



~ Frequently Asked Questions ~

Welcome to the Vinson-Owen School! We have designed this packet to answer your most frequently asked questions about our school. If you have any additional questions, feel free to call 781-721-7019 or email our Administrative Assistant, Helen Fenerlis, at HFenerlis@winchesterps.org. Parent involvement both in the class and in school is **very** important. Please help in the classroom, join the PTO and attend school events whenever possible. – **Grant Smith, Principal**

General School Information

What is the contact information for the school?

The main telephone number for the school is 781-721-7019. The fax number is 781-729-2681 and the school website is http://www.edline.net/pages/Vinson-Owen_Elementary_School.

What are the school hours?

Adult supervision is available beginning at 8:15 am daily, when students begin to enter the building. The official start of the school day is 8:25 am.

Our students are dismissed at 2:30 pm. Kindergarteners are dismissed at 12:15 pm daily, unless the child is enrolled in All-Day Kindergarten (ADK), in which case, they will also be dismissed at 2:30 pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

On Early Release days, the entire school is dismissed at 11:30 am.

What are the arrival procedures?

We ask that students arrive at school as close to 8:25 am as possible. Vinson-Owen does provide supervision from 8:15 am - 8:25 am. Students should **not** arrive at Vinson-Owen before 8:15 am, as there is no adult supervision.

What are the arrival procedures? (continued)

Walkers

- * Walkers coming **east** on Johnson Road (from the direction of Ridge St.), will enter the main walkway heading straight down the main path that leads to the front entrance.
- * Walkers coming **west** on Johnson Road (from the direction of Cambridge St.), will enter the sidewalk that is at the entrance of the driveway loop, walk all the way around the driveway loop to the entrance.

** At 8:15 am, students can begin to enter the building
according to their assigned entrance (see below) **

Car Drop-off

Cars will pull into the driveway entrance, pull around the outer loop and turn into the innerloop, pulling all the way around to the end of the inner loop for drop off). Other cars will pull behind). Students will exit their vehicles in the inner loop and walk to the entrance.

** At 8:15 am, students can begin to enter the building
according to their assigned entrance (see below) **

**** Safety Reminders:** Children should **ONLY** disembark from the right side of the vehicle. Please **do not** move your car until your child has fully moved away from the car.

In consideration of other families and to keep traffic moving,
please park if you need extended time at drop off.

Bus Drop-off

Students will be dropped off at the designated bus drop off/pick up area. Students will walk down the main path to the entrance and enter the building according to their assigned entrance.

When students enter the building beginning at 8:15 am

Kindergarten and 1st graders: Students will enter the cafeteria directly from the outside door and line up by classroom.

2nd graders – 5th graders: Students will walk through the main entrance directly to the gym and line up by classroom.

At 8:25 am, the bell will ring and the students will be led from the cafeteria and the gym to their respective classrooms.

What are the dismissal procedures?

Walkers

- * Walkers going **west** on Johnson Road (towards Ridge St.), will exit the building, walk straight down the main path and then turn right onto the Johnson Road sidewalk.
- * Walkers going **east** on Johnson Road (towards Cambridge St.), will exit the building walking on the sidewalk around the driveway loop to the entrance and then turn left onto the Johnson Road sidewalk.

Parents who are walking to meet their children should wait by the playground. Students will exit the building and walk straight ahead to meet their parents in this area.

Cars

The first car should pull into the inner driveway loop and go all the way to the end of the sidewalk in the inner loop. Cars will fill in behind, wrapping around from the inner to the outer loop all the way to the entrance from Johnson Road. Families are provided with a sheet of paper with their family's last name on it to be placed on the inside of the passenger side window. This is helpful for our staff to match students to cars.

*** Parents **MUST** remain in their cars at all times since parents will be directed to continually pull forward as space becomes available in the driveway loop.

Students who are being picked up by car will exit the building and wait in the "student waiting area" by the front entrance with the other students in their carpool group. Staff members will be positioned to provide supervision of this group while other staff members will take note of the last names displayed in the cars and call out students to meet their assigned car. Once students have safely entered their vehicle, the cars can pull out around the other cars in the lane to head toward the exit, allowing the cars behind to pull forward.

Kindergarten

Monday & Friday Dismissals

Kindergarten parents will park in the main parking lot and walk to the exterior entrance door of their child's Kindergarten classroom, where the kindergarten students will be waiting.

What are the dismissal procedures? (continued)

Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday – 12:15 Dismissal

Kindergarten parents will park in the main parking lot and walk to the main entrance where the kindergarten students will be waiting. Students taking the bus will be brought directly to the Kindergarten bus outside the Music Room.

Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday – 2:30 pm Dismissal

Kindergarten parents will park in the main parking lot and walk to the exterior entrance door of the Music Room, where the kindergarten students will be waiting.

Note: If a Kindergarten student has an older sibling, please note the following:

- * **Sibling in 1st or 2nd** Grade – can be picked up from the Music Room with the Kindergarten student.
- * **Sibling in 3rd, 4th or 5th** grade – can pick up the Kindergarten student from the Music room and proceed to the front of the school for pick up as a “walker” or by car.

Bus Students

All bus students will proceed to the cafeteria and will wait until their bus arrives. The students will then be escorted directly from the cafeteria to the appropriate bus.

What are the general traffic and parking guidelines?

To ensure everyone’s safety and to permit the flow of traffic in designated areas, please observe all of the traffic flow and parking signs along the school roadway.

Please ***do not park*** and leave your car in the drop off/pick up lane. This is for active drop off and pick up only with parents remaining in the car at all times while dropping off or picking up children.

What is the procedure if my child is absent?

Whenever your child is absent from school, please call the office before 8:25 am on the day of the absence or anytime before the day of the absence and leave a message with your child's full name, the reason for the absence, anticipated date(s) of absence, and the teacher's name. The voicemail is always available. The main number is 781-721-7019. Please choose Option #3 to report an absence.

We will check teachers' absence lists against parent calls. If your child has been marked absent but you did not call him/her in, we will make every effort to contact you or your emergency contacts. It is NOT necessary to send in a note once your child has returned to school.

What is the procedure if my child is tardy?

Children who arrive at school after 8:30 am must first check in at the office. If a child arrives to school after 9:00 am, he or she should be accompanied by a parent or a guardian to sign in.

What if my child needs to be dismissed early?

If your child is being dismissed early, please come to the front office. One of our staff members will call your child's classroom and your child will come to meet you in the office. Please sign your child out before leaving the building. *Please do not go directly to the classroom.*

What if we have a change in our dismissal plan?

While there should be a plan for dismissal that has been communicated to your child and the classroom teacher, changes do happen. In case of an emergency or unexpected change (e.g. you are arranging for someone else to pick up your child), please call the office and speak directly to our Administrative Assistant.

For the children's safety, we can **only** take changes in dismissal plans from parents or guardians. If at all possible, please try to call prior to 2:00 pm, to ensure timely communication of any change of plans.

Note: Arrangements for play dates **must** be made at home and a note sent in by the parent.

What is the procedure for checking in the building or delivering materials to my child's classroom?

All visitors and parents coming to Vinson-Owen during the school day **must** check in at the office, sign the register, and obtain a visitor's pass. If you have something to drop off for your child, please leave it with the office staff (labeled with your child's name and teacher), who will see that it gets to your child.

How do I contact the teacher or principal?

The Vinson-Owen School is committed to creating a culture of collaboration among school staff and families. The key to collaboration is open communication. Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you have a question, suggestion or concern. To contact your child's teacher, you can either send a note in with your child asking the teacher to call you, send an email or leave a message with the office. Teachers do have email; however, please keep in mind that their priority is with the children, and they may not check these messages during the school day.

For issues directly related to the classroom, please speak with the teacher first before contacting Mr. Smith. For school-wide issues or unresolved classroom concerns, please contact Mr. Smith at (781) 721-7019. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

How does the school communicate with families?

There is a district wide system called School Messenger which is used to send emails and recorded phone messages to the entire school regarding any important events. The Principal also includes a Principal's Message as part of the weekly PTO sponsored newsletter.

Is there a school calendar I can check for important dates?

Yes! Our district website at www.winchester.k12.ma.us has the approved district-wide school calendar that includes vacations, early release days, etc. You may also access the Vinson-Owen website from the district home page. Our website includes additional dates of field trips and schoolwide activities.

Health Room Information

Does my child need a current physical on file?

All kindergarteners and new students to Vinson-Owen **must** have a copy of a recent physical exam (within 1 year) and updated immunizations *prior to entering school*. Kindergarten students must also have a lead test result.

If your child has a Life Threatening Food Allergy or another medical condition, please schedule a time to speak with Jen Markham, the school nurse, to write an Individualized Health Care Plan for your child.

What are the guidelines for knowing when to keep ill children at home?

- *Elevated temperature within the past 24 hours
- *Vomiting or diarrhea occurring within the past 24 hours
- *Undiagnosed rash
- *Untreated lice (pediculosis) infection
- *Suspected conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- *Strep Throat- less than 24 hours of antibiotic treatment
- *If recovering from an illness and still unable to fully participate in school

NOTE: Children should be fever-free for 24 hours without medication prior to returning to school.

Is there a Food Policy?

Vinson-Owen does adhere to the following policies:

**** No food sharing** - . Students are to eat **only** foods provided by their families or purchased through our school cafeteria.

**** Snacks** - We encourage healthy snacks. Teachers may ask that morning snacks be peanut/tree nut free if a child or children in the class have these food allergies.

What if my child has a Life Threatening Food Allergy?

Teach your child or children about our “No Food Sharing” policy at school. Children should only eat foods that are deemed safe by their parents or guardians.

Epi Pens and Food Allergy Emergency Action Plans **must** be provided to the school nurse on the first day of school.

Children with Life Threatening food allergies may also choose to sit at the Allergy Awareness table in the cafeteria during lunch.

What if my child is currently taking medications?

It is recommended that medication be arranged so that it can be administered before or after the school day, whenever possible. When it is necessary for medication to be administered during school hours, please speak with the school nurse. A written, signed and dated request by a physician and the parent/guardian is needed to authorize the dispensing of prescription medication in school. Written authorization from the parent/guardian is required for over the counter medications as well.

In addition, an authorized adult should deliver the medication to the school nurse. No student should carry medications on the school bus or in the school building.

Lunch Room Information

Can my child purchase a school lunch?

On a daily basis, students have a choice of a hot lunch, an alternate lunch, peanut butter, peanut butter and fluff, peanut butter and jelly or a healthy salad. All school lunches include a drink (milk or OJ) and the fruit and vegetable of the day. Our school menu is sent home monthly and is available online on the Vinson-Owen website. Students may also order just milk and extra slices of pizza on pizza days.

Vinson-Owen operates on a Point of Sale (POS) system in our cafeteria. The POS system is a **CASHLESS, TICKETLESS** "debit" system that eliminates the need to pay with tickets or cash each day for a meal. You will be able to make payments anytime on-line or send in cash or checks on Monday mornings at school from 8:15 am until 8:45 am. All students will be required to have a pre-paid account if they wish to participate in the school lunch program.

Prices for school lunches are as follows:

- Lunch is \$3.00 each
- Milk is \$.60 each
- Juice is \$.60 each
- Water is \$.85 each
- Extra pizza slices are \$1.25 each

PTO Information

Are there opportunities for volunteering and involvement?

Vinson-Owen has a strong tradition of parent involvement. Many opportunities exist for you, as parents, to share your gifts with the classroom. Teachers will often call upon you to help with class projects, chaperone field trips and attend classroom presentations. You may also volunteer in the library during your child's assigned classroom time. There are day, evening and weekend volunteer opportunities that exist, with both small and large time commitments, that can be conducted from the school and some even from the home.

A way to share your gifts with the school at large is through the PTO. The Vinson-Owen PTO is a non-profit 501 (c) 3, school based network of parent volunteers dedicated to the enrichment of our children's education, health and welfare.

The PTO works closely with the Vinson-Owen administration and staff. This vibrant organization has many committees and social events throughout the year. Be sure to attend meetings and find out how you can be involved. If you have any other questions about the PTO, please feel free to contact the PTO president(s), whose contact information can be found using the following link: <http://vinson-owen.com/>

What is a CORI?

State law requires all staff and volunteers who work with children to complete a CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) form *every 3 years* in the presence of a CORI authorized employee (Principal and/or Administrative Assistant). This is information that is used to ensure student safety and is kept confidential. Please stop by the office to complete a CORI form if you have not done so already.

Is there a school newsletter?

Yes, the school newsletter, “VO News of the Week” is published weekly via email. It features PTO news, school information, dates and updates about coming events. The most recent edition of the newsletter, along with other helpful information, is posted on our website at <http://vinson-owen.com/>

Additional School Information

How do I find out about the curriculum?

Each grade level holds a “Back to School” curriculum night early in the fall for parents. You may contact the teacher if you have a specific question, and teachers may send out information about classroom studies and activities as well. In addition, the district publishes grade level expectations for each grade, which are available at the following site: www.winchester.k12.ma.us

Is there an Elementary School Handbook I can refer to?

Yes, the handbook is located on our district website at www.winchester.k12.ma.us. It contains the district policies pertaining to the elementary schools in Winchester.

What if my child needs a special service?

As part of our regular education program, we have a Psychologist, English Language Learner (ELL) Teacher, and Reading Specialists. If you have concerns in these areas, talk with your child’s teacher. Students with disabilities may be eligible for one or more of the following special education services: speech and language, occupational therapy or learning center support. If you have concerns about your child’s success at school, the first step is to speak with your child’s teacher. The teacher may consult with our Teacher Resource Team, who will recommend specific strategies for your child and/or additional assessments.

How can I give feedback to the school?

We are interested in your ideas! Mr. Smith is available to meet with any parent to discuss questions or issues and he can be reached at (781) 721-7019.

Welcome to Vinson-Owen!