parents and children have a right to individual privacy and the right to know concerning information gathered by the school. If you wish to see your child's records, you may do so by making an appointment with the principal's office.

Breakfast and Lunch

The kitchen serves a complete cold breakfast and hot lunch program for students. Milk and snacks may be purchased separately. If your child has forgotten their lunch, they may charge one to their account. It is important to repay the charge the next school day.

Additional information about Food Services, including menus and payment options, is available at <https://www.chclc.org/domain/977>.

Celebrations

Throughout the school year, classes have opportunities to celebrate various occasions. However, class festivities are limited to the following events: Halloween parade and parties, winter celebrations, and end-of-year celebrations.

Researchers estimate that up to 15 million Americans have food allergies. This potentially deadly disease affects 1 in every 13 children (under 18 years of age). That's roughly two in every classroom. It's also critical to note that these statistics suggest there may be children with food allergies who have yet to be diagnosed.

On a related note, we are bound by federal and state guidelines and district policy which prohibit us from allowing:

- food of minimal nutritional value as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations;
- all food and beverage items listing sugar, in any form, as the first ingredient; and
- all forms of candy.

Consequently, in response to the need to keep all of our children safe and remain in compliance with state and federal regulations, Woodcrest has taken the progressive stance of not allowing candy or food to come in for birthdays or holidays.

While formal birthday parties are not held to ensure the safety of students with food-related allergies, special non-edible treats for your child's birthday may be brought into school.

To avoid hurt feelings and the resulting distractions from the educational process, invitations to birthday parties may not be distributed in school.

General Safety

A Safety Committee, which includes a parent representative, meets on a regular basis to discuss security and safety issues. Any staff member, student or parent is invited and encouraged to bring concerns to our attention.

Visitors

Parents and guardians are always welcome to visit Woodcrest as long as the classroom teacher is notified in advance. All Woodcrest visitors must register in the main office for all school business, including the delivery of items, picking up a child early, or to speak with a staff member.

Consistent with all schools in Cherry Hill, we require that all parents/guardians/family members present photo identification and the student identification number of their child prior to being admitted to the school.

All other visitors, including alumni, must establish an appointment prior to arriving at Woodcrest and will also be required to present photo identification to be admitted into the school.

Once checked in, we ask that you wear a visitor's pass lanyard at all times when in the building so that our students and staff know you have been "cleared" by the main office.

Emergency Telephone Numbers

It is essential to your child's health and safety that the school has a local telephone number of someone who is to be contacted and who is available to pick up your child in the event of an illness, injury or an emergency early dismissal. Parents/guardians are reminded that if at any time they change their home, work, or emergency phone number or contacts, the school nurse and main office should be notified immediately.

Emergency Drills

There will be two emergency drills conducted per month as required by state statute: one fire drill and one school security drill (evacuations, lockdowns, shelter-in-place, etc). The purpose of all drills is to regularly practice emergency protocols so they become second nature to both our staff and students. In all cases, the nature of the drill will be tactfully and sensitively discussed with students in age-appropriate terms prior to each drill.

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

The mission of the Woodcrest PTA is to enhance and enrich our students' academic experiences by inspiring parents and teachers to work together to build a strong school community. Parental involvement is critical to a child's success in school, and we encourage all parents to show their support for their children by getting involved in the PTA.

While some PTA programs require parental participation during school hours, there are also activities that are after school hours. Many committees and volunteer opportunities are flexible and can be managed at your convenience. We want every child at Woodcrest to have the opportunity to benefit from a sense of pride in their parents' involvement at Woodcrest, as we have plenty of opportunities for parents to show their support. Please join us as we work together for the benefit of our children.