

Harmony Elementary

Student Handbook

2023-2024

Attendance Policies and Procedures

School attendance is important because it underscores the significance of learning and the importance of obtaining an education in our society, in addition to helping students develop good work habits that will carry over in life. Good attendance also correlates strongly with improved grades. A minimum level of attendance is required for attainment of the Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) curriculum.

The responsibility of school attendance is that of both parents and students. An up-to-date account of tardies and excused/unexcused absences is found in the Parent Portal.

Definitions

Truant – Any child subject to compulsory attendance who during the school calendar year has **more than ten days of unexcused absences. Parents will receive a letter notification after 5, 7, and 10 unexcused absences.**

Compulsory Attendance – Official Code of Georgia (O.C.G.A.) 20-2-690.1(a): *Every parent, guardian, or other person residing within this state having control or charge of any child or children between their sixth and sixteenth birthdays shall enroll and send such child or children to a public school, a private school, or a home study program that meets the requirements for a public school, a private school, or home study program; and such child shall be responsible for enrolling in and attending a public school, a private school, or a home study program that meets the requirements for a public school, a private school, or a home study program.*

Tardy – Students are tardy to school if they arrive after 8:45 a.m.

8:15 a.m. Building is open for students

8:45 a.m. Car rider line closes

8:50 a.m. School begins

Students entering school after 8:45 must be walked in by a parent/guardian and receive a tardy slip before going to class.

Instruction is from 8:50 a.m. until 3:20 p.m.
Teachers will take attendance at 9:00 a.m.

Check-outs before 12:06 p.m. and Check-ins after 12:05 p.m. will count as a school absence for that day.

Early Checkouts

Early checkouts are recorded on progress reports and monitored by the Attendance Assistant Principal.

Only those previously authorized by the enrolling parent will be able to check out a student--a photo ID is required. **No checkouts after 3:00 p.m.**

Absences

Per state guidelines, all absences will be considered "unexcused" except for the following reasons:

1. Personal illness or attendance in school endangers a student's health or the health of others.
2. A serious illness or death in the student's immediate family.
3. Observing religious holidays, necessitating absence from school.
4. Absences mandated by court order or by governmental agencies.
5. Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety.
6. Students serving as pages for Georgia General Assembly
7. Students whose parent or guardian is in military service and who is being sent overseas for active duty or returning from active duty (5 days per school year)

At any time school is closed due to inclement weather, an announcement will be made on all local news stations by 6:00 a.m. This info will also be posted on the GCPS main website and sent to parents via school messenger.

Documenting Absences

Parents or guardians must submit an excuse explaining the reason and date for the absence.

A letter will be mailed to the parent, guardian, or person having charge or control of the student to notify them if a student has 5, 7, or 10 **unexcused** absences, and stating the possible consequences. After 10 unexcused absences, you may be asked to present a physician's note to excuse future absences or attend a meeting at the school.

Work missed because of an excused absence must be made up within the length of time the student was absent. For unexcused absences, teachers will work with students to make-up assignments.

Transportation

State Law provides two ways students can be brought to and from school. One is by school bus, which we recommend. The other is for parents to bring their children to and from school by car. In doing so, parents must follow the car rider plan that is established by Harmony.

Car Riders

Parents who provide transportation for their children will enter and exit using the driveway north of the building on East Maddox Road. No cars are permitted in the bus driveway. Car riders line up and wait their turn as cars come by the designated area. Rules and procedures for car riders will be provided when you are issued your car rider number at registration. For the safety of all students, the rules and procedures must be followed.

Parents must not drop their children off or pick them up anywhere but the car rider lane during the designated car rider times. The bus lane in the front of the building is for buses only.

State law prevents passenger cars in this area. If you are walking your child in, please use the lower parking lot (north side of the school) and walk on the sidewalk in front of the building to go to the front office for check-in.

Arrival Time: 8:15 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.

At 8:45 a.m., car rider doors will be locked to allow students enough time to get to class. A parent/guardian must accompany car riders who arrive after 8:45 to the front office for check-in.

Dismissal Time: 3:20 p.m. to 3:40 p.m.

Each car rider will be issued a number to display on the rear-view mirror of their car when picking up children. Students will not be released to enter a vehicle unless the Harmony issued car rider number is displayed on the rearview mirror. Numbers and procedure information are provided during Open House. If you do not have a number displayed, you will be asked to park and go to the front office to show ID and check your student out.

School Bus

To prevent congestion in the parking lot and car riderline, parents are strongly encouraged to have their children ride the bus to and from school on the first day and every day of the school year. Parents of Kindergarten students must be present at the bus stop or they will not be dismissed from their bus.

Bus Manager Interventions

Students should communicate problems regarding transportation to the bus driver. Bus drivers and bus managers may use the interventions listed below for students who do not follow bus rules. A minor offense is considered inappropriate or unsafe student behavior that may be improved with minor assistance from the driver.

Mandatory Seat Assignment: Every student will be assigned a seat and the bus driver on a seating chart will maintain those seat assignments.

(The assignment of seats at the beginning of the school year is part of the prevention step and considered the first step of the "Student Behavior Management" process.)

Verbal Reminder: Bus managers will remind the student of bus rule(s) not being followed.

Talk privately with student: Bus managers will let the student know inappropriate behavior and what is expected from them.

Reassign bus seat: Bus managers will separate the students involved in the inappropriate behavior.

Parent/Guardian Courtesy Call: Bus managers will call the parent/guardian to notify them of students' inappropriate behavior, with a request for help to achieve appropriate behavior. This may be followed up in writing on a Parent Notification Form to alert parents of inappropriate behavior.

All the above steps may be bypassed depending on the severity of the inappropriate behavior.

Consequences

When student behavior on the bus escalates beyond a driver's control or is not improved after using the appropriate intervention steps, the bus manager will submit a Bus Discipline Form to the school office. Consequences including parent conferences and/or bus suspension may be enforced at the discretion of the local school administrators according to the severity of the offense. Safely transporting children to and from school will not be compromised.

Bus Discipline Form sent to Administrator:

Reasons:

- a. Behavior escalates beyond a driver's control or has not improved after using the appropriate intervention steps.
- b. Major offense.

Violations that should be considered major offenses include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. drugs (including alcohol, cigarettes, lighters)
- b. throwing objects off the bus
- c. fighting (trying to intentionally hurt someone, not pushing or shoving)
- d. weapons, dangerous instruments, and explosive/implosive devices
- e. threats (verbal and physical threats)
- f. electronic communication devices or pocket pagers (Students found in violation shall be subject to placement in an alternative education program.)

Documentation: Bus manager will maintain a daily written documentation of all occurrences in the Transportation Logbook.

Elementary Student Conduct Behavior Code

The following rules apply when a student is:

- a. on school grounds,
- b. at a school activity, function or event that is held off school grounds, or any place where the student is under the jurisdiction of school authorities; or
- c. on the way to and from school.

We want all students and classrooms to be the best possible places for students to learn. That means everyone must show respect for self and others, and for the school itself. The Gwinnett County **Student/Parent Handbook is available on the Harmony Website** and includes information regarding discipline policies in the Gwinnett County Public Schools.

A student who makes poor choices may receive one or more of the following consequences:

- *Verbal Reprimand
- *Parent/Teacher Conference
- *Parent/Teacher/Administrator Conference
- *Time-Out within/outside of the classroom
- *In-School Suspension
- *Out-of-School Suspension
- *Disciplinary Panel Hearing
- *Expulsion from School

Students are not allowed to bring toys or games to school or on the bus unless their teacher has directed them to do so. (Example: Special incentive days such as Game Day, etc.) **Electronic battery-operated games, collector's cards, discs, or cartridges are not allowed.** Gaming devices do not fall under the umbrella of "Bring Your Own Device" registration. These items are distracting for your child and others. **Cell phones must be always kept in the student's book bag, unless they are being used for instructional purposes.**

PBIS

Harmony is a Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS) school. Our mission is to be a school that fosters and maximizes learning time by acknowledging and encouraging positive behaviors throughout the school day. By modeling, teaching, and displaying positive behaviors in the classroom and at home teachers, parents, and students can work together harmoniously for success. We put our students first, to teach and model positive attitudes, behaviors, creative thinking, responsibility for learning, and compassion for others. As Harmony Wildcats learn to be respectful, responsible, and role models, they will have multiple opportunities to be recognized for displaying these expectations throughout different areas in the building and school day.

Dress Code

Clothing should set the tone for learning. All clothing must be appropriate for the school setting and activities. Clothing and shoes must be appropriate for outside recess.

If students do not follow the school dress code, they will be sent to the clinic for a change of clothing OR a parent will be called to bring a change of clothes.

Physical Education

Any student not able to participate in PE should bring a statement from the doctor stating the reason for not participating. Make sure your child is dressed appropriately and wears the appropriate athletic shoes (no crocs, flip flops, boots, high-heeled shoes, or open sandals). Safe play and sportsmanship are expected during PE class, and Teacher-Directed PE. No contact sports are allowed.

Birthdays

Birthdays will be recognized at Harmony on the morning announcements. A parent may bring a **store-bought ready-to-serve** treat to the cafeteria during lunch (due to various allergies). Parents of students with allergies may provide alternate treats for their student to his/her teacher if needed. **Birthday invitations may not be passed out at school.**

Cafeteria

Children will utilize their 9-digit student ID number when purchasing food. This number is available at registration or by calling the cafeteria office at 770-271-4898. Log into your child's account by going to www.mypaymentsplus.com to pay for meals in advance and to set up low-balance reminders and auto-payments. .

You may apply for free or reduced meals by visiting <http://gwinnett.school lunchapp.com>. The school system uses a family application for free and reduced benefits, so please be sure that all students in your household are listed on the application. To check the status of your application visit: <http://gwinnett.school lunchstatus.com>. Please allow 10 processing days. To expedite application processing, it is very important that you provide all required information on the application. The application process is easy, quick, and confidential. Students receiving reduced price meals should prepay to protect their identity. Only the cash register can tell if the meal is full-price, reduced, or free.

Menus and Prices are available by visiting <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcsnp.nsf> or by downloading the Nutri-Slice app that is available for Apple and Android devices.

Allergies/Dietary Restrictions

Harmony takes care to ensure your child receives a healthy, safe, and delicious meal. We are happy to adjust the meals we serve for children who have special medical needs. To accommodate these children, parents/guardians need to complete a Health Management Plan explaining the adjustments that need to be made.

Cafeteria Visitors

We encourage our parents to join their children for lunch. Please check with your student's teacher regarding their lunch schedule in the event of a schedule change. Please enter the building at the front office, sign in and obtain a visitor badge. **The enrolling parent in Synergy must list all visitors in the building.** You may wait in the bench area by the side cafeteria door. Due to space restrictions, we ask that parents sit with their child at the reserved table. Please allow **only your child** to sit with you to enjoy the time to talk together.

Snacks/Ice Cream

Students will have an opportunity for a daily snack break. Please send in a nutritious snack. Some examples are cheese and crackers, fruit, granola bar, etc.

In accordance with the GCPS Board Policy, only ice cream may be sold to elementary students. Ice cream is \$1.00 and may be purchased in the cafeteria during your child's lunchtime on Wednesday and Friday.

Media Center

The media center has books for assigned study and recreational reading. It is open for the entire school day.

Students are responsible for returning the books they check out within two weeks. Students who lose or damage a library book (beyond use) are required to pay \$15.00 to replace a hardcover book and \$5.00 to replace a paperback book.

Students who have an overdue book or need to pay for a damaged / lost book will not be able to check out another book until the previous book is returned or paid for in full.

Students are encouraged to use the media center for research. Gwinnett County provides research databases that can be accessed from school and from home through MY eCLASS.

Students can also read eBooks from home. They can be found in the Online Research Library and Media Catalog on the student's eCLASS page.

Technology

Students have many opportunities to use technology to enhance the curriculum. Students have access to computer software and the Internet connectivity in their classrooms and media center. Software is educational and supports the curriculum. Adult supervision is required for students to access the Internet.

All students who have access to the Internet will be required to have on file an updated (yearly) AUP (Acceptable Use Policy) form. Safeguards are in place to help prevent access to inappropriate information and pictures on the Internet.

Parent Portal

This online tool is valuable for staying up to date on your child's education. Additionally, students have access to a MY eCLASS student portal. The student portal contains online textbooks, leveled readers, math games, grades, and the Gwinnett County Research Library.

Counseling

The purpose of the Counseling Program is to help promote each student's social-emotional, academic, and career development throughout the year in the following ways:

1. Conducting individual counseling sessions with students when requested by teachers, parents, or students. The counselor may also conference with a student when he/she feels it is necessary.
2. Teaching classroom lessons (10 -12 per year) to all grade levels. The lessons cover Gwinnett County's Office of Advisement and Counseling's Standards and Competencies in academic, career and personal/social development.
3. Conducting small group sessions with students who need academic, social or attendance support (pending parent permission).
4. Consulting with teachers, parents, and administrators about a student's social-emotional, behavior, or academic concerns in order to promote his/her success.
5. Monitoring student attendance and meeting with students and/or parents regarding attendance issues when necessary.
6. Facilitating and supporting student leadership programs.

Clinic and Medication

If your child has any specific medical needs (such as allergies, asthma, diabetes, etc.), you must have a health management plan completed and on file in the clinic that allows us to address their specific needs.

We make every effort to keep the students in class; therefore, teachers are provided with bandages in their classrooms. For issues that cannot be taken care of in the classroom, first aid will be administered in the clinic. Should your child need medication at school, parents/guardians will need to provide the medication to the clinic in the original container.

No medications should be in the possession of a child at any time. A Gwinnett County Medication Administration Request Form must be completed and on file for all prescriptions and over the counter medications of any kind.

If a child becomes sick at school, we will attempt to contact the parents immediately. It is in your child's best interest to have an alternate plan in place in the event we are unable to reach you, or you are unable to pick up your child. **It is imperative that we always have current contact numbers for parents, as well as emergency contacts in the event we are unable to reach you.**

Students will be sent home for a fever and more than one episode of diarrhea or vomiting. Students must be fever free without the use of fever reducing medication for 24 hours before returning to school.

In the event of an emergency involving your child, and you or the emergency contact person cannot be reached, 911 will be called.

Grading/Progress Reports

Elementary report cards describing a student's progress are given to parents and/or guardians via Friday folders at the end of each semester.

Kindergarten & First Grading Scale:

- E Excellent
- S Satisfactory
- N Needs to Improve
- U Unsatisfactory

Second - 5th Grading Scale:

- A 90% - 100%
- B 80% - 89%
- C 74% - 79%
- D 70% - 73%
- U 0% - 69%

Parent Portal will be linked to the current grade book.

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled with parents and/or guardians in October and February, via an online conference-scheduling program. Parents and/or teachers may request additional conferences as needed.

Student Recognition

Students on the A Honor Roll, A/B Honor Roll, Wildcat Citizen Award List, and Perfect Attendance will be recognized at the end of each semester.

PRINCIPAL'S HONOR ROLL denotes All A's, and an E or S in Conduct, Effort, and Specials.

WILDCAT HONOR ROLL denotes All A's and B's and an E or S in Conduct, Effort, and Specials.

Note: A student will not be placed on the Honor Roll unless he/she has received a conduct grade of at least an S in all special area classes.

Visitor/Volunteer Check-In

All doors are locked. Please use the front door to enter the building. You must have a picture ID to enter our school for safety reasons.

Parents and visitors listed on the student information card are welcome to join their child for lunch. In order to eat lunch with a child, you must be listed on the emergency contacts and present ID.

For the safety of our children, all visitors must check in and out through the front office and wear a visitor's badge while in the building. After the first day of school, parents may not walk children to class in the mornings.

We welcome and encourage consistent parent communication with the teacher; however, parents are not able to visit the classroom in the morning or during the day to talk with the teacher or drop something off. Appointments must be scheduled in advance with the teacher. When appointments are scheduled, the teacher will notify the front office he/she is expecting a parent.

Parents wishing to observe in the classroom must make an appointment with the Assistant Principal at least 1 day in advance. These observations will be limited to one hour to reduce disruptions to normal classroom routines. If you want to discuss the progress of your child, you should call, send an email, or make a conference appointment at a time when class is not in session. Staff hours are 8:00 - 4:00. If there is an immediate concern, please ask to speak with the grade level assistant principal.

Parent/Teacher Communication

Good communication between home and school is extremely important in providing the best education for our children. As a courtesy to the teacher and the other students, please notify the teacher in advance to arrange a mutually convenient time for individual conferences to avoid disrupting the instructional day. All parents must check-in with the office before going to the classroom.

Parents may write, email, or call the school to request a teacher conference. Parents may email school employees by using the teacher's name and the Gwinnett suffix. (Ex:

FirstName_LastName@gcpsk12.org) Note: Some teachers' email may contain a middle initial. Email addresses are found on the Harmony website.

The Georgia State Board of Education requires a minimum of two parent teacher conferences per year. These are scheduled for the fall and spring of each year. However, any time you feel the need for a conference with your child's teacher, please do not hesitate to schedule one. Student Support Team Meetings may also be scheduled at parent request.

Communication Resources

There are several communication resources established by Harmony to support home/school communication. Information about signing up for these communications are found on the Harmony website.

School Messenger - Receive text message notifications of news and happenings, including school closings and delays. You must have a cell phone identified in the Parent Portal AND opt-in in order to receive messages.

Harmony Highlights - Our weekly newsletter is sent out by Mr. Day every Friday at 3:00 to communicate important information to parents.

Parent Portal - Registering for the Parent Portal grants you access to your child's attendance, test, course, and discipline history, as well as grades and class notes.

Teacher Communication - Weekly Teacher newsletters are located on our school website. Visit www.harmonywildcats.org, click parents, teacher newsletters.

DOJO - This free app is available through Google Play and App Store. The app allows you to receive news about class and school events.

Homework

The amount of time students spend on homework varies by grade level. In addition to the reading that takes place at school, every child should spend at least 20 minutes reading nightly. Research recommends that students should read for 90 minutes a day to maintain their reading level.

Textbooks

The county has provided a variety of digital texts and electronic textbooks. This content is available through your child's My eCLASS account. Electronic textbooks have a read aloud feature and additional content.

Withdrawal Procedures

Contact Bethany Reed, Harmony's Student Data Management Clerk, to help complete the GCPS Elementary withdrawal form. Students are responsible for the return of library books, and any outstanding charges (cafeteria, lost books, etc.) at this time. You will be given a copy of the withdrawal form to take to the new school.

Upon receiving a signed "Release of Record" form from the transferring school, the student's records will be released to the new school.

Student Records

Under the "Family and Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974", parents have several rights. These include the right to inspect and review educational records of their child, the right to control the release of the educational records of their child, the right to complain to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Office about the school's failure to comply with the law, and the right to be informed of the rights just listed. To obtain a copy of Gwinnett county's policies on their compliance with the law, or to request the opportunity to inspect and review your child's records, contact the school.

Change of Address or Phone

If you have moved or will be moving within our district, please let us know so we may update your files with your new address. A change of address within Gwinnett County requires a copy of a lease, deed, or contract, as well as a utility bill for your new residency. If you are moving outside of our school boundaries, please stop by the school to fill out the "Withdrawal" form. We will be happy to provide any documents needed to make the transition a smooth one for your student.

For emergency purposes, we must maintain updated information on each student. Please notify the school of any changes in contacts, address or phone numbers immediately so we maintain current information at all times.

Before/After School Activities

Harmony offers a variety of before/after school activities. Clubs begin and end at different times throughout the year and may involve specific grades. Please be on the lookout, via the Harmony website, for important information inviting students to participate. Parents must be prompt for the drop off and pickup of your child.

School Contributions

Our school uses MyPaymentsPlus to collect all fees (field trips, student fees, etc.) The school requests funds as approved by the Gwinnett County Board of Education. These funds are over and above any funds provided under the Quality Basic Education Act of 1985. No student will be denied access to or participation in any courses funded by the Gwinnett County Board of Education or by the State of Georgia.

Students with Disabilities

“It is the practice of the Gwinnett County Public Schools to provide instructional and related services appropriate to a free appropriate public education to individuals with documented disabilities. Individuals may contact their local school for information regarding such services.”

Parent-Teacher Organization

The Harmony Elementary PTO encourages all parents, teachers, school officials, grandparents, community leaders, and other interested individuals to join the PTO. Our PTO is strengthened by active participation, and we encourage all not only to belong to the PTO, but also to participate in all PTO sponsored activities. Your support is essential, and our goal this year is to reach 100% membership

PTO Meetings

PTO General Session meetings occur once each nine weeks and are typically held in conjunction with a school event, performance, or program. A short business meeting is held prior to the beginning of the scheduled activity. We invite and encourage you to attend. The schedule for the meeting dates and special events is posted on the website www.harmonywildcats.org.

PTO Volunteer Opportunities

Our school would not be successful in building strong foundations for our students' success without the commitment and dedication of our volunteers. Volunteers are always needed and welcome throughout the year. Please consider sharing your time by helping in one of the following areas:

5 th Grade Activities	Hospitality
BINGO (grade level & Family Night)	Reflections Art
Program Earning for Learning	Room Parent (classroom assistance)
Environmental/Beautification	Spirit
Nights Fall Festival/Spring Event	Spirit Wear
Fundraiser	Volunteer Coordinator
Holiday Shop	Yearbook (design/sales)

Harmony GA School Council

The Harmony Georgia School Council provides assistance to the principal in bringing about cooperation and coordination of resources for the students at Gwinnett County Public Schools.

We believe this shared decision-making council can

arouse citizen interest in educational affairs, involve citizens in making decisions confronting their schools, and develop better understanding among school, home, and staff, which will ultimately result in the improvement of education.

This council is made up of the principal, two teachers, two parents, and two business partners. All meetings are open and will be posted. Everyone is invited to attend and offer his or her comments and concerns. Check Harmony's website for School Council meeting dates/times.

HARMONY WILDCAT PLEDGE

As a Harmony Wildcat, I will be respectful of myself, others, and property, I will be responsible for my behavior and my academic success, and I will be a role model in my decision-making.