



Inspire. Engage. Impact.

Mountain River School Preschool Handbook

2019 - 2020

www.mountainriverschool.org

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Welcome

Welcome to Mountain River School! We are pleased to have your family join our rich learning community. This handbook is made available to you and your child(ren) to serve as an easy reference as you seek to learn about Mountain River School (“MRS”). We ask that you take the time to review with your child(ren) the material contained in this document so that this information is familiar to you. The review of this information can supply you and your child(ren) with answers to questions about our school.

Mission

To inspire children’s lifelong passion for learning and cultivate healthy, compassionate, environmentally-conscious individuals who follow their dreams and contribute with conviction to the world.

Mountain River School’s Educational Philosophy

MRS believes that children must unfold to their fullest potential: emotionally; socially; intellectually; physically; creatively; physically; artistically; and spiritually (nonsectarian). Our approach honors all parts of a child’s development and offers opportunities to learn in a nurturing, learner-centered environment, focusing on core skills, self-awareness, and mastery of foundational curriculum and project-based learning.

As children learn about themselves as individuals and become part of a community, they learn to speak a language of kindness, respect, and compassion for all. Exposure to nature helps students explore the connection between all living things, drawing upon their own innate knowing, intuition, and empathy. We practice mindfulness daily and are committed to cultivating and deepening our own awareness, personal relationships, and connections with community.

Mountain River School believes in developing the following core values to help cultivate strong global citizens:

Communication: We believe that open communication leads to collaborative practice.

Authenticity: We lead an honest and heart-centered life.

Mindfulness: We build awareness of mind, body, and heart.

Inclusivity: We strive to understand diverse perspectives.

Creativity: We foster a culture of imaginative thought and risk-taking.

Stewardship: We care for people and place.

Introduction

Mountain River School’s Preschool program was established in the Fall of 2019, and is a welcome addition to our private, non-profit K-8 elementary school. Mountain River School’s preschool license is renewed annually based on state regulations administered by the Child Development Division of the Department of Children and Families of the Vermont State Agency of Human Services. State regulations

set forth minimum requirements. MRS reserves the right to impose stronger guidelines, if appropriate. Copies of those regulations are available at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/laws-regs/childcare>. If you have a concern or complaint, please contact the Director. If your concern is not resolved, please contact The Board of Directors. Parents may also contact the State of Vermont Childcare Consumer Line with any questions or concerns: 1-800-649-2642

Preschool programming

The MRS preschool program serves children between the ages of 3 and 5 years. The staff/child ratio may not exceed 1:10 and group size may not exceed 20 children. Children are offered snacks, provided by their parents, twice per day and eat lunch at approximately 12:00pm. Children begin nap at approximately 1:00pm and wake up no later than 2:30pm.

Daily Schedule

8:00am-3:00pm – Full day students

8:00am-12:00pm – Half day students

7:30am-8:00am – Early-care

3:00pm-5:00pm – After-care

Daily Activities:

Upon arrival-wash hands, choose a daily job, make your choice for morning book, answer morning question, etc).

7:30-8:30-Morning Activities (either in the classroom or in playspace)

8:30-9:00- Morning Meeting (greeting, topic conversation, calendar, weather, orientation to the days activities)

9:00-10:00- Investigations and Explorations (indoors or out)

10:00-10:30- Hand washing and snack

10:30-11:00- Open explore time

11:00-12:00-Outdoor Explore in the fenced in play yard

12:00-12:30-Lunch

12:30-1:00- Opportunities for listening to a relaxing story, poetry, music, and rest

1:00-2:15- Outdoor “off campus” explorations

2:15-2:45- Snack

2:45-3:00 End of day meeting, transition home

Child Growth and Development

At MRS we know early childhood is a crucial aspect of an individual’s development and children need developmentally appropriate activities and experiences to foster their growth. Children deserve attention and attunement during this period in their lives, both at home and while at preschool. At MRS we believe that all children have their own unique style of learning that is integral to their development. A critical aspect of understanding a child’s learning is to observe and recognize each child’s individuality in order to provide an environment and experiences that foster all areas of development.

Developmental goals aim to:

- Create positive self-concepts
- Self-advocate •
- Enhance social skills
- Encourage emotional regulation
- Consistently think, reason, question, and experiment
- Be respectful & aware of individual diversity
- Increase autonomy by encouraging independence, self-sufficiency, initiative, and decision-making skills
- Make healthy nutritional choices
- Getting an adequate amount of physical activity

An understanding of child growth and development is integral to providing the appropriate preschool environment. MRS utilizes Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) as a guide.

Curriculum

Mountain River School adheres to an educational model known as place-based education. Place-based education connects learning with communities to increase *student engagement, student outcomes, and community impact*. At Mountain River School, we use place-based education with all programs and students. By emphasizing real-world learning experiences and a hands-on approach, students are given the opportunity to connect to the culture, economy, and ecology of local places. By providing a connection to the local, students develop a better understanding of the world and become a more thoughtful and active citizens in their own community and beyond. Mountain River School believes that by implementing place-based education local learning will inspire global citizenship.

Unlike many schools with a prescribed *scope and sequence* (a set curriculum that articulates how and when each topic should be studied), Mountain River School uses an emergent approach that values the interests of the student and the teacher in many domain areas. All students **will** learn the knowledge, skills, and dispositions articulated in the **progression**, but the experiences will be designed by the teacher and students to be relevant, engaging, and contextualized. What happens one year may not happen the next, and yet all students will still move through the appropriate progression.

Place-based Education Model

Our model puts the six core elements of place-based education principles at the center of the school experience. This model is supported by the following pillars:

Differentiated Pathways that align with our domains of learning and core skills.

Habits of Success where leadership and self-awareness proficiencies play an equivalent role to other knowledge and skills - the whole child matters.

Learner-centered projects serve as the core integrating methodology to support our place-based concepts.

Mastery is developed through a proficiency-based assessment system where advancement is based on demonstration of mastery rather than time period.

Domains of Learning & Proficiencies

Student progress is addressed through a holistic approach based on our seven domains of learning. The following domains are assessed for each individual child through a proficiency-based model.

Leadership & Self-Awareness

We strive to cultivate an environment that fosters effective communication and collaboration, lifelong learning, meaningful relationships, self-awareness and advocacy. Class sizes are kept small and we strive to integrate multi-age learning opportunities. Differentiated lessons tailored for the various learning styles/needs also help to promote these skills.

Language & Literacy

Strong foundational skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing, and analysis and interpretation are critical to the work that we do at Mountain River School. With *Lucy Calkins Units of Study* providing a foundation for our educators, students are provided reading and writing instruction through workshop models, supplemental resources, and differentiated strategies.

Science

Students are exposed to rich science processes and practices through their exposure to life science, environmental science, and physical science, which are embedded within our project-based, interdisciplinary “exploratories”.

Mathematics

Using Singapore Math as the foundation of our math instruction, students are exposed to foundational mathematical concepts and skills through differentiated, self-paced instruction.

Health & Wellness

We strive to create a healthy school environment, which promotes physical and social-emotional health and wellness and healthy living. Our students are exposed to an abundance of outdoor time to promote movement and exercise as well as outdoor intelligence, safe and smart technology usage (in the Forests program), and healthy food choices.

Creative Expression

At MRS, we believe strongly in creative expression and intertwining art through all subject matter. Arts integration encourages teachers and students to embed art in all daily practices. We believe that art should be experiential, evolving, collaborative,

problem-solving, and reflective. Arts integration is personally authentic and easily differentiated which honors children's passion for learning and inspiring curiosity.

Community & Culture

Our global studies explorations review the areas of civics, economics, geography & environments, historical perspectives, and sense of place. These units are embedded within our project-based, interdisciplinary learning "exploratories".

Approaching Assessment

Mountain River School believes that the student, teacher, and the community bring rich and varied context to the learner experience. In this regard, we use a proficiency-based learning and assessment approach to provide *context* and *relevance*, while still ensuring a high *fidelity to learner outcomes*. We see ourselves on the leading edge of this approach due to our *place-based and learner-centered* philosophy.

Clear learning expectations are outlined on the *learner outcome progression* for each of the seven domains of learning. As students progress through Mountain River School, they will be expected, under the guidance of our faculty, to demonstrate mastery of learning targets. Mountain River School documents and reports on this learning in real time to students, parents and teachers.

What Does This Look Like at MRS?

Mountain River School students will be engaged in a personalized learning journey to learn mathematics and literacy most mornings. Students will progress at their own pace, with guidance from teachers, occasionally working in groups, mini-classes, and other structures to ensure progress. Resources used will vary based on the student. The rest of the day is filled with project experiences. Students or teachers come up with appropriate driving questions which lead to authentic learning experiences. Teachers document learning and link learning targets to the projects.

Communities & The Outdoors

We look at communities by placing the core principles of place-based education at the center of center of the work we do:

Local to Global Connections & Community as Classroom

Our communities are our classrooms as we create "learner ecosystems" with the local-to-global context.

Learner-centered

Our learner-centered school allows students to develop agency, voice and choice.

Inquiry-based and Design Thinking Approaches

By understanding what is in our communities (through observations, data collection, questioning, predictions, etc.), we begin to understand our impact and how we can contribute toward making our community a better place.

Interdisciplinary

Engaging in projects and developing meaningful student experiences are central to the work that we do at MRS.

MRS believes that using our local surroundings and the natural world as an extension of the classroom is important to developing students as lifelong learners. Students are encouraged to create, explore, and collaborate during both, outdoor time and class time. Our school's location allows us to cultivate a passion and interest in learning through inquiry, observation, design, and experience. We also encourage students to engage in safe, responsible, and fun outdoor activities. Developing an "outdoor intelligence" while participating in these activities is crucial.

Technology Policy

Mountain River School believes in the integration of technology in grades 3-8 that aligns with our place-based educational principles. We strive to cultivate a respectful learning environment where technology promotes active learning and enhances student growth in a teacher-supported capacity. While students are allowed to bring their personal computer to school, the network, the internet, and personal computers will remain under the control and supervision of MRS, which retains the right to monitor all computer and internet activity by students. Before a student is allowed to use their computer on MRS premises, the student and the student's parent(s) must sign a computer/internet access acknowledgement, which will be retained by the school and signed yearly. Student computer privileges may be revoked if a student violates this acknowledgement.

Religious Activities

Mountain River School doesn't subscribe to or practice any religious activities.

Nondiscriminatory Policy

The Mountain River School welcomes diversity among students, staff, and volunteers and does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, gender expression, marital status, sexual orientation, military status, or national and ethnic origin in its admission or hiring policies, tuition assistance decisions, or any other aspect of its educational program.

The Mountain River School admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our staff, students, families, volunteers, and visitors.

Supporting Children with Special Needs

MRS strives to meet each child's needs. Our preschool curriculum is adapted to provide all children opportunities to participate in all activities that are appropriate to their age and development. If a parent of a child with an identified disability voluntarily provides copies of the child's Individual Education Plan (IEP), Children's Integrated Services (CIS) One Plan, or the equivalent; staff shall maintain this document in the child's file and review with all staff working with that child. Activities shall be adapted for children with disabilities to reach the goals described in the child's IEP, CIS One Plan, or the equivalent.

Preschool Staff Qualifications

Director

The preschool Director has at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field, experience working with young children, and certification in first aid and CPR. State licensing regulations also require continuing education annually.

Teachers

MRS hires the best-qualified teachers with degrees in early childhood education, a related field or an equivalent amount of education and experience. All teachers have training and experience in early childhood education. They receive additional training annually including first aid and CPR.

Every year, our staff completes a required number of professional development hours to stay up-to-date on best practices in education. In addition, our teachers strive to embody a holistic approach to living. They truly love and understand children, child development, and are passionate about the MRS philosophy.

Background Checks

MRS requires at least two references and a state background check for all job candidates. All employees must have no history of child abuse or criminal activity. The following persons may not operate, reside, be present at, or be employed at MRS:

- Persons convicted of fraud, a felony, an offense involving violence, unlawful sexual activity, or other bodily injury to another person including, but not limited to, abuse, neglect, or sexual activity with a child
- A person found by a court to have abused, neglected or mistreated a child, elderly person, disabled person, or animal
- Adults or children who have had a report of abuse or neglect substantiated against them under Chapters 49 and 69 of Title 33 Vermont Statutes Annotated

Communication Between Home and School

It is of utmost importance that you notify the teachers of any changes of address, phone numbers (at home and at work), caregivers, and emergency contact information. Likewise, teachers need to have up-to-date information relating to your child's health. Sharing information about allergies, illness, asthma-like conditions and medications (both prescription and over the counter) will allow us to provide optimal care for your child.

School-Wide (Non-emergency) Information:

All school-wide information, which includes but is not limited to important dates, changes to the schedule, and updates, will be communicated to parents through email and Google Calendars by Amanda Collis. Any questions concerning this type of information should be directed to her by email; amanda@mountainriverschool.org.

Child-Specific Information

- **Hopes and Dreams Meeting**
 - This meeting will be held in early October with the student, parents, and teachers. The purpose of this meeting is to discover the student's hopes and dreams for the year, and strategize on how to work towards those hopes and dreams. Parents will also have a chance to share their hopes and dreams for their child.

- **Parent-Teacher Conferences**
 - These conferences will be held twice a year, in November and March, with the parents and teacher. Prior to conferences, parents will receive a student learner profile documenting their progress. Conferences will be a time for the parents and teacher to discuss the profile with more depth. Teachers will also be able to answer any questions pertaining to the year thus far.

- While we strongly encourage families and teachers to use open and honest means of communication, we also recognize additional perspectives and support are necessary to work together for the betterment of the child and school. **If you have a question, concern, or comment please contact your child's teacher.**

- When *problems and concerns* arise, we ask that you hold these conversations for a time when other children and parents are not around. Please communicate with the teacher about any changes at home or within the family (i.e. parent on a trip, a family member in the hospital, sick grandparent). These changes can affect your child's emotions and behaviors, and it is useful for staff to be aware of these developments. MRS will always respect your privacy.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality plays a vital role in promoting respect for every individual and fostering a strong community. MRS takes confidentiality very seriously and makes every effort to protect each family's privacy. Communications among staff and parents about children should be kept confidential at all times. MRS recommends that conversations about a child, a child's behavior,

or an incident should be conducted in private, away from the child and other members of the MRS community. Discussions in the common areas should be kept to a minimum. If a parent has a question or concern, we suggest that this parent first contact the teacher via email or in person to arrange a time to discuss.

Please note that MRS is required to maintain records as a Recognized School with the State of Vermont Department of Education. The following records will be kept on file and are accessible to the Department of Education when requested:

- Attendance records for each pupil enrolled or regularly attending classes
- Yearly assessments of students progress
- Current immunization records or exemptions for all students (18V.S.A. §1121)

Admissions and Enrollment

MRS admits students of any race, color, and national and ethnic origin. If parents have any major educational, social, or developmental concerns about their child entering MRS, parents need to discuss these concerns with the Admissions Committee at the beginning of the admissions process. It is important that a positive and appropriate learning environment be established for each child. In an effort to create the best fit for your child and family, MRS reserves the right to place children in classes by age, gender, and developmental level. MRS does not discriminate in administration of its educational or admissions policies. MRS reserves the right to deny admission to its program if it is not an optimal fit for a child or family.

Admissions Process

- General inquiry will be received by admissions@mountainriverschool.org.
- Initial tour will take place with prospective parents on Wednesdays after community meeting.
- Student will come in to visit the school and spend time with class and educators.
- Parents will submit application and current teacher recommendation form.
- Enrollment begins as follows.

Procedures for Enrollment and Withdrawal

Enrollment:

- MRS has rolling admissions; applications are taken on a first-come, first-served basis.
- In instances when multiple applications are received at the same time, for the same classroom, for the same school year, and all other variables being equal (fit, etc), priority is given to applicants with siblings already enrolled. **This policy does not push rolling admissions applications of siblings to the top of the waitlist.** Sibling priority in rolling admissions only applies to applications received at the same time, with all other variables being equal.
- Class placement is made on the basis of age, gender and appropriate fit.
- The initial deposit is required to hold a spot for an enrolling student, and is non-refundable.

- The initial deposit will be held and applied at the end of the school year. It will be applied first to overdue balances and then to the remaining tuition owed on the last invoice.
- Students may not start the school year until the first month tuition is paid and all enrollment paperwork is complete.

Withdrawal:

- If a student withdraws after July 1st, we require a 90 day notice to withdraw your child.
- If withdrawal happens in less than 90 days from written notification, the family is responsible for tuition payments for 90 days after the written notification.
- If a child is withdrawn, there will be no refund after tuition has been paid.
- The registration fee and deposit are not refundable.

PLEASE NOTE: On occasion, our program is not an optimal fit for a child or family. MRS is a school that will make every effort to work collaboratively with families to resolve any challenges that arise. Additional resources may need to be used to support a child’s success in the school environment. If, after all reasonable efforts are exhausted, and the problem cannot be resolved, MRS reserves the right to dismiss a child from the program.

Required Forms for Enrollment

These forms must be on file before a child attends class.

1. Student Enrollment Form
2. Student Emergency Information Form
3. Student Information Form
4. Immunization Records
5. General Authorization & Consent Form
6. Acknowledgement of Policies and Procedures in Handbook
7. Medication Authorization Form
8. Tuition Agreement Form
9. Photo Release Form

Tuition

Tuition payments for each month are due on the 15th of the preceding month, as noted in the Enrollment Agreement, whether or not your child is in attendance or school is in session.

A late fee of \$50.00 will be charged if payment is received after the 20th of the month.

There will be a \$40.00 fee for any returned check.

The first payment for September is due by August 15th.

Tuition can be paid annually, bi-annually, quarterly, or monthly:

- One payment due on August 15, 2018
- Two payments due on August 15, 2018 and January 15, 2019
- Four payments due on August 15 and November 15, 2018; February 15 and May 15, 2019

- Ten monthly payments due on the 15th of each month August 2018-May 2019
- MRS reserves the right to terminate enrollment should an account become overdue.
- If a returning student has not fulfilled their tuition agreement by the end of the school year, MRS reserves the right to not hold the student's spot for the following year unless an agreement with the Board of Directors has been made.

Holidays

MRS closes for holidays and in-service days. Please see school calendar for this year's closings. Parents are required to pay for vacations, holidays, and in-service days if they fall on days their child is enrolled. For staffing purposes, parents are asked to notify MRS two weeks prior to taking a vacation.

In-Service Days

MRS staff has several in-service days throughout the year. These can be found on the MRS calendar at the beginning of the year. In-service days are for teachers to attend conferences and workshops, as well as plan curriculum. If there are changes to in-service days, where possible, parents would be given at least 30 days notice of additional changes.

Add a Day Policy

Families who attend four days or less a week may request to add an additional day if needed. The additional day will cost 1.5 times the daily rate. Parents will be required to request an additional day in writing no less than two weeks prior to the day needed. Any request not made in writing will be denied. MRS will review the request and make a decision based on availability of space and staffing. Parents will be notified within one week of the request. If an additional day is consistently requested, it is at the discretion of the Director to ask the family to become full time or pick up the extra day permanently. For example, if a family has requested an extra day two or more times per quarter, MRS will ask the family to add this day permanently. If the family declines to become full time or add the additional day permanently, MRS reserves the right to deny any future requests.

Day to Day Operations

Clothing & Personal Belongings

At Mountain River School children's play and learning is creative, colorful and dynamic. This learning unfolds within an educational environment that empowers children to be conscious of issues of commercialism and violence. To best support this vision, we respectfully request that children be sent to school with personal belongings and in clothing that is mindful of this and avoids depictions of the aforementioned.

- Each child has a cubby for outerwear and other supplies they will need for outdoors
- Please send children dressed for active and participatory play in clothing that can get dirty and with sturdy, protective shoes. Comfortable shoes for walking and climbing are essential.

- Except for extreme weather conditions, we go outside daily. Please be sure that your child has appropriate clothing, especially boots, gloves or mittens, a hat, a warm jacket, snow gear, and rain gear.
- We also ask that perfumes and body sprays are not used before or during school as it can affect children with chemical sensitivity and asthma.
- Please provide your child with a pair of inside shoes that stay at school to be worn in the classroom each day.
- Please provide your child with two extra set of clothes that can be left at school, or have them available in their backpacks. Each child should have at least two sets of seasonal clothes that fit – pants, shirts, underwear, socks. Please label clothing with the child’s name.
- Please provide sunscreen and bug-spray when necessary, as MRS does not supply this.
- Soiled clothes are bagged in plastic and placed in a child’s cubby. Parents are asked to take them home for laundering as soon as possible.
- All children who nap need to bring a crib-sized sheet to cover vinyl floor mats and a blanket. They also may have a small pillow and/or a soft cuddly toy.
- Parents are asked to take home nap sheets and blankets for weekly washing
- If children want to bring items from home to share, the following are encouraged: books, nature items, craft items, or something your child made. With the exception of nap items, children are discouraged from bringing toys, electronic devices, cell phones, or other non-essential items to school.

Lost and Found

Lost and Found is located in the mudroom cubby area. Parents and children are encouraged to check for missing items and to put names on all personal items that comes to school. Items that are unmarked and unclaimed may be donated to a charitable organization.

The last Friday of every month will be “cubby clean out day”. We will put all lost and found items out. If they are not claimed by the end of the month all items left will be donated.

Note: Mountain River School is not liable for any lost, ruined or damaged personal items.

Lunch and Snacks

- ***We ask all students to bring in a reusable plate and utensils to keep at school.*** Our hope is to reduce waste such as plastic and paper. Classrooms will have a bus bucket to store dirty dishes. Students will be tasked with washing these dishes daily.
- Parents should send lunch, a morning and afternoon snack, and a water bottle daily. Filtered water is available to refill water bottles as needed.
- Please place an ice pack in your child’s lunch box if there are any perishable items.
- Make sure to label your child’s lunch box & water bottle clearly.
- MRS encourages parents to promote good eating habits by sending in nutritious items for lunch. Please avoid sending juice, chocolate, candy, dessert, or other sugary items.
- Please include any necessary utensils and a cloth napkin in your child's lunch box.

- Trash-free lunch: encourages children to “pack out what they pack in.”
- We strongly encourage the use of low impact packaging (for example, being mindful of plastic bag use).
- Please let your child’s teacher of any food allergies your child may have.
- Several areas at MRS will be **designated as nut-free areas if needed**.

Birthdays

We enjoy honoring each child in the classroom through a simple birthday celebration that represents your child’s journey through the years, as he or she circles around the sun to represent each year of life. Your teacher will ask you to bring a picture of your child from each year of life to share, and we invite you to join us for this celebration. We ask that you refrain from sending in “sweet” treats to school and instead bring in your child’s favorite healthy treat.

We respectfully ask that parents not distribute birthday party invitations at school, unless all of the children are invited. It can be very painful for a child to discover that she or he is not invited to a birthday party, even if the children in question do not seem to be close friends.

Arrival/Tardiness/Dismissal

Arrival

Morning drop-off is between 8:00-8:30am, unless arrangements have been made to attend early-care from 7:30-8:00am. When you arrive at school with your child, please assist the child with clothing and belongings. State regulations require that children wash their hands with soap and water upon arrival at MRS. Children must be signed in and out on the attendance sheet on a daily basis. In the event of any emergency, attendance sheets are used to determine if all children are safely out of the building. Please be sure to deliver the child to a teacher before leaving MRS. If drop-off time is particularly difficult for a child, the parent and teacher should work to ease that transition.

Pick-Up

Afternoon pick-up is **by 3:00 p.m.**, unless arrangements have been made to attend after-care from 3:00-5:00pm.

Please be mindful of being on time. Contact your student’s classroom teacher immediately if there is an unforeseen issue that arises that may affect drop-off or pick-up times. **There is a late pickup fee of \$5 per 15 minutes late.**

Authorized pick-up

A child may only leave MRS with a legal guardian, unless a MRS teacher is notified otherwise. If the parents are legal guardians then a child shall be released to either parent unless there is a court order which prohibits release to a particular parent. A copy of the court order shall be at MRS. A child shall be released only to persons authorized by the legal guardian.

If your child is to be picked up by someone other than a parent or the “persons authorized to pick-up child” (listed on your child’s *Student Enrollment Form*), you must notify the teacher by

email or written note before 2:30 p.m. that day, in each instance. Please include the person's full name and contact number and inform this person that MRS will require proof of identification before releasing your child.

In the event of an emergency, a parent may contact the student's classroom teacher to give verbal permission for his or her child to go home with someone else. You will be asked to verify information on the *Emergency Form* in order for us to be assured that MRS staff is speaking to the parent. Teachers document emergency calls and information regarding the identity of the person authorized to pick up the child.

Remember, anytime you are in the building or on the property with your child, you assume responsibility for your child's safety and behavior. Teachers cannot be responsible while parents visit with one another or with a teacher. If you need help from a teacher in easing your child's transition to and from school, please be sure to ask. Teachers are often reluctant to involve themselves in parent/child interactions without being asked. As with all other matters, let us keep the lines of communication open.

Please, never leave your child alone inside or outside of the building. Do not leave any child unattended in a vehicle.

Absence

Students should always be in attendance unless they are ill or for reasons of a personal nature. Please contact your child's teacher by 9 am via email if your child(ren) will be absent or late.

Nap and Quiet Time

Nap and quiet time is an opportunity for all children to relax. To help children rest, teachers dim lights and play soft music. Teachers provide children who do not rest with quiet activities such as books or puzzles. To avoid disrupting other resting children, parents who need to pick up their children during naptime should make arrangements with their child's teacher.

Field Trips

Walking Field Trips

Exploring and learning outside are a critical part of the MRS preschool experience. This outdoor learning and exploration occurs daily and includes walking field trips on our beautiful 228 acre campus. At enrollment, parents are asked to complete a form allowing teachers to take children on walking field trips.

Off-Campus Field Trips

Other field trips involving vehicular transportation require specific permission slips. Parents shall give written permission to allow their child(ren) to participate in these field trips. This written permission shall be retained in each child's file.

Parent Visitation

Parents are welcome to visit at any time during the day as long as their visit is not deemed disruptive or difficult for their child. Parents are encouraged to visit with their child in the early phases of their time in the classroom to ease the transition, if necessary. The parent and teacher can decide the length and duration of those initial visits.

Health and Illness

Health Requirements

MRS ensures that our environment and practices support children's health and safety. We are required by law to obtain documentation that each preschool student has had the following:

- A general health examinations within forty-five (45) days of enrollment. Documentation shall include information regarding any health conditions and medications that may impact the care of the child.
- Immunizations: MRS is required to maintain documentation of each child's current immunization status. Immunization records shall include the immunization administered and the date of each immunization. The immunization record should be updated after each additional immunization has been received. If an enrolled child is in the process of complying with immunization requirements in accordance with the Vermont recommended immunization schedule, documentation in the child's file shall include the required Vermont Department of Health form. If a child has not had a required immunization due to a Vermont allowed exemption, documentation in the child's file shall include the required Vermont Department of Health form. Required immunizations:
http://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016/11/ID_IZ_CCP_cc_i mm_schedule.pdf
- The licensee shall submit a Vermont Child Care Immunization Report at least once every 365 days to the Vermont Department of Health, Immunization Office as required by 18 V.S.A. §§ 1120 - 1129

Hand Washing

Staff and children are required to wash their hands:

- Upon arrival each day;
- Before they eat, prepare or handle food;
- Before and after handling raw meat;
- Before feeding children;
- After toileting;
- After cleaning;
- After handling animals; and
- After outdoor play

Proper handwashing procedures will be posted in sink areas.

Drinking Water

MRS participates in the State of Vermont's program testing for lead in the drinking water of schools and child care facilities. Since we are new construction, we will test our water as soon as our system is complete.

No Smoking

Smoking is prohibited on MRS property and at all MRS functions.

Illness

If your child is showing signs of any illness, it is best that he or she stays home. All children and staff stay healthier when sick people stay at home. Common sense must prevail in the case of colds, which can range from a mild case of sniffles to a full-blown sinus infection or deep cough. We understand how rest is important for regaining health. Please email your child's teacher, as well as call the school and let us know if your child will be staying home due to illness.

We use the STUDENT ENROLLMENT FORM to contact parents or another designated adult if your child develops symptoms of illness while at school. We will allow your child to rest in a quiet, comfortable, spot until he/she can be picked up. Please pick your child up within an hour of being contacted by MRS staff.

If one or more of the following symptoms is present in your child (or they have a temperature higher than 100 degrees axillary with symptoms), we will call you to pick up your child:

- Loss of appetite
- Nausea or vomiting
- Red, pink, or crusted eyes
- Stomach
- Earache
- Diarrhea
- Rash/infection of skin
- Pale or flushed face
- Headache
- Thick or greenish mucus from nose
- Cough
- Loss of energy/decrease in activity/falling asleep
- Sore throat

IF YOUR CHILD IS NOT WELL ENOUGH TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE DAILY SCHEDULE, PLEASE KEEP YOUR CHILD AT HOME.

THE 24 HOUR RULE: Please make sure of the following before your child returns to school:

Fever free: A child should be fever free (under 100 degrees) for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medicine

Antibiotic timeline: A child should be on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning to school

Diarrhea free: A child should be diarrhea free for 24 hours

Parents must notify Amanda Collis (amanda@mountainriverschool.org) immediately if a child:

- Is diagnosed with any **communicable diseases** including strep throat, pink eye, head lice, pinworms, or any other of the diseases common to a school environment. The notification is important so that MRS can inform families to be on the lookout for symptoms. Please remember that MRS will not release the name of the child or family involved. An email would read: "There has been a case of _____ reported"
- Has any **allergies** or if you have any concerns about any aspect of your child's health.
- Is taking **medication**, as medicine may affect your child's behavior.

Medications

Parents are asked to make every effort to administer all medications outside MRS. If this is not possible, the parent must fill out a medication form so a qualified teacher may administer medication.

Vermont State Regulations require the following concerning medications:

Prescription Medications

- All medications shall be inaccessible to children.
- Written parental permission shall be obtained before administering medication, stating the name of the medication, the potential side effects, dosage, the date and time to be given, how the medication is to be given (mouth, ear), and whether or not prescription medication is given to a child. The permission form specifies medication that needs to be given.
- MRS shall keep a record of all prescribed medications given. The date, name of medication, dosage, time given and identity of the teacher who gave the medication shall be included in this record. These records shall be kept for one year. All medications given shall be in their original containers, clearly labeled with the child's name, dosage, medication name and schedule.

Non-Prescription Medications

Written parental permission shall be obtained before non-prescription oral medication is given to a child. Parents shall be notified before non-prescription oral medications are given. Written general permission shall be obtained from parents prior to the application of non-prescription ointments, creams, sunscreen, insect repellent, and other topically applied ointment and lotion. Such general permission shall be updated annually

Commitment to Conservation and Sustainability

At Mountain River School we are committed to conservation and sustainability. All members of the school community are asked to monitor energy and water consumption in all school spaces and participate in carpools and bus use, walk or bike when possible, compost and recycle waste, and use environmentally responsible products and paperless communication, including email. In

addition, we have a trash-free lunch policy encouraging children and families to “pack out what they pack in.” These actions help us to understand our environmental, community and economic impacts and make informed decisions regarding energy use, resource consumption and waste.

Safety

Fire Drills

As required by law, monthly fire drills are conducted at MRS. All children and guests present are expected to participate in these drills.

Safe Space Drills

As required by law, every other month, Safe Space drills are conducted at MRS. All children and guests present are expected to participate in these drills.

School Closures & Delays

MRS makes every effort to be open. School closures and delays are made to assure the safety of our children. You must make your own judgment about driving in hazardous weather situations. If bad weather begins and you wish to pick your child up early, please feel free to do so.

Parents will be charged tuition on a day MRS is closed due to inclement weather. Parents will be charged if a child is kept home on a day MRS remains open despite inclement weather.

***MRS reserves the right to close due to local power outages, snow removal, no telephone, no heat, child-teacher ratios don't meet state regulations, inclement weather or other circumstances which may affect our ability to operate.** As a general rule, the decision to close because of snow or other emergency is in accordance with the Lamoille South Supervisory Union. **An effort will be made to contact <https://vab.org/school-closings/> and parents through email, contingent upon power. Please make sure that your email is up-to-date by contacting MRS. In the event of an unexpected early dismissal, parents will be contacted by MRS. If there is a two-hour delay, drop off would be between 10:00-10:30 AM, with school resuming at 10:30 AM.**

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

In accordance with the State of Vermont, the staff at MRS is required to report any cases of suspected child abuse or neglect within 24 hours of either receiving a report of, or suspicion of, abuse. Reports are made to the Agency of Human Services, Department of Children and Families office in Waterbury (1-800-649-5285). Parents will always be notified of our concerns unless we feel it may jeopardize the safety of the child.

Preventing Child Abuse

MRS takes its responsibility for child safety very seriously. To that end, it has policies in place to safeguard all children in its care. They include:

- An open-door rule whereby parents are always welcome to visit their children during the day without prior notice and observe in the classrooms.

- All documentation related to a specific child, required by licensure rules, shall be made available to the parent(s) of that child within five (5) business days from the time of a request.
- Background checks on all staff upon hire, and as required by the State of Vermont.
- Not permitting staff to be alone with a child in a closed room.
- Training teachers to listen to what children say and to recognize clues that a child might be in danger.
- Procedures for staff to follow should there be any question of inappropriate conduct.

Prevent Child Abuse Vermont is an excellent resource for parents: <https://www.pcavt.org/>. Or call the Parents' Helpline 1-800-CHILDREN (1-800-244-5373).

Harassment, Hazing, Student Conduct and Weapons

In accordance with the State of Vermont, MRS maintains official school policies pertaining to harassment, hazing, student conduct and weapons being brought to our school. These policies are available for review upon request.

Emergency Preparedness

Emergency Planning

MRS maintains a written Emergency Response Plan to respond to a full range of emergencies both natural and man-made. Our complete plan includes how we will address and manage the following situations and responsibilities:

- Evacuations or other emergencies such as leaving the premise and lockdown situations;
- Specific concerns related to the location of the program;
- Notifying the local authorities of the emergency;
- A system for notifying the parents of the emergency;
- Notifying the local emergency planning committee regarding the location of MRS and using the committee as a resource in emergency planning for the program;
- A system of identifying the children and staff present at the time of the emergency and maintaining knowledge of their whereabouts;
- A system for handling infants, toddlers and children with special needs;
- An established evacuation meeting location within walking distance of MRS;
- A system to account for all children and staff at the evacuation meeting place;
- A process for relocation if necessary including safe transportation;
- A system for shelter in place if the staff and children present need to remain at MRS for an extended period; and
- Staff chain of command and individual staff roles and responsibilities, (if applicable) during emergencies.

All MRS staff are trained on the Emergency Response Plan and are aware of where to find the written plan. The Emergency Response Plan is reviewed and updated at least once every 365 days. Parents are encouraged to review the Emergency Response Plan. **Please note:** children would be taken to Morrisville library if evacuated from MRS.

Restorative Justice Policy

MRS is committed to providing a safe and positive learning environment for all children. We encourage children to develop social skills that reflect kindness, empathy, compassion, love, respect and healthy communication with all members of the school community. Teachers continuously model appropriate language and actions while also guiding positive interactions among children and adults. Nurturing these social skills is a central component of MRS, and it helps children grow as successful, lifelong learners and citizens.

When a problem arises, the teacher relies on the 4 R's to teach peacemaking skills that feel safe, while honoring all voices and perspectives. The four R's include "Remove," Reflect", "Repair", and "Rejoin." A child or children will be **removed** from the situation or area if it is no longer promoting positive play or conversation. A child or children will next be asked to **reflect** on the situation using "I" statements in the presence of a teacher. A child or children will then identify strategies to **repair** what happened with an

apology and ways to work towards changing their choices or behavior. A child or children will **rejoin** the community of learners and friends, as appropriate. This mindful, predictable guidance helps each child feel a sense of empowerment as well as gain a deeper understanding of being in community with others.

In the event that a student’s actions require them to be removed from school for the day, a meeting may be required with the classroom teacher. These actions are not intended to be punitive, but to recognize that the environment or situation is not presently working for the child to access their best learning and play and further process is required. Our team of teachers always has the child’s best interest in mind, and we see this as a positive step in the process rather than an action to look down upon. Mountain River School encourages parents and teachers to work together and develop a healthy relationship around this social-emotional work. If a specific circumstance/behavior continues to arise, the teacher will follow these procedures:

1. The teacher will document observable behavior
2. The teacher will discuss the child’s behavior with the student, parent, and Director, as appropriate, and develop strategies as necessary; follow-up conversations may be required.
3. At any time a student processes with their classroom teacher or Director, they may be required to call home directly to reflect with their parent, followed-up by a phone conversation with the classroom teacher or Director, as appropriate.
4. If a concern persists, a conference will be held with the teacher, parent, child (as appropriate) and Director to discuss options to help the child further develop appropriate social skills and replacement behaviors.
5. Staff members will make reasonable effort to work with the student and his/her family to resolve behavioral concerns. At any time, an individual plan of action may need to be implemented, depending on the severity of the concern. If needed, there is an opportunity for teachers and Director to seek support from outside resources.
6. If a student’s behavior warrants immediate dismissal for serious infractions, a re-entry conference will be required. Actions that may lead to short-term or permanent dismissal from MRS include:

Safety Violations	Respect Violations	Responsibility Violations	Trust Violations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assault and fighting ● Inappropriate personal space violation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disregarding adult directives ● Inappropriate personal space violation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disruptive conduct, talking out, disregarding school/classroom rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lying, deception, incomplete truths, etc. ● Cheating ● Plagiarism

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Threatening with gestures or objects ● Drug and Alcohol use ● Harassment ● Hazing ● Smoking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Threatening with gestures or objects ● Drug and Alcohol use ● Harassment ● Hazing ● Smoking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disrespect towards others and/or property 	
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Organizational Structure

Board of Directors

The MRS Board of Directors is responsible for determining MRS's mission and vision, approving the annual budget, fundraising, hiring and evaluating staff, recruiting and orienting new board members, and setting major policy and other responsibilities required for the smooth operation of the school. Between three and seven members comprise MRS' volunteer board. Meetings are held monthly.

2019/2020 Board Members are Jamie LaScolea, Rebecca LaScolea, Kary Bennett, Anna Barrett, Stephanie Ruhl-Bernstein, and Joe Nocito.

Parent Board

The Parent Board is comprised of parent volunteers who help to create a voice for all parents at MRS. Parent Board members shape and support various projects and initiatives at MRS.

Parent Participation

We encourage parents to spend time at MRS by joining us for lunch, volunteering, or simply going on a nature walk with us. By spending time at MRS, you communicate to your child that it is a place for your whole family and not just for your child. As parents build relationships with each other, the staff and other children, we develop our community.

Parents are the single most important influence in a child's life. Your child's success in school is benefited by and directly related to your participation. Speak with your child's teacher or advisor if you have any questions or concerns about his/her progress at school.

How can you help your child?

- Engage your child about his/her school day.
- Ask for any notices that have been handed out at school. (Check student's take-home folder, if applicable).
- Read and respond to correspondence or calls from the school.
- Encourage a daily art/reading/project time; turn off the computer, TV and/or radio.
- Get out in nature. Taking a walk or going for a hike is a great way to de-stress and communicate.
- Support learning. Do not do the work for your child. If you do help with work, write a brief note so the teacher will know where help was given.

- Attend school meetings and functions (parent board meetings, conferences, school activities, etc.)
- Provide feedback to annual surveys about school culture and curriculum. This information helps the administration and faculty provide the best possible education for your child. In addition, you are encouraged to share feedback during learning team meetings.

Classroom Observations

Parents are welcome to be a part of our classrooms or to volunteer at any level. We encourage all parents to visit not only their child's classroom but other classrooms as well. The school differentiates between observing out of curiosity and observing out of concern. For some children, it can be confusing to see a parent unexpectedly. For this reason, we ask that you arrange a time with your child(ren's) teacher in advance of when you are planning to visit. Also, there may be some children who cannot tolerate a parent visit at certain times of the day. If this is the case, the teachers will speak to you about other times that will work best for you and your child.

Observations: The following requirements help to ensure that the observation is a positive experience for both the student and observer.

General Requests

1. We ask that you save observations for after the first 6 weeks of school as this is an important time for the students and teachers to establish a healthy, supportive community.
2. Please use observation times to notice the rhythms of the group and the energy of the environment. A few examples might be, looking for positive interactions between students, or learning that happens in the quieter moments. You might also look for the ways in which children take initiative of their learning or the ways they move about the space.
3. We suggest letting your child know of your plan to observe so they are prepared as well.

Volunteering & Field Trips

MRS encourages parents and community members to become an integral part of our learning community. Teachers regularly include parents and others in special celebrations and welcome those who want to share special talents with the class. MRS believes that children benefit greatly from seeing adults share their talents and enthusiasm for learning. Volunteers are crucial to helping us create a unique and vibrant community. Please let us know if you have any ideas or thoughts you would like to share around this!

Classroom Volunteer: The following requirements help to ensure a volunteer's time is maximized in the classroom.

1. Meet with teachers before beginning to volunteer to clarify your role in the classroom (based on comfort level and skill-set).

2. Stick to a predictable time commitment for the class.
3. Understand the content taught in the class and the instructional style of the teacher.
4. Keep all student information confidential.
5. Follow the teacher's lead during the class.
6. Let the teacher address any behavioral issues.
7. Be positive, warm, and friendly with all students in the class.
8. If a parent, pay attention to all students and not just your child unless previous arrangements have been made with the teacher.

All classroom and field trip volunteers must have a background check prior to volunteering. Please contact kary@mountainriverschool.org to complete the appropriate paperwork.

Giving

Fundraising

The quality education that each student receives at MRS is grounded in low student to teacher ratios, an innovative curriculum, excellent faculty, supportive families, and a diverse and engaged student body. Supporting the school through charitable gifts, event participation and volunteer time all help to build a vibrant school community. MRS will hold fundraising events throughout the year which will be outlined in written communication. **Please reach out to Amanda Collis (amanda@mountainriverschool.org) to share your fundraising ideas and she can connect you with the fundraising committee.**

Ways to Give

- 1. Charitable Gift:** Like all independent schools, Mountain River School relies on tuition dollars as a steady source of income. Tuition, however, does not cover all the costs associated with the daily education and care of MRS students. Donations help support the annual operating costs in areas such as faculty salaries, curriculum development, classroom supplies, financial aid and facility maintenance. Gifts of any size are meaningful.
- 2. Event Participation:** We encourage family participation in these events, which promotes our sense of community and financially supports our high-quality program.
- 3. Time:** Many families participate in the daily experience of the students. Whether volunteering in the classroom or planning a parent night, giving time strengthens our community and enables the diverse experiences of parents to be shared with the school.