

Wards Creek Elementary Parent Handbook



2023-2024

We are delighted to have you as members of the Wards Creek Elementary family. Our faculty and staff are dedicated to creating an engaging, challenging, and productive learning environment for each student. Our partnership with you is the foundation for helping students maximize their full potential. Thank you for your involvement, commitment, and support. Together, the best is yet to come!

OUR CORE VALUES

We believe that:

- The Character Counts Pillars of Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship are essential qualities to model and instill in our students.
- All individuals are valuable and can make meaningful contributions.
- Hard work, determination, and perseverance lead to success!

OUR MISSION:

At WCES, we ensure **Achievement, Learning, and Leadership for ALL**

OUR VISION:

To build and sustain a culture that provides a safe environment where all stakeholders collaborate to ensure growth and achievement for **ALL**

ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NUMBER CHANGE

Please notify our office immediately if there is a change in your address, telephone number, or your emergency contact. The Change of Personal Information form is located on the Registration tab on our website <https://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/student/enrollment/#forms>. This information is very important in case your child becomes ill or injured. In addition, the telephone numbers you provide are the ones we use for school messages and emergencies.

- **Students will not be released to anyone who is not listed on the emergency information card.** If you would like a neighbor or friend to be eligible to pick up your child from school, please list them on your emergency contact card. Please make sure this information is updated whenever necessary.

AFTERNOON PARENT PICK-UP PROCEDURES

Parents must use the west entrance. Cars are not permitted in the east bus loop during arrival or dismissal times. Cars will line up along the sidewalk near the school, back to the cafeteria loading dock, and then back along the entrance drive. A staff person will assist with helping “weave” the cars through the parking lot so that all traffic can be stacked off of SR 16. Parent Pickup cars MUST have a “Parent Pickup Car Tag” attached to their rearview mirror. If your car does not have a “Parent Pickup Car Tag” (available at Orientation or from the school office), you will be required to park, show appropriate ID, and will have to check your child out at the office. Students will be called to pull up all the way to the numbered flag. As cars move to those flags, your child will be waiting to enter the car. We request that you keep your car tag visible until your child is in the car. Please use your turn signal when exiting the campus to assist the PSA directing traffic on SR 16.

ATTENDANCE

The importance of regular attendance cannot be over emphasized. All students should be in school every day that they are physically able. It is extremely difficult to successfully keep up with class work if attendance is irregular. According to Florida Statute 1003.26, patterns of nonattendance will be referred to the principal to determine if the concern should be brought to the Superintendent for possible truancy charges with the Circuit Court of St. Johns County. Parents and/or Guardians will receive state mandated automated attendance notification letters from St. Johns County School District when the student reaches 5, 10 and/or 15 unexcused absences, as well as, when they reach 15 total absences (excused and unexcused).

Excused absences include:

Personal illness, family emergency, death in the family, religious holidays of the student’s established religious faith, required court or law agency appearances, public and state competitions that are school-sponsored, scheduled doctor or dentist appointments.

Unexcused absences include: shopping trips, pleasure trips, suspension from school, appointments without prior approval except in case of emergency, truancy.

Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for more information.

Absences

If your child is ill and absent for two or more days, contact your child’s teacher to arrange for the schoolwork your child has missed. Parents should always submit a [Digital Absentee Form](#) explaining their child’s absence or students can bring the [Printable Absentee Note](#) on the day they return to school. Failure to complete the digital form or bring in a note within 48 hours will result in an automatic unexcused absence. Any student who is absent must make his/her own arrangements with the teacher to make up the missed work.

Tardiness

School begins at 8:25, but you may drop off your child any time after 8:00. **Any student reporting to school after 8:25 must be escorted by a parent to the front office** to receive an admittance slip before going to the classroom. Tardiness is disruptive to the learning environment and has a negative impact on student achievement so please have your student at school by 8:20. They must be in their classroom by 8:25. **Excessive tardiness, 5 or more, will be treated as an absence and addressed by school administration.**

Early Check Out

Our academic program runs from bell to bell. It is very important for students to be present for the entire school day. Please schedule appointments after school and make every attempt to have students present for the full day. **If you must pick up your child early, please be aware that children may not be checked out of school between 2:00-2:45 pm (1:00-1:45 on Wednesdays). If you need to pick up your child early from school, please do so before 2:00 pm (1:00 on Wednesdays).** Anyone checking out your child **MUST** be listed on the Student Information Form in our office. **You MUST also show a picture ID. There are no exceptions. Excessive early check-outs will be addressed by school administration.**

BUS REGULATIONS

Students are given the privilege of using the transportation services of the St. Johns County School District. Standards of discipline must be maintained at all times in order to satisfy safety requirements. Whenever a driver must direct his/her full attention away from the road, danger exists. A complete list of bus regulations is available in the **Student Code of Conduct**.

CLASSROOM CELEBRATIONS

We enjoy being able to have your child celebrate their birthday here at WCE. Students may bring in store bought items enough for all students in the homeroom class. Please refrain from homemade items so that we are mindful of those students with food allergies. The nutritional label must be on the package so that carb counts can be established for insulin administration. The label being present on all items is essential to the safety of these students. It would be most convenient if your child is able to bring in the treats to school. However, if you need to bring the food item to school, please do so at the beginning of the day. Parents must email the teachers ahead of time and also inquire if an alternative treat is needed for the health and safety of another student in the classroom.

DRESS CODE

We strongly encourage parents to play an active role in determining how their children dress for school. Please follow the guidelines below:

1. Clothing of a distracting nature is unacceptable.
2. Tennis shoes are the daily recommended footwear for safety.
3. Clothes with rips, tears, or fraying cannot reveal skin.
4. Outfits must not expose the midriff while in normal activity.
6. Shirts with cutout sleeves are not permitted. Sleeves of shirts should reach the cap of the shoulder
7. Hats or caps must not be worn in class or buildings.
8. Unusual hair color or styles that create a distraction to the normal routine of school will not be permitted.
9. Shorts must have 5" inseam and skirts must come to mid-thigh.

Students should come to school dressed in a manner that demonstrates respect for oneself and others. Parents will be contacted to bring a change of clothes if their child is wearing inappropriate clothing.

The above referenced list is an example of reasonable guidelines. Clothing that disrupts the educational activities and processes of the school shall be prohibited. Violations may result in consequences as outlined in the **Student Code of Conduct**: <https://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/schoolservices/conduct/>

ILLNESS

Deciding when to keep your child home from school can be difficult. If your child is ill at home before school, please do not send him/her to school with the understanding that he/she may call home. Sick children do not need to attend school as the ability for learning is impaired and the possibility for transmission to other students is a consideration. If your child is home sick, please contact the school and describe the illness and symptoms. If a medical provider makes a specific diagnosis such as strep throat, conjunctivitis, chicken pox, etc., let school staff know. If a student becomes ill while at school, he/she will be sent to the clinic for evaluation by the school nurse and will remain in the clinic if they are to be picked up by a parent/guardian. Students with physician's orders to receive medication during the school day must have a completed Medication Authorization Form on file with the nurse. All medication must be transported to school by the parent/guardian and must be in the original container with the appropriate prescription label attached. Students are not

permitted to carry medication on their person. Parents of students with a health condition must contact the school nurse to ensure the appropriate documentation is obtained.

LOST & FOUND

All personal belongings (jackets, hats, book bags, lunch boxes, etc.) should be permanently labeled with your child's name before being brought to school. Check our lost and found if an item is missing. Items not claimed from the lost and found will be given to charity at the end of each nine-week period.

MORNING DROP OFF PROCEDURES

Parents may drop off their child using the parent pick-up side of the building which is the west entrance (closest to SR 13). Parents may drop off students no earlier than 8:00 am. Someone will assist opening the car door for your child's arrival. Cars are not permitted in the bus loop during arrival or dismissal times.

It is important that your child arrive at school between 8:00 am and 8:20 am. Please make sure your child arrives at school by 8:20 am so that they can be in their classroom ready to learn by 8:25 am.

SCHOOL MESSENGER

You may receive a message from the principal or another member of the school or district staff via the School Messenger system. We ask that you listen to the complete message for this timely information and that you maintain current phone numbers on file so we can make sure these messages are reaching our families in case of urgent or emergency situations.

TRANSPORTATION CHANGES

If you need to change the way your child goes home, please submit the following district required survey link: <https://surveys.stjohns.k12.fl.us/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=wce-transportation>. Our school is then notified regarding the request. This needs to be submitted before 2:00 pm (1:00 pm on Wednesdays). Also, please email your child's teacher. However, you must complete this link. We cannot accept phone calls for those changes. If you do not have access to the link we will permit parents to submit a handwritten note a day in advance. Changes in afternoon transportation should only be for **emergency** situations.

TRANSPORTATION WAIVER SERVICES

Schools are not authorized to issue bus passes or instruct bus operators regarding bus ridership or stops. The Transportation Department may issue provisional waivers for a specific period of time due to extenuating circumstances. Parents may apply for this waiver via the St. Johns County School District webpage <https://surveys.stjohns.k12.fl.us/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=ptwaiver>. Waivers will not be available from individual schools.

VOLUNTEERS/VISITORS

Prior to having access to any activities happening on school grounds, during the school hours, all individuals must be complete the [School Access Form](#). After you have been cleared then you are free to make arrangements with your child's teacher to schedule a time and activity for you to help with. All volunteers/visitors must sign in through the KeepNTrack system in the front office and have the volunteer badge visible at all times. Please note that a driver's license is required in order to sign in.