

# Robert E. Willis Elementary School

## Student & Parent Handbook

### 2025-2026



The Mission of Robert E. Willis Elementary School is a commitment to excellence in all aspects of our school and culture.

The Vision of Robert E. Willis Elementary School is to promote and foster student achievement by providing an academically enriching environment that nurtures and supports the whole child.

## **Message from the Principal:**

Welcome to Willis Elementary! We look forward to having your family with us for the 2025-2026 school year. I am confident that we are going to have a successful year of building strong foundations and learning together. Please take the time to acquaint yourself and your child with the contents of this handbook. It will serve as a reference for information throughout the year allowing students and parents to have a clear understanding of school policies. In addition, please visit the following link to access the SDMC Student Code of Conduct: <http://www.manateeschools.net/policy>

Education should be a cooperative effort between home and school. Research supports the notion that optimal school success is achieved through frequent and open communication among teachers, staff, and parents regarding student progress. If you have questions throughout the year, please begin by contacting your child's teacher first. Often, an email or quick phone call can answer any misconceptions or concerns. If your concerns remain unresolved, please contact the school and ask to speak with a school counselor, student support specialist, or administrator for further assistance. We will be glad to assist you.

There are several ways we communicate with families so you can stay up to date with the many activities at Willis. Our school uses electronic communication in the form of email, text, and phone notifications, PTO and School Facebook sites, our school website, PTO newsletters, informational flyers, Peachjar electronic flyers as well as our Gecko Gazette Family Newsletter.

Thank you for supporting your child's success at Willis. We look forward to working with you as partners in education to help every student at Willis Elementary achieve their goals and pursue excellence.

It is going to be a great year!

Sincerely,

Natalie Jadid  
Principal  
jadidn@manateeschools.net

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### **Ways to Stay Informed!**

#### **Willis Elementary School Website**

<https://www.manateeschools.net/willis>

#### **Willis Elementary School Facebook Page**

<https://www.facebook.com/Robert-E-Willis-Elementary-School-1393618317423284>

#### **Willis Elementary School PTO Website**

<http://www.williselementarypto.com/index.html>

#### **Willis Elementary School PTO Facebook Page**

<https://www.facebook.com/Willis-Elementary-PTO-155725804495819/>

**To receive weekly school newsletter email** [WillisElementaryPTO@yahoo.com](mailto:WillisElementaryPTO@yahoo.com)

**School District of Manatee County** <https://www.manateeschools.net/Page/1>

## **School Hours**

**Student Hours: 8:25 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.**

**Front Office Hours: 7:45 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

\*The first bell rings at 8:20 a.m. indicating students have five minutes to get to class before he/she is marked tardy after the 8:25 a.m. tardy bell.

<b>Important Phone Numbers</b>		
<b>Willis Elementary Main School Number: (941) 316-8245</b>		
Name	Position	Extension
Natalie Jadid	Principal	80001
Cindy Nguyen-Pham	Assistant Principal	80002
Monica Mardones	Student Support Specialist 3-5	80003
Darren Downs	Student Support Specialist PreK- 2	80030
Kimberly Thomas	Literacy Coach K-5	80042
Sarah Van Zytveld	School Counselor K-2	80030
Phyllis Morales	School Counselor 3-5	80004
Venner Badgley	Senior Secretary	80008
Kelley Carpenter	Registrar	80009
Shania Mack	Clerical Assistant	80000
Dana Sullivan	Guidance Clerk	80081
Maritza Clark	Clerical Assistant	80072
Frank Martens	Head Custodian	80039
Jeff Cardarelle-Hermans	Cafeteria Manager	80014
Michelle Swensen	School Nurse	80010
Kris Miller, LPN	Clinic Nurse	80011
Gecko Care	After/Before School	80095
Kelley Carpenter	Gecko Care (EDEP)	80014
<b>District Phone Numbers</b>		
The School District of Manatee County: (941) 708-8770		
Elementary Director: Dr. Annette Codelia (941) 708-8770		
Bus Transportation: (941) 708-8800		
Attendance Line: (941) 316-8245 and press 8 to report an absence. *Please make every effort to contact the office by 8:25 a.m. if your child will be absent. This request is made for the protection of your child.		

## **Attendance**

- Florida Compulsory School Law (F.S. 1003.21) states all children must attend school regularly during the entire school term.
- **Student Absences:** Please call the school by 8:25 a.m. if your child will be absent. This request is for your child's safety and informs us that your child is safe at home. By noon each day, if we have not been notified of your child's absence, a Blackboard Connect phone message will call you with an automated message stating that your child is absent. If your child is absent and the school has not been notified, these absences will be marked unexcused.
- **Convenience Absence:** Sometimes parents request that a child be allowed to miss school for trips of various sorts. While in many cases there may be value derived from these trips, please understand that such absences are recorded as unexcused. If such an absence does occur, the student is required to make up the work missed. A record of absences is reported to parents at the close of each quarter and those absences will show as unexcused on the child's permanent record. Student attendance is monitored daily through our Student Information System.
- **Tardies:** Being late to school disrupts the instructional program for not only the tardy student, but for the teacher and other students in his/her class. A record of tardies is reported to parents at the close of each quarter and is recorded on the student's permanent record. The first bell rings at 8:20 a.m. giving students a five-minute warning to get to class. The tardy bell rings at 8:25 a.m. Please be sure your child arrives at school in enough time to get to his or her classroom before the tardy bell rings. Students that are not in their classroom by 8:25 a.m. will be considered tardy.
- **Early Dismissals/Early Student Pick-up:** For safety reasons, students will not be dismissed from their classrooms after 2:45 p.m. If a parent comes after 2:45 p.m., we will ask you to wait in the car rider line until the bell rings.
- **Under no circumstances will a teacher release a student to a parent from the classroom.**
- **Student "Sign-Out" Procedures:** Prior to a child's release during the school day, individuals are required to:
  1. Be an approved person listed as a pick-up person on the student's bio form.

2. Show proper identification: a valid Florida Driver's License, State of Florida Identification Card, or a valid driver's license or state identification card from any of the other states in the United States of America.

3. Sign the child out in the office.

4. Wait in the front office for the child.

- No child is to leave the school area or a classroom with a visitor or parent unless permission has been received from the office. Children will only be released to those adults for whom the school has written authorization on the information form in the office. Students must exit through the office double doors.
- Refer to the Manatee Schools Student Code of Conduct for more detailed attendance information.

## **Communication**

**Changes in address or phone:** It is crucial that you notify the school registrar at ext. 80009 to request a **Student Information Change form** if you move addresses or change your contact information, including a change of email or phone. If you move, you must notify the school within five days of your move. If you have moved out of Willis' attendance zone, in many cases your child may remain at Willis through the rest of the school year, but district transportation may not be provided. If it is discovered that you have moved and not provided notification, your child could be assigned to an alternative school or considered to be "found out of our attendance area". This could mean an immediate change for your child.

**Emergency Contact List/Pick Up List:** The enrolling parent is strongly encouraged to list all possible adults that may need to pick up your child throughout the school year. **There is no limit to the number of names that you provide to pick up your child and it's best to do this at the beginning of the year.** When you need to add a contact during the year a form must be completed. This form can be requested from the office and then the form will populate in your FOCUS account. It is important for parents to understand that children are easily confused by frequent changes in their routines. By being consistent in the method of transportation for your child, you will ensure a safe arrival home, and your child will feel more secure knowing their daily routines. **Please know that this policy is for the safety of your child and that we are not permitted to release your child to anyone that is not on the approved list.**

**Withdrawal Procedures:** If it becomes necessary for you to withdraw your student from Willis Elementary School, we would appreciate you providing us notification 3 days in advance. This way, the classroom teacher can gather all the things that the student will need upon leaving our school and parents can sign the withdrawal form. Please remember, before you leave, to return all library books, textbooks, school materials and check cafeteria balance. You may contact our school registrar, Kelley Carpenter at 316-8245 x 80009, for more information on withdrawal procedures.

**Backpack Tags:** The first day of school students will receive a color band to attach to their backpacks indicating how they will go home. Pre-K and Kindergarten will have their names and teacher names written on their backpack tags. Leave these tags on all year.

### **Morning Arrival/Drop-Off Procedures**

**Car Riders:** Procedures for drop-off include following the signs for the car drop offline. Remain in your vehicle and have your child exit the car from the passenger side. Please remain in the car as you drop your child off in the morning. For your child's safety, please also be sure you only drop your child off at the designated locations. **For the safety of our students, children must be accompanied by an adult when walking through the parking lot or crossing the car line.**

**Parking Lot Reminders:** When arriving at school, parents are requested to follow the traffic patterns and not cut across the grass. This will help ensure everyone's safety and respect for school property. Please Park in designated parking spaces only. **Please be sure to have your child use the crosswalks when walking from the parking lot to the school building.** Children may not be dropped off or picked up in the parking lot and left to walk unattended. Parents may not park along The Masters Avenue as the Manatee County Sheriff's Department has informed the school that tickets will be issued if cars are parked along the road.

**Bike Riders/Walkers:** All bicycles will be kept at the bike rack closest to the park. Students will need to bring a lock to secure their bikes since this is not a secure area. Helmets will be kept with your bikes and are required on school premises. Walkers/bike riders will walk along the sidewalk to enter the building closest to the crosswalk and report to breakfast and/or to their designated area. **Only students are allowed** past the crosswalk at arrival and dismissal time to ensure the safety of all students. No motorized bikes, scooters, or motorcycles are to be ridden by students on school grounds.

**Entering the Building: Students should arrive no earlier than 7:55 a.m.** Students who need to be dropped off prior to 7:55 a.m. must be enrolled in our **Gecko Care** before school program as supervision is not provided prior to 7:55 a.m. Car riders and bus riders only will enter through the front lobby. All Walkers and bike riders will enter through the black gate closest to the crosswalk to enter the school in the blue hall.

**Breakfast:** Once a student enters the building, they may choose to go to the lunchroom for breakfast or to their class holding area outside their classroom. Breakfast is free for all of our students. Students who do not choose to get breakfast are expected to go to the assigned hallway where there is a designated location for them to sit with their classmates. While in the hallways, students will sit quietly and read while they wait for school to begin. Students with classrooms upstairs will use the stairwell in the main foyer. Students who choose to eat breakfast will walk to the cafeteria.

### **Dismissal/Pick-Up Procedures**

**Transportation Changes:** If it is necessary to change your child's mode of transportation, please call the office and send a note with your child in the morning. We never take a child's word that they are changing their transportation home for the day. You must send a note in the planner or attached to the planner that is dated and explains how your child's transportation will be changed for the day.

**Early Pickups:** If it is necessary to pick your child up early from school, he/she must be picked up prior to 2:45 p.m. for safety reasons. Students will not be called from class after 2:45 p.m. as we will be preparing for dismissal. If a parent comes after 2:45 p.m., we will ask you to wait in the car rider line until the bell rings.

**Emergencies:** In the event of a true emergency, please call the main office at extension 80000 or 80081 by 2:30 p.m. and speak to someone directly and we will do our best to work with your situation. Do not leave a voice message. We ask that you do this at least thirty minutes before dismissal. Without such notification, your child will be sent home the usual way.

**Bike Riders 3:10 p.m.:** Students must use sidewalks provided to exit school grounds. Bike riders must **walk bikes** off school property and as required by law, should always wear a helmet. Bike riders are expected to follow bicycle safety rules.

**Walkers 3:10 p.m.:** Students are expected to go directly home after school. Students **MUST** cross the street at the crosswalk only where staff can supervise.

Staff will assist students as they cross the car line to the sidewalk. For safety and security reasons, parents are not allowed to pick up students from the school parking lot. Students are expected to show courtesy to our neighbors by respecting private property, walking along sidewalks, and by speaking courteously to adults. **Students who are designated as walkers have permission from their family to walk home independently.** If a parent chooses to have their child meet them at the park or any other destination, it is the parent's sole responsibility to be in that area to meet their child and the school will have no other responsibility in ensuring student pick-up. If you choose this pick-up procedure, please practice with your child what to do if for some unforeseen reason you are not there on time one day. We never want a child to be in a position where he or she is afraid and unsure of how to get home safely. If you are meeting your child at the park, do not park in our school parking lot. Parking at the park will ensure a one-direction and safe dismissal.

**Pets on Campus:** Please do not bring animals to pick-up areas, as they are not permitted on school grounds.

**Car Riders 3:15 p.m.:** Students will be sitting in our foyer while waiting to be called for pick up in the car rider loop. Please remember to place your car tag identification sign (provided by the school) on the dash of your car every day, so that we may identify you quickly. Please leave it displayed until your child is in your vehicle. We will provide each family with multiple car tags to ensure an authorized person is picking up your child. The left lane is for parking lot access only. Please stay in your vehicle at all times.

**Seatbelt Assistance:** If your child needs assistance buckling their seatbelt, please follow these procedures: Continue to pick up your child in the Car Rider line. Once your child is in the car, please continue to exit pulling around the corner and parking in the grassy area to buckle your child in properly. This will help us avoid delays in the car line.

**Bus Riders 3:15 p.m.:** All parents of students requiring bus transportation must complete a registration form at "Register to Ride" every year. Please visit <https://www.manateeschools.net/registerioride> to reserve a spot on the bus for your child/children. At dismissal, students that ride a bus will be seated according to their bus number/color. Each bus has been assigned a different color. Bus students will have a colored wristband attached to their backpack, which corresponds to the bus they ride. As students board their bus, staff members ensure they are boarding the correct bus by checking the colored band on their backpack. In addition, student ID's will need to be scanned as

they enter the bus. Please keep these IDs attached to backpacks. Bus riders will be expected to follow the District's Student Code of Conduct.

**School Bus Procedures:** Safety on the bus depends on the cooperation of each child. Bus drivers will review safety procedures on the bus during the first week of school. When students fail to cooperate with the bus driver, parents will be notified via a courtesy note and/or a bus referral. The privilege of riding the bus may be temporarily suspended. We suggest that parents wait at designated bus stops in the morning and meet students in the afternoon to ensure safe practices are being followed. Please see the District Code of Student Conduct.

**Willis Gecko Care 3:15 p.m.:** Our extended day program is called Gecko Care. Program hours for morning care are 7:00 a.m. to 7:55 a.m. and afternoon care is 3:15-6:00 p.m. Students who are designated to go to Gecko Care cannot be picked up during our regular dismissal time. Pick up begins at 3:45 p.m. For more information, please call Kelley Carpenter at 316-8245 ext. 80009.

**Heavy Rainy Days and Lightning Dismissal:** If there is heavy rain and/or lightning at dismissal, please be patient as the safety of all students is our number one priority. In the event of heavy rain/lightning, we will stop dismissal until conditions improve. If conditions do not improve by 3:10 p.m., all walkers and bike riders will follow car rider procedures. A Blackboard Connect message will be sent to notify parents if there is a change in dismissal. For safety and security reasons, no students will be released to parents that walk up from the parking lot. **Note: If there is only light rain and no lightning, students will be released as walkers.**

## **Parent Involvement**

**Visitors:** At Willis Elementary School, family involvement is strongly encouraged. We welcome parents/guardians and other relatives at our school. Please understand for the first few weeks of school there will not be visitors for lunch to allow staff to establish routines and safety procedures. When you arrive on campus for lunch, conferences, and special events during school hours, please report to the front office with a valid Florida driver's license, State I.D., valid driver's license from another state, or valid passport and sign in through our Raptor ID system. A visitor badge will be provided and must be worn on chest the entire time a visitor is on campus. Note that you are expected to be on campus for the purpose indicated on your badge. Please respect the designated planning times provided to teachers for preparing their classroom for learning by making an appointment. We ask that if you require extended conversation with a staff member you request a conference outside the student

day so our staff members can remain focused on educating and supervising our students. Before you leave, please return to the office to sign-out and exit the office double doors. Parents who want to visit the classrooms must make arrangements with the teacher at least one day prior to the visit.

**Volunteers -Our school needs and welcomes volunteers!** If you are interested in volunteering, please email [willisPTO@yahoo.com](mailto:willisPTO@yahoo.com). Note that district policy prohibits volunteers from being unsupervised with students unless they have completed a level 2 screening which requires fingerprinting and an extensive background check. Click here to complete the volunteer application required by the district: <https://apps.raptortech.com/Apply/MjQ2Mzplbi1VUw==>

Volunteers should be 100% focused on assisting in the area they are helping; therefore, no younger siblings are allowed to accompany a volunteer. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Nia Mack at extension 80000 to learn more about the volunteer application process.

### **Ways to Volunteer!**

- Volunteers can assist teachers in providing more individualized instruction
- Strengthen school-community relations through positive contributions
- Assist with monitoring the cafeteria
- Volunteer for classroom projects, school events and PTO events
- Assist the media specialist in the library

### **Get involved on PTO or SAC!**

**Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO):** When a child is registered at Willis Elementary School, his or her family automatically becomes a member of our Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO). There are many ways for our families to become involved in our school community. For more information about Willis' PTO, please check out the PTO website at <http://www.williselementarypto.com/>

**School Advisory Council (SAC):** As required by Florida Statute every school must have a School Advisory Council (SAC). The SAC is a governmental body formed for the purpose of advising the principal on policies and procedures at the school, which help ensure that every student is meeting with success. As such, the SAC must abide by all Florida Sunshine laws. This group is also responsible for approval of the School-Improvement Plan and the expenditure of school improvement funds budgeted to every school, which must be spent on school improvement. In addition, the SAC approves the spending plan for any A+ Recognition dollars awarded by the state for school grades. The makeup of the

SAC is defined in statute and must be representative of the school demographics. It is to be comprised of the principal, teachers, parents, support employees, and other business and community members. The majority of the members of the SAC at any school may not be employees of the school district. All positions are elected positions except for the principal and community representative, which is assigned by the school principal.

## **Wellness and Safety**

**School Clinic:** The school clinic is available for students who become ill or are injured during the school day. If the illness or injury is of such a nature that the student needs to go home, the parent will be notified and be expected to make arrangements for the child to be picked up in a timely manner from school. The telephone number for the Willis clinic is 316-8245 extension 80011. Please do not send a sick child to school so as not to spread illness through classrooms. Additionally, we do not have facilities to care for sick children. Note: Per state requirements, we must receive approval to treat your child. Information will be sent home with directions on opting out.

### **For children to receive medication during school hours, the following guidelines must be followed:**

1. Only prescription medicine will be given. Over the counter medicine is not permitted without a prescription from a physician.
2. The medication shall be supplied by the parent or guardian in person in a childproof container, bearing the prescription, child's name, attending physician, the name of the medication, the amount to be given, the frequency of administration, and any special instructions.
3. All medications to be administered in school to an elementary student must be delivered to the school by a parent or guardian. When presented in the school office, parents or guardians must fill out the "Authorization for Medication Form" before the medication is given. \*Sample bottles of medication must be accompanied by a written prescription and labeled with the child's name.
4. The parent and/or physician should make school personnel aware, in writing, of symptoms or possible reactions relating to the medication or lack of medication.
5. No medicine for acute or contagious illness should be given in schools. Children should be home under these conditions.

**Emergency Drills-Safety:** The safety of our students and staff is a top priority. Throughout the school year, we will conduct a series of emergency drills that will

include fire, tornado, school bus, shelter in place, and intruder drills (also known as lockdown drills). We want our students to know how to respond if a situation arises and will handle these drills calmly and with sensitivity. Classroom teachers and administration will talk students through our safety procedures while considering their age and needs. Our goal is to lessen anxiety for our students and staff should a situation occur, and have safe practices become routine.

**Fortify**-All Manatee County schools utilize Fortifyfl. <https://getfortifyfl.com/> Fortify is a suspicious activity reporting tool that allows families and students to instantly relay information to appropriate law enforcement agencies and school officials.

## **Cafeteria**

**Payment Options:** The Willis Cafeteria is run on a computerized point of sale system, which enables us to have money held in an account for each student. Breakfast is still free this year for all students. However, a student lunch costs \$3.10. You may wish to send money for your child to purchase additional snacks, entrees or beverages. Any student enrolled in a School District of Manatee County public school may apply for free and reduced-price meal benefits by visiting [School Menus](https://www.schoolcafe.com/ManateeCountySchools). <https://www.schoolcafe.com/ManateeCountySchools>

**Payment System!** Fast and convenient online payments can be made with a credit card or debit card at [www.schoolcafe.com](http://www.schoolcafe.com) Cash or check may be sent to school in an envelope labeled as "Cafeteria Money". Your child's name, grade, and your child's teacher's name should also be clearly written on the front of the envelope. Checks should be made out to Willis Elementary School.

Please be sure the check includes Student(s) name and ID number in memo line of your check. All checks must include name, address, and phone number.

These envelopes should be turned into the classroom teacher. All money sent will be applied to the student's account, as we cannot return change. If you have any questions about your child's account, please call the Cafeteria Manager, Jeff Cardarelle-Hermans at extension 80014.

**FREE Daily Breakfast:** Breakfast is served every morning from 7:55 – 8:20 a.m. in the cafeteria. All Manatee County School District students may receive free breakfast daily at no charge if they choose to eat in the cafeteria. All students wanting to have breakfast should report directly to the cafeteria upon arriving

at school and should arrive to school prior to 8:15 a.m. in order to have enough time to eat before students are expected to enter their classrooms. After eating their breakfast, students report to their class holding area in our school hallways with adult supervision.

**Water Bottles-** Students are allowed to bring water bottles to school in a container that can be completely closed. Stanley cups or similar containers with straws or have an open mouthpiece are not allowed due to spillage concerns and safety in the hallways.

**Parents/Guardians Eating Lunch at School:** A Sign-Up Genius calendar will be shared with families monthly via email. This calendar helps to ensure an equitable process while also ensuring space is available. When parents come for lunch, you may only sit with your child at the designated outside visitor tables. Parents/Guardians visiting for lunch must meet their child in the lunchroom and may only visit with their child. Parents may not accompany their child to recess or back to the classroom. Parents will sign in at the front office to receive a visitor pass and sign out as they leave.

**Cafeteria Rules:**

- G- Get everything you need before you sit down.
- E- Extend your hand to ask for help.
- C- Clean up after yourself.
- K- Keep your hands, feet, and food to yourself.
- O- Only talk with your shoulder partner in a Level 2 voice and use your manners.
- S- Stay in your seat.

To keep parents informed, if a child consistently breaks a cafeteria rule, a behavior reminder slip will be sent home with your child. Please review the expectations with your child if they receive a Reminder Slip and sign and return this slip.

**Classroom Celebration Policy:** If you wish to send in treats for your child's class, it must be arranged with your child's teacher in advance and meet the criteria outlined in the School District of Manatee County's Wellness Policy. This policy states: "Only food prepared by and purchased from licensed food service establishments may be served to students, except food brought by the parent for their child. All food must be purchased from a licensed food service establishment and ingredient labels must be available for all food brought to the classroom." This policy lessens issues with food allergies or sensitivities.

**Student Birthdays:** Student birthdays are celebrated in each class on a monthly basis in order to minimize the loss of instructional time and to limit the number of sweets that children are offered. These parties are held after lunch. The teacher will communicate with families to share the day each month that the celebration will occur. However, students are limited to sharing their celebration with their classmates only. Invitations to home parties may only be handed out in class if the entire class or all boys or all girls are invited; otherwise, invitations may not be distributed at school.

**Deliveries to Students:** The delivery of flowers, balloons, valentines, or birthday presents, and food via UBER eats and other food delivery services to classrooms will not be permitted, as such deliveries are distracting and time-consuming for the learning environment and office staff. We know you love your children. We do too! However, we do not have the capability to accommodate these situations.

## **Academic Progress Communication Tools**

**Student Agenda/Planners:** As a tool to support home and school communication, as well as helping students manage their workload, each student will be provided with a student agenda/planner free of charge from the school. Teachers may write notes home to parents in the planner. There is also a space for parents to write notes to the teacher. Please read and sign your child's agenda daily and be sure your child has it at school every day. Your child's agenda/planner may contain important pages, flyers, and information from the school. Please make it your child's responsibility to bring you the agenda/planner to check daily.

**Progress Reports/Report Cards:** Progress reports and report cards are posted to the Focus Parent Portal. Progress reports will be posted to the Focus Parent Portal four times a year (halfway through each of the four quarters). Report cards will be posted at the end of each quarter. Parents can view them on the distribution dates once the Assistant Principal publishes them which is done when teachers are done putting in grades.

**Requests for a Conference-**If you have any concerns regarding your child and would like to speak with the teacher, please call or email your child's teacher or leave a message on the teacher's voice mail system. The teacher will contact you within 24 hours and schedule a conference. Conferences are typically scheduled before or after school when the teacher is free from student responsibilities and able to devote their full attention to your concerns. Please

understand, your child's teacher will only be able to meet with you if prior arrangements have been made.

**Additional Conferences-**During the year, if student concerns are brought up by the teacher and more intensive interventions are needed, you may be asked to participate in additional conferences as part of the team to discuss your child's individual learning needs. These meetings are held to inform you of special services for which your child may qualify. We hold these conferences in the best interest of your child, and we appreciate your attendance and input.

### **Life Skills and Student Discipline**

**Student Code of Conduct:** At Willis Elementary, we believe everyone has the right and responsibility to achieve his or her educational best. It is our priority to provide a safe and amiable learning environment. Likewise, we believe that no one has the right to disrupt another student's learning. With these beliefs, we will show respect for all members of the Willis Community, clearly define our expectations across all settings, and hold each other accountable for appropriate behavior. All students are also expected to follow the Manatee County Student Code of Conduct that is located online at <https://www.manateeschools.net/policy>

**Behavior Expectations:** Classroom rules are posted and carefully explained to the students by the teacher. Classroom procedures are explained and practiced. Children receive positive reinforcement when rules are followed, and redirection and appropriate consequences are given when they are needed. While classroom rules are unique to each classroom, all rules are linked to the school-wide expectations across all settings. Therefore, compliance and non-compliance of the rules will be identified as matching one of the following school-wide expectations:

- 1. Being Safe**
- 2. Being Respectful**
- 3. Being Responsible**

**Addressing Behavior:** When a student experiences a problem at school, his or her classroom teacher may counsel the student individually or contact the parent to discuss the concern. In some instances, teachers may refer students to the student support specialist, school counselor, or administrator. If the student exhibits a lack of cooperation, or the behaviors are deemed dangerous or interfering with the learning opportunities of others, further interventions may be taken. In such a case, the parent may be notified in the form of a referral. If

a referral is written, the parent will be contacted by phone. The referral will be accessed in the Parent Portal System.

**Items from Home:** There are very few occasions when it is necessary (or desirable) for students to bring items from home to school. Weapons or weapon-like toys of any kind, including toy guns and knives, are not permitted on school property at any time. Students who violate this rule will face consequences that may range from suspension to expulsion.

**Positive Reinforcement and Gecko Awards:** The staff believes positive reinforcement is effective in promoting behaviors that lead to life success, and students are recognized for their achievements at quarterly assemblies known as Gecko Awards. Parents of children who are going to be recognized are invited to attend the assembly and join the staff in celebrating their child's success. Students being recognized will receive a certificate and incentives. On the day of the assembly, all visitors should arrive early to check in at the front office. We also ask that you RSVP to your child's teacher so we can print badges ahead of time. Before being permitted on campus, all guests will be required to present proper identification. For young children, research shows that positive feedback registers more strongly in the brain areas responsible for cognitive control and increases the likelihood positive behaviors will be repeated.

**Life Skills:** Life Skills and character education are part of Florida's required instruction mandates. These monthly lessons provide explicit instruction to address character education standards and the life skills to equip our students with the requisite skills to navigate the world around them and be prepared for a successful future. They include Cooperation, Responsibility, Respect, Patriotism, Gratitude, Empathy, Perseverance, Honesty, Courage and Creativity.

**Textbooks/Library Books:** Instructional materials issued or checked out to students are the property of the school board and must be returned at the end of the school year. Students must return books they have checked out to be able to get new ones. According to school board policy, students must pay for lost or damaged library books, and/or textbooks and workbooks.

## **Dress Code**

**Willis Elementary has a mandatory uniform policy.** *Students are required to wear a Willis Elementary Uniform to school each day.* School uniform items may be purchased at any retail outlet if they meet the school uniform criteria. Willis Elementary School embroidered shirts are optional and may be purchased online through the PTO website. Our uniform policy is mandatory for every

student who attends Willis Elementary School. A student new to Willis Elementary has 30 days to comply with the school uniform policy. Exceptions to the uniform policy will be allowed for those with strict religious beliefs regarding clothing as well as those participating in Boy or Girl Scouts or other national organizations, which have their own uniforms. Students are encouraged to represent these organizations on the day of their meetings by wearing the appropriate attire.

**Dress Down Days:** Typically, on the last Friday of each month the PTO sponsored fundraiser, "Dress Down Days" allows participating students the option to wear their choice of clothing if it meets the District Dress Code. Information and dates are sent out by the PTO at the beginning of each year.

**Spirit Wear:** Every Friday all students may wear Willis Spirit Wear shirts. These include Willis Spirit Wear shirts available for purchase at Manatee Apparel or t-shirts from school such as runners club, fun run, patrols, 5<sup>th</sup> grade t-shirts etc.

### **The Willis Elementary Uniform Policy is as follows:**

**Shirts:** should be a generic solid polo style shirt or button-down collared shirt in **white, light blue, or navy blue**. Long or short sleeves are acceptable. "Willis Elementary" T-shirts may be worn on the last school day in the week. School T-shirts and monogrammed polo shirts are sold online. Please check the PTO website for details. The only acceptable logo on school shirts will be the Willis Elementary School Gecko shirts or monograms.

**Outer Garments:** Sweatshirts, jackets, or outer garments may be worn. These items are to be in the school uniform colors of white, light blue, or navy. On very cold days, heavier jackets or outer garments in any color or style may be worn to and from school. However, if your child needs to wear something during school hours to keep warm, it must be in the appropriate school uniform colors.

**Bottoms:** Pants, shorts, skirts, skorts, jumpers, or capri pants should be **khaki or navy blue. No blue jeans, denim, or jeggings**. Shorts, skirts, skorts, and jumpers must be fingertip length. Please monitor this as your child(ren) grow since the jumper or skirt they started the year with may not continue to be appropriate as they grow. On announced "dress down days" students may wear denim bottoms. Denim bottoms are **not** to be low-rise, have any holes, cuts, slits, or bleached portions. If **belts** are worn, they should be fastened and should be

black, brown, khaki, or navy in color. Oversized, baggie, extremely tight or ill-fitting clothing is not permitted.

**Shoes:** As a health and safety precaution, student shoes must have a closed heel and closed toe. Sandals, thong-type shoes, shoes with cleats, shoes with thick platform soles, high heels, shoes with wheels, and Crocs™ are not allowed. Sneakers with socks must be worn for P.E. **Socks:** Crew length or less, of any color may be worn. Socks, tights, leotards, leggings, leg warmers, or other such coverings, which extend higher than crew length must be solid navy, khaki, or white.

**Hair and Accessories:** **Hair** must always be neat and **must be a natural hair color**. Barrettes and ponytail scrunchies, etc. are acceptable. Students, however, may be asked to remove any items in the hair that are costume like or distracting (**For example, headbands with animal ears**). **Jewelry** should be simple, safe, and appropriate for elementary school. **Make-up** is not allowed.

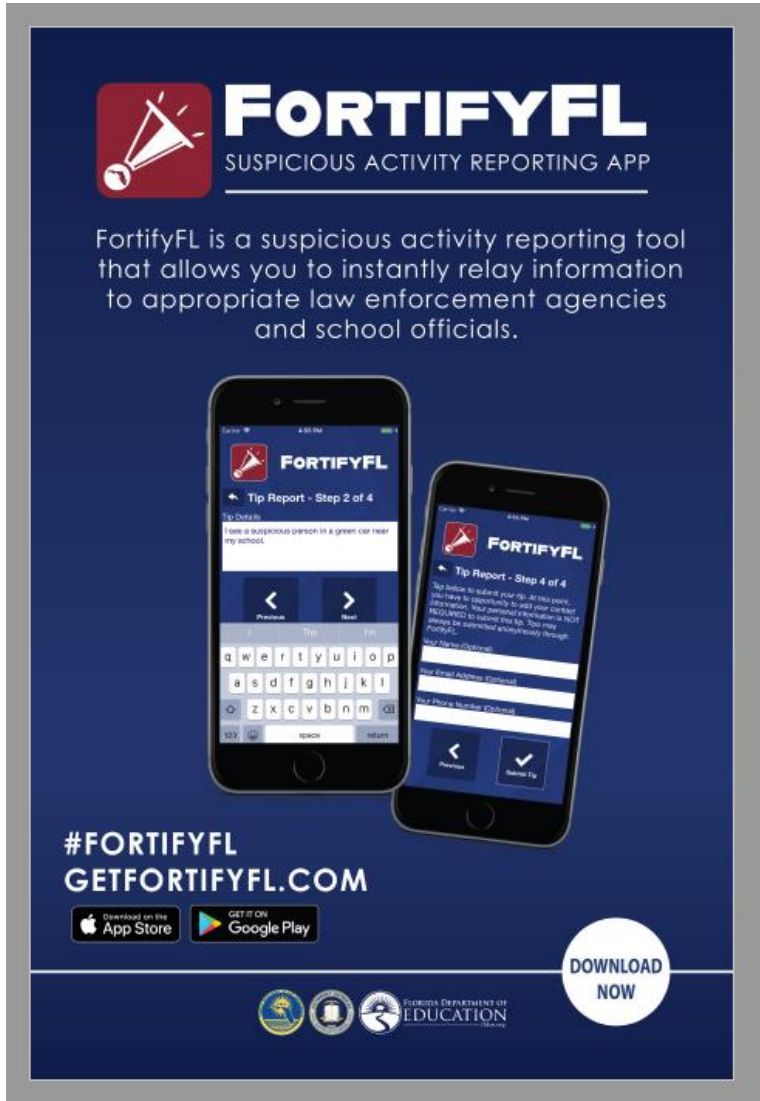
Any intentionally visible items worn under uniform clothes must comply with the colors outlined in the uniform policy and be a solid color.

If a student comes to school out of uniform, the following actions may take place:

- A verbal warning may be given from a staff member to the student and/or a note may be sent home.
- Parent/guardian may be contacted and required to bring appropriate attire to school for the child. A conference may then be scheduled with the principal.
- The student may be sent to the clinic to see if they have appropriate spare clothing in the student's size.
- A letter or referral from the principal may be sent home requiring a reply from the parent/guardian.

Please contact Mrs. Morales, the school guidance counselor, at extension 80004 for information regarding financial hardship applications or exemption procedures. Willis Elementary School maintains a supply of gently used uniforms should a student have the need. If you have uniforms, you no longer need that are in good condition and would like to donate these to the school, please drop the uniforms off to the staff in the front office.

Our district utilizes **Fortify**, a suspicious activity reporting tool that allows you to instantly relay information to appropriate law enforcement agencies and school officials. Go to [getfortifyfl.com](http://getfortifyfl.com) for more information or to submit a threat.



The advertisement features a dark blue background. At the top left is the FortifyFL logo, a red square with a white megaphone icon. To its right, the text "FORTIFYFL" is written in large, bold, white capital letters, with "SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY REPORTING APP" in smaller white capital letters below it. A horizontal line separates the title from the text below. The text reads: "FortifyFL is a suspicious activity reporting tool that allows you to instantly relay information to appropriate law enforcement agencies and school officials." Below this text are two smartphones. The left phone shows the "Tip Report - Step 2 of 4" screen with a text input field containing "I see a suspicious person in a green car near my school." The right phone shows the "Tip Report - Step 4 of 4" screen with fields for "Your Name (Optional)", "Your Email Address (Optional)", and "Your Phone Number (Optional)", and a "Submit Tip" button. At the bottom left, the text "#FORTIFYFL" and "GETFORTIFYFL.COM" is displayed. Below this are the "Download on the App Store" and "GET IT ON Google Play" logos. At the bottom center, there are logos for the Florida Department of Education and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. At the bottom right, a white circular button contains the text "DOWNLOAD NOW".

**FORTIFYFL**  
SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY REPORTING APP

FortifyFL is a suspicious activity reporting tool that allows you to instantly relay information to appropriate law enforcement agencies and school officials.

#FORTIFYFL  
GETFORTIFYFL.COM

Download on the App Store  
GET IT ON Google Play

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

DOWNLOAD NOW

Updated 07/14/25.