

# Welcome to Whitethorn School

*Dear Parents,*

*Welcome to our beautiful school serving the community from Shelter Cove to Ettersburg to China Creek and Whitethorn. This handbook will help you understand our school community by giving you information on our programs, services, staff, policies, and regulations. Please call us if you have any questions.*

*Our school is part of its surrounding communities. Please join us in our efforts to provide a safe learning environment with a high quality of education for all of our students. We need YOU!*

*Please call us directly at (707) 986-7420 if you have ideas, concerns, or needs. We are here to help.*

## Our School Staff

### **Principal**

**Stephanie Steffano-Davis**

### **Teaching Staff**

**Amy Vaughn**

**TK/Kindergarten-Second Grades**

**Pamela Lauer**

**Third-Sixth Grades**

**Josephine Finen**

**Special Education Teacher**

**Beth Maloney**

**Speech and Language Pathologist**

### **Classroom Aides**

**Jacob Shafer**

**Jessey Rubin**

### **Support Staff**

**Tina Wilcox**

Custodian

**Heidi Jory**

Secretary

Cook

Bus Driver

## School Information

### School Hours

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday                  8:20 – 2:35

Wednesday                  8:20 – 1:35

Minimum Day                  8:20 – 1:20

Teachers are at school from 8:15 a.m. until at least 3:15 p.m., and at other times by appointment.

**Children should arrive at school no earlier than 8:15 a.m. They are required to go directly home from school, except when participating in supervised school activities, when other arrangements have been made with the teacher or principal.**

### Attendance

California state law requires every child to attend school. Good attendance is very important to your child's progress in academic subjects. In addition, state funding to support school programs is dependent upon attendance of our students. The following three rules are essential:

1. Please have your child arrive at school on time. If a student arrives late, please check in with the teacher, and emphasize to the child to be quiet and respectful of the class activities as he/she enters the room.
2. After returning to school after an absence, a student must bring a note from home verifying the reason for the absence.
3. Excused absences are allowed for illness, dental, medical or legal appointments, or funerals. Excused absences do not count toward Average Daily Attendance (ADA), and therefore the school does not earn state funding regardless of the reason for the absence.
4. If at all possible, schedule dentist or doctor appointments so that children do not miss school, or so that the children leave after the morning classes. In all classrooms, most of the instruction in Language Arts and Math classes takes place before lunch; therefore it is best for the student's progress in those subjects to minimize morning absences.

Parents will be contacted when students are absent without excuses, are repeatedly tardy, or have excessive absences of any kind, and may be referred to the School Attendance Review Board (SARB) to seek solutions to the attendance issues.

## **Free and Reduced Breakfast and Lunch**

Our school participates in the Federal Free and Reduced Program Meals (FRPM). If there is any possibility that your family is income-eligible and so qualifies for the program, please fill out an application. If your family qualifies, you may allow your child to eat school breakfast and lunch for free or at a reduced price. In addition, an FRPM percentage above 50% would make Whitethorn School eligible for many grant opportunities. In order to qualify our school for these grants, we need our families to apply for the Free and Reduced Program Meals.

## **Independent Study Contracts**

If your child will be out of school for five or more consecutive school days, we urge you to let your child's teacher know at least one week in advance so an Independent Study contract can be developed. This will allow your child to keep up with schoolwork and receive credit for school attendance. Both the child's parent (or legal guardian) and the child must sign the contract. It must be turned in to the classroom teacher, with the work completed, upon the child's return to school. If this work is completed on time, your child will be given full credit for attendance. If the work is not completed or only partially completed, your child will receive partial or no credit for attendance, and may not be eligible for Independent Study in the future. Independent Study attendance does count toward the school's Average Daily Attendance with the state. If you know in advance that your child will miss school, but it will be less than five days, please check in with his/her teacher and you may be able to pick up work so that your child will be able to keep up with the class. Please consider scheduling vacations that coincide with the school holidays. Classroom discussions, activities, and interactions cannot be duplicated in an Independent Study packet, and are a valuable part of your child's schooling.

## **Picking Up Your Child During School Hours**

If you need to pick up your child before school is dismissed, please stop by the office first to sign the Early Release log.

If no one is in the office, you may sign out your child using the Early Release log in your child's classroom.

## **Dropping Off and Picking Up Students**

For safety reasons, it is essential that we **back in** to park in front of the school to increase the driver's visibility when leaving the parking lot. Students may be dropped off without parking the car, by stopping at the school chain link gate and letting the children out there. Please drive slowly when you are near the school.

## **Messages to Students/Using the Telephone After School**

If all staff members are working with students, you may reach the answering machine when you call the school. Please leave a message, including your name, the child's name and a contact phone number. The machine is checked frequently during the day. The school telephone is busy and can only be used for school business and emergencies. Students who want to go home with a friend must make arrangements beforehand. Please have your child bring us a note so we know where you want them to go after school.

## **Parent Conferences**

The dates for parent conferences (called "minimum days") can be found on the school calendar. Report cards are given out at the end of each trimester. Each student will be scheduled for a parent conference at the end of the first trimester. Grades, progress and test results will be discussed at that time. At the end of the second trimester, teachers will schedule conferences for students as needed, or if requested by a parent or guardian. During parent conference weeks, students are dismissed at 1:20 p.m.

## **Lost and Found**

Found items are located in the school office. Please ask Heidi from time to time if you have lost something. It would be helpful if student names were on all clothing and lunch containers.

## **Student Discipline**

Our school staff accepts the responsibility for keeping your children safe while at school, and for providing a positive learning environment with high standards for academic work and behavior. **Our goal is to allow students to learn and teachers to teach.** Harassment of any kind, fighting, or defiance will not be tolerated.

A discipline matrix is attached at the end of this section. Teachers will outline their classroom discipline guidelines for you.

## **Parent Volunteers and Classroom Visits**

Parents are welcome and encouraged to visit our school and to participate at all grade levels as parent volunteers. Please use the Visitor Log to sign in and out at the office, or in the event that no one is in the office when you arrive, please check in at Room 3. We ask that you make arrangements with the classroom teacher ahead of time, and that you do not bring other children with you without special arrangements.

If you want to visit your child's classroom, please contact the teacher prior to the visit. All visitors and volunteers must check in at the office.

## **Health and Safety**

### **Emergency Contacts on Registration Form**

All students must have emergency contacts on file so we can reach you in case your child gets hurt or sick at school. There must be at least 2 local emergency contacts with phone numbers. If you are new to the area and have difficulty finding people to list, contact the school secretary for help. Please keep this information up-to-date by

informing us of any changes. ***Schools must have a current phone number at all times,*** in case we need to contact a student's family during the school day.

### **Medication**

We cannot dispense ANY medications unless we have the Consent to Administer Medication form, completed by a doctor and parent, on file. If your child needs to take medication during the school day, send the medicine in the original package with your child, explaining exactly when and how the medicine should be taken. The school secretary or a qualified registered nurse will dispense all medicine. If your child has asthma and must use an inhaler, please make sure one is left with the secretary or nurse. If your child has an allergy to bee stings, please give the office a bee sting kit. There is an Epi-Pen in the office for anaphylactic shock emergencies, as per state law, and there are staff members trained to administer it if necessary.

### **Emergency Drills**

Emergency drills are held on a regular basis for students to practice how to react to fires, earthquakes, floods, etc. In the event of a natural disaster, your child will be kept at the school until you or the person(s) designated on your registration form's emergency list can pick him/her up.

### **Lice Head Checks**

We check students for lice on a routine basis. Parents will be notified if there is more than one active case in the classroom. Our secretary is available to help families cope with head lice.

### **Dress Standards**

Students should wear clothes that are comfortable and that will not interfere with his/her ability to learn and participate in all school activities, including physical education. Be sure that shoes are sturdy and safe. High heels and flip-flops should not be worn to school. All jackets should be labeled with the child's name. Clothing should not have words or pictures representing any kind of tobacco, alcohol or drugs. No violent, suggestive, or inappropriate language or depictions should be on clothing. If so, your child will be asked to wear the clothing inside out. Straps on dresses or tops should be at least one inch wide.

### **Special Instructional Programs**

#### **Library**

Parent Volunteers organize our library, which is housed in our "Bonus Room." The Bonus Room is also used for small group work for the upper grade classroom, and for some of our enrichment classes.

## **Computer Cart**

Our computer cart is well-equipped. We can use it in any room at the school. Each classroom has access to technology for educational purposes. For students to be allowed to access the Internet, an Internet Use Agreement must be on file.

## **GATE Program (Gifted And Talented Education)**

Although there is no longer state or federal funding earmarked for GATE programs, our school district values and supports enrichment programs for gifted and talented students. Along with daily differentiation of instruction, our enrichment includes GATE Academy, Science Fair, and Spelling Bee, and many Friends of Whitethorn Elementary School (FOWES) funded programs which change yearly. All students participate in our school-based enrichment programs.

## **GATE Academy**

Along with the rest of our school district, Whitethorn students may be invited to participate in the GATE Academy. A certain number (which changes yearly) of those who qualify for GATE enrichment are invited to the Rising Stars GATE Academy at Humboldt State University. When there are more qualified students than open spots in the Academy, we use multiple criteria along with a lottery system to choose each year.

## **Science Fair**

Science is a special interest at Whitethorn, and our school has a school-wide Science Fair and participates in the county-wide Science Fair annually.

## **Spelling Bee**

Our school spelling bee is open to all students in grades 4-8. Winners compete in the district-wide spelling bee and then may progress to the countywide bee, and the state bee.

## **Special Events**

### **Awards Assemblies**

These are held each trimester. Citizenship, academic and trimester attendance awards are given to the students. Parents are invited to attend and will be notified if their child is receiving an award. A monthly student assembly recognizes perfect monthly attendance. A final Awards Assembly is held in conjunction with the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduation ceremony.

### **Back To School Night**

Back to School Night is a great opportunity to find out about our school and what your child's teacher has planned for the academic year. Each teacher is available to discuss classroom curriculum and expectations. Back to School Night dates and times will be announced on our school website, on our Facebook page: Whitethorn Elementary School, as well as in notes home, and All-Calls.

## **Field Trips**

We organize some K-6 field trips together. Individual classes also plan and organize field trips to enhance the subjects they are studying. Due to the high cost of using a school bus, parents and staff often drive private cars on field trips. Chaperones are always needed on field trips. There are a number of forms to fill out in order to be able to drive on a field trip, and your car must be safe and well-maintained. This is another great chance to volunteer and have fun!

## **Open House**

Our school Open House is held in the spring. Students and teachers get to show off the great work students have done all year!

## **Team Sports**

Volunteer coaches organize sports programs in which Whitethorn students compete, through community sports leagues and through other programs sponsored by the school. Be sure to send a note if your child is attending practices.

## **Sixth Grade Promotion**

Our sixth grade students are honored with a promotion ceremony on the last day of school. In some years, we have organized a school dance to celebrate near the end of the year.

## **Programs for Special Needs**

### **Title I**

Whitethorn does not receive Title I funds due to our low Free and Reduced Program Meals numbers. Title I can provide special instructional time and materials to students in reading, math and language. Most of our district's instructional assistants are funded through this program.

### **English Learners (EL)**

Students who qualify for our EL program are served at Whitethorn School by an EL paraprofessional, who will help them become proficient in reading and writing in the English language. Student skills are assessed using the CELDT (California English Language Development Test).

### **Student Study Team**

This team approach reviews the needs of individual students and helps them get the services they need. We address academic, social, and basic needs.

### **Resource Specialist Program**

This program has specific requirements for entry and provides assistance for students as needed.

### **Speech and Language Program**

This program serves students with speech or language needs.

**Other ongoing programs and activities at Whitethorn include:**

<b>Wild Child Forestry</b>	<b>Aikido</b>
<b>Classroom Parties</b>	<b>Musical Drama</b>
<b>Gardening</b>	<b>Good Morning, Let's Read!</b>
<b>Chamber Readers</b>	<b>Second Step Violence Prevention</b>
<b>Science, Art, and Invention Fairs</b>	

## **Parent Groups**

### **Friends of Whitethorn Elementary School (FOWES)**

Whitethorn's very active Friends of Whitethorn Elementary School presents many events including the Whitethorn School Fun Run. They also raise funds and donate time and energy for school beautification, field trips, and other special projects. Donations from parents and FOWES fundraising have paid for our enrichment teachers and part of our school secretary, due to the inadequacy of the state funding for Necessary Small Schools of our size. The contributions FOWES makes to the school make our school GREAT. We encourage everyone to join.

## **Whitethorn School Student Responsibility Plan**

The purpose of this policy is to teach our students to develop responsible behavior, and to choose appropriate actions. It is meant to help students prepare for their lives as adults.

We believe that a positive approach to teaching works best. Because of this belief, this policy has several rewards for students who exhibit responsible behavior. It also has clear consequences for violations of school rules and expectations.

Let's work together to provide our children with the help and guidance they need to be successful and productive adults.

### **The School Rules—The “Three Bees”**

*The following rules are easy to remember, and cover all the “bases”*

- **Be Safe**
- **Be Responsible**
- **Be Respectful**

# Expected School Behavior

## General Expectations

- The directions of school adults must be followed immediately and without arguing. Time will be allowed to discuss the situation calmly.
- Drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or tobacco products are not allowed at school ever.
- All medicine must be kept in the office, and you must have the appropriate signed forms on file. The secretary or a qualified registered nurse will give you the medicine when needed, if you have a note from a doctor.
- Real or toy knives, guns, or weapons must stay far away from schools.
- Keep candy and toys at home.
- State law prohibits stealing.
- Please clean up after yourself. Littering is gross.

## In the Classroom

- You are in school to learn. Please complete assigned work during school as well as assigned homework.
- Listen to your teacher and follow the classroom rules.
- Allow other students the chance to learn by not bothering them or disrupting the class.

## On the Bus

- The school rules apply to the time spent on the bus.
- Please stay in your seat on the bus.
- Please speak in quiet voices on the bus.
- Follow ‘red light’ rules.
- Be respectful to the drivers.

## In the Hallways

- You must move safely in the school hallways.
- Walk in the hallways, and keep your hands to yourself.
- Speak in a quiet voice—Students are at work.
- Keep halls quiet and calm; bouncing balls and jumping are for the playground.

## In the Bathroom

- Be safe in the bathroom. Play on the playground.
- Wipe up if any water spills.
- Paper towels go in the trash can only.
- Respect other students’ privacy.
- Try to use the bathroom during recess time.
- Keep the bathroom clean for the next time someone uses it.

## In Line

- Be patient and wait your turn politely.
- Face forward, speak quietly, and keep your hands and body to yourself.
- Line up **behind** the other people in line (unless you are the first one there!).
- Hold your lunch bag still when you are in line.

## In the Cafeteria

- Please eat politely so that everyone will enjoy lunchtime.
- Be seated while you eat.
- Eat your own food, not your friend's food.
- Speak in a quiet voice with students next to you or across from you.
- Ask permission to get out of your seat.
- Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
- Food must be eaten in the cafeteria, unless it's a picnic day.
- Clean up the area where you have been eating. Use the garbage, compost, and recycling bins appropriately.

## **In the Library**

- Keep food and drinks away from books and computers.

## **Pets at School**

- Pets may only be brought with permission of the teacher and must be transported by a parent or guardian.
- Dogs need leashes, other pets mostly need cages to be safe.
- Pets may not come to school on the bus, and they may not be on the playground at lunch or recess.

## **On the Playground**

- Be responsible for your safety and the safety of others.
- Stay within the school boundaries.
- Stay where an adult can see you.
- Take care of yourself and each other.
- Go up the slide using the ladders.
- Slides are for sitting on and sliding down.
- Swinging is back and forth only.
- Only jump from low places.
- Use playground equipment safely. If you aren't sure how to use it, ask an adult on playground duty to tell you what is safe to do.

## **Tag**

Tag is fun when played safely. You may not tackle each other, pull on clothes or arms, or drag each other down. A tag must be just a light touch. Take a turn being 'it'.

## **Football**

Touch football is allowed, and like any game, it is a privilege that can be lost if the playing gets rough.

## **Basketball**

Half-court or full court games are allowed. Please share the basketball courts with other students.

## **Baseball**

Wooden or aluminum bats can only be used when a teacher is with his/her class. At recess plastic bats must be used.

**Soccer** Follow the rules of soccer (no hands).