

Pinewood Elementary School

Parent and Student Handbook 2021/22



1925 North Main Street
Mount Holly, NC 28120

Mrs. Tyler West, Principal

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Daily School Schedule

7:10 Building opens and student drop-off begins *All students go straight to classrooms
7:10-7:30 Grab-and-Go breakfast available *Students eat in their classrooms
7:30 Instructional day begins
7:40 Tardy bell rings *All students arriving after this time must be walked to the front office by a parent
2:15 Instructional day ends; Dismissal of students
2:40 Teacher day ends

ATTENDANCE

Tardies

Students are considered tardy or late if they are not in the building **by 7:40 AM**. Excessive tardies interfere with instructional time and disrupt the classroom schedule. We encourage all students to be on time for school; however, we understand there are occasionally circumstances beyond your control. If your student must be late to school, we require that you enter the building with your student, come to the lobby, and sign the student in with front office staff.

Early Checkouts

Parents are encouraged to leave their children at school all day. When possible, please schedule appointments for your student after school hours or on teacher workdays. If a student needs to be dismissed early, please send a written note to the teacher including: student name and date, reason and time for early dismissal, and name of the person picking up the child. This note should be given to the teacher at the start of the day. *Families are encouraged not to sign students out of school after 2:00 PM due to end of day procedures.*

To sign out a student, Gaston County Schools' policy requires that the adult has photo identification. There can be no exceptions to this policy, and we thank you for understanding that we are protecting children.

Absences

We appreciate your commitment to having your child in school each day; however, there are times that children are sick and may not be able to come to school during their illness. Within three days of the child's return, please send a note to the teacher explaining the child's absence so that he/she can be marked as "excused." After three days, absences will remain coded as "unexcused."

Proof of Residency

It is the policy of Gaston County Schools that students will attend school in the district where their legal guardians live. Families must prove that they maintain a domicile in the school district at the time of enrollment through two pieces of documentation. The following are the only documents that can be accepted as documentation: lease or mortgage statement and a utility bill (power, water, sewer, cable or satellite). The same documents are needed for a change of address if you move to another address within our district.

Withdrawal of Students

During the school year, if it becomes necessary to move out of the Pinewood school district, we respectfully request at least 2 days notice in advance of the student's withdrawal. This will allow the school to properly prepare the student's materials for transfer, collect library books and other school-based materials, and notify parents of any fees that may be applicable.

COMMUNICATION

Parent Communication

The best ways to communicate with teachers are school email, Class Dojo, and our Schoology learning management system. Student work will be sent home in folders at least once a month so that you can see your child's progress, but please reach out any time.

ParentLink is an automated telephone system that allows the school to send a recorded message out to families with information regarding current events at the school. We send these out weekly on Sunday nights. It also allows Gaston County Schools to notify the entire school system at one time should there be an emergency. Please keep your phone number updated with the school in order to receive these important messages.

Our school website and Facebook page are kept up to date with information, documents, photos, and good news. You are also welcome to call the school office with any questions.

Occasionally, the need for a conference with your child's teacher may arise. Either parent or teacher may request a meeting in writing so that a convenient time for both parties can be established. Please understand that we will have visitor guidelines in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, so phone and virtual conferences are required until further notice. During a normal year, if you come without an appointment, your teacher will most likely not be able to meet with you due to required after school meetings, trainings, and planning. Similarly, parents are not able to drop-in at arrival, during the instructional day, or during lunch to meet with a teacher. This time is important for supervising and instructing all students.

Parent/teacher conferences will take place two times a year: October 7th, 2021 and March 10th, 2022. We will hold these either remotely or in-person, depending on current COVID guidance.

Television/Radio/Internet

Occasionally during extreme weather, it becomes necessary for Gaston County Schools to close or delay school for the safety of students and staff. When a decision is made, it is broadcast on all local news stations, local radio broadcasts, Spectrum Channel 21 and the Gaston County Schools' website.

TRANSPORTATION

Car Riders

Each family will be issued 2 car tags that are unique to our school. These tags will change each school year and must be replaced at Open House or via the front office. During afternoon dismissal, the car tag **MUST** be displayed so that staff can easily read the students' names. If you do not have a car tag with you, you will need to park and check your student out via the front office with your licence. Dismissal procedures begin at **2:15**, and parents of car riders are asked to be in line at this time.

Daycare Riders

A list of daycares that provide transportation from Pinewood Elementary can be obtained from the front office. Students are expected to walk to the vans at dismissal to avoid injury. If daycare vans are late for pick-up, students are expected to wait quietly and follow school behavior expectations in the gym with a Pinewood Elementary staff member.

Bus Riders

New this year, bus service for Pinewood Elementary is shared by several schools in the East Gaston Feeder area. This will allow us to have five buses and no second loads in the morning or the afternoon. Pinewood and GCS Transportation are responsible for determining bus routes and student stops, which have changed greatly since last year. New students will need to allow up to 2 full school days after enrollment before beginning bus service so that the stop can be added to the route and the bus driver made aware of a new rider. Parents are responsible for the supervision of their students until the bus arrives for pick-up and upon arrival at the bus stop in the afternoon. **At this time, a federal mandate requires all bus riders to wear a mask while travelling on school transportation.**

Bus Rider Behavior Expectations:

- **B** - Be Responsible

- Follow the GCS Code of Conduct
- Be on time - at the stop 5 minutes early!
- Keep the bus clean - No food, candy, gum, or drinks.
- **U** - Use Respect
 - Talk softly and appropriately
 - Respect yourself, others, and property
 - Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself - Take nothing out of your bookbag, including homework, phones/electronics, and toys
- **S** - Stay Safe
 - Stay seated and keep aisle clear
 - Listen to the driver and other adults
 - Get on and off only at your assigned stop
 - During COVID-19: Wear a mask at all times while riding on the bus

Changes in Transportation

Changes to student transportation will not be taken by phone. All changes must be given to the teacher or office in writing and cannot be accepted after 1:30 pm. This is for the safety of our students. Parents should use extreme caution when emailing teachers about transportation the day of the change. Since teachers do not always have time throughout the day to check emails (and they may have a substitute from time to time), it is very likely that an electronic message will not be seen in time for dismissal.

SCHOOL NUTRITION

Breakfast and Lunch

Due to the pandemic, all students will be able to take advantage of a federal program that allows for FREE breakfast and FREE lunch.

Breakfast is offered daily in grab-and-go format. Students have two food choices, and they will eat in their classrooms. A hot lunch is also served daily. Students will travel through the serving line and choose their drink, entree, and side items from the School Nutrition Menu. Students will travel back to their classrooms to ensure at least 3 feet of distancing while eating.

Free and Reduced Meal Applications

Because all students will benefit from free meals this school year, the Free and Reduced Meal Application is only needed if families would like to ensure they receive P-EBT benefits. Applications should be returned to the front office or to Gaston County Schools Nutrition (500 Reid St. Lowell, NC 28098).

Students with Special Dietary Needs

Students with medical conditions such as allergies and diabetes may request modifications to school meals by completing a Diet Order Form. These may be obtained through the cafeteria manager, school nurse, or Gaston County School Nutrition. Diet Orders must be signed by a physician and returned to the cafeteria manager.

Classroom Snacks

Any foods sent to school for classwide distribution must be store bought with a complete ingredient label adhered to the package. Thank you for understanding that this is to protect students with food allergies. We will not be sharing food or snacks in an effort to keep our students healthy and safe.

ACADEMICS

Instructional Program

Pinewood Elementary follows the Gaston County Schools' pacing and curriculum guides. Our literacy program is the *Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Reading, Writing, and Phonics*. Lucy Calkins and her co-authors aim to prepare students for any reading and writing task they will face and to turn kids into life-long, confident readers and writers. With over 30 years of research and work in thousands of schools across the country, they have developed powerful goals and instructional practices that include the workshop model. Students learn in both whole group, small group, and independent settings as they practice their literacy skills.

Our math program, *Ready Classroom Mathematic*, is new this year. It is a focused, coherent, and rigorous K-5 mathematics curriculum aligned to the state standards and our iReady diagnostic system. Deep and careful attention is paid to mathematics content and discourse.

Science and Social studies take an integrated approach, where standards are taught both explicitly through labs and discussions, and in a blended format with articles and books during reading time.

All students at Pinewood take special classes (Art, Music, PE, and Innovation Station) to build upon their classroom instruction. They also receive Guidance lessons and visit our Maker Space and STEAM Labs at least once each month.

A+ Arts Integration

As an A+ Arts Integration school, our teachers are highly trained by the *A+ Schools of North Carolina* network. Students will experience lessons that engage their multiple intelligences while infusing visual arts, music, dance, theater, and creative writing into their grade level content. In our first year as an A+ School, we look forward to continuing professional development and integrating the arts through both classroom lessons and co-teaching with our arts specialists.

Technology

Technology plays an important part in preparing students for their future academic and career success. Students experience the integration of technology into their classroom environment on a regular basis, as all teachers have a cart of Chromebooks to use during instruction. All students will sign an acceptable use policy the first time they log in to the school network. This outlines specific rules for students using the Gaston County Schools' computer network and computer hardware, including care for the equipment and proper use of the Internet.

In an effort to ensure that our students have consistent and equitable access to digital tools and instruction, students will be allowed to bring their device home with them each afternoon. First, parents must sign a Chromebook agreement that outlines proper care and liability.

Again this year, **Schoology** will be used as our online learning platform. This is not a replacement for in-person teaching, but it sometimes serves as a launching pad for classroom assignments that help students learn, practice, or show evidence of their skills. Schoology will be used in class to differentiate activities, and it can also be used at home when students have to miss school. In addition, **iReady** will be used to diagnose learning levels and create unique learning pathways for each student in Reading and Mathematics. Each student will have a goal of passing 2 iReady lessons each week in each subject.

Instructional Support

Pinewood uses the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) process to provide interventions for students who are below grade level. Progress is documented by classroom teachers and data is discussed with other professionals to find the best support for each student. Part of this process includes vision and hearing screenings and a social/developmental history form filled out by the parents. Your child's teacher will contact you if he/she is going through this intervention process.

Other instructional supports include the Exceptional Children's program, English as a Second Language, Title 1 Literacy Support, and Academically/Intellectually Gifted classes.

Our School Counselor conducts individual, small group, and whole class counseling lessons to encourage the growth and development of the whole child. Her main focus is on character education and social skills. Our counselor also assists students and families with Section 504 accommodation plans needed for a diagnosed disability.

Field Trips

**Our goal is to safely conduct field trips later this school year, but we will await direction from state and local decision-makers.*

Grading Scales

Kindergarten through Second Grade students have standards-based report cards with ratings that show their progress towards meeting each standard. Specific grading codes for these grade levels are printed on the report card.

Third through Fifth Grade students earn number grades based on a ten-point scale:

- A 90-100 Excellent
- B 80-89 Very Good

- C 70-79 Satisfactory
- D 60-69 Inconsistent
- F 59 and Below Not meeting grade level standards

Interim Reports and Report Cards

Interim reports are sent home approximately halfway through each 9-week grading period to any student who is performing below grade level standards.

Report cards are distributed to all students on the following dates:

- October 28th, 2021
- January 13th, 2022
- March 24th, 2022
- Week of June 6th, 2022 (via mail)

Student Promotion / Retention

Decisions regarding promotion and retention are based on student performance data collected throughout the school year, what is in the best interest of the student, and in adherence with state and local guidelines.

Parents are involved in this decision-making process. Parents are notified mid-year if there are concerns on the part of the school that students are not making the necessary progress to be ready for the next grade level. Several conversations will be held in the following months regarding student progress. The principal reserves the right to make the final determination in promotion or retention.

Media Program

The Media Center offers a wide variety of high-interest books for all levels of readers. Students can visit the Media Center for open checkout three days a week. To allow all students access to the resources in the Media Center, students are required to take care of the books they check out and promptly return them once they are read. Books that are damaged or lost are the financial responsibility of the student's family.

To support our Media Center and purchase new materials, Pinewood Elementary School hosts a Scholastic Book Fair twice a year. Be sure to enjoy these fantastic fundraisers with your family.

Student Testing

When state and local standardized tests are to be administered, testing information will be sent home with students. Parents may also visit the Gaston County Schools website at www.gaston.k12.nc.us for updated testing schedules.

Title One Program

The Federal Title One program provides financial assistance to local educational agencies and schools with low-income families. This helps ensure that all children meet the challenging state academic standards. Pinewood qualifies for this supplemental funding, which is spent on instructional supplies and support, student-centered technology, and professional development.

Under federal law, parents of students attending Title One schools have the right to know information on the professional qualifications of each child's teacher, including:

1. Whether the teacher meets the state qualifications and licensing criteria for the grades and subjects he/she teaches.
2. Whether the teacher is teaching under provisional status because of special circumstances.
3. Whether the teacher has an advanced degree and the field of discipline of the teacher's certification or degree.
4. Whether the child receives special services from a paraprofessional and the qualifications of the paraprofessional.

Should you have any questions about our teachers' qualifications, please see an administrator.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Student Dress Code

The following guidelines outline the appropriate dress for your student to actively and safely participate in the instructional program at Pinewood Elementary School. Parents of students whose attire has been deemed inappropriate will be called to bring other clothing.

- Students should attend school dressed comfortably for the weather and school building.
- Clothing advertising alcoholic beverages/tobacco products or containing inappropriate language or messages should not be worn.
- Students are not permitted to wear tube tops, halter tops, see-through shirts, midriff tops, or bike shorts.
- Skirts and shorts should fall at mid-thigh (or lower). Shirts should fall to the mid-thigh (or lower) of students wearing leggings.
- Students will not wear hats, caps, or other head coverings inside the school building.
- Shoes with wheels are not allowed at school or any school function. Shoes with constant flashing lights must remain off during the school day. (Shoes that light up when you step on them are allowed if they are not a distraction.)

Pinewood Elementary DOES allow flip flops and sandals to be worn at school, but respectfully reminds families that flip flops and sandals can make free play, running, and climbing on outdoor equipment difficult. To maintain a schedule during the instructional day and transitions, we do not allow time for changing shoes.

Student Cell Phone Policy

Cell phones are not encouraged to be brought to school. If students need to bring a cell phone to school, it should be turned OFF and kept in their backpack at all times, including on the bus. Students who need to make a call during school hours will be allowed to do so through the use of school phones, not their cell phones. Students are not allowed to call, text, play games, record, stream, or email on their personal cell phones during the school day or on the bus. Cell phones that ring or cause a distraction to school may be held in the office for parent pick-up.

Positive Behavior Intervention Support

Pinewood is proud to be a Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) school. This means we focus on clearly defined expectations, rewards for positive behaviors, and students making good choices. We strive for consistency in student expectations, procedures, and consequences so that our school environment is predictable and safe. Our school mantra is “Pinewood Porcupines are SHARP.” We teach and expect our students to be **S**afe, **H**elpful, **A**ccountable, **R**espectful, and **P**ositive in all areas of the building. Students are rewarded for positive behavior with Quill Cards, which they can use as currency in Piney’s Store!

Gaston County School Code of Conduct

In addition to school-wide expectations, all students are expected to follow the Gaston County Schools Code of Conduct (found on the GCS website). Administrators use this document as a guideline for administering consequences when a student does not respond to classroom behavior interventions. The Code of Conduct also applies to students when they are being transported on buses or attending school-sponsored events or trips.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Visitors to School

Safe and orderly schools are essential to student success. We welcome you to come and be involved in the great events we have occurring at Pinewood. All visitors are required to enter through the main entrance and sign in at the office. In keeping a safe and healthy environment, please note that all visitors are subject to metal detection.

**Our goal is to safely welcome visitors later this school year. Currently, any visitors who wish to pass through our second set of doors during the normal school day will need to be approved ahead of time by the principal.*

Volunteers

For the safety of our students and for consistency in following GCS policies, all parents and community members who wish to work in the classrooms, serve as room parents, and chaperone field trips must be trained volunteers. Applications can be completed at tinyurl.com/GCSVolunteerSite. An online application begins the background check process. Once approved, potential volunteers will need to take a class at Pinewood or at the Central Office to be cleared to volunteer and chaperone. If you have already applied and taken the class, volunteers should visit the same site and login to “reactivate” their account each school year.

**Our goal is to safely welcome volunteers later this school year, but we will await direction from local decision-makers.*

Tobacco Free Campus

To protect everyone's health, district policy prohibits the use of tobacco products (including electronic cigarettes) everywhere on campus, by everyone, at all times. We appreciate all visitors following this policy while on campus and while on field trips with our students and staff.

School Safety Exercises

To help prepare students and staff for the unexpected, monthly fire drills are held at Pinewood. We also conduct severe weather drills, evacuation drills, and lockdown drills at required intervals. Our goal in conducting these drills is to create an environment where students feel safe every day. Please note that administrators and designated staff also conduct random metal detection of students and their belongings at least once a week.

To achieve student safety and keep our focus on instruction, the following items are not allowed to be brought to school:

1. Knives, guns, or other sharp-pointed or dangerous objects, including fireworks
2. Money that is not being used to pay for lunch, field trips, or school-sponsored events.
3. Live animals
4. Chewing gum, candy, and sodas
5. Toys, including trading cards of any kind
6. Electronic devices such as iPads, iPods, handheld gaming devices or MP3 players. Pinewood administration may hold these items until they are picked up by a parent.

Student Illness and Medication at School

If students become ill or are injured at school, they are to let their teacher know. The school will make contact with the child's family when it is deemed necessary. Please be sure the office has current phone numbers for you at all times in case of an emergency.

There are several staff members who are trained in CPR and First Aid and designated as First Responders. These trained individuals will respond immediately to any medical emergency within our building. Should it be deemed necessary in an emergency, 911 will be called to respond.

Gaston County Schools has established policies for administering medications at school. If your child must have medication of any type, including over-the-counter drugs, given during school hours, you have the following choices:

1. You may come to school and give the medication to your child at the appropriate time(s).
2. You may obtain a copy of a medication form from the school nurse or school secretary. Take the form to your child's doctor and have him/her complete the form by listing the medication(s) needed, dosage, and number of times per day the medication is to be administered. This form must be completed by the physician for both prescription and over-the-counter drugs. The form must be signed by the doctor and by you, the parent or guardian. Prescription medicines must be brought to school in a pharmacy-labeled bottle which contains instructions on how and when the medication is to be given. Over-the-counter drugs must be received in a container labeled by a pharmacist, complete with instructions (like a prescription drug).
3. You may discuss with your doctor an alternative schedule for administering medication (i.e., outside of school hours).
4. Self-medication: In accordance with G.S. 115C-375.2 and G.S. 115C-47, students requiring medication for asthma, anaphylactic reactions (or both), and diabetes may self-medicate with physician authorization, parent permission, and a student agreement for self-carried medication. Students must demonstrate the necessary knowledge and developmental maturity to safely assume responsibility for and management of self-carry medications.

If a student becomes ill or has been injured at school, the parent or guardian will be notified. Students who suffer from fever, vomiting, or diarrhea will be expected to be picked up from school, and they should recover at home until they are free from these ailments for 24 hours.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the following protocols are in place. Parents should reach out to our full-time school nurse for guidance in these scenarios:

- Students and staff must remain at home if they have any of the following symptoms:
 - Fever of 100.4 or higher
 - Chills
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - New cough
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Diarrhea/vomiting
 - Sore throat
 - New onset of a severe headache
- They may return to school after having symptoms in any of the following circumstances:
 - It has been 10 days since symptoms began, they are fever free for 24 hours without medication, AND their symptoms have improved.
 - They have a negative COVID test, their symptoms have improved, AND no fever for 24 hours without medication
 - They have a doctor's release, their symptoms have improved, AND no fever for 24 hours without medication
- Students must remain home if:
 - They have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 (remain home for 14 days since last exposure)
 - They have tested positive for COVID-19 (remain home for 10 days since first positive test)

Parents of students with health plans for chronic illnesses or life-threatening allergies should renew these health plans each year by providing the school nurse documentation from your medical provider. Medicine and forms should be provided to the school nurse at the start of each new school year, with attention given to the medicine's expiration date.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Student Birthdays

Student birthdays are recognized on the announcements, and students receive a treat from the school. For a number of important reasons, we will **not** conduct birthday celebrations in class. Please do not send in treats, cupcakes, goodie bags, etc. for the purpose of celebrating birthdays. Likewise, balloons, flowers, and other gifts should not be delivered to the school. Such deliveries interrupt the instructional day.

Teachers will not be involved in the distribution of birthday party invitations.

K12PaymentCenter

K12paymentcenter.com is a website that can be used to pay school fees and add money to your child's lunch account. All parents are encouraged to create an account to avoid sending cash to school with your child.

Checks Written to the School

Gaston County Schools recognizes that occasionally a parent may inadvertently overdraw a checking account and a check may be returned by your bank. In order to recover these funds in a private and professional manner, the school system has contracted with Envision Check Recovery Services for collection of returned checks.

Lost and Found

Unidentified items are placed in the lost and found, which is located between the lobby and the gym. All items not claimed by the winter break and by the end of the year will be donated to Goodwill. To avoid losing items, please label your student's belongings with their name in permanent ink.

Thank you, and have a great year!