

Forest Heights Elementary School

PARENT – STUDENT HANDBOOK 2016 - 2017

**“We Believe in our Intelligence, and
We Stand on our Character”**



Dr. Pete Thompson, Principal
(301)749-4220
(301)749-4224 (fax)

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Welcome, to another exciting school year at "*The Heights*". The faculty and staff encourage each of you to maintain an active role in your child's educational experience throughout the school year.

This handbook has been prepared to begin an open line of communication and understanding of the policies and procedures at Forest Heights Elementary School. We hope it will be helpful in answering some of the questions which may arise during the course of the school year. Please use this handbook as a reference in conjunction with other school related materials you will receive during the school year.

As the school year progresses, you will find many experiences planned for your child(ren) with the intent of making their learning experience meaningful and successful.

During the school year, if you or your child(ren) encounter any issues, please look to your child's teacher as the first point of contact for resolution. If you are unable to resolve the problem with the teacher's assistance, please feel free to schedule a conference by calling Ms. Watson (301)749-4220.

The following policies and procedures are scheduled to be addressed with your child within the first week of school. County Code of Student Conduct, School Wide Discipline Policy and Procedure, and Reporting Harassment/Bullying. In addition, we will be introducing a new school-wide Character Development Process. The plan will provide incentives and additional supports in order for students to develop the necessary social and behavioral skills to achieve at high levels,

Here at Forest Heights Elementary we request that our parents become actively involved in their child's educational process through volunteering at least four hours per marking period and maintaining biweekly contact with your child's teacher. We are seeking all positions for our P.T.O. We strongly encourage parents to become involved in the PTO. Finally, please **remember that the school day is from 7:30 a.m. to 1:55 p.m. Instructional time will begin promptly at 7:45 a.m..**

We are looking forward to a successful year to ensure academic success for all children. We know that we can count on your support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Pete Thompson, Principal

School Hours

7:30 a.m.	All students enter and/or eat breakfast
7:40 a.m.	All parents should be existing out of the building
7:45 a.m.	Morning announcements and the start of instruction
1:55 a.m.	Bus Dismissal
2:00 p.m.	Walking/After Care students dismissed

The school office is opened from 7:00 to 3:10 p.m. Note: Teacher conferences are by appointment only.

School Meal Program

Free/Reduced Meal applications are sent home the first week of school. No application will be processed by the Food and Nutrition Office unless form is completed and signed. Each child must have an application. Students who are identified as receiving benefits from the Food Stamp Program or Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) are certified as eligible for free meals without the submission of an application for Free/Reduced price school meals. If you have any questions regarding your application, please call Food Service at (301) 952-6580.

Breakfast	Free		
Full Price Lunch	\$2.75	Reduced Lunch	\$.40

Menus which are established by the Food Service Office will be published on a monthly basis and sent home with the school newsletter.

If lunch money is lost or forgotten, students will be provided a sandwich and milk from the cafeteria.

Visitors

All visitors **must** report to the office and obtain a visitor's badge before visiting **any** area of the school.

School Uniform Policy

The Mighty Wise Owls Uniform Policy is MANDATORY! Dress Attire is as follows: No Exceptions, No other colors than stated - Students must be dressed appropriately before they enter the classroom (please see non-compliance policy below). We ask that parents/guardians please make sure that uniforms are clean daily.

Girls are to wear:

- Solid Navy Blue Skirts, Pants or Jumpers knee length.
- Shirts - Light Blue Uniform Shirt - No other colors.

Jewelry - Small stud/small hoop earrings only. No other jewelry is to be worn.

- The following cannot be worn: Large Hoop or Dangling Earrings, leggings, sweat pants or jeans.

Boys are to wear:

- Navy Blue Slacks with Navy Blue or Black Belt (to be worn daily)
- Shirts: Light Blue Uniform/Polo Shirt (long/short) sleeves
- Sweaters or Vest: Solid Navy or Black

Non-Compliance with the Uniform Policy

Students who are not in compliance will be brought to the attention of the Guidance Counselor and a call will be made to the parent. The student may also be separated from his/her class. A more severe form of discipline will be used for students who do not comply after these steps are taken. UNIFORMS ARE MANDATORY!

1st Violation - Parent contacted and informed of the violation.

2nd Violation - Written notification is sent home to inform the parent/guardian of the uniform violation.

3rd Violation - Detention.

4th Violation - Parent/Teacher/Student/Administration Conference.

5th Violation - Student is removed from the class for one (1) full day and completes assignments.

Out of Uniform Days: Some out of uniform days may be granted. If this happens, we will send WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION or school all call to parents (please keep office informed of changes to telephone numbers). On those days children are expected to wear closed-toes shoes. No T-Shirts, no skin tight clothing, nor short shorts or short skirts. All clothing must be in good taste.

Late Arrivals (Tardy)

A late start is an early absence from your child's education. It is important that every child arrive at school on time and prepared. Students need time to unpack their books and speak with their teacher before the beginning of instructional time. If your child(ren) arrives at school after 7:45 a.m., parents must accompany them to the office for a late pass. Parents, we ask that you **do not** escort your child(ren) to their classroom after this time as the instructional time has began and this will interrupt the class. **Note: Excessive tardiness will result in referrals to the Pupil Personnel Department and/or Court Liaison's Office. Students will be allowed to enter the building at 7:30 a.m.**

Early Departure

Parents, please report to the office to sign the "Early Departure Log Book". If possible please send a note with your child(ren) stating that they will be picked up from school for an early dismissal. **If someone other than a parent/guardian is to pick up your child(ren), please include his/her name in the note. The person picking up your child should be on the emergency contact list as someone authorized to pick up your child. We WILL NOT under any circumstances release a child to anyone NOT listed as authorized as an option for pick up. In addition, the individual(s) picking your child up MUST present either a state or government issued identification.**

Parents **will not** be allowed to sign students out after 1:30 p.m. The afternoon dismissal process will begin at 1:50 p.m.

If it is noted that a child is habitually being picked up early, a conference will be held with the Principal and Professional School Counselor. If the early departures persist, it will be reported to the Pupil Personnel Worker for further action. Children need to be in school all day in order to reach their fullest potential.

Vital Information

It is imperative for OUR school to have current information on all students throughout the school year. On the first day of school, each child will take home an "Emergency Care Form," in which we ask parents/guardians to complete and return the following day. Whenever there is a change of address, change of home/work, number and/or emergency contact numbers, please inform the office of the change immediately.

Census Cards (Federal Survey Cards)

These cards are sent home in the Fall and **all** cards **must** be completed, signed and returned to the school by the published deadline.

Identification Tags

Please pin colored identification tags on your Pre-K, Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade child for the first week or so of school. He/she should wear it each day until they know their full name, address and telephone number. Also, your child(ren) should know their bus stop and bus route number, morning and evening, this information should have been sent to you over the summer. Students registering after August 15, 2016 will be given the bus information upon registering.

Parents will be expected to furnish the classroom teacher with the daily mode of transportation for their child(ren) on the first day of school. **Please complete the form sent home** with the following information:

Mode of Transportation
Name of Person Picking Up
Name of Facility (if applicable)
Contact Telephone Number/Cell

Students will be expected to follow their regular transportation routine unless written permission is received by the teacher or office in advance.

Homework

Homework is a learning activity performed by the student and is related to the child's experience within the classroom. It is intended to promote individual competency. Its purpose is to supplement and enrich classroom work, to provide for individual interests, to promote competency in subject matter, and to enhance time management skills. Homework will be given on a regular basis. Each teacher will provide, in writing, a copy of his/her homework requirements. We believe, that parents play an integral part in implementing effective homework strategies by providing a consistent time and place for their child to study while offering words of encouragement and support. Parents please provide feedback to the teacher if the assignment(s) are too easy or if the child is having difficulty with the task(s). Below you will find suggested timeframes for completion of homework:

Pre K thru Kindergarten - 30 Minutes

1st thru 2nd Grade - 40 Minutes

3rd thru 4th Grade - 1 Hour

5th thru 6th Grade - 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ Hour

Emergency School Closing

In case of inclement weather or other emergency situations an announcement will be made over all Washington area radio and television stations to inform you of early dismissals, closing or late openings. You may also log on to our county website at www.pgcps.org.

In order to keep telephone lines open for emergency calls, parents are requested NOT to call the school, Central Office, or radio stations. *In the event that our school would have to close due to an emergency (loss of heat, broken water pipes, no electricity, etc.) a plan has been advised to house students from our particular school in another school nearby.* Forest Height's students will be transported to Oxon Hill High School and returned to Forest Heights for our regular dismissal. If we are able to use our Global Connect (school wide call out system) we will do so. It is important that Ms. Watson receive all current working telephone numbers in order for the call out system to work properly.

Cell Phones

Please see Board Policy and Administrative Procedure 5132 from the P.G. Website. **During** school hours (7:30a - 1:55p) and on a school buses, cell phones and portable electronic devices **must remain off** and the items should be stored out-of-sight in a back-pack, book bag, purse, vehicle, locker, etc. Students of Forest Heights will have access to the schools telephones. In a case of a school wide emergency parents/guardians will be contacted via telephone, global contact or system wide call outs. Violations of the Board Policy and Administrative Procedure may result in confiscation of the cell phone or portable electronic device.

Discipline

The Forest Heights faculty is committed to provide each child a golden opportunity to learn in a safe and nurturing environment. Therefore, staff members will not tolerate persistent class disruptions. In general, most minor disciplinary cases will be handled in the classroom through teacher/student conferences. On occasion, it does become necessary for the teacher to contact the parent/guardian concerning a student's misbehavior. At that point, we expect that the parent/guardian will be able to intervene so that the misbehavior does not persist. Most problems are usually resolved at the classroom or parent level. If the administration becomes actively involved, it is because the problem has not been resolved at the classroom or parent level, or because the problem cannot be resolved through the usual channels or techniques employed by the teacher.

Depending upon the nature of the problem, a Student Discipline form may be filled out by the teacher and sent to the office. The administration will strive to use a variety of informal disciplinary/guidance techniques prior to initiating formal disciplinary action.

However, it must be noted that the seriousness of a student's behavior may also warrant the immediate use of more formal disciplinary procedures, including the denial of education participation (suspension). The Code of Student Conduct policies and procedure can be viewed on our website via www.pgcps.org.

Bus Riders

Riding the school bus to and from school is a **privilege**. If your child's behavior warrants removal from the bus he/she is still expected to arrive on time and will be dismissed with the walkers at the end of the day. Parents will be notified by letter from Principal Merrifield of any infraction of these rules by their child. Unacceptable behavior **will** result in suspension from riding the school bus for a given period of time or for an indefinite period of time. Parents are also urged to occasionally accompany their child to the bus stop to observe his/her behavior. The school would appreciate being notified of any inappropriate behavior exhibited at the bus, which is detrimental to the safety and welfare of any/or all children while waiting for the school bus. The following rules must be followed daily on the bus:

- Remain seated at all times
- No eating on the bus
- Students must whisper when speaking with a peer
- No profanity
- No fighting
- No throwing of objects
- No tampering with emergency exits
- Students must follow the directions of the bus driver at all times

If for some reason it becomes necessary for your child(ren) to walk home or be picked up, it will be necessary for a note to be sent to the office. Otherwise, all bus riders will be placed on the bus as scheduled.

Safety Patrols

In every school community, the Safety Patrol is an essential part of the school's total program. Safety, in itself, is essential for the well being of all children.

The members of the Safety Patrol are selected from among the students in Grades 4 through 6 based on conduct, attitudes about safety, willingness to accept responsibility and because they have been found to be reliable, trustworthy, and conscientious citizens. During this past Spring safety patrol candidates underwent extensive training under the direction of the Prince George's County Police Department. They will continue working with patrols throughout the year in order to establish and maintain a safe and secure learning environment.

Questions concerning the Safety Patrol program should be addressed to the Safety Patrol Coordinator, Mr. Turner.

Volunteers

The volunteer is an integral part of our program at Forest Heights. Volunteers donate their time either on a regular or "as needed" basis to the school. They provide excellent supplementary help to both teachers and pupils by working in the classrooms, media center, etc. Some do clerical work, while others work directly with the children either individually or in small groups. Many volunteers have been trained by the volunteer office to work in specific areas such as reading and language development. These dedicated people, who provide such valued assistance, are well appreciated.

If you wish to volunteer, please leave your name and number in the office. It is our goal that every parent donates at least 2 hours per marking period to strengthen our school-community relations. Field trip volunteers must be fingerprinted, please make an appointment by calling (301) 952-6775.

Parking

Parents who bring their child(ren) and/or pick them up are asked to be considerate of the buses that transport students. Parking or standing is not permitted within the bus loading circle during posted hours (7:30 a.m. - 1:55 p.m.) Picking up or discharging your child(ren) creates a problem for the buses, but is also potentially dangerous for students who walk to and from school. Ideally, we request that if you are picking up or discharging students, that you do so from the back parking lot area. Students will use the side wall to enter or exit the building.

In addition, it is **illegal** to park or stand in a posted (NO PARKING) area. If an emergency situation arises, the area must be clear to emergency vehicles (ambulance, rescue or fire vehicles).

Parent Teacher Organization (P.T.O.)

The purpose of the P.T.O. is to foster a closer relationship with the home and school, in which parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the education of children. The P.T.O.'s mission is to not only assist parents in developing the skills they need to raise and protect their children, but to also encourage parent and public involvement in the public schools of this nation. **Here at Forest Heights Elementary we request that our parents become actively involved in their child's educational process through volunteering at least four hours per marking period and maintaining biweekly contact with their child's teacher.** As the African Proverb clearly states, "It takes a village to raise a child." Will you become an active villager?

Moving From Attendance Area

If you plan to move out of the Forest Heights attendance area, please inform the office immediately so that we can prepare a Transfer packet for your child(ren). 24 hour notice is necessary for all needed paperwork, ie Transfer/Withdrawal or Verification letters of any kind.

Birthday Celebrations

Parents we understand that some of you may wish to celebrate with your son/daughters on their birthday. Because of the academic/instruction time, we must limit any celebration to the lunch time assigned and parents are to bring in store brought cupcakes only. Please call Ms. Watson for further information.

Lost and Found

We ask that you mark your child(ren) clothing and belongings with his/her name. This is especially helpful for us in returning lost items to the owners. Unclaimed lost articles are collected and stored in the Lost and Found container in the cafeteria. Please encourage your child(ren) to check for lost items. Small articles such as keys, glasses, money, etc are kept in the school office. We also periodically lost articles for the students and parents to check over. Despite our best efforts, many articles of clothing go unclaimed each year and are donated to charity.

Bulletins/Newsletters

A newsletter is posted on the website each month with pertinent information which you may need to know. Copies will be also be available in the main office. Please ask your son/daughter for this newsletter and keep it in a handy place for easy referral.

Helpful Hints

Please check your child(ren) back packs each and everyday. Notices are sent home with important dates that you must be aware of.

Forms are to be returned to school promptly. A child may become upset when the teacher has to keep asking for information to be returned.

Items belonging to children, should be marked with names to aid in the return of lost or stolen items.

Children should not bring extra money to school. Many incidents of lost or stolen money occur when extra money is left in desks or lockers.

No Ipods, MP3 players, Gameboy systems or PSPs are allowed in school. These items are very expensive and should be kept home for personal entertainment.

Guidance Program and Services

I am pleased to announce that we will have a full-time guidance counselor, Ms. Qiana Wright, this year.. Ms. Qiana Wright and responsible self direction in all students, from Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 6. As such, the guidance program serves a unique and necessary function in the educational process. It is a coordinated effort involving home, school and community.

Objectives of the guidance program are:

- Help students develop self understanding and self discipline
- Help students develop skills in decision-making
- To assist students to recognize and respect individual differences
- To provide teacher with supplementary information for better understanding of students

Referrals: Students are referred by classroom teachers, specialist, support staff, administrative support or through self-referral.

Students and parents will individually meet with our Professional Counselor, to complete their yearly Individual Learning Plan.

Medication

Students are only permitted to take medication at school when it is deemed absolutely necessary and a **Physician's Medication Authorization Form is on file for each individual situation (Prescription or Non-Prescription)**. Student's must be able to administer their own medication under supervision of the nurse or office personnel. The exceptions to this would be possible acute allergic reactions (bee stings, epipens,etc). Please notify the school nurse if this situation exist with your child(ren). All medications must be brought to the school nurse for safe storage.

Illness or Injury

In case of illness or injury, students are referred to the Health Room. The school nurse will render first aid and emergency care for minor illness or injury. In cases that necessitate the notification of parents, the school nurse will make the contact. Please keep the school office advised of all current telephone numbers, including an emergency contact and number.

Accident Insurance

An Accident Insurance Plan is available to students at the beginning of each school year. Enrollment is voluntary. Parents make the premium payments directly to the insurance company.

Family Life and Human Development

The Family Life and Human Development Unit is designed to acquaint fifth and sixth grade students with some of the physical and emotional stages of maturation. The study begins with heredity and concludes with childbirth. Prior to actual instruction, parents will be notified, and an opportunity for you to come in to preview material and ask questions provided. Parental permission is required for all students to be enrolled in the class.

Testing Program

Kindergarten students are given the Systematic Help in Identification and Programming (SHIP) testing in the first month of school. SHIP screens vision, hearing, speech, language, motor development and visual perception. Parent interviews are also conducted.

Quarterly all 3rd through 6th grade students are given the PGCPs Quarterly Benchmark Assessments in reading and math. These assessments are designed to provide valuable information for appropriate placement and instruction of students throughout the school year.

April 1 through April 30, the 3rd through 6th grade students from throughout the county will be tested using PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) in math and reading and (Maryland School Assessment) in the area of science. You will receive additional information about these tests prior to them being administered.

These tests offer diagnostic information, making clear those areas in which each child excels and those areas in which more help is needed.

You may schedule an appointment with the secretary to view your child's testing records at anytime throughout the school year.

Field Trips

Classes enjoy taking field trips, but the number of trips have been severely cut back recently due to increased cost of transportation. These trips are planned by the teacher when appropriate to school work and provide enrichment experiences for students. Written parental permission is required before any student can go on a field trip. Again parents chaperoning field trips must be fingerprinted prior to the field trip. Please arrange an appointment by calling (301) 952-6775.

Special Education – Resource Room

Occasionally, some students may need additional supports and services in order to access the general education curriculum. If their needs are significant, they may qualify for special education services in addition to or in place of instruction in the general education classroom. The teacher or parent may refer the child to the School Instructional Team (SIT). The SIT will discuss the child's strengths and needs, and using a Response to Intervention (RTI) model, may recommend classroom instructional strategies or additional instructional supports to assist the child in accessing the curriculum. The SIT will meet on a regular basis to monitor the child's progress and make additional recommendations for instructional interventions if needed.

Students who do not show improvements and are suspected of having a disability that impacts their access to the general education curriculum are referred to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. The IEP team may recommend assessments in order to gain more information about the students'

strengths and needs. If the team determines that the child has a disability that impacts his or her access to the curriculum, then the team (including the parent, administrator, general educator, special educator, and other staff) will develop an IEP for the child that describes the nature of support and services the child needs.

Media and Technology Center

The Media Technology Department aims to facilitate our total school curriculum in providing a quality educational program that will develop skills to research, analyze, create, and communicate information effectively, enabling student to become successful, contributing members of a fast paced, information based global society.

Music Program

Vocal music is taught beginning in Pre-Kindergarten and continuing through Grade 6.

Instrumental music is offered to students in Grades 4, 5 and 6. Participation is on a voluntary basis and students must provide their own instruments. One-half hour classes are held twice each week. Instruction is given in the following instruments: violin, cello, flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone and baritone horn.

Physical Education Program

Physical Education seeks to help each child develop mentally, socially and physically. Physically Education classes are scheduled for each child each week.

In the lower grades, importance is placed on development of gross motor activities, as well as the different components of physical fitness (strength, speed, flexibility, etc.) Development in these areas is essential if the child is to attain success I the upper grades. In the upper grades, concentration is primarily devoted to development of various sport skills and concepts. Most of the activities are team games with specific rules to follow.

Participation of all students in physical education is required by law. A note from a doctor, or in some cases the parent, is required to be excused from class.

Perhaps the best statement about the importance of physical education comes from the ancient Greek motto "A sound mind is a sound body".

Speech Program

Speech and hearing services are part of the Special Education Program. Speech, hearing and language therapy are specialized programs of identification assessment and treatment of children with communication problems.

The speech and hearing therapist works with children in individual sessions, small groups and in the regular classrooms. The therapist also services as a consultant or resource person to the classroom teacher, and to other members of the education team.

Pre- K and Kindergarten

The Pre-K and Kindergarten Program is designed to provide interesting and purposeful experiences out of which a child may organize: (1) self concepts, (2) concepts of the world in which they live, and (3) some concepts of the people with whom they live.

Specifically, the Kindergarten Program is designed to provide opportunities for (1) physical growth-large and small muscle skills (2) social and emotional growth and (3) language and thinking skills, listening and speaking, numerals 1 -50, letters of the alphabet, and the sound of the letters, visual discrimination and differences in pictures, letters and words, as well as following directions. It is also one of our goals to have all of our students, if possible, reading (comprehending) with understanding at 1st grade level by the end of their Kindergarten experience. The same level of achievement is expected for math as well.

Reporting Pupil Progress

Parent Portal of SchoolMax grading system is available online for you to review your students progress at all times.

Pre- K - Quarterly progress reports issued.

Kindergarten - There are four reporting periods for Kindergarten, one at the end of each quarter. In addition, Kindergarten teachers will set a date for a conference with parents. A Teacher Observation Checklist will be used in the Fall to help teachers better prepare for your child's level of development.

Grade 1 through 6 - The grading program allows for four (4) grading periods: three written and one conference. Additional conferences may also be requested or necessary.

Conferences - The classroom teacher will send written notification before the end of one of the first three reporting periods to schedule a conference.

Deficiency Notices - Parents of students who are making unsatisfactory progress will be sent an Interim Progress Report at the midpoint of each nine week grading period, or as soon thereafter as it becomes apparent that the student is not making satisfactory progress. These notices are to be signed by the parent and copy returned to the school.