

Student & Parent Handbook

Freedom Elementary School

2026-2027



Phone Number

941-708-4990

Website

manateeschools.net/freedom

Hours of Operation

7:45am - 4:00pm



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Welcome Message

Dear Freedom Elementary Families,

Welcome to a brand-new school year! We are thrilled to partner with you as we begin another exciting journey of learning, growth, and success for our students. At Freedom Elementary, we believe that strong connections between school and home are the foundation of student achievement, and we are so grateful to have you as part of our school community.

Family involvement plays a vital role in helping children thrive. When families stay actively engaged in their child's education, students are more motivated, confident, and successful. We encourage you to take an active role by volunteering for school events and activities, participating in our Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), and joining the School Advisory Committee (SAC). These opportunities allow you to share your voice, build connections, and help make our school an even better place for all students.

Regular attendance is another key to success. Every school day provides important learning experiences that help students build skills and stay on track. We ask for your support in ensuring your child attends school daily and arrives on time, ready to learn.

Strong communication between school and home also makes a meaningful difference. Please stay connected by reading school communications, checking your child's progress, and reaching out to teachers or staff whenever you have questions or concerns. Together, we can support your child every step of the way.

There are many simple ways families can help students be ready for learning each day at home:

- Establish consistent bedtime and morning routines
- Encourage reading every day
- Create a quiet, organized space for homework
- Talk with your child about their day and what they are learning
- Ensure your child eats a healthy breakfast and arrives prepared with needed materials

By working together, we can create a positive and supportive learning environment where every child can succeed. Thank you for trusting us with your child's education. We look forward to a fantastic school year filled with growth, achievement, and memorable experiences!

Sincerely,

Mr. Greg Sander - Principal

Mrs. Brittani Barnes - Assistant Principal



Attendance & School Calendar

School hours are 8:25am - 3:15pm. Students who need to leave early must be signed out through the front office prior to 2:45pm.

Attendance

Student attendance is critical to optimize student academic performance! Instruction begins promptly at 8:25am. Students should be in their classrooms ready to learn at this time.

Should your child need to be absent from school, their absence should be reported via the school's attendance phone line prior to 10:00am on the day of their absence. The school's attendance line can be reached at 941-708-4990 and select option #8.

Written notes and/or notes from health care providers are also accepted to excuse an absence.

Kindergarten through 5th Grade

Morning Arrival

Students are supervised beginning at 7:55am. Students that need to be on campus prior to 7:55am must be enrolled in the Beyond the Bell program.

Breakfast is available for all students from 7:55am - 8:20am daily at no cost.

Car Loop Drop-Off

Morning drop-off begins at 7:55 on the east side of campus in the car rider loop. The car rider loop can be accessed by turning right at the first stop sign upon entering campus and proceeding through the winding loop. A Freedom staff member or a safety patrol will assist students each morning. Students should not get out of their cars until they have reached the designated area with a staff member or safety patrol present to assist them. Students will be escorted to the cafeteria or their designated classroom area upon arrival to campus.

The car loop closes promptly at 8:20am. Any student arriving after the loop has closed will need to be brought to the front office by a parent or guardian to receive a tardy slip.

Bus Riders & Daycare Vans

Students who ride a school bus or a private daycare van will be dropped off at the school's bus loop. Students must be registered online with the district transportation department to be eligible to ride the school bus to and from school. A Freedom staff member and safety patrols will assist students each morning as they arrive. Students will be escorted to the cafeteria or their designated classroom area upon arrival to campus.

Bike Riders, Scooters, & Walkers

Bikers and walkers will walk down the east sidewalk, along the open field to enter campus. Students will ensure that their bikes, scooters, and helmets are placed in the bike rack area and secured. The school is not responsible for any lost or damaged transportation and/or personal items. Students will enter the main building through the "B" Doors and go to the cafeteria or their designated classroom area upon arrival.

Safety Patrol Drop-Off

Fifth grade students serving as safety patrol students can be dropped off at the front entrance ("A" doors) at 7:45am to ensure they are at their assigned posts by 7:55am. Due to supervision restrictions, younger siblings must follow the arrival procedures listed above and cannot be dropped off prior to 7:55am.

Kindergarten through 5th Grade

Afternoon Dismissal



Afternoon dismissal starts at 3:15pm. Students will be given a band on their backpack on the first day of school indicating their normal dismissal group. **Please do not remove the colored band from your child's backpack, as it is used all year for student transportation.**

Dismissal Changes

Changes in dismissal **MUST** be received in writing via the student's agenda, Class Dojo message, or teacher's e-mail prior to NOON on the date of the dismissal change. If the change is not received, the student will be dismissed with their documented dismissal group.

Car Rider Dismissal

Upon arrival to school, at the first stop sign, turn right into the car rider loop. We will not release students to parent who walk up to the car rider loop. Pull as far forward as you can to next staff member at a loading zone. The staff member will load your child into the vehicle. We are not able to seatbelt your child into the car. We will load multiple cars at one time, and then release loaded cars. Do not exit the line out of order for student and staff safety.

Our automated student identification system requires each car to have an identification tag every day. Cars without the assigned identification tag will be instructed to go to a designated spot to await further assistance. This will result in a delay of your child being dismissed to your vehicle. Car identification tags remain active year after year. A \$5 fee will apply for any replacement or additional tags and can be ordered through RevTrak online.

Bus Riders & Daycare Vans

Students must be registered online with the district transportation department to be eligible to ride the school bus to and from school. Parents will receive bus information directly from the transportation department. The transportation department can be reached at 941-708-8800.

Be sure that you know the bus stop times and location for afternoon drop-off. Pre-K and Kindergarten students will be required to be met by an adult at their bus stop each day. Please let your child's teacher know the bus number or route number.

Private daycare vans will be picked up in the bus and taken directly to their location. If your child needs to change their dismissal to not ride the daycare van, please inform the daycare directly of the change.

Bike Riders, Scooters, & Walkers

Biker riders, scooters, and walkers will be dismissed from campus at 3:15pm. Staff members will walk students to the stop sign past the car rider loop. Students must remain on the sidewalk walking/riding to the crossing guard. State law requires that all bike, scooters, and skateboard riders have a helmet.

In case of inclement weather, please contact your child's teacher to change your child's dismissal for that day. If there is no change of dismissal received, students will be held in the cafeteria until it is safe to release.

ESE & Pre-K Arrival & Dismissal

Students are supervised beginning at 7:55am. Students that need to be on campus prior to 7:55am must be enrolled in the Beyond the Bell program.

Breakfast is available for all students from 7:55am - 8:20am daily at no cost. EPK students will attend breakfast daily after assigned drop-off time.

Morning Arrival

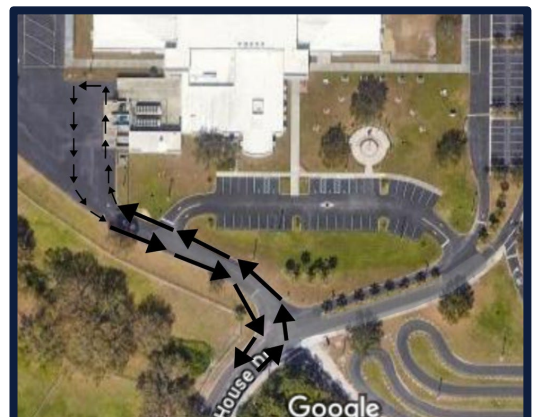
ESE and IPK students will be dropped off on the west side of campus (see map below) from 7:55am until 8:25am. Families should turn left at the stop sign when entering campus and follow the cones to the designated pick up area. Parents should remain in their car. A staff member will assist your child out of the car and into the school to their designated areas. Please place your yellow ESE/Pre-K car rider card in the windshield to help staff members indicate that your child is in the correct drop off location.

EPK students arrival time is 8:30am until 8:45am. Parents may park in the front parking area and escort their child to the front “A” doors of the school. A staff member will greet your child at the door and escort them into the cafeteria for breakfast.

Afternoon Dismissal

All ESE and Pre-K car riders will be dismissed on the west side of campus. Families should turn left at the stop sign when entering campus and follow the cones to the designated pick up area. A map is provided below. This dismissal location will allow families to buckle their child before pulling away. Kindergarten through 5th grade siblings of ESE or Pre-K students can join their younger siblings at this pick up location as well. Please notify the teachers of older siblings so that they may ensure those students are dismissed to the appropriate dismissal location.

All ESE and Pre-K car riders families will be provided with a paper car tag. This tag should be displayed in the front window at dismissal. This tag will be different than the car rider tag required in the Kindergarten through 5th grade car rider dismissal loop. Your child (and siblings, if any) will be escorted by a staff member to your car.



Communication Apps

Focus Parent Portal

The **MySDMC Focus App** is designed to provide secure, easy access to important student information for School District of Manatee County parents, students, and staff.

Families can check grades, attendance, and statewide assessments results directly from the app. Parents must have an active FOCUS Parent Portal or MySDMC SSO account issued by the school district to access the app. Please see the school registrar if you need more information for linking your account.

The app is available for download from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

Class Dojo

Class Dojo is a free, online classroom management and communication platform used at Freedom Elementary School. Each teacher will have a unique code to share with families to link to their classes. Teachers and staff can share photos, private messages much like texting, and important announcements via the app. You will also be automatically linked to the Freedom Elementary School's Class Dojo profile where you will receive schoolwide updates and information.

While there are paid features available on Class Dojo, the free membership is all that is necessary to meet the communication needs between home and school.

Class Dojo also has a feature to translate the messages you receive from school into the language of your choice.

The app is available for download from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

Important Information



Electronic Devices Policy

Students are permitted to bring cell phones, smart watches, and other forms of communication devices to school. **However, all types of communication devices *MUST* be turned off and put away in the student's backpack during the entire school day.** For more information on the School District of Manatee County's electronic device policy, visit www.manateeschools.net/policy. (Florida House Bill 1105; effective July 1, 2025).



Volunteers

All volunteers must be cleared through the school district. Level 1 volunteers may interact with students while being supervised by a member of the staff. Level 1 clearance can be obtained at no cost. Level II clearance is required for volunteers interacting with student UNSUPERVISED, such as chaperoning field trips, one-to-one mentoring, or tutoring. Level II clearance does require an application fee. Please visit manateeschools.net/volunteers for more information and to begin the application process.



Beyond the Bell Care

The Extended Day Enrichment Program (EDEP) supports working parents by providing affordable, safe, and nurturing extended day enrichment program designed to enhance their children's life educationally, socially, culturally, emotionally and physically. The program at Freedom Elementary is known as "Beyond the Bell". Students may be dropped off at 6:45am and must be picked up by 6:00pm. Space is limited at each grade level. Please contact Nicole Martocchio at 941-708-4990 ext. 59003 for more information.

Information

Cafeteria & Celebrations

Breakfast is FREE for all students at all schools daily. Lunch cost is \$3.50 daily or \$17.50 per week. Payments can be made via cash or check sent in to the school via your child's agenda and/or class communication system. Any cash or check payments must include your child's name, grade, and teacher. An electronic payment system is also available via the app described below. Free and reduced lunches are available for those who qualify. For more information on free and reduced lunches, please visit manateeschools.net/page/free-reduced-price-meal-benefits.



School Café App

The School Cafe App is available for families to have a fast and convenient way to make payments for school lunches online using a credit or debit card. You will need your child's 10-digit school ID number to register. The app is available for download in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. Please contact Food and Nutrition Services for more information at (941) 739-5700.



Family Lunch

Families are welcome to join their students for lunch. There is a two-adult limit per reservation due to spacing capacity. Your reservation should be limited to once per month to accommodate other families who would like to join their students. Multiple reservations will be deleted. Please arrive 5 minutes prior to your time slot in order to be checked in with our office staff. Reservations for family lunches can be made at our website: manateeschools.net/freedom. Select "Activities" and then "Family Lunch" to make your reservation.



Birthday Celebrations

Our cafeteria offers a selection of birthday baskets delivered during lunch hours. To accommodate your request, the cafeteria needs at least 2 weeks' notice. For more information, please visit our website: manateeschools.net/freedom. Select "Families" and then "Birthday Celebrations". A form can also be picked up at the front office.

Balloons are not allowed to be given to students to take to their classrooms. Due to food allergies and other health concerns, no homemade treats are able to be brought into school. Store bought treats may be sent in, however, they must include a detailed ingredients list and be completely sealed. We highly recommend working with our cafeteria to celebrate your child's birthday.



Staff Contact Information

Listed below are key contact staff members at Freedom Elementary School. We are here to help, so don't hesitate to reach out to one of the following staff members. Please allow at least 24 hours for return response on any message left for one of our staff members.

The phone number is 941-708-4990.

Your child's classroom teacher

Your child's teacher will provide you their contact information on Back to School Night. The teacher is your first and best line of communication to address any needs or questions you may have. Teachers can be reached via Class Dojo, district e-mail address, or message on the classroom phone.

Administration

Principal - Mr. Greg Sander (ext. 59001)

Assistant Principal - Mrs. Brittani Barnes (ext. 59002)

Resource Staff & Front Office

Student Support Specialist - Mrs. Sheena Brillhart (ext. 59012)

School Counselor - Mrs. Kayla Webb (ext. 59004)

Senior Secretary - Mrs. Nicole Martocchio (ext. 59003)

School Registrar - Mrs. Valerie Giobergia (ext. 59007)

Front Office/Attendance - Mrs. Gisela Lopez (ext. 59000)

Guidance Clerk - Mrs. Taylor Cincotta (ext. 59008)

Cafeteria

Cafeteria Manager - Mrs. Sara Walker (ext. 59018)

Visit Us Online

Webpage: manateeschools.net/freedom

Facebook: *Freedom Elementary School*

Facebook: *Freedom Falcons PTO Group* (Private group - must request to join)



Welcome to the Freedom Family!

We look forward to working with you and your child this school year!
We invite to learn more about Freedom Elementary using the QR codes below!

Go Falcons!



Scan here to
visit our school
website



Scan here to
visit Freedom
on Facebook



Scan here to
visit access
the school's
RevTrak page



Scan here to
visit Freedom
Falcons PTO
on Facebook