



**Birches
Elementary
School**

**Student Handbook
2009-2010**

Annette B. Miller, Principal

Birches Elementary School
416 Westminster Blvd.
Turnersville, NJ 08012
856-232-1290

This agenda belongs to:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____


CITY/TOWN _____ ZIP CODE _____

PHONE _____

STUDENT NO. _____



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Dear Students and Parents:

The Birches Elementary School Staff would like to welcome you to a new school year. We hope your summer has been a pleasant one and that you are looking forward to a year of growth and learning.

This student datebook is provided to promote student achievement and increase parent communication with the school. It is also designed to acquaint you with the school's programs, services, policies, and procedures. The calendar and events are available on line. To view the events list, log on to wtps.org/Birches. You can also find information regarding your child's classroom by accessing the District eBoard.

The motto of Birches School is "Excellence in Education". Parents and staff are partners in the education of our children. Cooperation and communication between the school and home will play a major part in your child's success. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns. We hope this will be an enjoyable, positive, and productive year for your child.

Sincerely,

The Birches Staff

BIRCHES SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Birches School is to enable its students to develop their self-worth through interpersonal skills, while promoting positive attitudes, fostering honesty, integrity, academic excellence, and good citizenship.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Our school will foster appropriate social skills and social development.
- Our school will provide an environment where positive self-concepts and attitudes will flourish.
- Our school believes that children should understand the concept of setting attainable and realistic goals.
- Our school believes that students should understand how to use critical thinking to solve problems.
- Our school strongly believes in striving for academic excellence.
- Our school will foster an environment that promotes interpersonal skills.
- Our school believes in promoting a sense of honesty, self-respect, integrity, and respect for others

GENERAL INFORMATION

ABSENCE, EARLY DISMISSAL/LATE ARRIVAL, EMERGENCY CARD

When your child is going to be absent, please call the office (232-1290) between 8:00am and 9:30am. At that time, please make arrangements for homework to be picked up or brought home with a sibling or neighbor. An absence note is required when your child returns to school. A doctor's note is required after a three day absence. The parent/guardian will be contacted in writing by the principal or school nurse when a child reaches 10 and then again after 15 excused or unexcused absences/tardiness. Retention will be considered after 20 days with the final retention notice sent after 30 days (Board Policy 5200). Absences for family vacations are unexcused absences and discouraged. However, if necessary, please notify the teacher at least two weeks in advance. Make up work will be assigned upon the child's return.

If your child is going to leave school early for a doctor's appointment etc., please notify your child's teacher. Students arriving late for school must go to the MAIN OFFICE for a pass before going to class. A student must be present at least *two hours to receive credit for a half-day and *four hours to receive credit for a full day (*excluding lunch).

You are encouraged to schedule appointments (doctor, dentist, etc.) for your child(ren) outside the scheduled school day. Whenever it is necessary for you to pick up your son or daughter at school, please plan to do so prior to dismissal. Parents are not permitted to meet their child(ren) as the students are exiting the school building, walking to their assigned bus, or waiting at the bus loop. If an emergency exists and you must pick up your child(ren) at dismissal, please phone the school ahead of time to inform the office staff of your plans. You must enter the school and sign-out your son/daughter at the Office or Nurse's Office. Given the proper notice from you, we will arrange for your child to meet you in the Office or Nurse's Office.

If a change must be made on your child's emergency card, please contact the school nurse. Please keep your child's emergency card up-to-date. Please be reminded that you must complete the card in full, including signatures, or it will be returned.

CHILD CARE

If you are in need of before and/or after school child care there are two (2) programs available.

Just Kids – (856) 768-8190 Just Kids will be held at Birches School.

Champion Program – (856) 227-6445 Champion Program will be held at Wedgwood School. Parents will be expected to transport their child(ren) to Wedgwood School in the am. A bus will transport your child(ren) to and from Birches School, and parents will pick up at Wedgwood in the pm.

EMERGENCY CLOSING, REGULAR DISMISSAL , SCHEDULED / UNSCHEDULED EARLY DISMISSAL

Listen to your radio for information regarding school closing/early dismissal - **Washington Twp School District – Gloucester County** (there are several Washington Township School Districts in NJ). Our district's emergency number is **803**. In the event of a school closing, you will be notified through the **Global Connect School Communication System**. You can also access school closing information through the District Website www.wtps.org.

BOE Policy 8601: Pupils in grades 1-8 who are not eligible for district-provided transportation or who are eligible for such transportation but elect not to use it, shall be permitted to leave the building unescorted unless the parent/guardian provides prior written notification to the school of any arrangements for pupils requiring an escort. All documented escort arrangements will be considered applicable for the entire school year. Parents/Guardians may alter such arrangements upon prior written notification to the building principal. Alternate emergency arrangements for dismissal must be documented in writing to the building principal on the day of the emergent alternate dismissal arrangement. All pupils who are eligible for district-provided transportation and who elect to use such transportation shall be permitted to leave the bus stop even if no escort is present. For pupils who are not eligible for district-provided transportation, if the parent/guardian indicates that an escort is required at dismissal, and the escort is unable or fails to pick up the pupil at the time of school dismissal, the pupils will be taken to the school office. The school staff will attempt to contact the parent/guardian or emergency contact person. If the pupil's escort fails to pick up the pupil from the school office within 30 minutes of the school dismissal time, proper authorities will be contacted, including the local police and/or DYFS.

In the case of an UNSCHEDULED EARLY DISMISSAL for pupils in grades 1-8 who are not eligible for district-provided transportation or who are eligible for such transportation but elect not to use it, will be permitted to leave the building unescorted unless the parent/guardian provides prior written notification to the school of any arrangements for pupils requiring an escort on unscheduled early dismissal days. All documented escort arrangements will be considered applicable for the entire school year. Parents/Guardians may

alter such arrangements upon prior written notification to the building principal. Alternate emergency arrangements for dismissal must be documented in writing to the building principal on the day of the emergent alternate dismissal arrangement.

YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED BY GLOBAL CONNECT IN THE EVENT OF AN UNSCHEDULED EARLY DISMISSAL PLEASE INFORM THE OFFICE IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS SERVICE. ALL PARENTS/GUARDIANS SHOULD HAVE AN EMERGENCY PLAN IN PLACE IN THE EVENT OF AN UNSCHEDULED EARLY DISMISSAL DAY. PLEASE DISCUSS THIS PLAN WITH YOUR CHILD. PLEASE BE SURE TO REVIEW THE SCHOOL DISTRICT CALENDAR TO NOTE EARLY DISMISSAL DATES. Click the calendar link on the District Website www.wtps.org or you may request a copy from the main office.

LUNCH PROGRAM – (Lunch and item prices are listed on the monthly menu.)

Birches has a computerized lunch program. You may send in cash/check daily, weekly, or monthly. Please make checks payable to Washington Township Food Services, place the cash/check in an envelope with your child's name, PIN #, and teacher's name on the front of the envelope. Please specify if you wish to purchase breakfast, lunch, snack or *ala carte (*can be used for any purchase). When the account balance gets low, the cashier will notify you in writing (via your child). Charging a Lunch means that there is no money in the child's account and he/she has no money to purchase lunch. In this case, he/she may charge for that day. Parents are expected to pay the charge the following day. Birches has implemented a *Recess Before Lunch Program*. Your child(ren) will participate in organized play activities, supervised by a cafeteria assistant, prior to eating lunch. Hand Sanitizers have been placed throughout the building to insure cleanliness prior to eating lunch.

SCHOOL TIMES

School hours are 9:00AM to 3:20PM. Early dismissal will be 1:40PM and lunches will be served. Please note that the last five days of school will be a 1:00PM dismissal and no lunches will be served. Please do not send your child to school prior to 8:50AM. Students are not permitted in the building without supervision. During inclement weather, students may enter the building, but no earlier than 8:50AM.

VOLUNTEERS

We encourage and welcome parent volunteers to help in the classrooms, in the school, and the office. If you are interested in helping at the school on a volunteer basis, please contact the office or your child's teacher.

PARENT/TEACHER COMMUNICATION

We believe that effective communication between the home and school provides the foundation for a student's successful education. Accordingly, we have worked to provide a means of promoting ongoing communication as a result of the technology available in our school. We are able to offer voice, eBoard, and e-mail communication for you to communicate with your child(ren)'s teachers. If you have access to a telephone or computer, you can leave a voice mail, eboard, or e-mail message at your convenience.

The preferred method of communication is eBoard or e-mail. You may access the eBoard through the Birches Website. E-mail may be accessed using the first initial followed by the last name and wtps.org (example: gbreen@wtps.org). However, at anytime, you may call **218-0957**, enter the four-digit extension number provided during back-to-school night and leave a voice mail message (bypassing the main office).

PTO

The Birches School Parent Teacher Organization is an active and important part of our educational system. The goal of the PTO is to connect children, families, staff, and the community to provide social activities, information, support, and enriching experiences, while also providing ideas and input into school improvement programs. We encourage all parents and other members of our community to become involved in the Birches PTO.

We are fortunate to have a supportive PTO. Your participation is needed to help with the activities sponsored by the PTO. You may join at Back to School Night or send in your check (payable to Birches PTO), please write your name, child's name and teacher name on the envelope. If you would like more information about the PTO, you may e-mail PTO at Birchespto@aol.com. Someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

ELEMENTARY CODE OF CONDUCT

It is our belief that most children are eager to learn, will obey the school rules, and will conduct themselves properly. It is not only the responsibility of students to obey school rules, but also the responsibility of school staff to enforce them. Students are expected to exhibit proper behavior on the school bus, while walking to school, in classrooms and school gatherings, in the halls, in the lunchroom, and on the playground.

Students who violate school rules will receive consequences ranging from warnings, to detentions (parents will be given 24 hours notice and must provide transportation for after-school detentions), in school restrictions, or in the case of serious offenses, out of school suspensions. Parents will be notified of serious or repeat rule violations. Again, in the case of serious or repeated offenses parents will be required to meet with a building administrator or his/her designee. When appropriate, the services of the guidance counselor will be provided. The schools will provide various forms of positive reinforcement/recognition/rewards for students who exhibit good behavior/follow school rules.

* **Each student is expected to:**

- Treat others in the same manner that he/she expects to be treated
- Refrain from conduct that disrupts or threatens to disrupt the learning of other students
- Attend school regularly
- Respect the rights of others
- Respect school property
- Come to school prepared with appropriate books, materials, and homework

* **Violations of the following rules will result in disciplinary actions**

1. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom or on school property
2. Fighting or provoking a fight
3. Harassment, bullying or verbal assault
4. Disrespect to any adult (teacher, substitute, assistant, office personnel, etc.)
5. Possession or use of anything which may be considered a weapon
6. Possession or under the influence of controlled/dangerous substances
7. Possession of smoking materials, matches, or smoking on school property
8. Possession or lighting of fireworks on school property
9. Damage or vandalism to school property
10. Stealing
11. Absence from class without permission/or misuse of lavatory privilege
12. Truancy from school
13. Failure to report to detention
14. Dress or appearance that is disruptive to the school program

* **Zero Tolerance Policy**

There is no tolerance of bullying, teasing, threatening and harassing at Birches School. The following steps will be taken towards those who continue this behavior.

1. Teacher investigates, requires verbal or written apology, teacher phones home
2. Teacher investigates, requires verbal or written apology, classroom restriction, teacher phones home
3. Teacher investigates, office and counselor informed, counselor intervention, restricted lunch, teacher schedules parent conference
4. Student is sent to office, teacher informs principal, principal determines actions/consequences

HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING

Acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying are prohibited. "Harassment, intimidation or bullying" means any gesture, written, verbal, or physical act that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function or on a school bus that:

1. Is perceived as being motivated by, but not limited to, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, beliefs, or mental or physical disabilities.

2. Has the effect of harming a pupil or placing the pupil in fear of harm.
3. Has the effect of causing substantial disruption in the orderly operation of the school.

Complaints alleging violations of this policy shall be reported to the Principal. A prompt and thorough investigation will be conducted. The school district prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying.

EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT BEHAVIOR

*** Students should be prepared mentally and physically for the process of learning.**

Students are nourished, rested, clean, properly dressed, and groomed

Students are free of drugs and alcohol

Students come to school prepared to learn

*** Demonstrate respect for people and property**

Students are honest, courteous and polite

Students respect the property of others

Students respect the rights of others and their own opinions and unique differences

Students participate in the maintenance and cleanliness of school facilities and property

*** Take responsibility for his/her own behavior and learning**

Students recognize that school is work and academic development is the primary purpose

Students complete all homework, class work and assignments

Students make personal choices based on reasonable decision-making process

Students accept constructive criticism and disagreement when necessary and appropriate

Students use appropriate Conflict Resolution skills to solve disagreements

Students accept the consequences of their actions

*** Use time and other resources responsibly**

Students attend school regularly and punctually

Students use books and other equipment appropriately

Students complete work on time

*** Share responsibilities when working as members of a group**

Students cooperate, contribute and share in the work of the group

Students accept and assume leadership when appropriate

Students listen to the points of view of others

*** Meet the unique requirements of each class**

Students participate actively in class work

Students follow class rules and procedures

Students bring to class textbooks, clothing and other materials necessary for participation

Students observe rules for safe handling of class equipment and materials, and for behavior in the classroom, in the halls, in lavatories, on the school bus, on school property, to and from school

*** Monitor his/her own progress toward objectives**

Students seek assistance from school staff members and peers

Students value the relations of learning to everyday life

Students use assignment books to keep track of homework

*** Communicate with parents and school personnel about school-related matters**

Students take time to discuss academic learning and school progress with parents/school personnel

Students transmit information to parents and return responses to appropriate school personnel when requested

Students know the appropriate people to involve when a problem occurs

Lunchroom

1. Always sit at your assigned table
2. Stop talking when a whistle is blown or an adult asks for your attention
3. Speak in a respectful manner at all times
4. Stand in line quietly
5. Throw all trash in containers and clean your table
6. Keep your hands to yourself
7. Follow the assistants' directions at all times
8. Speak in a quiet tone
9. Raise your hand if you need to get out of your seat for any reason
10. Use two **GOLDEN RULES**:
 - a. Treat other people the way you want to be treated
 - b. If you don't have something nice to say to someone, don't say anything at all

Playground

1. Stay in your assigned area
2. Students may only use playground equipment with permission
3. Keep your hands and feet to yourself
4. Speak in respectful manner at all times
5. Follow the assistants' directions at all times
6. Line up immediately when the bell rings
7. Use the GOLDEN RULES

Inclement Weather

1. Students **ARE** permitted to:
 - a. Carry on quiet conversations
 - b. Play board games
 - c. Read books
 - d. Do class assignments (if teacher has indicated so)
2. Students are **NOT** permitted to:
 - a. Run around the room - all children should be seated in a chair or on the floor
 - b. Throw anything in the room
 - c. Sit on desks, bookcases, or heating vents
 - d. Stand on chairs
 - e. Leave the room or stand at the doorway
 - f. Write on black/whiteboards (unless teacher indicates otherwise)

TRANSPORTATION POLICY

Your child has the privilege of using a school bus. This transportation is provided in accordance with state law for children living remotely from the school at public expense. All children are entitled to this provided they do not infringe upon another child's rights. It is, therefore, important that you impress upon your child the importance of conducting himself/herself in a quiet and orderly manner traveling to and from school. The safety of all passengers demands that the attention of the driver must be on the road and must not be distracted in any way, least of all, be any disorder on the part of the transported children. **A reminder that all buses are equipped with video cameras.** The following policy shall be adhered to with regard to behavior on buses:

1. Students, upon boarding a bus, shall immediately be seated.
2. Students shall remain seated until the bus has come to a full stop at their destination.
3. Students shall at all times keep their entire bodies within the bus.

4. Hazing of any sort or type shall not be permitted.
5. Unnecessary noise, shouting, or use of objectionable language shall not be permitted.
6. Throwing of articles within the bus or out of the bus windows shall not be permitted.
7. Damage to buses by student shall not be tolerated. Payment for repairs shall be assessed to the parents of the child(ren) involved.
8. No gum chewing or eating on the bus at any time.
9. While waiting for the bus, students should line up and be well behaved. Students should not run in the street or on private property. Any complaints from residents will be considered a bus violation.
10. No student may ride another bus other than the one assigned. If a student misses a bus, it is the parent's obligation to provide transportation.

For those students violating bus rules, the following criteria will be used:

<u>VIOLATION</u>	<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>
1st	Warning
2nd	* 3-5 days suspension of bus privileges
3rd	* 10 days suspension of bus privileges
4th	* Suspension of bus privileges

*Transportation to and from school for your child for this period of time will be parent responsibility.

SAFE SCHOOL PROCEDURES

ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE/PARKING

The safety of Birches' students is our highest priority. The following procedures are in effect for arrival and dismissal of walking students or those students transported to school other than by bus:

- All walking student will line up in front of the building upon arrival. Students should arrive no earlier than 8:50AM.
- All walking students will be dismissed at the front entrance at 3:15PM.
- Walking students may be picked up and discharged on Westminster Blvd.
- A crossing guard and several student safeties are posted along the way to ensure their safety.

Parents may also enter the parking lot following the procedures:

- **FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS OF STAFF ON DUTY – YOU MAY DROP STUDENTS OFF WHERE DESIGNATED BY STAFF**
- **Do not park in front of the building in the fire lane or stop in the middle of the parking lot.**

Please designate an area outside the building where you will pick your child up at the end of the school day. Remind your child that if you are late picking him/her up from school he/she is to go back into the building and go to the Main Office. Please reinforce with your child that he/she is never to go to a friend's house after school without your permission. Review with your child his/her instructions to follow in case of an Early Dismissal.

It is very important that you notify your child's teacher **in writing** if there is a change in the way your child will be going home. If the teacher does not receive notification your child will be dismissed the normal way.

SIGN OUT PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

In order to assure the safety of all students, we must insist that the following procedures be followed whenever you remove your child from school during school hours:

The parent/guardian must notify the Attendance Office in writing that their son or daughter must leave school early for a scheduled appointment. This note must be sent to school no later than the morning of the scheduled appointment.

A parent/guardian must come to school and sign out the student from the Office or Nurse's Office. If an adult other than the custodial parent/guardian is to pick up the student, the parent/guardian must authorize the student's release in writing and by a phone call ahead of time. No student will be released to a minor or an unauthorized adult.

Parents may not pick up their students from a classroom, a hallway, the bus loop, or any other part of the building or school grounds.

SCHOOL VISITS

All visitors are to enter through the main door and check in with the office for a visitor's pass.

All other outside doors remain locked. Visitors are not permitted to go beyond the office without a pass. We strongly recommend that you make an appointment before coming in for a visit. Teachers are not available to see parents during instructional time.

SAFETY AND SECURITY PROCEDURES

- Homeroom teachers are on duty in the hallways at 8:55AM and other teachers are assigned to the lobby and bus duty, weather permitting. We continually ask parents not to have students arrive early unless they are enrolled in a morning program.
- At dismissal time, students are supervised to the exit doors in the front of the building. Teachers are stationed in the hallways and outside on bus duty, safeties are stationed throughout the building and along walkways in the front of the building, and a crossing guard is stationed at the crosswalk on Westminster Blvd.
- Playground assistants provide supervision during lunch times and have access to keypads to unlock doors to enter the building.
- The building will be secured at 4:00pm. After 4:00pm there is no access to the building. Parents picking up their child from Just Kids will enter through the side door of the All Purpose Room. Parents of students participating in any after school activity should arrange a pick up location outside of the building.

All district personnel will wear photo ID badges.

- The effectiveness of our building security relies on the cooperation of everyone, both staff and parents. We have instructed our staff to challenge all visitors, known or unknown, for their visitor's pass. I am also asking parents for their cooperation by keeping in mind the following:
 - Follow the guidelines for arrival and departure
 - Follow the guidelines for signing out students
 - Use crosswalks when crossing the parking lot.
 - Be mindful of staff members assigned to parking lot duty.
 - Refrain from coming into the office at dismissal time to pick up your child(ren) unless it is absolutely necessary
 - Check in with the office for all visits. Do not go directly to the classroom. This includes walking your child to class. When questioned by one of the staff members, please respect their authority.**
 - Do not approach any student, even your own, on the playground, etc.
 - If there is a legal custody situation, make sure all current legal documents are on file.

The safety and well-being of our children is our common goal!