

# High Bridge Elementary School

## Student/Parent Handbook

2025-2026 School Year

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Welcome back to school! Our teachers and staff have been busy preparing, and we are anxious to greet all our new and returning students.

Here is a reminder of the school procedures that help prevent confusion and ensure a safe and pleasant school environment. This information changes from year to year, so we ask even our “veteran” parents to **please read closely**. We know we can count on your cooperation and assistance.

## Attendance Policy

**Please see Pupil Code of Conduct for additional details.** (Policy # 5113)

### Attendance

Regular attendance and punctuality are important for students from the first day of school. Pupils who do not enter their homeroom class at the required time in the morning are considered late or tardy. A student will be recorded as late or tardy when he/she arrives in their Homeroom class after 8:30 a.m. Homeroom is from 8:20-8:30 a.m. If a student is in school for less than four (4) hours during any day, he/she is recorded as absent for the full day.

On the day a student returns to school after an absence, a note is required stating the reason for the absence. A doctor's note is required after extended or frequent absences for illness. All absences should be reported to the main office as well as the nurse to ensure accurate attendance record keeping. Report your student using one of the three methods below:

1. Call the absence line (908) 638-4105
2. Email both [luster@hbschools.org](mailto:luster@hbschools.org) and [clarkj@hbschools.org](mailto:clarkj@hbschools.org)
3. via Genesis Parent Portal (instructions listed below):
  - a. Sign in to the Genesis Parent Portal.

- b. Click the Notify Attendance Office link (on the Summary tab under This Week).
- c. Select Absent from the Student, which will be a dropdown box.
- d. Click the checkbox next to your absent child(ren).
- e. Type a brief reason for the absence.
- f. Click the Submit to Office button.

The school strongly believes that all activities during the school day, from 8:20 a.m. to 3:10 p.m., are important. Therefore, medical or dental appointments are encouraged after school hours. The office and homeroom teacher should be informed in advance. The school does NOT approve of students being signed out before dismissal at 3:20 p.m. because of valuable loss of instructional time.

### Excessive Absence from School

It is important that students attend school on a regular basis. The educational program offered by the district is predicated upon daily pupil attendance. Therefore, an unexcused absence of Ten (10) or more days will result in a letter informing parents of this and requesting support for improved attendance. Five unexcused tardies will be counted as an unexcused absence. If the absenteeism rate continues, the administration and parents will have a conference to discuss this matter. Further absences may result in municipal court involvement as per the laws of this state.

### •ATTENDANCE POLICY•

Regular attendance and punctuality are important for a student from the first day of school. Pupils who do not enter their homeroom class at the required time in the morning are considered late or tardy. A student will be recorded as late or tardy when he/she arrives in the homeroom after 8:30 a.m. If a student is in school for less than 4 hours during any day, he/she is recorded as absent for the full day. (6A:32-8.3) Regular attendance by all students in the Public Schools of New Jersey is a well-established, long-standing State Policy (N.J.S.A. 18A—38:25, 26) that has been repeatedly upheld by the courts of the state as well as by the Supreme Court of the United States. A pupil must be in attendance for 162 or more school days to be considered to have successfully completed the instructional program requirements of the grade/course to which she/he is assigned and to be eligible for promotion to the next grade.

**Truancy** The board will report to appropriate authorities infractions of the law regarding the attendance of pupils.

### **Excused Absences**

- A. Religious Holiday
- B. Take your child to work Day

On the day when a student returns to school after an absence, he/she is required to bring a note signed by a parent/guardian stating the reason for the absence or tardiness and specific dates of absence or tardiness. Extended (three days or more) chronic absences for illnesses require a written note from a doctor.

The school strongly believes that all activities during the school day, from 8:20 a.m. - 3:10 p.m., are important. Therefore, medical or dental appointments should not be made during the school day except for extensive or emergency care. The office and homeroom teacher should be informed in advance. The school does not approve of parents/guardians signing out students prior to 3:10 p.m. for any other reason. Outside tutoring sessions must be scheduled after the school hours.

### **Late or Tardy to School**

If a student arrives late or tardy to homeroom, the discipline code will be followed. The second incident of lateness or tardiness will result in a parent conference and other school consequences. Five unexcused tardies will be counted as an unexcused absence.

### **Excessive Unexcused Absence from School**

It is important that students attend school on a regular basis. The educational program offered by the district is predicated upon daily pupil attendance. Therefore, an unexcused absence of ten (10) or more days absenteeism rate will result in a letter informing parents/guardians of the number of absences. The administration will require a conference with the parents/guardians to discuss the matter. Further absences may result in municipal court involvement as per the laws of this state, and, in extreme cases, absenteeism may warrant retention in the current grade. Unexcused absences may incur disciplinary violations and behavior consequences.

<b>Days Absent</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
10-14	Letter Sent home from Administration
15-19	2nd letter sent; a meeting with Administration
20+	Student may be retained unless extenuating circumstances exist (see Board Policy 5113

For more information regarding Tardiness and Attendance, please see district policies [5240](#) and [5200](#).

Eligibility for participation in ANY co-curricular programs, students MUST be in school for 4 hours on the day of the activity or event. Any student that is absent for any reason or sent home sick from school cannot participate in an activity until they return to school.

Per District Policy 2430 - Participation in Co-Curricular Activities.

[2430](#)

### **Tiers of support for absenteeism to discuss strategies to improve attendance.**

1. Parent meeting with Teacher
2. Parent meeting with Guidance Counselor
3. Parent meeting with Principal

\*\* Parents and students have the opportunity to appeal any dates in question.

# Absences & Late Arrivals

If a student will be **absent or late** for any reason, the School Office **must be notified by a parent or guardian**. If your child is ill, please call the office **before 8:30 am OR notify the office through Genesis parent portal using the “notify attendance office” prompt**. Messages may be left on our voicemail system at any time, day or night. To leave a message, please dial 638-4105, press # 1 If you know in advance that your child will be absent or will need to leave early, you may send a note ahead of time.

Please note that if a student is absent without notice from a parent or guardian, we will attempt to reach you by telephone. If we are unable to reach you at the main number, we will call each number on your contact list in an attempt to locate your child. If we are unable to reach you and we do not know the whereabouts of your child, we will contact the High Bridge Police Department to help ensure your child is safe. This is why it is imperative that you keep your contact information up to date in the Parent Portal.

We need a call from you when:

- ❖ Your child is ill (must be called in DAILY), please state the nature of the illness.
- ❖ Your child will be late to school. Please state the time and reason for late arrival.
- ❖ Your child will be absent for any other reason than illness. Please state the reason for the absence.

Our school day begins at 8:30. If your child arrives after 8:30, they will be marked late. If your child arrives at 11:55 am, they will be marked for a ½ day absence. If they leave school by 11:55 am and will not be returning, they will be marked for a ½ day absence.

In addition, listed below are further procedures that will be in place regarding number of absences:

- ❖ Once a student has accumulated 10 days absent, a letter will be sent home.
- ❖ Once a student has accumulated 15 days absent, a second letter will be sent home.
- ❖ Once a student has accumulated 20 days absent, a letter will be sent home explaining that the student risks retention at his/her grade level.

In addition, listed below are further procedures that will be in place regarding numbers of late arrivals:

- ❖ Once a student has accumulated 3 tardies, the guardian will receive a phone call from the school.
- ❖ Once a student has accumulated 4 tardies, the guardian will be required to meet with school officials.

For more information regarding Tardiness and Attendance, please see district policies [5240](#) and [5200](#).

Eligibility for participation in ANY co-curricular programs, students MUST be in school for 4 hours on the day of the activity or event. Any student that is absent for any reason or sent home sick from school cannot participate in an activity until they return to school.

Per District Policy 2430 - Participation in Co-Curricular Activities.

[2430](#)

# Arrival/Dismissal Procedures

Each grade is assigned a door to use for arrival and dismissal. Please have your student enter through the door they are assigned to.

## [Elementary School Map](#)

Students in kindergarten through fourth grade may be dropped off **along the sidewalk** in the parking lot at the north end of the building, utilizing our drop off line. Please **do not** drop children at the main entrance at the front of our building. **Only children accompanied by adults may enter or leave the building through the front door.** The front of our building is reserved for buses and other transportation vehicles. When unloading children from your car or van, please do not allow them to exit from the driver's side. Children should always step from the **passenger side** of the vehicle right onto the sidewalk or grass.

You may park your car on Mine Road and have your kindergarten through grade 4 child walk up the Bunny Trail which is supervised from 8:20 until 8:30. This is a great option for avoiding the crowding which occurs in the parking lot at arrival. Concern for the safety of students walking to school prompted the High Bridge Borough Council to establish the "old railroad path," between Main and Thomas Streets, as a walkway. The Board of Education has established procedures (described below) which are intended to help students avoid crossing the dangerous Fairview Avenue/Church Street intersection and arrive safely at school.

### **From the South end of town:**

All children walking to the Elementary School are to avoid crossing the busy intersections of Fairview Avenue/Mine Road and Fairview Avenue/Church Street. Children are not to walk to and from school along the Fairview Avenue sidewalk. Only those few children who live on Fairview Avenue -- or to the west between the school and Church Street -- are permitted on this walk. Students are to enter the walkway at Main Street or Mill Street (where a Crossing Guard is stationed) and proceed to Taylor Street. At dismissal, the children are to reverse the procedure. Students are not to walk along Mine Road to Taylor Street.

### **From the North end of town:**

Students are to cross Fairview Avenue with the Crossing Guard. They will walk on the sidewalk to the steps in front of the school, cross the driveway at the crosswalk, and proceed to the north end door.

At dismissal, students walking to the north end of town will be dismissed from the north end door. They will reverse their morning procedure. They are reminded to cross Fairview Avenue only with the Crossing Guard.

### **Important Reminders:**

- ❖ Students may not walk over lawns or private property.
- ❖ Students are to travel the safe walking routes to and from school.
- ❖ Students may not loiter in the walkways.

- ❖ Students are expected to go directly home from school. They are not to remain on school grounds after dismissal unless accompanied and supervised by an adult. Please discuss these reminders with your child.

At dismissal children should not be on the playground without direct supervision. **Our playgrounds are not open to anyone outside of the students until 3:10 as our staff and students could still be using the equipment.** Kindergarten and carpool students will be dismissed from the lower level on to the blacktop play area. Students using the Bunny Trail will be dismissed from doorways on the south side of the building. If students cannot locate the person picking them up, they are instructed to speak to a teacher on duty who will contact the Main Office. Contact a staff member or office staff if you are unable to meet up with your child. Staff members carry radios for quick communication.

Parents are asked to meet students on the sidewalk or the blacktop area. **DO NOT** park or wait along the sidewalk area, as this causes traffic issues and creates unsafe crossing conditions. Note that students are not permitted to enter the parking lot except when accompanied by an adult, so it is necessary for you to leave your vehicle and escort your children to the car.

If your child is to follow a different routine after school, please **SEND A NOTE** to school with your child. Please do not call the Office to ask us to notify your child unless there is a genuine last-minute emergency situation. Getting such messages to students, especially at the end of the school day, is difficult, often confusing and always troublesome. As a result, parents' notes will be the only acceptable notification for students to stay after school, go home with a friend or other adult.

Teachers and staff serve as supervisors to ensure the safety of our children. Please be respectful of their directions; they are here to help.

Thank you for your consideration and attention to these policies and procedures.

## Birthdays

While food treats are not permissible, please check with your child's teacher for other options regarding birthday celebrations. Consider visiting the classroom to read a book or do a craft, but again, please confer with your child's classroom teacher when planning a birthday celebration.

## Cell Phone Policy

Students are not permitted to bring or possess a remotely activating paging device on any school district property at any time regardless of whether school is in session or other persons are present.

Students are not permitted to use cellular telephones while school is in session. Cellular telephones must be turned off while the pupil is in the school building and must be stowed in the student's locker or backpack between the hours of 8:15 am and 3:00 pm.

Wearable technology, such as a Smartwatch, must be off during school hours. Students are not permitted to make phone calls or send text messages from their cell phone or any other device. Cell phones and/or wearable devices may only be turned on after school has concluded for the day and the student is outside the school building.

Students in possession of cellular telephones or using wearable technology as a communication device will be subject to the following disciplinary action:

- 1st Offense: The student will have their phone confiscated and stowed in the front office for the remainder of the day. The student will be permitted to pick up their cell phone at the end of the school day.
- 2nd Offense: The student will have their phone confiscated and stowed in the front office for the remainder of the day. Device pick-up should be made by the student's parent or guardian.
- 3rd Offense and Beyond: The student will be assigned a lunch or after-school detention and will have their phone confiscated and stowed in the front office for the remainder of the day. Device pick-up should be made by the student's parent or guardian.

Please Note: Parents that need to get in touch with students are expected to do so by calling the main office.

## Communication

We encourage you to communicate regularly with your child's teacher. Please send a note, email or call if you have any questions, concerns or comments, and you can expect the teacher to respond within 24 hours during the school week. Our voicemail system will allow you to leave a telephone message at any time, day or night. Teachers' voice mail extension numbers are on our website.

Please **check your child's backpack and/or our website every day** for notes and announcements from school. We try to go as paperless as possible so be on the lookout every Friday afternoon for the Topper Tribune, which is our weekly newsletter containing all relevant information for the upcoming week including lunch orders, important dates, announcements, and reminders. The email addresses used for communication are taken directly off of our Parent Portal, **so please be sure we have accurate information**. We also have a district wide FaceBook page (HighBridge School District) where information about the district and school activities can be found.

We require a note from you when:

- You are picking up your student early for any reason.
- Your student returns from an absence.
- You are going out of town or know ahead of time that your student will be absent.
- Your child will have a different dismissal.

When you send a note to school for your child we ask that you put it on a full sheet of note paper and ALWAYS include your child's full name, their homeroom teacher, the date and then place your signature on the bottom.

Please keep the following information in mind:

- Your child gives the note to the classroom teacher in the morning.
- The note is sent to the office for the nurse and/or attendance count.
- Once the day is over, your note will be filed for legal purposes.

## Discipline

Our goal is to create a safe environment for all the children. Discipline is perceived as supportive and positive. Though students may receive consequences as a result of their actions, we also discuss ways

to avoid the behavior and become successful. Combined with cooperation and support from our parents, discipline should be a positive factor in our school. Our school rules are necessary to enable large numbers of people to live and work harmoniously together.

No child will stay after school for disciplinary reasons unless you have been informed at least one day in advance either by telephone or by a note from the teacher. You will be informed of the time your child will be dismissed if "staying after" is recommended. If you receive one of our notices to parents/guardians, please fulfill your responsibility and return it to school with your signature the next day.

For full details of our discipline please refer to our Elementary School Code of Conduct.

## Dress Code

The school seeks the continued cooperation and support from parents regarding student attire. Students are asked to wear clothes which are neat and clean in appearance and suitable for the school's educational atmosphere. The administration reserves the right to make the final decision regarding appropriate dress in school.

Unacceptable clothing:

- Clothing that portrays pictures or words that promote sexual activity, drugs, alcohol, tobacco products etc.
- Halter tops, spaghetti strap tops (straps must be at least one inch in width).
- Skirts or shorts shorter than fingertip length.
- Unsafe clothing such as backless footwear, high heeled shoes, pants that drag on the ground.
- Hats are not to be worn inside school.

## Emergency Contact Information

During the school year there may be times we will need to contact you concerning the health or safety of your child. **Please make certain we know how to reach you during school hours.** We rely upon the parent to update your emergency information using the Parent Portal in Genesis. We will use this to reach you and/or other adults who can take care of your child in an emergency.

Your contact information is also used for School Messenger. This program allows us to contact you with messages regarding school closings, dissemination of communication, data submitted through applications, important events, etc. We also use this to send our Topper Tribune (our weekly newsletter). It uses your cell phone numbers and/or email addresses. **It is extremely important that you update your Parent Portal Emergency Contacts page throughout the year.**



# HIB

## (Harassment, Intimidation & Bullying)

The Board of Education believes that harassment, intimidation and bullying activities of any type are inconsistent to the educational process. All such behaviors at any time on school premises, at any school sponsored function are prohibited. The school's Anti-Bullying Specialist will investigate all complaints related to activities associated with harassment, intimidation and bullying.

Any student who is found to participate in any activities involving harassment, intimidation or bullying will be subject to corrective action to end the behavior which may include but not limited to counseling, warning, disciplinary action, and/or referral to law enforcement. Reference Board of Education policy #5512 on the district website [www.hbschools.org](http://www.hbschools.org).

## Illness

Please be sure to have a plan if your child is to fall ill during the school day and needs to be picked up early. If your child is sent home from school with the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting

They can return to school when they have been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of symptom reducing medication.

If your child has had these symptoms at home, please do not send them to school until they are symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

## I&RS

Intervention and Referral Service Committee (I&RS) is a school based problem solving group whose purpose is to assist with strategies for working with students who have problems in learning and/or behavior. The primary role of the committee is to help students receive the assistance they need within the regular education program setting. A plan is developed and put into place for a period of time. If the interventions are not successful, the committee may recommend referral to the Child Study Team. Students are referred to I&RS by their teachers and the parents will be notified and invited to participate in the team meeting.

## Lost and Found

Please put an identification label on all outer clothing, including hats, jackets, as well as lunch boxes, eyeglass cases, etc. Each year many unclaimed, unmarked items are given to charity. If your child has lost something at school, they should check the "Lost & Found" in the Front Lobby.

# Lunch

Each week, a Maschio's lunch menu will be sent home to you on our Topper Tribune newsletter via School Messenger. Lunch orders for the following week will be made using this link. All orders are due on Sunday by 7:00 pm before the school week begins.

**It is important to note, the State of New Jersey is no longer offering free lunch.** Lunch must be purchased and can be paid for by cash, check or PaySchoolsCentral account. Snacks will also be available for purchase after students finish their lunch.

Please visit our district website for information on establishing a PaySchoolsCentral account. Parents may review what their children are purchasing in the cafeteria along with account payment history information. When signing up for PaySchoolsCentral you must use your child's student ID number. This number is located in the Parent Portal.

For information on the free and reduced lunch program, please visit our district website.

# Parental Custody

If there are issues involving custody, whether legal or personal in nature, it is imperative that the office is provided with appropriate documentation. If you are not the primary residence of the child but would like all school notifications, please check our website's Virtual Backpack.

# Parent-Teacher Conferences

A parent teacher conference offers a special opportunity to share information about a student. The best conferences end with both the parents and teacher feeling they have learned something about the child and with a clear action plan on how to best support the child going forward. Our conferences are held November 6-8 and March 6-8. These will be early dismissal days (12:30) for your children and conferences will take place later during the day.

# Parking

Visitors to the school may use the 15 Minute Parking spaces directly in the front of the building. If you are staying longer, please use the main parking lot. Several spaces in front of the building are reserved for staff, and we ask that you please leave these spaces open. Also, please remember that the yellow lined curb in front of the school must be left open. Do not park along the front sidewalk as doing so will block emergency vehicles and the larger vans transporting students with special needs. In addition, if you park along the sidewalk across from the visitor's spaces, you risk damage to your car from others backing out.

Please note there are designated handicapped parking spaces in our front and end lots. These spaces are mandated by law and may be used only by vehicles with handicap registration.

# Playground

The overall goal of playground activities is to give the children maximum opportunities to exercise and explore. It is important to have adults present to act as a deterrent to any inappropriate or unsafe activities and to offer if immediate assistance is needed.

We now have an additional playground that is for preschool aged children. Please make sure that the children playing here are age appropriate.

If you are waiting for the children to be dismissed and have a younger sibling with you, please remember that our playground is to be used by High Bridge Elementary students only during school hours. You may use the equipment with a non-HBES student after hours.

Adults are expected to supervise their children at all times. All students are expected to use common sense and to play safely while enjoying the playground structures. Students are advised of our playground rules:

- No jumping off of equipment.
- Play is not allowed when equipment is wet or icy.
- Equipment is to be used only in the manner it was intended for (ex: slides are for sliding down, not for climbing up).

# School hours

K-4 Regular Day	K-4 Delayed Opening	K-4 Early Dismissal
8:30-3:10	10:30-3:10	8:30-12:30
Preschool 9:00-3:00	Preschool 10:30-3:00	Preschool 9:00-12:30

Students are to arrive no earlier than 8:20 am and are to report directly to their assigned classroom. Parents may not enter the school building with students or escort children to class. If a child has too much to carry, or other needs, parents may bring such items to the Main Lobby. Please remember that the school day begins promptly at 8:30, and both teachers and students are busy with the morning routine.

All students arriving later than 8:30 (or 9:05 for preschool) must be signed-in at the Office by an adult. If you know in advance that a student will be late for any reason, please call the office (or send a note) and let us know. The school day normally ends at 3:10pm (3:00pm for preschool), but on early dismissal days, students are dismissed at 12:30pm. (NO LUNCHES WILL BE SERVED)

# Smoking

In accordance with State law, smoking is not permitted anywhere on school premises. Please remember that this includes the outside school grounds and playgrounds. Refer to district policy [#7434](#) for more information.

# Visitors

We welcome visitors to our building. All visitors must register with Main Office staff and obtain a visitor's badge. For more information, please refer to district policy [#9150](#).

# Volunteers

Volunteers are an important part of the High Bridge family. All volunteers must be HIB trained through our website. Please contact the main office or classroom teacher for up to date training information.

# Weather

Please plan now for inclement weather. It is a good idea to develop a plan for delayed openings and early dismissals. Explain to your children now -- and remind them later -- what to do if school is dismissed early. Please be sure all contact information, including that for emergency contacts, is correct and up to date.