

Wards Creek Elementary Parent Handbook



2025-2026

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!

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 direct 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 walk out to the designated walkway and then look for their car. Please pull up as far as the adult supervision requests you too. Give yourself a little room so that you may be able to pull out if the car ahead of you is still waiting for their child. Continue to watch for the direction from the adults helping direct traffic. Please write your child's last name, grade level, and their PikmyKid number on the car tag. We request that you keep this visible until your child is in the car. This helps the adults know which student they are needing to look for to arrive. 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. Always submit a [Digital Absentee Form](#) explaining your child's absence or students can bring in a 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 7:50. Doors entering the main building will close at 8:25 and adult supervision will report to other duties. **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 <https://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/schoolservices/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

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. Clothing that disrupts the educational activities and processes of the school shall be prohibited. Violations may result in consequences as outlined in <https://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/schoolservices/conduct/>. Students will have recess on a daily basis. Therefore, we strongly suggest that students wear tennis shoes.

HOME ACCESS

Home Access Center (HAC) allows students and parents to view their child's educational information via a secure, password protected website, Android app, or iPhone app. Report Cards will be issued electronically on this the Home Access App: <https://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/hac/>

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 the symptoms are severe that you seek medical attention, and makes a specific diagnosis such as strep throat, conjunctivitis, chicken pox, etc., please let the 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.

LUNCH WITH CHILDREN

We often have requests for adults to have lunch with their children. However, we would like for you to consider the following challenges and expectations prior to this request:

1. Due to the capacity in the cafeteria, lunch with your child would need to be in another location.
2. The past few years that alternate location has been the courtyard. However, the courtyard will be used this year often for outdoor classroom experiences and grade level celebrations, along with school assemblies.
3. If lunch continued in the courtyard, and it rains, there is no alternate location.
4. Safety measures are continuing to be redefined to make it more challenging to accommodate this request.

We do understand that these opportunities are special. However, please recognize the challenges for this in the school setting in which a school is over capacity. Therefore, lunch with children during this school year will not be able to occur. Celebrating your child with a special treat after school can be just as impactful. In addition, because parents at school were only permitted to have lunch with their child only, an off-campus treat would make it possible to include having friends join. Thank you for understanding.

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 7:50 am. Someone will assist opening the car door for your child's arrival. However, most children are available to not wait for the assistance. Cars are not permitted in the bus loop during arrival or dismissal times. It is important that your child arrive at school between 7:50 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 ACCESS

Prior to having access to any activities happening on school grounds, during the school hours, all individuals must 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 Raptor 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.

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. We request that all parents opt in to receive messages:

<https://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/schoolmessenger/>

STUDENT CELL PHONES

Florida has recently enacted legislation restricting student cell phone use in schools, primarily aimed at improving focus and safety. For elementary students, the new law generally prohibits cell phone use from "bell to bell" during the school day, expanding on the previous restriction of use during instructional time. Students may have cell phones on campus, however they must be turned off and in their backpack during school hours.

TRANSPORTATION CHANGES

Children appreciate consistency in procedures. With safety in mind, students going home the same way each day is best for routines. However, if a change in dismissal is needed, the changes must be made through <https://parents.pikmykid.com/>. We cannot accept phone calls for those changes. If you do not have access to the app, we will permit parents to submit a handwritten note a day in advance.

TRANSPORTATION WAIVER SERVICES

WCE is not authorized to issue bus passes or instruct bus operators regarding bus ridership or stops. Any request for changes must be made through the SJCS D Transportation Department.