

Mount Ellis Elementary School Handbook

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Matthew 19:14

Mission Statement

Leading children to a love of learning, an active lifestyle, a heart of compassion and service, and an eternal friendship with Jesus.

About us

Mount Ellis Elementary School is a Pre K-8 school owned and operated by the Montana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. It is accredited by the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists Office of Education and the National Council for Private School Accreditation. All teachers meet accreditation requirements. Students are nurtured in a safe environment, where they are led to develop Christian character, strong intellect, critical thinking, useful skills, and motivation to service.

At MEE, dedicated teachers will work to encourage students and instill in them a lifelong love of learning. The students will be pointed toward Jesus Christ as the Master Teacher and true model. Students will respect themselves and others. They will strengthen their relationship with God and those around them.

Admission Policies

It is the policy of Mount Ellis Elementary to admit students of any race, gender, ethnic background, and religious belief who are willing to support the principles and regulations of the school.

Criteria for Admission

Families must:

- Be in agreement with the philosophy and policies of the school as outlined in this handbook.
- Desire to be part of a Christian community.
- Make satisfactory financial arrangements.
- Be in compliance with Montana law regarding attendance and immunizations.

Entrance Age

In harmony with Montana state law, a student must be at least five years of age by September 10 to enter kindergarten and six years of age by September 10 to enter first grade. Students that are four years of age and potty trained are welcome to enter our Pre-Kindergarten Program.

Process for Admission

Parents wishing to enroll their child must complete the following:

- Application for Admission
- Financial Clearance
- Immunization Records
- Birth Certificate
- Physical Clearance: new students (must be completed in the last nine months or by October 1)
- References (3): new students
- Transfer Request: new students

When enrollment is complete and the application has been accepted by the admissions committee, the applicant will receive an acceptance letter from MEE. Students are accepted on a nine-week trial basis. The school admissions committee will review all student admissions and has the final decision regarding acceptance.

The school reserves the right to evaluate any student before placement in grade level. Due to meeting times, this may not occur until after the admissions process has been completed. Students will not be accepted with a past debt or without an approved payment plan.

Asbestos

Federal law requires a public announcement to be given to school patrons regarding any asbestos material in the school. Mount Ellis Elementary School facilities have been checked by a certified asbestos inspector. A written plan is on file. This plan details the response actions that our school will take regarding asbestos containing materials found in our building. This document is available for those wishing to view it. The asbestos in the school is in a non-friable condition and presents no hazard to anyone at the present time. It will be checked at stated periodic intervals to ascertain any change in the material.

Attendance Policy

School begins at 8:00 a.m. and dismisses at 3:30 p.m. on Monday through Thursday. We have early dismissal on Friday at 12:30pm. **Please call the office by 8:15 AM if your child will not be at school that day.** The school secretary will call if we do not hear from you

by 8:15 AM.

Supervision begins at 7:30 a.m. and students must be picked up at 3:30 p.m. MEE offers an after school program for an extra fee from Monday to Thursday. Any student still on campus at 3:45 PM will automatically be enrolled into the after school program. Students that are not picked up by 5:30 pm will be charged \$1 per minute starting at 5:31. There is no after school care offered on half days or Fridays. Parents will be charged \$1 per minute/per child. starting at 12:46 PM.

School entrance doors will be locked, for security purposes. If your child arrives after 8:00 am ring the doorbell and a staff member will assist you. Regular attendance and being on time is critical to the success of the student. Your child is missing important education when they are not in class by 8:00 AM. **Daily attendance is taken by 8:05 AM.** Attendance records are maintained and serve as a legal document. Volunteers and visitors are asked to sign in and out at the front door where there are visitor badges available.

Only those on the approved list, through a text or those given written permission signed by the parent may pick up your child. Please keep your approved pick up list current with the office.

Calendar

A school calendar will be given to each family at the beginning of the school year during registration. It is also on the school webpage.

<https://mtelliselementary.adventistschoolconnect.org/> .Dates on this calendar have been approved by the school board. Parents will be notified of any changes.

Classroom Citizenship

Rules specific to the classroom will be made at the teacher's discretion with the support of the school board. Being a member of the classroom may mean helping to clean up the room at the end of each day or week. These duties may include: emptying trash vacuuming etc. Students will need to keep their areas neat, clean, and orderly. They are expected to keep their areas organized in such a way they may work productively and without distraction.

Cell phones are permitted but must be turned off and turned into the teacher at the beginning of the school day. The teacher will return cell phones at the end of the school day. Cell phones are not to be used for communication during the school day. All phone calls must be made through the office with permission. **The school does not assume responsibility for damage or loss of any items that are brought on campus and not turned in to the teacher.** The school staff reserves the right to inspect desks, backpacks, notebooks, lockers, and other possessions at any time without advance notice.

Code of Conduct

Mount Ellis Elementary expects children to develop respect for self, others, and especially God. This means that students and parents must all cooperate with the teacher and the school board concerning all rules and regulations.

Our discipline process is grounded on the fundamental principle of trust and endeavors to demonstrate the Biblical process of accountability, repentance, reconciliation, and restoration.

We expect students to accept responsibility for choices and follow the process for redeeming the damage caused by those choices. Problem-solving, face-to-face meetings, and suspensions are components of this process.

The goal of discipline is to restore trust, which is central to meaningful relationships. Certain issues may be referred to the school board. Consequences may include suspension and expulsion. Parents may request a hearing with the board.

Each case will be handled on an individual basis depending on the specific nature of the offense and always with the attitude of Christian concern. A conference will be held at the time of suspension or expulsion and before the suspended student will be readmitted to school.

The Principal has the authority to suspend a student at any time, until the staff and Principal have considered the case and given a recommendation to the school board for further action. Expulsion is at the sole discretion of the Principal in consultation with the school board.

Prevention of Verbal Abuse Towards Teachers by Parents

Policy Statement: At Mount Ellis Elementary, we are committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and conducive learning environment for all students, staff, and parents. Verbal abuse towards teachers by parents is unacceptable and detrimental to the well-being of our educational community. This policy outlines the guidelines and consequences for parents engaging in verbal abuse towards teachers.

Definition of Verbal Abuse: Verbal abuse is defined as any unwarranted and offensive language, comments, or behavior directed towards a teacher that is intended to demean, threaten, harass, or intimidate. Verbal abuse may include, but is not limited to, shouting, swearing, derogatory remarks, personal insults, or any form of communication that causes emotional harm or disrupts the learning environment.

Guidelines:

1. **Respectful Communication:** Parents are encouraged to communicate any concerns, questions, or feedback to teachers in a respectful and constructive manner. Open and respectful dialogue between parents and teachers is essential for the educational progress of students.
2. **Prohibited Behavior:** Parents shall not engage in any form of verbal abuse towards teachers. This includes both in-person and electronic communication (e.g., email, phone calls, social media) directed at school staff.
3. **Conflict Resolution:** In the event of a dispute or concern, parents are encouraged to follow the established channels for conflict resolution, such as scheduling meetings with teachers, school administrators, or participating in parent-teacher conferences.
4. **Privacy and Confidentiality:** All communication involving students, teachers, and parents should respect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals involved. Personal matters should be discussed privately and not in a public forum.

Consequences:

1. **Warning:** The first instance of verbal abuse by a parent towards a teacher will result in an official warning from the school administration. The warning will clearly outline the unacceptable behavior and the need to adhere to this policy.
2. **Parent-Teacher Conference:** If the verbal abuse continues, the school may request a parent-teacher conference with the principal and/or the superintendent to address the issues at hand and seek a resolution through constructive dialogue.
3. **Temporary Restriction of Access:** In cases of severe or persistent verbal abuse, the school reserves the right to temporarily restrict a parent's access to school premises and school-related events to protect the well-being of staff and students.
4. **Legal Action:** In extreme cases, where verbal abuse escalates to threats, harassment, or other unlawful behavior, the school may involve law enforcement or take legal action as necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of the school community.

Appeal Process: Parents who believe that they have been unjustly accused of verbal abuse may appeal the decision through a designated appeals process outlined by the school administration.

Review and Revision: This policy will be periodically reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure its effectiveness in maintaining a respectful and safe learning environment for all members of the school community.

By implementing and adhering to this policy, Mount Ellis Elementary aims to foster a positive and respectful atmosphere where parents, teachers, and students can collaborate effectively for the benefit of education and personal growth.

Communication

MEE desires clear, open communication between the school and home, using a variety of methods to attain that goal:

- Communication Folder (grades 1-2)
- Monthly calendar (ONLINE)
- Newsletters (Sunday Email)
- School website <https://mtelliselementary.adventistschoolconnect.org/>
- Classroom website with spelling lists and memory verses
- Email (first.last@mtelliselementary.org)
- Text to your cell phone (**sign up with school secretary**)

In an effort to maintain a work/home balance, teachers will adhere to following set hours of communication. **Hours of communication are between 7:30am-5:30pm.** If you attempt to contact teachers after those hours you may not receive a response until the following day.

Computer Use

All students are asked to take time with their parents to openly discuss, understand, and commit to the following guidelines for acceptable use of technology resources at school.

- Uphold the Christian standards of our school when I use any electronic equipment.
- Use computers, keyboards, printers, and digital cameras only with the supervision and permission of an adult.
- Use all equipment and networks carefully, and appropriately to avoid any damage or change to the computer system or its software.
- Do not change, delete, add to, or download any software.
- Respect others and agree not to open, copy, change, delete, or damage files or folders that are not mine.
- Keep my password and login name private and only use my own accounts.
- Never give out personal information over the internet.
- Only use permitted areas of the Internet.
 - Students are responsible for repair or replacement costs of damaged computers.

Through filtering devices, MEE will do all in its power to limit the availability of controversial and offensive materials on our system. We do not condone the use of such material by any student or staff member. The use of MEE's computer network and

internet access is a privilege and not a right. Inappropriate use will result in restriction or cancellation of access privileges.

Conflict Resolution

MEE school board, faculty, staff, parents and students are expected to face problem situations in the following manner:

- Initially, deal directly with the teacher/person involved. **Most problems are solved at this level.** Keep the matter confidential. Follow the pattern of sharing the problem only with those who are directly concerned.
- Please do not spread gossip. Advise the complainant to go directly to the individual or people involved.
- If the problem should persist, then it is appropriate to consult the principal.
- You may always use the contact form on the school website <https://mtelliselementary.adventistschoolconnect.org/> and this will go directly to the principal's email.

Contraband

The possession of firearms, pocket knives, fireworks, fire starting devices, and weapons in any form, on school property is prohibited. Toys of these descriptions are also prohibited unless specifically authorized by the classroom teacher. If a student discovers that they have accidentally forgotten about a contraband item, they need to turn it in to a teacher immediately. Disciplinary action will be taken unless prior authorization by school administration has been given. Violation of this rule can be subject to expulsion. We have a zero tolerance policy for alcohol, drugs, and tobacco on campus.

Curriculum

Mount Ellis Elementary takes pride in providing children with an intimately Christ-centered educational experience. We believe that students will discover an enthusiasm for both Christ and learning by implementing a spiritual curriculum that also prepares them to be an important part of our society.

Movies and multimedia at Mount Ellis Elementary will primarily be educationally based. It is our goal to make the best use of our children's time to advance their educational opportunities during school hours. Media that is shown will closely correspond with the subject matter being taught and will be pre-approved.

Each subject throughout the school day has a Christian perspective. Our commitment

is to teach these subjects in a manner that continually glorifies God, while developing necessary useful skills and practices.

Dress Code

In our dress, as in all things, it is our privilege to honor our Creator. What a person wears makes a statement about that person, as well as about the school they attend. Dress that is **neat, modest, and clean** will represent our school and demonstrate respect for ourselves, others, and God.

Clothing

- Weather appropriate (***we play outside – bring warm clothes***)
- Appropriately sized (***shorts and skirts need to be modest***)
- Low-cut necklines, tank tops with straps that are less than three fingers wide, and midriff-baring clothing are not appropriate for school wear.
- Shorts/skirts must be of modest length and appropriate for school and recess activities. The hem of shorts must reach a student's fingertips when they are standing with their arms at their sides. All skirts and dresses must be worn with shorts underneath to make them appropriate for active play.
- Please do not wear clothing with graphics or expressions that do not reflect the school's Christian standards.

Shoes

- Shoes must be worn at all times
- Shoes must be appropriate for the classroom and physical education activities (for example: no slippers, flip-flops, or heels)
- **During wet, muddy or snowy weather, students need appropriate footwear for outdoors and separate footwear for indoors.**

Other

- No rings, or dangling jewelry should be worn **at any school function**. This is considered a safety issue, and often results in an injury or ruined property. ● Sunglasses and hats/hoods may be worn outside only.
- For water and swimming activities; swimwear must be modest and cover the midriff.

The staff of Mount Ellis Elementary reserves the right to make interpretations and decisions relating to student dress.

Field Trips

Teachers plan field trips throughout the year to complement classroom curriculum. Parents are required to sign and return a permission slip for each off-campus trip or

activity. Parents are welcome to participate by providing transportation and chaperoning. Persons driving for field trips must give proof of adequate insurance and have completed "Sterling Volunteers". Children who are not currently enrolled in MEE need to make prior arrangements with the teacher. All handbook guidelines apply to student dress and conduct during off-campus activities.

Children 5 and under or less than 60 lbs must be restrained in approved child safety restraint. Parents of children meeting this criteria will be required to provide approved child safety restraints for any off-campus activity. Students six and over, or weighing more than 60 lb must use a seat belt. Please make sure your booster seat is properly labeled with the student's name.

Financial Policies

Annual Registration Fee

An annual registration fee is due for each student each year as part of a complete application. The non-refundable fee is charged to all students, regardless of entrance date. Entrance fees are due before school begins.

Financial Aid

It is our desire to provide an education to any child who wishes to attend MEE. If the cost of tuition is too great a financial burden, we will assist you in seeking financial aid. Financial aid paperwork may be obtained from the MEE treasurer.

Mount Ellis Elementary is supported by four sources of income:

- Tuition and payments from patrons

- Subsidies from Bozeman and Mount Ellis Seventh-day Adventist churches, and contributions from Belgrade and Livingston Seventh-day Adventist churches.

- Subsidies from the Montana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and the North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

- Donations

Harassment and Bullying

Mount Ellis Elementary is committed to providing a school environment free from harassment for all students. Everyone has the right to feel safe and free from teasing and intimidation at school. Harassment is inexcusable in all forms, and MEE works hard

to ensure a relationally-safe environment.

If someone does something that makes another person feel bad about who they are, it is considered harassment. If someone is bothering another person, either physically or verbally, that is harassment. Harassment/bullying behavior(s) may include, but are not limited to:

- Teasing
- Name-calling
- Unwanted physical contact
- Spreading rumors or lies (gossip, notes)
- Nasty, mean or obscene gestures
- Threatening gestures or statements
- Unkind remarks about a person's family, ethnicity, or gender
- Unkind remarks about a person's physical appearance or intelligence ●
- Actions or comments that make others feel unwelcome
- Forming a group to be used against another person for the purposes of intimidation and exclusion

If someone is bullying or harassing you, here are some things you can do:

- Tell the person that you don't like their behavior, and ask them to stop ●
- Walk away
- Get help from a teacher, school volunteer or other adult
- If the problem still doesn't end, talk to the principal about the problem. Talk to your parents and get their help and advice.

If harassment is reported and found to be true, there will be a disciplinary consequence. All incidents of harassment or bullying will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Home and School

The Home and School Association is MEE's parent organization. It serves to draw the home, church, and school closer together in a positive working relationship. Your Home and School Association is involved in many aspects of school life such as: fundraising, volunteer coordination, teacher appreciation, citrus sales, fall festival, school picnic, open house, yearbook, hot lunch and more.

Why should you get involved in Home and School:

- Studies show students who have parents that are involved in their education do better in school.
- You help decide where the fundraising money is used.

- You meet and work with other parents.
- You help Mount Ellis Elementary be the best it can be.

The Home and School Association will meet periodically throughout the school year to plan events. Meetings are kept well-organized and brief, so that busy parents are able to participate. Important decisions that affect students' experiences at school are made at these meetings.

Hot Lunch

For several years MEE has been fortunate to have enough parent volunteers to cook and serve hot lunch one day per week. This program is organized during the beginning of the school year when availability of volunteers is determined. Scheduling and menus will be sent home at that time. Your tuition includes this hot lunch program.

Medical Information

A parent must send a note if a student is physically limited in any way. If it is a continuing condition, a note from a physician is required.

MEE staff is authorized to administer oral medication to students during school hours, only after receiving parent permission. Prescription medication must be in the original container, appropriately labeled with the student's name, name of medication, time to be given, amount of dosage, and the physician's name and date. It must be accompanied by a written statement from the parent explaining dosage and method of administration.

Emergency medication, such as bee sting kits, epinephrine injectors, or medication for Asthma must be properly labeled and must include complete instructions provided by the physician for proper use. Parents must also sign a request for dispensation, which should accompany the medication.

All medications are to be picked up at the end of the dosage. If medications are not picked up by the end of the school year, they will be destroyed.

Illness

Students should stay home if symptoms of illness develop. Students may return to class once they have been free of diarrhea, vomiting, and fever for at least 24 hours without medication. These conditions are highly contagious, and it is our goal to prevent the spread of illness to other students. Parents will be asked to take their child home if symptoms develop while at school. All of these guidelines are in addition to what is required in the school COVID-19 guidelines.

Student Injury

Minor injuries will be treated with first aid supplies under the care of the teacher on duty. In cases of injury or sudden illness that prevents the student from participating fully in normal school activities, the parent will be asked to take the student home. In the case of serious injury or illness which requires immediate medical attention, emergency services will be contacted.

Student Accident Insurance

All students are covered by school accident insurance. The premium is paid from the student's entrance fee. A summary of this coverage is available to parents at the school office. Students are covered for injuries occurring during school and school-sponsored activities. This coverage is offered as secondary insurance that covers what the parents' insurance does not cover. There is no coverage for loss of personal property. Any accident or injury must be reported immediately to qualify for insurance coverage.

Pledges- Student and Parent

You will be asked to review and sign the following pledges at the beginning of the school year.

Student Pledge

I accept that my participation at Mount Ellis Elementary School is a privilege. I agree to abide by the standard of conduct and other regulations expected of each student enrolled in this school while I am attending. I will not give the impression to students, parents, or faculty that I am not in harmony with the goals, aims, and standards of this school.

Parent Pledge

I have read the handbook and am in agreement with the mission statement and guiding principles. I will actively support these, and the regulations in the handbook or any other regulation deemed necessary by the administration or school board.

I pledge to work with the school, not only to meet these goals, but also to maximize my child's educational experience. My financial obligation is clearly understood and I agree to pay my child's account each month, unless I arrange otherwise with the school administration or finance committee in advance.

School Board

Mount Ellis Elementary is operated on the local level by an elected school board, working under the general direction of the Montana Conference. The school board meets monthly and is open for all constituent members and parents to attend, except when in executive session. Items parents wish to have addressed should be presented to the Chairman at least one week in advance.

Special Needs

At MEE, student success is a top priority and teachers use many methods to reach that goal. Students with special needs (behavioral, academic, or emotional) may require the use of resources not offered at MEE. This takes a cooperative approach between parents, teachers, and special education personnel.

Examples of resources outside of MEE are, but not limited to, special education testing services, Individualized Education Plan implementation, counseling, behavior training, etc. **Students who have special needs may be asked to obtain these services as a condition for enrollment at MEE.** Services provided in this manner are aimed at being able to keep special needs students at MEE in a Christian environment while also providing the professional help needed for academic, behavioral, or emotional growth and success. In addition to assisting the student, these services provide support for the classroom teacher and the parents.

There may also be cases where a student's needs cannot be met at MEE, even with the added resources discussed above. MEE staff, in consultation with the school board or conference educational superintendent, will make that determination.

Visitors

Visitors are welcome at Mount Ellis Elementary. Everyone, especially parents, are welcome to come participate in or observe the classroom. Please check with the teacher in advance to schedule a mutually convenient time to visit. You must sign in at the office when you arrive on campus.

Volunteers

Volunteers are an important part of our school. All volunteers must successfully complete the Sterling Volunteers (ncsrisk.org) training and background check. This screening must be completed before an applicant can serve as a volunteer. Individuals who have committed physical or sexual abuse may not volunteer for any school-sponsored activity. For more information, please contact the school office.

Volunteer opportunities include tutoring, serving hot lunch, giving worship talks, helping with home and school projects, etc. Volunteer drivers and/or vehicle owners need to fill out a *Vehicle and Driver Form* before the school trip. We will need a copy of the

insurance card and driver's license.