



PS 163

The Alfred E. Smith School

163 West 97th Street New York, NY 10025 (t) 212 -678-2854 (f) 212-678-2856

Family Handbook

Donny Lopez, Principal

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PS 163 MISSION

PS 163 is a learning community that provides its students with the tools they need to become academically outstanding, socially responsible, critical thinkers. Our well-rounded, developmentally appropriate curriculum leads students to gain confidence as learners, examine and assess ideas, and contribute meaningfully.

Through skillful teaching, our educators promote critical reasoning and problem-solving as they help their students establish a firm foundation of literacy and mathematics skills they can apply to real world experiences. Our social studies and science instruction challenges students to examine ideas that shape their world. The cluster programs offer an exposure to the arts, science and technology.

Our program of instruction and enrichment is rigorous, creative, and highly motivating: it prepares our students to enter the middle school of their choice. The teachers and administration share a common bond with parents as we set our students off on a journey of self-discovery that will make them responsible citizens of an ever-changing world community. The goals of our parent association help many families make PS 163 an integral part of their lives.

The PS 163 community is sensitive to the individual needs of children. We foster respect and promote a peaceful environment. We encourage students to be curious, creative, and self-motivated. We help students establish work habits and a love of learning that will lead them to success throughout their education and into adult life.

REQUIRED SCHOOL FORMS

At the start of the school year, students receive a folder containing forms that need immediate attention:

1. **Blue Emergency Contact Card** – Please fill out the front and back of this emergency contact card and return it to school as soon as possible. It will be kept in the main office. Please also keep this card updated throughout the year by coming in to the office to record changes in your contact information. The school **MUST** be able to contact you immediately if your child is ill or has an accident at school.
2. **Lunch Form** –Every student must submit a lunch form regardless of whether or not the student will eat the school lunch. Lunch forms help determine the school's eligibility for additional funding.
3. **Dismissal Form** – This form is provided by the classroom teacher. Please list all the individuals who are authorized to pick up your child. Any changes to this list must be submitted to the classroom teacher.
4. **Health Examination Forms and Immunization Records** - New York City law requires that every child who enters school for the first time have proof of a health exam. A completed form (205) becomes part of your child's health record at our school. Immunizations are mandated by law. Children who do not meet immunization requirements must be excluded by law. For more information, including a list of immunizations and the schedule please go to www.schools.nyc.gov and follow the links on the right hand side.

COMMUNICATIONS AT A GLANCE

School Main Office: 212-678-2854

Fax Number: 212-678-2856

Website: www.ps163pa.org The PS 163 Website is the best and most current source of information about the school, and current and upcoming events. Visit often!

Yahoo Group: The PS 163 Yahoo group is a great way to connect with our community. Most important notices are sent out to parents via email. The listserv is also used to remind parents of upcoming events and opportunities. You can sign up at www.groups.yahoo.com/groups/PS163NYC.

Home Folder Mail: Many written notices are sent home in your child's home folder. Please check your child's backpack daily to receive notices on a timely basis.

Text Alerts: Sign up for text alerts re: school activities, PTA meetings, volunteer needs, school closings and much more. Text JOIN163 to 555888. You will receive approx. 5 texts/month and can opt out anytime.

Twitter: Follow Principal Lopez on Twitter: @mrlopez163

SCHOOL PROCEDURES & ROUTINES

ARRIVAL

The school day begins at 8:20 AM.

Pre-K and Kindergarten

Parents can escort Pre-K and Kindergarten students directly to their classrooms. The gate to the trailers opens at 8:00 a.m.

Grade 1

Students are dropped off in the cafeteria where they are picked up by their teacher. Until mid- September 1st grade parents are welcome to join their children in the cafeteria for arrival procedures (please note that only PK and K parents are allowed in the building for morning arrival procedures).

Grades 2nd – 5th

All classes in grades 2-5 line up in the schoolyard at their designated line spot. Parents of children in grades 1st – 5th are not allowed inside the school during arrival procedures.

Bus Transportation

Students may receive free school bus service if they meet the Department of Education eligibility criteria. Parents may consult the NYC DOE website: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Transportation/default.htm> to review the transportation eligibility guidelines. At the beginning of school, parents can submit a request for bus service in the Main Office. Children who do not qualify for free school bus service may qualify for free or reduced rate Metro Cards.

School Bus Arrival

Students who arrive on the school bus are met by a school aide who escorts them into the school building.

Breakfast

All students may participate in the Department of Education's free breakfast program. Students eating school breakfast enter through the Main Entrance beginning *at 7:30 a.m.*

Lateness

Instruction begins as soon as the students arrive in the classroom. Please give your child the opportunity to make an unhurried transition to a very busy school day by bringing them on time. All students who arrive after 8:20 will be considered late and must stop at the Main Office to ensure they are marked present. **Keep in mind that lateness is a part of a student's permanent record and is considered by middle schools when reviewing applications for admission.**

DISMISSAL

Dismissal is at 2:40 pm

Pre-K and Kindergarten

Kindergarten and Pre-K students are dismissed directly from the classroom. The doors of exit 8 on the end of the driveway by the main entrance, will open at 2:30 p.m. so parents may have access to their child's classroom.

Grades 1st – 5th

Grades 1st – 5th are dismissed from their line spots in the schoolyard. Parents may enter the yard through the walkway to the west of the main entrance and through the Happy Warrior Playground on Amsterdam Ave.

Grades 4th & 5th

Students in 4th and 5th grades are permitted to go home unescorted by a parent, **ONLY WHEN PRIOR WRITTEN PERMISSION HAS BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE CLASSROOM TEACHER**. Please note that no child will be allowed to leave school alone without this written permission.

School Bus Dismissal

Students who take the yellow school bus are escorted by their teacher to the auditorium where they are met by a school aide. The school aide will ensure they get on the proper bus.

Dismissal to an Afterschool Program

Students are escorted by their teacher to the auditorium where they are met by their afterschool program representatives. Parents/Guardians must keep informed of the afterschool schedule changes.

**** Changes in Dismissal Routines**

If there are changes to your child's dismissal routine, you must send a note to the teacher **with your child** by the morning of the change. For example, if your child regularly takes the bus but is being picked up that day, the teacher must have a signed note to that effect. If you wish your child to be picked up by another parent, you must also send that in writing. Last minute changes to your child's dismissal routine are strongly discouraged as they require interrupting class time.

Early Dismissal

Please try to schedule dentist, doctor and other appointments for your child after school hours. However, if a student needs to leave school early, **they must be signed out in the Main Office**, by an adult over 18 years old. This adult **MUST** be listed on the emergency card unless the teacher has been notified in writing by the parent. Students will stay in their classroom until the parent arrives. We **do not** encourage early pick-up between the hours of **2-2:40 p.m.** as it interrupts with classroom dismissal procedures.

Late Pick-Up

Students must be picked up promptly at the end of the school day. We understand that emergencies do occur. **Please call the Main Office if there is an emergency and you will be late.** Parents/caregivers who arrive later than the designated pickup time must enter the building through the Main Entrance. Students who are not picked up on time will be signed in to the late room in the auditorium. Before leaving the building, the child must be signed out in the appropriate sign-out book. If it becomes very late and a child is not picked up, and no one on the emergency card can be reached, the 24th Precinct will be notified.

Inclement Weather

During inclement weather, parents should note the following procedures unless otherwise posted.

Rain Arrival/Dismissal Procedure

Grade	Arrival	Dismissal
Pre-Kindergarten	Classroom (Exit 8 at end of Driveway)	Classroom (Exit 8 at end of Driveway)
Kindergarten	Classroom (Exit 8 at end of Driveway)	Classroom (Exit 8 at end of Driveway)
1 st Grade	Cafeteria	Gym
2 nd Grade	Auditorium	Gym
3 rd Grade	Auditorium	Schoolyard
4 th Grade	Gym	Schoolyard
5 th Grade	Gym	Schoolyard

PLEASE NOTE: During the winter months, snow can prevent the school from using the schoolyard for normal arrival and dismissal procedures. When that occurs, the arrival/dismissal procedure listed above is in place for grades 1 & 2. Students in grades 3 – 5 are dismissed from the school’s driveway.

ATTENDANCE

Absences

If a student is absent from school more than one day consecutively, his/her parents must call the Main Office to advise of their child’s absence – 212-678-2854.

Parent or medical verification notes should be submitted to the Main Office on the day the student returns to school. Absences documented with medical verification notes will be noted in the attendance system.

If the student will miss more than 2 days of school because they are traveling, please submit the travel itinerary to the Main Office so that a notation can be made in the attendance record.

LUNCH AND RECESS

Lunch

There are three consecutive lunch periods which are scheduled by grade and supervised by school aides. Families may purchase school lunch and/or send lunch from home. Paper bags or soft lunch boxes are recommended for lunches sent from home. Glass containers, soda and candy are prohibited. **Please label your child’s lunch box and all containers so that the items may be returned to you in case they are lost.**

Please explain to your child that if their lunch is forgotten, they can eat school lunch on that day. School lunch usage is tracked in a computerized system and parents will be notified if they owe funds for school lunch. Lunch menus are available online at www.schoolfoodnyc.org.

***** Lunch drop-off is strongly discouraged. If you are purchasing lunch for your child, please do so before they enter the building.**

Paying for school lunch

The school uses a computerized tracking system for school lunch. Parents can enroll and fund their account using their child's school ID number on www.mylunchmoney.com.

Recess

The lunch period includes time for eating and for recess. Recess takes place outdoors whenever possible and children should be dressed appropriately for the weather.

Snacks and birthday parties

Pre-K and Kindergarten students have afternoon snack time in their classroom. Parents usually provide snack for the whole class on a rotating basis. The classroom teacher will instruct parents on electing a class parent to coordinate this rotation.

Check with your child's classroom teacher about his or her policy for celebrating birthdays in the classroom well in advance of your child's birthday. Decorations, party favors and the like should be reserved for home parties.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT & COMMUNICATION

Parent Involvement is a vital part of the educational process. Children whose parents/guardians participate in school see by example that school is both valued and valuable. Parents are encouraged to become involved in many aspects of school from becoming a class parent to involvement at the school level through the PTA. The PTA meets monthly, alternating between morning and evening meeting times.

Parent Coordinator

The role of the Parent Coordinator is to act as the liaison between parents and the school's administration, staff members and teachers. Our Parent Coordinator is Walkiria Santana. She is your contact person for any school-related information. She is located in the main office and can be reached by email at WSantana2@schools.nyc.gov or by calling [212 678-2854](tel:212-678-2854). Se habla espanol.

Class Parents

Every class will have one (or more) class parent(s). Please keep the class parent's name and telephone number handy so that you can keep in touch and be familiar with what's happening in your child's class and at the school. This will be helpful for things specific to your child's class, such as class trips, parties, or projects.

Communicating with your child's teacher

If you have concerns or questions regarding any situation with your child, please speak with your child's teacher! The classroom teacher is the person who spends the most time with your child and should be your first contact. He/she should be kept informed of your concerns. You may contact a teacher by sending a note with your child or by leaving a note in the teacher's mailbox in the Main Office. You may also call the Main Office and leave a brief message.

In order to speak **individually** with your child's teacher, you need to schedule an appointment. It is best to send a note with your child or leave a phone message with the main office (212-678-2854) regarding the scheduling of an appointment. Please state your concern and whether you would like to set up a meeting or speak with the teacher by phone. Please give a few possible meeting times and include the best way for the teacher to contact you.

Other teachers who work with your child are also available to speak with you about any questions or concerns. You can contact them by leaving a note in their mailboxes in the main office or by calling the office to leave a message.

Parents are not permitted to go to any classroom at any time without an appointment.

Back-To-School Night

Back-To-School Night (also called Meet the Teacher) in mid- September is an opportunity for parents as a group to meet with the classroom teacher to learn about the specifics of that coming year.

Parent Teacher Conferences

General Parent Teacher Conferences take place in November and March of each year. These meetings are an important component of the home-school partnership. Parents' preferences for meeting times are honored as much as possible within the designated afternoon and evening times.

Please do not feel that these mandated conferences are your only opportunity to talk with your child's teachers. Our teachers are willing and available to schedule conferences throughout the year.

Report Cards

Report cards are distributed three times per year – at the Parent Teacher Conferences in November and March and on the last day of school in June. The first two report cards must be signed by the parent and returned to the teacher. **It is highly recommended that you make a copy for yourself.** The last report card in June is given to parents to keep. While grades are kept on record, **the school does not keep copies of these documents, which include teacher comments.** Please keep the report card in a secure place.

TELEPHONE MESSAGES, USE OF PHONES IN THE MAIN OFFICE

Only **URGENT** telephone messages can be delivered to students during the school day. Please give your child's name and classroom when calling.

There is one telephone in the Main Office for student use, in case of emergency.

HEALTH

Children should not attend school if they have the following:

HEAD LICE

It is the policy of the Department of Education that students found to have live head lice will be excluded from school and not allowed to return until they have been cleared of lice by a PS 163 staff member or a professional service. For additional information, visit the Department of Education website at:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Health/Pediculosis/default.htm>

Families must also do their part by regularly checking their children and keeping them at home while lice are present. Please let your teacher know if your child has developed a case of head lice. The school will provide information on dealing with lice upon request.

Illness or Accidents at School

A child who has a minor injury while at school will be seen by the school nurse and returned to class. S/he will be given a note to take home. A child who becomes ill or has a serious accident in school will be seen by the school nurse and the family will be contacted. We **must** be able to reach a parent or one of the adults listed on the Blue Emergency Contact Card immediately.

Please remember that if necessary, we may call 911; however, hospital physicians will not treat a child until a parent or guardian is present. We must be able to reach a parent or guardian at all times during the

day. For this reason, it is imperative that the school has the correct information on your child's Blue Emergency Contact Card.

An ill child may not remain in school. For all policies concerning illness in school including influenza viruses log on to www.schools.nyc.gov.

Parents can help control the spread of illness by:

- Training children to wash their hands thoroughly
- Training children to cover their mouths and noses when coughing and sneezing
- Kindergarten students should have a change of clothing in the classroom at all times.

SAFETY & SECURITY

SECURITY AND VISITING THE SCHOOL

All parents and visitors who enter the school building during the day must sign in with a picture ID to the School Safety Agent and obtain a Visitors' Pass in the main office.

SAFETY DRILLS

Fire drills in school are required by law to provide safety and protection for students and staff. The drills enable students to practice how to recognize and respond to signals, listen to and follow specific directions, and walk quickly and silently away from the school building. If you are in the building during a fire drill, you must also exit the building, walking quickly and quietly.

The school is also required to conduct two lockdown drills during the school year. Just as with fire drills, lockdown drills enable students to practice how to respond to signals and follow specific directions in the case of a dangerous situation occurring within the building when an evacuation is not possible.

SNOW AND EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

If there is a city-wide emergency, you can access information on the New York City Department of Education website or by calling 311. You can also check the school's website. When possible, the Parent Coordinator will keep parents informed through e-mail updates to the Yahoo listserve.

Parents are encouraged to subscribe to the NYC and DOE notification newsletters which provide information on topics such as Middle School enrollment calendars and procedures, neighborhood emergency alerts and other useful information.

- DOE: <http://schools.nyc.gov/subscribe>
- Notify NYC: <http://www.nyc.gov/notifynyc>

MEDICATION & ALLERGIES

Children may not bring medication to school. The school nurse must administer all medications, including over-the-counter items, after a medical authorization form has been approved by the Department of Education. Approval may take up to two (2) weeks. Medical authorization forms, commonly referred to as 504 forms, are available from our school nurse.

Please note that PS 163 is not a nut-free school.

DISCIPLINE

The DOE's official discipline code can be found via the following link:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/DisciplineCode/default.htm>

CLASS TRIPS

Class trips are an important part of our curricular work. Teachers organize and arrange the trips to coincide with the curriculum. Therefore, *trips are not optional excursions*. They will range from walks around the block to visits to the city's cultural institutions, such as museums and theaters. Classes will travel on foot or by school bus, city bus, subway or chartered bus, depending on the destination.

Teachers will notify you of upcoming trips and give you specific information on lunch, transportation, admission fees, etc. Please notify your classroom teacher or our Parent Coordinator if you need assistance to cover any trip costs or fees. No child should miss a trip due to cost.

Depending upon the trip, a teacher MAY request parent chaperones to accompany the class and assist in supervision. The DOE requires one adult chaperone for each 10 children. Parent chaperones play a vital role in maintaining the safety and educational value of the trip.

“Rules of the Road” for parent chaperones are:

- Permission slips must be filled out and returned in advance of any field trips.
- Follow the instructions of the teacher who organized the trip.
- Turn off your cell phone.
- Limit adult socializing.
- Do not bring siblings of any age. This is a liability as well as a safety issue.
- Do not purchase souvenirs or food for your child or any students unless requested to do so by the teacher.
- Remember that you are there for all the students, not just your child.

All students must return to school at the conclusion of a field trip even if you are chaperoning the trip. If you wish to leave school and take your child with you after the class has returned to school, you may do so by signing out in the Main Office.

LOST AND FOUND

Lost items (clothing, lunchboxes, book bags, etc.) are placed in the Lost and Found next to the cafeteria. Be sure to put your child's name on all of his or her belongings. Unclaimed items are donated to a local charity at the end of each month.

IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS

PS 163 Main Office	212-678-2854
PS 163 PTA Website	www.ps163pa.org
Principal email Donny Lopez	212-678-2854 dlopez17@schools.nyc.gov
Assistant Principal Andrea Spence	212-678-2854 ext. 1222 aspence32@schools.nyc.gov
Parent Coordinator Walkiria Santana	212-678-2854 ext. 1153 WSantana2@schools.nyc.gov
School Nurse	212-678-2854 ext. 1400
School Psychologist Karen Ramirez	212-678-2854 ext. 1280
School Social Worker Evening Shinerock	212-678-2854 ext. 1281 eshinerock@schools.nyc.gov
Guidance Counselor Jennifer Smullian	212-678-2854 ext. 1223 jsmullian@schools.nyc.gov
Leap Afterschool Joni Wildman	(631) 807-7288 ioni.wildman@leapnyc.org
District 3 Superintendent Ilene Altschul	212-678-2880 or ialtschul@schools.nyc.gov
District 3 Family Advocate DJ Sheppard	212-678-5857 or djshepp@schools.nyc.gov
Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT)	718-784-3313