

Birch Meadow School- Frequently Asked Questions
Updated 2018



What are school hours?

- First bell at 8:15 AM
- Start of Day Bell at 8:25 AM
- Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday dismissal at 2:45
- Every Wednesday is a 12:45 dismissal for all students

What are arrival procedures?

- Classroom Doors
 - Teachers in Grades K,1, 4 and 5 open external classroom doors at 8:15 when the first bell rings.
 - Students in Grades 2 and 3 enter at 8:15 through the doorway at the end of the Grade 2/3 hallway.
 - If you arrive after 8:15 please enter through front door of school.
- Front Door
 - The front door is opened for students at 8:15 a.m.
- Driveway Drop Off
 - Staff are at the front of the building beginning at 8:10 a.m.
 - Cars pull into driveway and students exit through sidewalk side door.
 - Drivers stay in cars and students exit independently.
- Students arriving after 8:25 a.m. need to be walked in by a family member and signed in at the main office.

What are dismissal procedures?

- Dismissal bell rings at 2:45 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.
- Dismissal bell rings at 12:45 on Wednesday.

- Students in Grades 2 and 3 are dismissed from the hallway door onto the playground.
- Students in Grades K, 1, 4, and 5 are dismissed from their exterior classroom doors.

- If an older sibling is picking up a sibling in Grade kindergarten or 1st please make sure that is on the dismissal form and that sibling comes to the exterior door to pick up.

Dismissal changes:

- Changes in dismissal should be communicated to the classroom teacher via note or email.
- If your dismissal routine changes unexpectedly during the day, please call the office and let us know. We will get a message to your child through their classroom teacher(s).

How do I know if my child is too sick to come to school?

Please do not send your child to school if they have any of the following:

- Fever of 100 degrees or higher. A child with a fever should not return until they have been fever free without a fever reducer such as Tylenol or Ibuprofen for 24 hours.
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- They have been treated with antibiotics for an infectious illness for fewer than 24 hours.

What if my child wants to buy lunch at Birch Meadow?

- The current prices are as follows: hot lunch including milk is \$2.75; desserts and snacks are .25 to 1.25, milk is .55.
- Menus are posted in each classroom and available on Birch Meadow Website at <http://www.reading.k12.ma.us/birchmeadow/>
- If your child forgets to bring his/her lunch to school and does not have money, they will be permitted to charge their lunch for that day. Lunch charges are the exception and should be paid within 24 hours.
- Along with a purchased lunch, students may purchase one snack and one dessert along with milk or water.
- The lunch program uses a "point of sale" (POS) system allowing parents to pay money into a student account which can be used as a debit system to purchase lunch. All students are assigned a 4-digit pin code which protects the safety and confidentiality of student information and finances.

There are two ways to add money to your child's account:

Send a check, made out to **Reading School Nutrition Department**, or cash in with your child in a sealed envelope. In the memo section of the check, note your child's name and room number.

OR

Visit the Reading Public Schools food service website <https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/departments/food-services/> to add money online via My School Bucks.

What is the policy for allergies at snacks or lunch?

Click the link below for further information.

[Allergy Guidelines and Wellness Policy](#)

How do I get in touch with the people at the school?

Below is our School Directory

Main Office/Principal	(781) 944-2335
Fax	(781) 942-9164
School Nurse	(781) 944-2335 Ext 205
Absentee Line	(781) 942-9173 or call the main number and Select "1"
Library/Media Center	(781) 942-2335 Ext 206
School Psychologist	(781) 944-2335 Ext 204
Speech and Language Therapist	(781) 944-2335 Ext 208
Learning Center	(781) 944-2335 Ext 122
Superintendent's Office	(781) 944-5800

What do I need to do if my child will be absent from school?

When your child will be absent or late, please call the absentee line (781-942-9173) before 8:15 a.m., giving the information requested on the recording. Your call will be recorded. The absentee line is available 24 hours a day.

The recorded messages will be compared to the school's absentee list for that day. In the event that your child's name is on the school's absentee list and a call has not been received, we will:

- a) Call your home.
- b) If verification is not received from home, we will refer to the list of names you have supplied to the school on your child's emergency card, and call the names in the order given to verify your child's absence.
- c) If verification is still not received after the above attempts have been made, we will call the Reading Police Department.

A written excuse is required for any student who has been absent. This note should be turned in on the day the student returns to school. A student who had been absent due to a prolonged illness or a communicable disease (such as: strep throat, conjunctivitis, lice, etc.) should check in with the school nurse when returning to school. Written notice of a planned absence of more than five school days must be submitted to your child's teacher at least one week in advance. Homework during the planned absence will be assigned at the discretion of your child's teacher.

Can I distribute invitations at school for my child's birthday?

Invitations to birthday parties will not be distributed in school. Please do not send party invitations to be distributed in children's classrooms.

What is available for childcare before and after school?

The Reading Extended Day Program operates before and after school care onsite at all Reading Public Schools. To find out information about the before and after school care at Birch Meadow, visit the Extended Day Program website at [Extended Day on District Website](#)

How are expected behaviors taught at Birch Meadow?

Expected behaviors are explicitly taught through whole school and individual classroom lessons. Behaviors are reinforced through positive recognition. See the expected behaviors on the matrix as they align to our school values below.

[Birch Meadow Behavior Matrix](#)

What is the best way to communicate with teachers?

Your child's teacher will give you detailed information about home-school communication including newsletters, websites, how to best contact the teacher.

The Reading Public Schools has the following guidelines for parents regarding home-school communication:

- Urgent information or anything time-sensitive should be relayed to teachers via written notes or telephone calls to the main office. This would include medical concerns, changes in after-school plans, personal issues, and attendance information (absences, tardiness, and dismissals).
- Responses from teachers to parents can be expected within 2 school days. (Staff are not expected to reply to email messages over weekends or holidays.) Teachers will make every attempt to check their email during the school day, however, depending on their individual schedules, this is not always possible. The arrangement of our school day sometimes allows for limited email access. Some teachers also may prefer to respond to email by phone or writing a note.
- Your child's academic progress, learning expectations, or behavioral issues are sometimes best addressed through a telephone conversation or by scheduling a personal conference with your child's teacher. If you need to have a conversation with a teacher, email may not be the best or most efficient communication tool to address your needs. Lengthy emails may not be effective. If necessary, please set up a meeting or have a phone conversation with the teacher. Your child's teacher may also choose to reply to a concern by arranging a time to talk further.
- When teachers are absent from school, substitutes will not be reading the teacher's emails. If a teacher is absent from school, they most likely will not be checking their email on that day.
- Because written emails can be easily misinterpreted, *tone* and *respect* are of course important to us in all home-school communications. It is always recommended to both staff and families that draft emails be

read carefully before sending to make sure that they are communicating the information accurately and with the desired tone.

How do I get in touch with PTO?

To contact the PTO, you may drop a note in our mailbox in the main office or send an e-mail to birchmeadowpto@gmail.com

Can I visit or volunteer at the school during school hours?

- There is a buzzer system and video camera at the main entrance of the school.
- All visitor/parent volunteers need to push the call button to be buzzed into the school.
- It is mandatory that visitor/parent volunteers report to the main office to sign in and receive a Visitor/Volunteer badge to wear in the school. If you do not have a badge, you will be stopped and asked to report to the office. This process helps to ensure the safety of the children while at school. Prior arrangements to observe classrooms must be made with the principal before arriving at the building.
- Classroom volunteer opportunities are available at the discretion of each individual classroom teacher.
- CORI forms must be filled out prior to any volunteering taking place. These forms are available on the school website and copies are in the Birch Meadow Office. Fill in the form completely and bring it to the main office with a valid photo ID. Carol Chapman will process the CORI. CORI checks are valid for 3 years.