

RIDGE RANCH

PARENT HANDBOOK

2025-2026

(rev. 8/29/25)



Welcome to Ridge Ranch School. We are looking forward to a productive school year filled with lots of learning and fun. The following handbook of information may help to answer the numerous questions you may have regarding our school. Please read this information and cooperate with us by following the policies and procedures. Please keep this handbook to refer to throughout the school year.

ARRIVAL

Children are permitted to go to their classrooms at 8:45 a.m. However, they **should not arrive earlier than 8:45 a.m.** since no supervision is provided until that time.

If your child is late, send a note to the teacher explaining the reason for the tardiness. Your child should bring this note to the nurse upon arrival.

If you are driving your child to school, please follow what has become a safe and efficient procedure:

Bus: Buses will be greeted by staff members and will be loaded and unloaded at the main entrance of the school.

Walker/Car Line:

- When bringing your child to school by car, follow the traffic pattern (Lockwood to Sherwood) and pull up to the front of the school **as far as you can in the drop-off zone which ends at the awning of the main entrance. THIS WILL ALLOW FOR A QUICKER AND SMOOTHER DROP OFF LINE FOR ALL.** Please stay in your car and have students exit the car on the building side not the street side.
- Staff members will be stationed to ensure a safe arrival for all students.
- If you walk to school, please follow designated paths to school. Do not walk through the parking lots.

ATTENDANCE

The Board of Education has a policy to encourage good attendance. If an elementary student is absent from instruction for more than 20 days in a school year, the child could be retained. Parents must make careful decisions to determine the health of the child. It is better to keep a sick child home. Since there are three full weeks of vacation during the school year, parents are encouraged to plan vacations only during the dates listed in the district calendar. In addition, it is also the policy of the Board of Education that four late arrivals to school equal one absence. Please refer to your copy of the Paramus Board of Education Attendance Policy for further information.

ABSENCES

All schools within our district will now require parents and guardians to report student absences through the Genesis Parent Portal. Please report your child's absence via the Genesis Parent Portal prior to 8:45 am. Parents and guardians will receive an auto-response to confirm the absence has been recorded. [Here](#) are the procedures for submitting attendance.

If your child is absent, tardy or will be dismissed early, **please log onto the Genesis Parent Portal and report the reason for the absence, tardy or early dismissal.**

- Students who enter the building after 9:00 am are tardy. Students that are not in class by 9:05am will be marked absent.
- If you do not enter the attendance in Genesis, you will receive an automated phone call by 9:20am.
- Students marked absent, but arriving to school late, will be changed to tardy before the end of the day.
- If you receive a call, you will still need to log onto the Genesis Parent Portal and enter the absence, or you will receive another automated call at the end of the day.

You are encouraged to keep sick children at home until they are well enough to participate in a full school day.

- Before returning to school, Board procedure requires a child be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- Once they return to school, children are expected to participate in recess and PE, unless the doctor indicates that restrictions are advised. Please discuss any concerns with the school nurse.
- Work can be sent home when necessary. Please call or write a note to request this.
- Children who contract an illness or injury that requires absence for an extended period of time (minimum of two weeks) may be eligible for home instruction. Parents are requested to contact the principal or the Department of Student Personnel Services as soon as they are aware of the need.
- Paramus Public Schools have an [attendance policy](#). An elementary student will be recommended for retention when he/she has accumulated unexcused absences that exceed 10% of the school year (18 days). Meeting the unexcused absence limit will trigger the attendance review and appeals process. (See Section J, Appeals).
- Please refrain from removing students from school for vacations or other unnecessary reasons.

Excused Absences:

The parent or guardian must notify the school of all absences using the Parent Portal attendance notification in the district's student information system. Documents should be uploaded into the system as required below:

1. Student Illness: The first 9 absences (equivalent to 5% of the school year) due to student illness will be excused with a written notification from the parent in the student information system or supported by a written notification from the parent prior to the student's return to school. Any additional absences due to illness beyond 5% of the school year will require a doctor's note for each subsequent absence. Without a valid doctor's note, these additional absences will be recorded as "unexcused".
2. Death in family
3. Observance of [state-recognized religious holiday](#)
4. Medical/dental appointment (with confirmed documentation from a medical professional)
5. Suspension from school or placement
6. Court appearance (documented)
7. Administrative Decision

Note: Any reason not listed above is an unexcused absence.

BIRTHDAY

Students may come to the office for some birthday swag. Non-edible birthday treats may be given. Due to food allergies no cupcakes or edible treats.

BUS PROTOCOL

The Board of Education will notify those students who are eligible for bus transportation. Only those students assigned to a specific bus number may ride the buses to and from school. Due to insurance reasons, no other students will be permitted to ride the buses.

For the safety and welfare of students and others, it is necessary to:

1. Be sure your child is on time and does not miss the bus.
2. Teach and remind your child to enter and leave the bus in an orderly manner.
3. Teach and remind your child to remain seated with a seat belt fastened while the bus is in motion.
4. Teach and remind your child to avoid shouting or singing or distracting the driver in any way.
5. Teach and remind your child to keep their head, arms, and hands inside the bus at all times.
6. Teach and remind your child that appropriate student behavior also applies on the bus.

Students will face disciplinary consequences as listed under the Code of Conduct and be subject to removal from the bus if inappropriate conduct occurs.

- Students taking buses home will be loaded into buses by school staff. Families eligible for bus service who opt to pick up by car are assigned to a dismissal door.
- Parents must meet their children at the bus stop or make arrangements to have a responsible adult meet their children at the bus stop.
- Please remind your child of the importance of being seated and buckled in the seat belt. It is the law in New Jersey.
- Proper bus etiquette is expected at all times to ensure your child's safety and make travel more enjoyable for all.
- Kindly remind your youngster that he or she must:
 - *Buckle his/her safety belt immediately upon boarding the bus and keep it buckled.*
 - *Remain seated at all times.*
 - *Keep hands, feet, and objects to oneself.*
 - *Use appropriate language.*
 - *Use a quiet voice and speak with friends nearby.*
 - *Watch for the stop.*
 - *Get on and off the bus carefully.*
 - *Keep food/beverage items in backpacks/lunch boxes. There is absolutely no eating or drinking on the bus.*

Only students who are assigned busing may ride the bus. Students can only ride the bus to which he/she is assigned. Walkers may not be transported by bus.

Video and/or Audio Monitoring Devices Are Used On School Owned and Contracted Vehicles and May Be Monitored At Any Time.

CLEANING

Every night after the staff and students leave, the building will be cleaned. Doorknobs and high-touch surfaces will be cleaned throughout the day.

CODE OF CONDUCT

1. I WILL TREAT EVERYONE WITH COURTESY AND RESPECT.
(Be nice to everyone.)
2. I WILL TREAT PERSONAL AND SCHOOL PROPERTY WITH RESPECT.
(Don't break or ruin stuff that belongs to the school or other people.)
3. I WILL CREATE AND MAINTAIN A POSITIVE AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT.
(We stay safe at school.)
4. I WILL COME TO SCHOOL PREPARED FOR LEARNING.
(Be ready to learn.)
5. I WILL ACT RESPONSIBLY AND ACCEPT CONSEQUENCES FOR MY ACTIONS.
(If you get in trouble, don't blame other people.)
6. I WILL HELP EVERYONE IN OUR SCHOOL FEEL CAPABLE, CONNECTED, AND CONTRIBUTING. *(Be kind to everyone—even people who you don't agree with.)*

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT

INFRACTION	CONSEQUENCES
1. Use or possession of Illegal Drugs and/or Alcohol	<p>The principal will have the discretion to take any of the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out-of-school suspension for a minimum of three days and will return only after a parent conference. • The police may be notified.
2. Theft	<p>The principal will have the discretion to take any of the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent conference and the development of a plan to monitor the student's behavior. • Parent/student will be held liable for the cost of replacing the item(s). • Suspension from school and police may be notified.
3. Vandalism	<p>The principal will have the discretion to take any of the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent conference and the development of a plan to monitor the student's behavior. • Parent/student will be held liable for the cost of replacing the item(s). • Suspension from school and police may be notified.
4. Fighting	<p>The principal will have the discretion to take any of the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student will be assigned detention(s). • Student may be suspended from school depending on the circumstances of the incident.
5. Intimidation/Bullying/Harassment Relational Aggression	<p>1st Incident: For minor isolated incidents the teacher shall remediate or discipline including a warning, deprivation of some minor privilege.</p> <p>2nd Incident: (or more serious exclusion from classroom and school based activities such as assembly first incident) Teacher remediation or discipline that may include deprivation of privileges programs, detention, parent notification, and/or referral to the principal or guidance counselor.</p> <p>3rd Incident: (or very serious first or second incident) In addition to the steps noted above, exclusion from school sponsored activities such as class trips, sports activities, after school clubs, etc., referral to the</p>

	principal or guidance counselor, parent notification, detention and possible suspension.
6. Disrespect Toward Authority	The principal will have the discretion to take any of the following actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School detention assigned and parent notified. • In-school or out-of-school suspension and a parent conference.
7. Misuse of Computers	Detention(s), parent conference, and compensation for damage. Subsequent offenses: out-of-school suspension and possible loss of computer privileges.
8. Weapons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following state code a student can be removed from school for up to 1 school year and the police will be notified.

COMMUNICATION

Communication between home and school is vital to your child's growth and success. Several different forms of communiqués will be part of our routine. We will regularly update the community utilizing the school messaging system. Teachers will update you on classroom happenings through class correspondences. Information is also provided on our website, www.paramus.k12.nj.us. Please click on the Ridge Ranch tab. Parents are encouraged to sign up for the PTA website and read PTA newsletters.

You can be well informed by making sure your contact information is current. Please let us know whenever you have a change of address, home or work phone numbers, doctor's numbers, or emergency contact persons.

To contact a teacher, write a note, send an email, or call to leave a message. Every effort will be made to respond in a timely manner. Please keep in mind that teachers do not have the ability to check their email consistently throughout the day so if you need to contact the school in an emergency, please call the school.

When sending money to school, please seal it in an envelope and label it with the child's name, event, teacher's name, and the amount enclosed.

COMPUTERS/CHROMEBOOKS

The District issues chromebooks to students for use with school-related assignments. Students are responsible for taking good care of their chromebooks. Teachers will let students/families know if chromebooks should stay in school, remain at home, or be brought back and forth to school each day.

Chromebooks are issued for school use and not for personal use. All Chromebook activity is monitored and there should be no expectation of privacy.

CONFERENCES

Parent conferences are held in the fall and in the spring. Teachers will arrange their conference schedules. Additional conferences may be arranged throughout the year by teachers or parents when needed.

DISMISSAL

Staff members supervise all dismissals. Children attending the aftercare program are dismissed to Champions and attendance is taken.

Students who are dismissed as walkers may not walk home alone unless the parent requests permission from the principal in writing.

Our buses usually arrive at 3:00 p.m. Children are called by bus to the main hallway and loaded into the bus by school staff. If a bus arrives at school later than 3:30 p.m., the school office will contact you. Phone numbers listed in Genesis will be called, so please ensure your information is correct in the system.

There are two dismissal areas behind the school on the basketball courts. One is the set of doors marked by a Red Star (considered front door walker), the other is the set of doors marked by a Blue Star (considered back door walker). All students are dismissed hand-to-hand to a parent or guardian. If anyone other than a parent or guardian will be picking up, please notify the school.

To ensure all students' safety and a smooth dismissal, **we cannot accommodate occasional changes for convenience. Therefore, it is the parents' responsibility to provide transportation for activities or play dates after students have returned home from school.**

In August, each family will complete a dismissal declaration indicating their child's daily dismissal schedule. Please notify the office in writing should your dismissal declaration statement change during the year.

All of the above procedures involve cooperation between home and school. We are sure you understand that the safety and well-being of the children are our utmost concern.

Emergency early dismissals occur infrequently. Therefore, we *must* have a phone number on your emergency contact where you can be reached should this occur.

DISMISSAL DECLARATION

Each parent is required to make a dismissal declaration now for the entire year that can only be changed because of a permanent change in life circumstances. We regret that we cannot accommodate occasional changes for convenience.

Please complete a separate Dismissal Declaration form for each child at Ridge Ranch School. Dismissal declarations are completed and submitted electronically through the Parent Portal in Genesis under the Forms tab. It is very important that you complete

this form prior to the first day of school. Without it there is no way for us to know how your child is to be dismissed from school.

If your child is enrolled in aftercare for only part of the week, please indicate two dismissal procedures.

DRESS CODE

Students should wear appropriate athletic footwear on days they have physical education class. Please remember that our students go outside to play at recess time, so dress them according to weather conditions. **No flip-flops, please!** These are unsafe when running and playing both in PE classes and outside. However, sandals with straps that secure them to the foot may be worn on non-PE class days.

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

If school has been canceled due to weather conditions parents may obtain this information via Paramus District Website (www.paramus.k12.nj.us) In addition, families will receive an automated message from the School Messenger system. The police request that you DO NOT call them.

Only in the event of an **unusual** emergency closing, will a phone chain be activated by the class parents. Therefore, it is very important that you provide the school and your class parent with up-to-date information on your daytime phone or cell phone number. Please be sure to provide a reliable contact person who can be reached in case of an emergency.

EDUCATIONAL FIELD TRIPS

Educational field trips are a valuable part of our school program and are encouraged. Teachers acting in accordance with a planned outline carefully schedule trips so as to gain maximum educational opportunities for their students. Permission slips are sent home including all information relative to the trip, including the cost. These must be signed and sent back to school before the youngster is permitted to participate in the trip. Verbal permission is not acceptable; we are required to have written parental consent. Checks for field trips should be made payable to *Paramus Board of Education*. Monies for field trips are not refundable or transferable.

Parent chaperones are not permitted to lend money to or make purchases for any student. Please defer to the classroom teachers regarding visiting the gift shop on the premises of the field trip. If this is not in the field trip itinerary, then NO student will be permitted to visit the gift shop.

We are not permitted to give food, drinks, gum, etc. to any student. This is in accordance with District food allergy policy and procedures.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Electronic devices (cell phones, iPods, iPads, game devices, etc.) are a distraction in the classroom, at lunch, and on the bus. **Keep these expensive devices at home for safekeeping.** Refer to Board of Education Policy 3515.1 for further information.

If for safety reasons you wish for your child to have a cell phone or smart watch, please be advised that the student must keep it in his or her backpack and cannot access it while on campus or on the school bus.

EMERGENCY FORMS

Emergency forms are a vital resource when a youngster becomes ill or injured during the school day. The listing of home and business phone numbers as well as the name and number of a relative, friend, or neighbor must be completed early in the school year. Please notify the school whenever a change of information should occur.

Please make it a priority to verify/update all information on your child's Emergency Form via the Genesis Parent Portal on or before the first day of school.

FOOD ALLERGIES

Paramus Elementary schools are peanut and nut-free facilities. Please check the labels of all the food you send in with your child to ensure there are no peanut or nut products sent to school.

HOMEWORK

The Paramus Board of Education recognizes homework as an integral part of the instructional process. Homework should provide for the reinforcement and extension of learning experiences that take place in the classroom. Teachers, students, and parents each play an important part in ensuring that homework fulfills this purpose.

The nature and amount of homework will vary by subject, by grade level, and by the student. If it is to serve a worthwhile purpose, homework must be assigned with some regularity, with due consideration to the individual needs of students, and with provision for reasonably prompt feedback to the student on work completed.

Guidelines:

- Homework is given regularly
- Reinforces skills and concepts
- Includes independent reading every night
- May involve exploring new or related subject matter
- Evaluates student responses
- May at times require parental guidance/assistance (parents do not do the homework)
- Parents review and check homework for completion

Time Allotments:

Research has shown the most beneficial activity to foster student success is daily independent reading. Teachers will assign independent "Just Right" reading as homework.

The time allotments listed below are in addition to the nightly reading.

Kindergarten: Occasionally, 10-20 minutes + nightly reading
Grade 1: 20-30 minutes per night + nightly reading
Grade 2: 30-45 minutes per night + nightly reading
Grade 3&4: 45-60 minutes per night + nightly reading

If an individual student's homework time consistently exceeds these guidelines, it is recommended that the parent notify the teacher.

Homework can be expected Monday through Thursday. Weekend and holiday assignments will be given at the discretion of the teacher.

LOST ARTICLES

Students are advised that valuables should not be brought to school. Parents are encouraged to place their child's name in all belongings brought to school. Clothing that is lost may usually be found in the lost and found area located in the nurse's office. Articles that have not been claimed will be discarded twice per year (End of December and end of June). In the event that your child has lost an article on a school bus, please contact the bus contractor directly.

LUNCH

Students have two options; order through Pomptonian via the Paramus Schools website or bring lunch from home.

LUNCHTIME

The elementary lunchtime is from 12:00 noon until 12:45 p.m. With the exception of days with severe weather conditions, children are routinely sent outdoors during lunch recess. Please dress your child(ren) appropriately.

WATER BOTTLES, AND SNACK BREAK

- Children will be allowed to enjoy a quick, healthy snack during the day. Snacks should be easy to open and portable.
- We urge parents to ensure that children do not leave their snacks at home. This will help to minimize the number of visitors from the outside.
- Children are able to fill their water bottles at our filtered, chilled, filling stations.

MEDICATION IN SCHOOL

The New Jersey State law mandates specific procedures to the administration of any medication. Please read the following procedure from our Superintendent of Schools so that you are familiar with the regulations. Samples of the forms are available from the school nurse.

DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT PERSONNEL SERVICES PROCEDURE FOR ADMINISTERING MEDICATION AT SCHOOL

When requests are made by parents to have medication administered to their child in school, the following procedure should be followed:

- All medications to be administered in school should be ordered in writing by the family physician and addressed to the school nurse. Dosage, time schedule and purpose of medication should also be included.
- Also required is written authorization from the parent to be presented to the school nurse.
- All medication must be in original containers and must be properly labeled by the registered pharmacist who dispensed the prescription (medication in envelopes, wrapped in paper, or in unlabeled bottles are not accepted).
- The medication will be stored in a locked cabinet in the Clinic by the nurse.
- This program is approved for essential medications only, i.e., antibiotics, tranquilizers, anticonvulsants, asthmatic medication, eye drops, and the like.

If your child needs medication during school hours, please see the school nurse.

PLAYGROUND AND OUTDOORS

We will go outside most days, so please send children with appropriate clothing for playing on outdoor playgrounds.

PUBLICITY

From time to time during the school year, positive publicity appears in district publications, cable TV shows, and in local newspapers and internet news services. You will find a release form on your Genesis Parent Portal. Please fill this out immediately indicating whether your child's photo can be used when school events are submitted to the media for school-related publicity.

PUPIL ACCIDENT INSURANCE

The District's student accident insurance is provided by the Board of Education on an excess basis. Although the Board of Education provides insurance, you must first file a claim with your own insurance. The District's insurance will cover 80% of the remaining balance.

REGISTRATION OF NEW STUDENTS/RE-REGISTRATION OF EXISTING STUDENTS

Registration of all early childhood and kindergarten children takes place in the spring of each year. Board of Education policy specifies that a child must attain the age of five by October 1 of the school year in which he or she enters kindergarten. At the time of registration, parents must furnish evidence of the date of birth, completed immunization, physical examination reports, and all proofs of residency required by the district. Refer to the district's website for proof-of-residency and registration guidelines: www.paramus.k12.nj.us. The district requires re-registration, including proof of residency, for all students entering Kindergarten, 5th grade, and 9th grade.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Students are excused from school to observe state listed holidays. Parents must send a note prior to the holiday to notify the school of the absence. Teachers will not schedule tests or introduce new work during these approved holidays. The student's attendance record will not be affected by excused religious absences. You may obtain a copy of the New Jersey State Department of Education Religious Holidays calendar by contacting the school office.

REPORT CARDS

Progress reports for students in kindergarten through fourth grade are issued three times a year. Report cards are now 'paperless' and are accessed by parents via their Genesis Parent Portal. Grading benchmarks can be accessed on our website under "Standards-Based Report Cards." Parent conferences are held in the fall and in the spring. The teacher will arrange for conferences with parents; the first one is generally scheduled during the months of November/December. A conference will also be scheduled in the spring - typically in May/June. Should you feel the need to meet with a teacher sooner, please contact him/her directly.

SCHOOL HOURS

Full Day General Ed: 8:45a - 3:00p

Early Dismissal: 8:45a - 1:10p

Lunch / Recess: 12:00p - 12:45p

Grades K, 1, 2: Lunch 12:00p Recess 12:25p

Grades 3, 4: Lunch 12:25p Recess 12:00p

SCHOOL NURSE

A full-time certified nurse is assigned to Ridge Ranch to oversee the health program. The nurse administers primary first-aid measures to treat minor injuries or illnesses. Her other functions include:

- Weighing and measuring of all students
- Screening for vision and hearing

- Screening children age 10 and older for scoliosis
- Maintaining health records
- Promoting health practices at school
- Administering Mantoux tuberculin tests to new employees and certain students
- Participating in the child study team and the pupil assistance committee
- Participating in the school safety committee

The school nurse will contact you if:

- Your child is too ill to remain in school
- Your child is injured and needs medical attention
- The screening process indicated a need for you to obtain further help (i.e. eyeglasses)
- She and the teacher think that your child requires attention for other health reasons
- Contact tracing/Quarantine protocols

Other important information

- New students, kindergarteners, and all third graders are required by the district to have a complete physical examination.

SCHOOL SAFETY TEAM

The Ridge Ranch School Safety Team oversees the Week of Respect Activities and all aspects of the school climate. They are also responsible for investigating reports of alleged acts of HIB and reporting findings to the Superintendent of Schools.

SCHOOL SECURITY

Armed Security Guard on site each day. School safety officers will continue to work in the schools to ensure the safety of our students and staff. Schools will continue to conduct required fire and safety drills. You will be notified upon completion of each security drill.

STUDENT and STAFF WELLNESS

Your child's well-being is a primary concern for us. Our counselors will lead regular lessons focused on self-care/wellness. Parents are encouraged to maintain communication with their child's teacher, principal or school counselor if there are concerns about their child's social, emotional or academic well-being.

VENTILATION AND AIR FILTRATION

In addition to our HVAC system which provides a continuous airflow into classrooms, each room is also equipped with a portable air purifier.

VISITORS

A safe school environment is a secure school environment. We have a security guard on duty during school hours. All visitors must bring their license and sign in for pre-existing appointments. **Visitors will not be allowed in the building unless they have an appointment.**

POLICY QUICK REFERENCE

Please refer to the following policies on the district website or use the Quick Link on the Ridge Ranch website:

1. **Paramus Public Schools Computer Facilities Access Agreement**
2. **Policy 5131.2 - Harassment, Including Sexual Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying and Relational Aggression**
3. **Policy 5135.1 Electronic Portable Communication Devices**
4. **Policy 5113 - Attendance, Absences, and Excuses**
5. **Right To Know Letter from Superintendent (RE: NCLB - Highly Qualified Teaching Staff)**
6. **FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)**
7. **PPRA (Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment)**
8. **Life Threatening Allergies/Food Allergies in the School Grades PreK-4 (relating to policy 5141.21)**