

Castle School Handbook

Attendance

Castle Elementary Attendance Policy: The District 622 School Board believes that regular school attendance is imperative, and it is the parent or guardian's responsibility to ensure that children are attending school regularly. In addition, the Washington County Community Services Department, in conjunction with representatives from the county attorney's office and court services, has initiated procedures for handling elementary school absences. The procedures our school follows are outlined below:

1. Elementary School students are defined as continuing truants if they are absent from school without a valid excuse for three days in a single school year. After three or more unexcused absences, Castle Elementary School will call the parent/guardian stating our concern. Any further absences or tardies, a letter will be sent home to parents/guardians.
2. Students who are absent from school without a valid excuse for seven days or more are referred to the Washington County Truancy Social Worker who will determine whether to visit the family or to set up a diversion meeting at the school.
3. All absences will be marked unexcused until parent/guardian states the reason for the absence.
4. Examples of excused absences include:
 - Parent/doctor verified illness.
 - Family emergencies - a result of a serious illness of an immediate family member.
 - Scheduled appointments that could not be arranged before or after school or on days when school is not in session.
 - Religious holidays.
 - Prearranged family vacations - an exceptional circumstance, which requires families to take vacation during the school year. Family vacations should be scheduled to correspond with days when school is not in session. Prior approval by the building principal must be obtained if the absence is to be recorded as approved.
 - Athletic tournaments - on a limited basis and with pre-approval by the building principal.
 - Exceptional circumstances - any other circumstances where permission may or may not be granted at the discretion of the building principal where the pre-approval is requested for any circumstances other than those identified above.
5. Examples of unexcused absences include:
 - Parent has car trouble and cannot transport the child to school.
 - Overslept - alarm did not work.
 - Shopping.
 - Needed at home.
 - Family vacation that is not prearranged.
 - Babysitting.
 - Missed the bus.

- No call or note from parent regarding reason for absence, or no reason given.

6. The school can challenge suspicious excuses offered by parents/guardians.

7. The average student in the state of Minnesota misses a total of seven days in a school year. Those seven absences include illness, vacations, or family emergencies. If a student is absent excessively due to illness, school personnel can require the parents to obtain a doctor's excuse each time the child is absent due to illness.

Please remember to call the Attendance Line at 651-748-6717 to report all absences. Call the Health Office at 651-748-6715 to report communicable illnesses (i.e. flu, strep throat, chicken pox, head lice, impetigo, scarlet fever, pink eye, etc). It is very important that you state the reason for the absence, or it will be recorded as unexcused.

Sick child?

Parents, please be sure to call the Castle School attendance line if your child will not be attending school for any reason. The attendance line is available 24 hours a day so you can leave a message. Please include your child's name and the reason they are not coming to school. The attendance line phone number is 651-748-6717.

Bicycles, skates and scooters

Students in grades four and five who wish to bike, skate, or ride a scooter to and from school may do so with parental permission. A note to that effect needs to be given to the principal beforehand. Bikes and scooters parked at school are expected to be locked. The school is not responsible for damage to or loss of the bikes, skates, or scooters.

Birthdays

If your child is having an at-home birthday party, please do not send invitations to school for distribution, as feelings can be easily hurt. Your child may bring a store-bought treat to school to share with the class; this practice is voluntary and at parents' discretion. Please do not send flowers or balloons to school as they cannot go home on the bus.

Castle School Hours

- Student hours: 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Staff hours: 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
- Office hours: 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Safety patrols will be able to cross your child beginning at 8:45 a.m.; there is no one to supervise your child before that time. Teachers and staff members are busy preparing for their school day. Children need to wait by the front doors for the bell to ring at 8:55 before going to their classrooms.

If you are picking up your child at the end of the day, please send a note to the classroom teacher. Please arrive a few minutes early and report to the office so that buses do not need to be delayed while we locate your child. Please park in the lot, not along the bus lanes or parent drop off lanes.

Please call the school office at 651-748-6700 no later than 2:45 p.m. if you are picking up your child "at the last minute" at the end of the day. Students have left classrooms for bus duties and to gather jackets and backpacks and are difficult to track down!

Adventure Connection

The Adventure Connection program provides extended day programming which also includes youth enrichment and recreational classes for kindergarten through fifth grade children at each elementary site in District 622. The program is a cooperative effort between the city and school district to provide a wide variety of individual and group activities that address the areas of physical, mental, social, and emotional growth. Children must be registered with the program in order to participate.

- Hours:
Before school: 6:30 - 9 a.m.
After school: 3-6 p.m.
- Schedule Options:
Weekly - Monday through Friday, or specific days of each week
Varied - Attendance changes each month
Drop-In - Call in advance, on a space available basis

Phone numbers:

District Center - 651-748-7432

Castle - 651-748-6798

Bus students

The district's Transportation Department notifies parents concerning pick up and drop off times for students who are bused to Castle School. Patrols are placed on every bus to assist the driver with loading and unloading safely. The following procedures will be used when parents request to have their children ride a bus not assigned to them:

- After the routes are established in the fall, the Transportation Department will inform us the number of extra seats (if any) available on each bus.
- Students may be authorized by the principal to transfer buses if a seat is available.
- The student **MUST** have a note signed by his/her parent/guardian for each bus transfer request.
- "Blanket" notes cannot be honored (i.e. "Please allow Mary to ride the Dog bus to Girl Scouts every Thursday for the year.") The approval of one note does not imply that future notes will be approved. The student load on each bus changes frequently, therefore, a seat may be available one week, but not the next.
- Notes should be given to the teacher by the student in the morning. The teacher sends the note to the office with the attendance/lunch count. At that time, the note will be considered for approval after checking the list of available seats. Students can pick up their notes in the office during lunch break.
- When a note is not approved, the student will be instructed to call a parent and make other arrangements.
- A Student Bus Safety Code pamphlet is available in the office.

Communications from Castle and the School District

- Castle Mail Carrier: The youngest child in each family will be designated "Castle Mail Carrier". We ask parents to make it a point to empty their child's backpack each day.
- Monthly Newsletter - "Castle Corner"
This monthly newsletter includes a message from the principal. It also includes activities from grade levels, notes from the Health Office, PTO notes and other important reminders. This newsletter is sent with the Castle Mail Carrier.
- District 622 Publications: Four times a year, the 622 News is published by the District Communications Office and mailed to all residents. The annual report is mailed to all residents in October.
- District Calendar: A yearly calendar is mailed to all district parents in August. In-depth information about all schools, bus transportation and routes, budget, extended day programs, community and Early Childhood Education, immunization requirements, school hours, holiday schedules, food service programs, and special events, are shared in a clear, concise manner. If you do not receive your District 622 calendar in the mail, extra copies are always available in the school office.
- Conferences: This event is one of the most effective communication tools for parents and teachers alike. Conferences occur at the end of the first trimester (November) and at the end of the second trimester (March). Most years Castle School parent attendance at conferences is near 100%!
- Castle Calendar: Each year a Castle School calendar/handbook is created. This calendar includes monthly activities and policies and procedures. Artwork from students is included each year.

Data privacy/ student records

The school district will not furnish information from students' records to third parties without permission of the student or the parents unless the request is accompanied by a subpoena or court order. Student records will be transferred to educational institutions when requested. Student directory information, by law, must be given to all persons requesting it unless the parent does not want the information released. Contact your principal if you do not want your child's directory information released for non-educational reasons.

Dress

In general, dressing for the weather (and in good taste) is the rule in regard to student dress. Students are expected to go outside each day after lunch unless we have inclement weather.

During the winter months, students should be dressed appropriately. Hats, mittens/gloves, warm jackets and boots are needed. The wind chill factor and temperature are checked prior to students going outside each day for recess.

Colored Hair

Other than on special school spirit days, all students are expected to use only natural hair highlights or color tones. We have discovered that bright colors such as green or orange create a distraction in the classroom.

Homework

Homework may be given as a continuation or enhancement of school curriculum. Homework is the child's responsibility. Being aware of, and interested in the papers and projects your child brings home from school, is vital to their success.

*Non-illness absence homework policies: We encourage you to schedule vacations outside of school time. Usually no homework will be assigned prior to the time your child will be on vacation. An optional task

such as keeping a travel journal may be asked of the student.

High Potential

Students at Castle have opportunities to participate in building level enrichment activities and district level High Potential programs.

Students in grades 3, 4 & 5 are selected for district programs using a process that applies input from standardized tests, and parent/teacher evaluations. This process assures us that we are including only those students who can handle the accelerated pace and are capable of being away from the regular classroom.

Students in grades K, 1 & 2 are officially identified for High Potential services too, and may be pulled out for small group work at the building level. The High Potential pull-out services will focus on Math and Language Arts. Students are encouraged to be risk-takers, enthusiastic about learning, demonstrate an ability to problem-solve, and positive and respectful to other students. If you have questions, feel free to call the K-12 High Potential Coordinator at 651-748-7476.

Library/ Media center

Castle has a computerized library system. Electronic card catalog stations are available for student use and all circulation is on the computer. Students have a 35 minute library period scheduled each week. Library skills and literature appreciation are emphasized.

- Kindergarten students may check out one book.
- First grade students may check out one book until December when they may start to check out two.
- Students in grades 2-5 may check out two books.

All books may be kept one week. Renewal of materials is available. Materials must be returned before others are checked out. Replacement of lost or damaged materials is requested.

Lost and found

The Lost and Found is located in the hallway opposite the lunchroom. Every year large amounts of clothing, shoes and lunchboxes are unclaimed by students and delivered to the Goodwill.

Please label all items with your child's name so they won't end up in Lost and Found. Small items such as money, keys, jewelry, etc. are turned into the office.

Music

The students attend two music sessions per week with the Music Specialist, with each grade level presenting a program to parents sometime during the school year. In music class, students play Orff instruments, learn to sing with good vocal production, study music theory and music appreciation.

- Choir: Choirs are extracurricular activities offered by the Music Specialist. Each choir meets for 45 minutes before school once a week. A concert is given in December and again in the Spring.
- Instrumental Music: Band is offered to 5th grade students only. Students meet before school for a large group band rehearsal and once a week during the school day for a small sectional lesson. Development of good tone and note reading skills are emphasized as well as proper playing habits and care of instruments.

Parent Involvement

(Visit the [Parent Involvement](#) page)

CURRICULUM REVIEW: Parents have a right to review any curriculum materials used during instruction of students, and/or request that students be excused from instruction on specific topics and/or lessons. If you wish to have more information on this, please contact the principal.

Physical education

The students meet with the Physical Education Specialist twice a week. We strive for every child to have an active, enjoyable, safe, and successful Physical Education experience. Our motto is "Every Child is a Winner!"

Tennis shoes with laces or velcro straps for class activities are required EVERY DAY. Please do not wear slip-on shoes or black bottomed shoes that mark the floor. If possible, keep a pair of tennis shoes at school just for Physical Education class.

Medical excuses must be written by the parent to the Physical Education teacher. Excuses for more than one week require a doctor's written statement.

School Delays/Closings

Please remember the difference between a delay and a closing. A school closing means all regular programs will be canceled for the day. A school delay indicates that school will begin two hours late. If a delay occurs, Castle's starting time would be 11:00 a.m. In the event of a potential delay or closing, listen to WCCO 830 a.m. radio or log onto www.isd622.org.

PLEASE DO NOT CALL CASTLE SCHOOL.

In the event of a delayed school opening, the following would occur:

- All students will have lunch at their scheduled times.
- All bus routes will run two hours late.
- Morning preschool experience programs are canceled.
- Stepping Stones and Adventure Connection programs will, to the extent possible, open as usual.

School store

The School Store was started to provide fifth grade students with a practical opportunity to apply their math skills. Service to peers and younger students is also a goal. Pencils and other school supplies are available at "Target" prices during the noon hour after the store opens mid-September. A parent volunteer coordinates supplies and schedules for the young entrepreneurs.

School patrol

School patrol members are fifth grade students, chosen on the recommendation of school staff. Duties consist of crossing walking students, bus assistant and kindergarten student assistants. Contact the School patrol coordinator at 651-748-6734.

School visits

Parents are welcome to visit Castle Elementary. We ask that you please check in at the office and pick up a

identification badge before going to a classroom. A phone call before your visit is appreciated. If you plan to have lunch with your child, please let us know by 10:00 a.m.

Requests to have friends and relatives visit school for the day cannot be accommodated because of insurance restrictions.

Telephone usage

In order to promote individual responsibility, students will be allowed to use phones for emergencies only, and not for forgotten items or messages. Arrangements for transportation, visiting another child, etc. should be made before the student leaves home.

Cell Phone & Electronic Devices

Students are not allowed to use cell phones, pagers, or other electronic devices during school hours. Students possessing such devices during the student day will be required to turn them into the school office for parent pick up. Parents with any concerns or questions are asked to contact the school principal.

Zero Tolerance

During September, the principal or designee will visit every K-5 classroom to talk with children about the Student Responsibility Policy and the Minnesota Zero Weapons Tolerance Law and its consequences for them. This will be adjusted to their level of understanding. Parents need to know that they are legally responsible for their child's behavior in school.

The Dangerous Weapons Act (Zero Tolerance) prohibits students from bringing firearms, knives, replicas of any weapon or device capable of producing great bodily harm to school. Automatic suspension is the consequence for this at all district schools. If a student inadvertently is in possession of a weapon, and reports it immediately without showing it to peers, the suspension is avoided. Parents will be asked to come and pick the weapon up in the office.

Notes from the nurse

The Health Aid Office phone number is 651-748-6715.

The school nurse's daily hours are 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Good health is basic to sound education and productive living. The purpose of the school health program is to maintain, improve and promote the health of the school-aged child.

For your child's security, if he or she is going to be absent from school for any reason, please call the attendance line at 651-748-6717. The attendance line is available 24 hours a day. If you do not call us, we will attempt to contact you either at work or at home.

Immunization Requirements: A healthy learning environment minimizes the number of school days lost to illness. Therefore, it is extremely important that children be immunized early against contagious childhood diseases that can spread rapidly among unimmunized children. According to Minnesota law, every child enrolled in a school or a child care facility, whether public, private or religious, must have received a specific series of immunizations. Only the child who has a medical reason to not be immunized or whose parent or guardian is conscientiously opposed to immunization is exempt. The exemption must be signed by their doctor and notarized.

Illness - When to Stay Home

- If the student has had a fever of 100 degrees or more, the student should stay home for 24 hours after the temperature returns to normal without use of medication.
- If the student has vomited or had diarrhea, the student should stay home until 24 hours after the last episode and is able to hold down a meal.
- If the student has any rash that may be a disease related or you do not know the cause, check with your family doctor before sending the student to school.
- If the student is ill, please call the school daily to report the illness. If you do not call the school the day of the absence, or if we cannot reach you that day, your child will be considered to have an unexcused absence. After 3 unexcused absences, state law requires notification of Washington County Social Services. A meeting at school of parent(s) and principal is also set.
- If you have any questions about the above information or illnesses, please call your family doctor or the school nurse.

Homebound Instruction

District 622 provides homebound instruction for all students who are homebound with a serious illness. The students are eligible for this instruction when a doctor determines that they will be absent for 15 consecutive days or more. Please keep the school informed if you know that your child is expected to be out that long.

A Healthy School Environment

- If your child becomes ill or is injured during the school day, you will be notified so arrangements can be made for your child to be taken home. Emergency information cards must be kept current. Home, mother's work, father's work, and daycare phone numbers are required. A note or phone call about any change is important.
- Always keep your child home if an elevated temperature is present.
- Please notify the school nurse if your child develops a communicable disease (strep throat, chicken pox, head lice, impetigo, scarlet fever/ scarletina, pink eye, etc...).
- Children should be dressed appropriately for the season and specific weather.
- It is important that your child eat a nutritious breakfast every day before coming to school.
- Please read communicable disease slips sent home with students and follow suggestions for each specific illness.

Medications

- Students requiring medication or inhalers at school shall be identified by parent and/or doctor to the school nurse. When medication is necessary, written authorization from both parent/guardian AND physician or authorized prescriber must be received before ANY prescription or over-the-counter medication can be administered. Authorization needs to be renewed annually or whenever medication changes. (A hand written note is acceptable.)
- All medication (including over-the-counter preparations) must be kept in the health office and dispensed by the school nurse. Parents must bring the medication to the nurse rather than having the child bring it in.

- All medication must be brought in the original prescription bottle. Ask for the medication to be divided into two bottles completely labeled - one for home and one for school. Over-the-counter medication must be supplied in the original sealed container.
- Parents will need to pick up any unused medication.