



PS234 INDEPENDENCE  
SCHOOL

# Information for Families

•



## PS 234

292 Greenwich  
Street New York,  
NY 10007  
212.233.6034  
[www.ps234.org](http://www.ps234.org)

Principal: Lisa Ripperger  
[lripperger@ps234.org](mailto:lripperger@ps234.org)

Assistant Principal: Elizabeth Sweeney  
[esweeney@ps234.org](mailto:esweeney@ps234.org)

Assistant Principal: Erica Davis  
[edavis@ps234.org](mailto:edavis@ps234.org)

Parent Coordinator: Magda Lenski  
[mlenski@ps234.org](mailto:mlenski@ps234.org)  
ext. 1010

School Secretary: Cathy Santiago  
[csantiago@ps234.org](mailto:csantiago@ps234.org)  
ext. 1012

School Secretary: Annette Lebkowski  
[alebkowski@ps234.org](mailto:alebkowski@ps234.org)  
ext. 1011

School Aide: Paget Williams  
[pwilliams@ps234.org](mailto:pwilliams@ps234.org)  
ext. 1014

## Table of Contents

Absences	2
Arrival and Dismissal	2-3
Bicycle and Scooter Parking	4
Cell Phones/Electronic Devices	4
Change of Residential Address	4
Change of Email Address	4
Class Gifts	5
Class Potluck/Picnic	5
Communication with Staff	5
Dress Code	6
Dogs	6
Emergency Contact Information	6
Extended Absences	6
Field Trips	6
General Rules	12
Half Days	7
Homework	7
Illness	7
Lateness	8
Lice	8
Lost & Found	8
Medication	8
Metrocards	8
Mission Statement	1
Notes from School to You	9
Parent Involvement	9
Parent Teacher Conferences	9
Pick Up at Dismissal Time	9
Report Cards	10
School Buses	10
School Meals	10-11

## **Mission Statement**

PS 234, Independence School focuses on children working together in an interactive setting. Children are viewed as individuals with specific strengths, needs and learning styles. We are committed to meeting our children where they are, and extending their learning as far as we can. Our curriculum of interdisciplinary studies accommodates these differences so that all children can achieve their potential.

Studies at PS 234 are centered on core curricula in social studies and science. Through rich thematic units, students develop skills such as inquiry-based research, non-fiction reading and writing, oral communication and artistic expression. Enrichment programs in art, music, library and science often support the classroom thematic studies as well.

Our literacy program includes components such as read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, book clubs and writer's workshop. All classrooms from Kindergarten-Fifth Grade use the TERC Investigations in Number, Data and Space as their core mathematics program. Through inquiries, activities and games, and the use of manipulative materials, children construct mathematical ideas, explain their thinking and practice skills.

## **ABSENCES**

If your child is sick, please call the main office (212-233-6034) to report your child's absence. Upon return, a medical note from the doctor should be given to the main office and not to your child's teacher.

Although not encouraged, we realize that sometimes it is necessary for families to be out of town for an extended period during the school year. If this is the case, please contact the Attendance Secretary, with your travel itinerary. It is important that we have this information on file so we can document your child's absence appropriately.

Should it be necessary to take your child out of school (for doctor's visits, lunch, school tours, etc.), you must come to the main office first. A staff member will call your child's classroom and they will come to the main office. You must sign them out in the "child sign out book" and upon return sign them back in. If you know in advance that your child will be leaving for an appointment, please give written notification to your class room teacher so that your child will be all ready to go at the appointed time.

## **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

### **Line-up**

- **Kindergarten – Fourth Grade students** should arrive through the schoolyard gates on Greenwich Street no later than 8:25 a.m. every morning. The school bell will ring at 8:27 a.m. calling all children to their line-up spots.
- **Kindergarten – Fourth Grade families** enter through the Greenwich Street gates and after saying goodbye to children, all grown-ups exit the schoolyard through the Chambers Street gates.
- **Fifth Grade students** enter through the red, main doors on Greenwich Street and meet their teacher in the cafeteria by 8:27 a.m. Grown-ups say goodbye at the red doors.

The Greenwich Street gates and yard will open at 8:10 a.m. for all students. Students may enter the building starting at 8:00 a.m. for breakfast in the cafeteria.

### **Dismissal: Kindergarten and First Grade Students**

- **At 2:45 p.m. all Kindergarten and First Grade classes will dismiss in the schoolyard** to waiting adults.
- Parents/guardians/caregivers of Kindergarten and First Grade students should enter and exit the schoolyard from Greenwich Street. The gates open at 2:40 p.m.
- Kindergarten and First Grade children must say good-bye and shake hands with their teachers when being dismissed so teachers can be sure they leave with an appropriate adult.
- Late pick-up will be in the back of the schoolyard until 3:00 PM and then children will be brought to the main office.

### **Dismissal: Second and Third Grade Students**

- **At 2:50 p.m. all Second and Third Grade classes will dismiss in the schoolyard** to waiting adults.
- Parents/guardians/caregivers of Second and Third Grade students should enter and exit the schoolyard from Greenwich Street.
- The gates open at 2:40 p.m.
- Second and Third Grade children must say good-bye and shake hands with their teachers when being dismissed so teachers can be sure they leave with an appropriate adult.
- Late pick-up will be in the back of the schoolyard until 3:00 PM and then children will be brought to the main office.

### **Dismissal: Fourth Grade Students**

- **At 2:50 p.m. all Fourth Grade classes will dismiss directly onto Greenwich Street from the main front doors.** Teachers say goodbye to their students at the door. Department of Education policy permits students in Fourth Grade to be dismissed on their own after school. If you wish to have someone pick up your child, please be sure a grown-up is in front of school at dismissal.

### **Dismissal: Fifth Grade Students**

- **At 2:50 p.m. all Fifth Grade classes will dismiss directly onto Warren Street from the school's side door.** Teachers say goodbye to their students at the exit ramp. Department of Education policy permits students in Fifth Grade to be dismissed on their own after school. If you wish to have someone pick up your child, please be sure a grown-up is by the side of the school at dismissal.

### **Inclement Weather Line-up & Dismissal**

**When the weather is bad, all children will gather indoors until 8:30 a.m.** when their teachers will escort them to their rooms. For the safety and security of all the children, parents may not escort their children into the Gym or Lunchroom on inclement weather days. This is extremely important, as the gymnasium in particular is very crowded on rainy mornings.

- Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade children will enter the school through the red doors at the main entrance.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade children enter through the gates in the big yard.
- Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade children will go to assigned tables in the Lunchroom.
- 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade children will go to assigned spots in the Gymnasium.

## **BICYCLE and SCOOTER PARKING**

We have two dedicated bicycle racks for PS 234 students. The racks are located on the northwest side of Warren Street by Greenwich Street and are easily identifiable as they are red. Please help protect our flower gardens by not locking bicycles and scooters to the garden fence. All bikes and scooters that are found by the garden fence will be removed.

## **CELL PHONES/ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

The Department of Education has made a change in its cell phone policy. Students are now permitted to have a cell phone in school. PS 234 rules are as follows:

- Cell phones must be turned off and put in backpack before entering the school.
- Cell phones may never be used during the school day.
- In the case of an emergency, parents can call the school office phone (212-233-6034) and we will convey the message. Parents should not call or text a child's cell phone during the day.
- If a phone rings or a child uses a phone during the school day, the phone will be confiscated and the child will collect it from the office at the end of the day. If it happens again, parents will have to come to the school to pick it up.

## **CHANGE OF RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

If you relocate during the course of the school year, please contact the Pupil Accounting Secretary so we can make the official change within the Department of Education's system. Notifying your classroom teacher of an address change will not suffice since you need to fill out a change of address form and bring in the appropriate documentation to the main office in order to officially update your address.

## **CHANGE OF E-MAIL ADDRESS**

On a school level we are trying to be as green as possible and send home most information electronically. At the beginning of the school year we create a database of current family emails and news@ps234.org with your updated email address and include your child's name, grade and teacher.

## **CLASS GIFTS**

Staff members are always appreciative of the gifts that families give. However, please keep in mind that the PS 234 is a part of the larger NYC Department of Education workforce and as NYC employees are governed by certain rules and regulations. Cash, checks, gift checks and exorbitant, luxury items are really inappropriate and put staff members in an awkward position. The School Chancellor's regulations suggest a nominal cash contribution per family. Please keep this in mind should your class be considering a gift for the teacher during the holiday season or at the end of the year.

## **CLASS POTLUCK/PICNIC**

Twice a year each class gets together for a social gathering. At the beginning of the year every class hosts a potluck dinner and this is meant to be an opportunity for families to get to know each other as well as a chance for them to meet the teacher outside of the classroom. At the end of the year, a class picnic is held which includes both children and adults. We'd like to remind everyone that these are meant to be simple get togethers that give families a chance to get to know each other. We ask that parents refrain from catering and hiring entertainment for these evenings. For the potluck, bringing a simple dish for 5-6 people would suffice. An easy solution for the class picnic is for each family to bring a meal for themselves and maybe a dessert to share.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF**

PS 234 encourages an open line of communication between families and staff. Whenever you have a question or concern about your child, his/her work or behavior, you should reach out to your child's teacher. You may contact them by either leaving a note in their mailbox in the main office or by emailing them. All staff emails are listed on the school website, [www.ps234.org](http://www.ps234.org), under the staff directory listing. Staff should respond to your request within 48 hours. Please note that teachers are not checking emails during the course of the school day.

Please do not try to have a conversation about your child in the schoolyard at drop-off or pick-up times as teachers are focused on the children at these times and cannot give you their undivided attention.

The parent coordinator, Magda Lenski, is here for you as well. She should be your main resource for getting information and voicing your concerns. Magda is the liaison between families, staff and administration and can assist in directing your questions to the appropriate person.



## **DRESS CODE**

PS 234 does not require uniforms. We do ask, however, that children are dressed appropriately for school.

- Halter-tops, midriff-baring shirts, t-shirts depicting drugs or alcohol or excessively short shorts/skirts are not appropriate for a learning environment.
- We ask that children wear shoes to school that are comfortable and safe for running in. Flip-flops in particular have proven to be a real hazard when children run. We therefore request that children NOT wear flip-flops to school.
- Children are asked not to wear hats in school.

Classes go outdoors for recess each day. We understand that children need time to release their physical energy and will have an outdoor recess unless it is raining or very cold outside. Please be sure that your child's outer clothing is appropriate to the weather.

In addition to a daily recess, children have weekly physical education classes. It is important that they wear sneakers for these classes. Children who do not wear sneakers cannot participate in the activities. Teachers will send home notifications in the first few weeks of school to outline the physical education schedule.

## **DOGS**

Please do not bring dogs into the school or schoolyard. If you must tie your dog please use the fence furthest away from the school. Some children are frightened by or allergic to dogs, and the large number of children milling about frightens some dogs.

## **EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION**

On the first day of school you will receive a blue Emergency Card that needs to be filled out. This card is the office's main source of contact information for you. It is very important that we always have the most updated information on file. If any of your data changes during the school year please come to the office to make the necessary changes and notify your teacher as well. On this blue card, we ask you to list two additional adults that we may call in case we cannot get in touch with you. These should be adults that can be called in case of an emergency or if your child is sick. We strongly suggest the contacts are family or friends who live/work locally.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Throughout the course of the year, teachers will schedule field trips. Some of these may be local neighborhood walking trips; others may require students to use either public transportation. Teachers will send home permission slips prior to the scheduled trip date. It is very important that you return a signed permission slip to your teacher by the requested date. If a teacher does not have written permission from a parent/guardian on file, the child will not be able to accompany the class on the trip.

## **HALF DAYS**

Half-days are scheduled several times during the year to provide time for parent-teacher conferences and completion of clerical work. Parents will be notified in advance of these early dismissal dates. You may also check the calendar on the school website for school events and holidays. **On half-days, all children are dismissed at 12:00 p.m.** Children who eat school lunch meals will be served before dismissal. Please pick up your child on time, as the school is unable to provide supervision after the 12:00 PM dismissal.

## **HOMEWORK**

Homework gives students the opportunity to do the following:

- practice skills and strategies learned in class
- gather information and solve problems independently and at their own pace
- develop organizational skills and good work habits

At the beginning of the school year each teacher will send home a letter detailing how homework will be given in his/her class. Every classroom teacher has a plan for homework for his/her class. Please read the homework letter carefully so that you and your child will be clear about how he/she can be best prepared for school.

## **ILLNESS**

Please do not send your child to school if you think he/she may be ill. Call the main office in the morning to inform us that your child will be out sick. Upon return, please present a note from the doctor to the main office, so that we may code your child's absence as a medical absence. Please be certain that your child is healthy before he/she is returned to school.

Parents are our first line of defense in preventing the spread of infection. If your child has an infectious illness, please let your child's teacher know via a note or email or call the main office. We can then inform the nurse of infectious illnesses in the school and alert other families. Illness is a natural part of life and it is impossible to eradicate infectious illness from our school. Also talk to your children about washing their hands regularly and avoiding the sharing of food and drinks.

Children who become ill in school will be seen by the nurse before being sent home. Children usually wait in the nurse's office until someone can pick them up. Please sign your child out in the child sign out book in the main office before you take him/her. It is school policy that children who are sent home sick may not return to the school later in the day.

## **LATENESS**

It is very important that your child arrive to school on time. Children will be marked late if they do not walk into the classroom with their class in the morning. **Children who arrive between 8:30 and 8:40 AM may go directly to the classroom but they will still be marked late.** Children who arrive after 8:40 AM are required to get a late pass from the security guard since at that point attendance rosters are in the office and not in the classroom.

Parents may not escort late children up to the classrooms. This is to reduce the disruption to the classroom teachers and the other students. Lateness is not only recorded on your child's permanent record, but often contributes to classroom difficulties.

If you are late because of an appointment (medical, school tour or interview) bring a note in to the main office stating such so that we may code the lateness appropriately.

## **LICE**

Lice infestation is very contagious. In order to maintain a lice free environment any child with lice will be sent home. The Department of Education requires that children be lice free before they can return to school and we feel strongly that only this way can we prevent the widespread contagion of lice. There will be periodic school-wide lice checks during the year. The lice technicians are here to determine the presence of lice/nits but will not do treatments.

## **LOST & FOUND**

Please **label** clothing, lunch boxes and personal belongings with your child's first and last name. Any found items will be placed in the lost and found bins along the east wall in the cafeteria. Please check this regularly for missing items. All unclaimed lost & found is regularly donated to local charities.

## **MEDICATION**

Children may not bring medication to school. The school nurse must administer all medications, including over the counter items, and only after a medical authorization form has been approved by the Department of Education. This includes inhalers and EpiPens. Medical authorization forms are available from our school nurse, on our school website [www.ps234.org](http://www.ps234.org) or through the Department of Education's website [www.schools.nyc.gov](http://www.schools.nyc.gov)

## **METRO CARDS**

Children in grades K-2 who live more than a half mile from school and students in grades 3-5 who live more than a mile from school are eligible for a full fare school metrocard. Some students may be eligible for a half fare metrocard. The metrocards will be issued twice a year, in September and February. All metrocard issues should be addressed to the main office

## **NOTES FROM SCHOOL TO YOU**

We rely on both backpack mail and e-mail to communicate with families. Please check your child's folder everyday to see if there are any notes from your teacher. On a school level we are trying to be as green as possible and send home most information electronically. If you are not on receiving our emails, please sign up at [news@ps234.org](mailto:news@ps234.org) to receive important school announcements.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

We are proud to have a very active parent body at PS 234. Parents can be seen helping as trip chaperones, working in the library and assisting classroom projects. Your contributions to classroom life are crucial to our success. Your teacher will let you know when and how you can help. However, we ask that you not visit the classroom unexpectedly.

PS 234 is fortunate to have a very active and vital Parent Teacher Association. Every parent/guardian of a student at PS 234 is automatically a member of the PTA. Throughout the school year the PTA hosts many events which allow parents to participate in and which help to build a greater sense of school community. It is because of parent involvement that our PTA is so successful in fund-raising which helps support many of our enrichment programs. All PS 234 families are encouraged to attend the monthly PTA meeting and to get involved. For more information on the PTA community, visit the [ps234.org](http://ps234.org) website or email [pta@ps234.org](mailto:pta@ps234.org)

## **PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES**

We will host curriculum nights for all families during the school year. Your child's teacher will describe in detail the plans and schedule for the year as well the procedures for many important routines for the class. In addition, there are two formal parent conferences a year, one in November and one in March. Additional conferences are usually given upon request. It is very important that parents make every effort to attend parent conferences.

## **PICK UP AT DISMISSAL TIME**

At the beginning of the school year, your child's teacher will ask you to put in writing specific instructions regarding dismissal instructions. You need to list an authorized person/organization for each day of dismissal whether it's a parent, caretaker or afterschool program. Should any of these instructions change in the course of the school year, alert your teacher. Please understand that for the safety of your child, we will not dismiss to anyone other than the designated person.

In the case of the occasional change – a playdate, visiting grandparents, a new babysitter – please give your teacher a note the morning of the alternate plan. Playdate arrangements must be made from home. Children will not be permitted to telephone from the office to make dates. Should you have a last minute change in pick up, please call the main office with ample time to alert the teacher.

## **REPORT CARDS**

Written reports go out to parents twice a year. These reports describe your child's progress and set goals for him/her. Children do not receive grades in our school but rather are marked as below, approaching, meeting or exceeding standards. A narrative account from your child's teacher is also included in the report.

## **SCHOOL BUSES**

The Office of Pupil Transportation based on your address assigns your child a bus stop. That is the official bus stop for your child and it is the stop on file in the school. Bus drivers will refuse to take unofficial bus riders. The bus stop is based on your home address. Therefore bus stops cannot be tailored to your work address.

Children are expected to stay seated and behave themselves on the bus. If there are continuing discipline problems with your child he/she may be suspended from riding the bus.

If there is any change in the daily bus routine you must notify us in writing on the day of the change otherwise we will abide by your usual routine. Please send in two notes, one addressed to your child's teacher, the other to Paget Williams, the School Aide in charge of Transportation. Do not depend upon last minute phone calls to the office to change bus routines.

If your child stops using the school bus, or if you want your child to begin using the school bus, please notify the main office.

The bus cannot transport children who don't take the bus for play dates. If you have arranged for a play date after school, please make sure your child is picked up at school.

## **SCHOOL MEALS**

### **Breakfast**

Breakfast, free to all children, will be served from 8:00 to 8:20 a.m. Students coming for breakfast should go to the cafeteria after entering through the Greenwich Street red doors between 8:00 – 8:20 a.m.

### **Lunch**

NYC provides free lunch meals to all public school students.

Students may eat school lunch, bring lunch from home or go out to lunch with a grown-up during their lunch period.

- If your **child brings lunch from home**, a soft plastic lunch box is recommended. **Glass containers, soda and candy (including the candy in Lunchables meals) are prohibited at school.**

- We urge all parents to make arrangement for children to arrive at school with their lunch.
- In case you forget to give lunch to your child in the morning and must bring lunch later in the day, please label the lunch box clearly with the child's name, grade and teacher. Someone from the office staff will deliver it to the child at the appropriate lunchtime.
- **Complete the school lunch form** you will receive the first day of school.. This form is a compliance point for our school's accountability with the Department of Education and your participation is required to determine necessary funding for lunch programs.
- If you plan on **taking your child out to lunch**, send a note to your teacher that morning informing them of the plan. Please come to the main office at the designated lunchtime to sign your child out.

The lunch periods are as follows:

- Kindergarten and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade: 11:30 am – 12:20 pm
- 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade: 12:20 pm – 1:10 pm
- 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade: 1:20

## REMIND YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT THESE GENERAL RULES

1. Fighting of any kind, including “hitting back”, is not permitted in our school. Children should seek non-violent solutions to their conflicts. If they need help they should always ask the assistance of an adult.
2. Footballs and football playing are never allowed in the yard. That includes recess, line-up time, and after school.
3. We ask children not to play ball or run in the courtyard in the morning during line-up time and during dismissal. There are a lot of children in the yard at those times and we don’t want anyone to get hurt. Ball playing may resume after all children have been dismissed.
4. Keep toys and other inappropriate items at home (i.e. electronic toys, game cards, candy). If found, these items will be taken from your child.
5. Under Department of Education policy, students are prohibited from having **cell phones at school**. If a staff member is aware of a child having a cell phone at school, it will be confiscated and only returned directly to the parent or guardian.
6. Children must take care of school property. Graffiti and vandalism are serious offenses.
7. Children must return school property promptly and in good condition. Library books and instruments are on loan to students. They are responsible for their care. If lost, they must be replaced. The library asks for a \$10 donation for lost books and the music department requires full reimbursement for lost musical instruments.
8. Under no circumstances should any child bring anything to school that can be misconstrued as a “weapon”. This includes water guns, pocketknives, Swiss Army knives etc.