

Student Handbook 2023-2024



MERIDIAN HIGH SCHOOL

194 W. Laurel Rd. | Lynden, Washington | (360) 398-8111

MR. DEREK FORBES, PRINCIPAL

MR. SHAUN DOFFING, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

MS. CHERYL McBRIDE & MR. DON McMAINS, COUNSELORS

MERIDIAN SCHOOL DISTRICT VISION

In Meridian, we empower all learners to thrive academically, socially and emotionally as valued members of our local and global communities.

MERIDIAN SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITMENTS

BELONGING



Meridian strives to be a welcoming place where understanding and respect are priorities. Everyone will be honored, valued and heard.

- Learners experience a community that embraces and honors who they are.
- Everyone sees themselves represented in their educational environment.
- All voices are invited, heard and empowered.

COMMUNICATION



Meridian commits to proactive, consistent and clear two-way communication that is accessible for all.

- Open communication is encouraged and valued between staff, students and our community.
- Clear, consistent communication from all levels of the district supports student learning.
- Students and families are informed so they can be involved and engaged in school.

SUPPORT



Meridian works in partnership with staff, families, students and community to nurture success in each and every student.

- Each learner has access to support systems and partnerships that meet their individual needs.
- Students engage in their own progress using self-assessment and goal setting.
- Every learner is included as an active partner when determining their level of support.

WELLNESS



Meridian creates an environment that supports staff and students' physical, social and emotional well-being.

- Members of our learning community feel physically, emotionally and academically safe at school.
- Learners are supported in developing their health and wellness.
- Students are taught strategies for emotional regulation and problem-solving.

LEARNING



Meridian is guided by a commitment to equitable education that develops academic and personal skills for life.

- Our youngest learners benefit from an inclusive and robust early childhood education.
- Each learner has access to rigorous grade-level instruction designed to meet their unique needs.
- All students make measurable growth toward meeting or exceeding proficiency on grade-level standards each year.
- Meridian graduates are prepared for their career and life goals.

BASIC SCHOOL INFORMATION

LOCATION & PHONE	SCHOOL HOURS
194 W. Laurel Rd. Bellingham, Washington 98226 Phone: 360-398-8111	School Begins: 7:55am School Ends: 2:35pm Office Hours: 7:30am to 3:30pm

OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION

NAME	ROLE	EMAIL
Mr. Derek Forbes	Principal	dforbes@meridian.wednet.edu
Mr. Shaun Doffing	Assistant Principal	sdoffing@meridian.wednet.edu
Mrs. Cheryl McBride	Counselor	cmcbride@meridian.wednet.edu
Mr. Don McMains	Counselor	dmcmain@meridian.wednet.edu
Mrs. Kelly Gookstetter	Head Secretary	kgookstetter@meridian.wednet.edu
Mrs. Tami McMains	Attendance Secretary	tmcmain@meridian.wednet.edu
Mrs. Lori Blankenship	Registrar	lblankenship@meridian.wednet.edu
Mrs. Stacy King	Nurse	sking@meridian.wednet.edu
Mrs. Rachael Berdan	Health Room Assistant	rberdan@meridian.wednet.edu

ISSUE	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
Academic Progress	Individual Teachers or Counselors
Attendance Concerns	Mr. Doffing, Assistant Principal
Attendance Reporting	Mrs. McMains, Attendance Secretary
Behavior / Discipline	Mr. Doffing, Assistant Principal
Friendship / Relational Concerns	Mrs. McBride or Mr. McMains, Counselors
Illness / Injury / Medication	Mrs. King, Nurse
Sports & Athletics	Mr. Michaelson, Athletic Director
Student Mental Health	Mrs. McBride or Mr. McMains, Counselors
Student Schedules	Mrs. McBride or Mr. McMains, Counselors

ATHLETIC OPPORTUNITIES

FALL SEASON	WINTER SEASON	SPRING SEASON
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross Country • Football • Soccer (girls) • Softball Slowpitch (girls) • Swimming and Diving (girls) • Volleyball (girls) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basketball • Bowling • Cheerleading • Dance/Drill • Gymnastics • Swimming • Wrestling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseball • Golf • Soccer • Softball Fastpitch (girls) • Tennis • Track and Field

DISCIPLINARY OFFENSES

The following are the specific disciplinary offenses that will be enforced if violated. Please be aware that engaging in any of the following behaviors will result in consequences, potentially including loss of privileges, detention, or suspension. Consequences and restorative solutions will be at the discretion of school administration.

MINOR	LOW/MODERATE	MAJOR/SEVERE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Dishonesty • Defiance • Disrespect • Disruptive Conduct • Dress Code • Forgery • Inappropriate Language • Lying • Physical Contact • Property Misuse • Skipping Class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggressive Behavior • Alcohol Possession & Use • Bullying • Destruction of Property • Repeated Disruptive Conduct • Fighting • Illicit Drug Possession & Use • Insubordination • Left Campus • Marijuana Possession & Use • Sexually Inappropriate Conduct • Tardies • Theft • Tobacco Distribution • Tobacco Possession & Use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol Distribution • Arson • Assault • Assault of Teacher • Discriminatory Harassment • Fighting w/ Major Injury • Gang Intimidation or Activity • Illicit Drug Distribution • Marijuana Distribution • Possession of Weapon • Robbery • Safety Issue • Sexual Assault • Sexual Harassment • Threats / Intimidation

THE MERIDIAN MINDSET

In Meridian, all students, staff, and families are valued members of our school community. As a community, the Meridian Mindsets were developed to showcase our aspirations for how our community approaches challenges, interacts with each other, and strives to engage each day.

Members of our school community aspire to be...

Caring

Refers to demonstrating concern and compassion for others, and taking actions to support their well-being. Being caring involves demonstrating kindness and empathy towards classmates, teachers, and staff.

Courageous

Refers to being brave and willing to take risks, even in the face of adversity or uncertainty. Being courageous involves speaking up for oneself or others, and taking on new challenges with determination and perseverance.

Trustworthy

Refers to being reliable, responsible, and truthful in all interactions with others. Being trustworthy involves following through on commitments, being honest in communication, and respecting the confidentiality of others.

Open-Minded

Refers to being receptive to new ideas and perspectives, and willing to consider different viewpoints. Being open-minded involves actively listening to others and being willing to learn from them, even if their ideas differ from one's own.



BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

All members of the Meridian High School community - staff, students, parents, and guests – must work together to create a positive environment where all students can achieve at the highest levels. Below are the expectations for student behavior while at school. All community members share the responsibility of ensuring these expectations are met.

	EXPECTATION
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow directions from staff members the first time Remain on campus during the school day Phones may only be used before or after school, at lunch or during passing time Check all medications in with the nurse Wear clothing defined as appropriate in board policy (see below) and that also covers the genitals, buttocks, cleavage, and undergarments Use appropriate language Remain only in designated student areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Off Limits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports Fields & Track (unless during PE) Parking Areas Staff-Only Areas
Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrive to class on time Give your best effort and have a growth mindset Ask for help from peers or staff when needed Complete assigned work yourself Complete all assignments by the due date
Hallways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep pace at a walking speed Continue moving during transition times; help reduce crowding Use a hall pass or teacher note when out of class during instruction time
Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep your school supplies well-stocked Bring all needed supplies to class each day Use only your own belongings, unless given specific permission
Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay in designated areas Use appropriate trash / recycling bins Clean up your area after you finish
Personal Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take responsibility for your actions and words Keep hands and body to yourself Use respectful, positive language toward others Treat those different than yourself kindly

TIPS FOR GENERAL ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- Use your class time to complete as much work as you can; minimize homework
- Set aside a quiet time and place at home to study each day
- Review your planner to see what you need to accomplish after school each day

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

QUESTION	ANSWER
What should I know about riding the bus?	Bus drivers will provide riders with an explanation of rules on the bus. In general, the same rules that apply at school apply on the bus. If your conduct on the bus is inappropriate or disruptive, you may face discipline at school and/or removal from bus service. Information on bus routes and pick-up times can be found online on the Transportation Department website .
What if I'm going to be late to school?	We expect all students to arrive at school on time. There may be times when you have an appointment or other family circumstance that prevents you from being here when school begins. In those cases, your guardian would need to contact the office to excuse your tardy arrival. Traffic or oversleeping are not excused reasons for tardy. If no reason is provided, the tardy will be considered unexcused. If your tardiness happens frequently, we will help problem-solve with you and your guardian. When you get to school late, you'll need to check in at the office before heading to class.
What are the expectations for my behavior at school?	Meridian High School believes in creating an environment where all students can learn and be their best selves. Please see the "Behavioral Expectations" and "Disciplinary Offenses" sections of the handbook for more information on what is expected of you at school.
What if I don't meet behavioral expectations at school?	Mr. Doffing (Assistant Principal) and the counselors (Mrs. McBride and Mr. McMains) work with students who don't meet behavioral expectations at school. Our goal is to use behavioral violations as an opportunity to reteach expectations, practice what students should do next time a given situation occurs, and to help students make amends for any wrongs they may have visited upon others.
Does MHS have a dress code?	Yes, we do! Our dress code is designed to help you make good choices about the clothing you choose to wear to school. In short, you can't wear anything that is a health or safety concern, that will disrupt the education of yourself or others, or that features inappropriate messages, language or topics. We also require all clothing to fully cover buttocks, chest/torso, and underwear. Hats and hoods are allowed so long as they don't violate the above guidelines. For more information, please see the "Dress Code" policy included in this handbook.
Can my parent(s) or guardian(s) visit the school?	Yes! All visitors are required to report to the office and wear a visitor badge while on campus. Parents who wish to volunteer must fill out a volunteer form. Non-MHS students are not allowed on campus.
How do I report an absence?	Your guardian needs to contact the school to have your absence excused within 24 hours of the day you missed. There are three ways to do this: 1) call the main office at 360-398-8111, 2) email our Attendance Secretary Mrs. McMains at tmcmain@meridian.wednet.edu or 3) bring in a note when you return to school. Please make sure your guardian includes your full name, grade level, the date of the absence, and the reason for the absence when contacting the school.
What if I lose something at school?	In general, the school is not responsible for lost items. Belongings that are found at school will be placed in the lost and found area in the Main Office. Students who have lost items may look for them there. This area will be periodically emptied and donated, so be sure to check if you're missing something!
What if I need to get ahold of a parent or guardian during the day?	Students may ask to use classroom phones or place a call from the office to listed parents or guardians or emergency contacts. Students may not use school phones without permission. Do not use your personal device during class time.
What if my parent(s) or guardian(s) needs to get a hold of me during the school day?	Parents can contact the office to leave a message for their student. We will do our best to relay messages to students during the course of their school day, but it can be challenging, especially if the messages come within the last hour of the day. We encourage families to communicate their after-school plans to their child prior to the start of the day to minimize the use of our office staff for this purpose.
What can I do during lunch? How long is it?	Lunch is 30 minutes long and occurs in the middle of the school day. You can be in the cafeteria, courtyard, or appropriate student lounge—no food in the lounge, however.

SELECTED DISTRICT POLICIES*

NON-DISCRIMINATION

Board [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) 3210

The district will provide equal educational opportunity and treatment for all students in all aspects of the academic and activities program without discrimination based on race, religion, creed, color, national origin, age, honorably-discharged veteran or military status, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, marital status, the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability. The district will provide equal access to school facilities to the Boy Scouts of America and all other designated youth groups listed in Title 36 of the United States Code as a patriotic society. District programs will be free from sexual harassment. Auxiliary aids and services will be provided upon request to individuals with disabilities.

Conduct against any student that is based on one of the categories listed above that is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive as to limit or deny the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the district's course offerings; educational programming or any activity will not be tolerated. When a district employee knows, or reasonably should know, that such discriminatory harassment is occurring or has occurred, the district will take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to end the harassment, prevent its recurrence and remedy its effects.

Title IX and Compliance Coordinator: Kurt Harvill, kharvill@meridian.wednet.edu
Section 504 questions and complaints: Aaron Jacoby, ajacoby@meridian.wednet.edu

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

GENDER-INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

Board [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) 3211

The board believes in fostering an educational environment that is safe and free of discrimination for all students, regardless of gender expression, gender identity, or sex. To that end, the board recognizes the importance of an inclusive approach toward transgender and gender-expansive students with regard to key terms, communication and the use of names and pronouns, student records, confidential health and education information, communication, restroom and locker room use and accessibility, sports and physical education, dress codes, and other school activities, in order to provide these students with an equal opportunity for learning and achievement.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

STUDENT DRESS

Board [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) 3224

Students' choice in dress should be made in consultation with parents.

Student dress will be allowed as long as it does not:

- Create a health or safety hazard;
- Indicate membership in a gang or hate group;
- Damage school property;
- Demonstrate inconsistency with the mission of the school district; or
- Include lewd, sexual, drug, tobacco, or alcohol-related messages.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Board [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) 3205

The district is committed to a positive and productive education free from discrimination, including sexual harassment. This commitment extends to all students involved in academic, educational, extracurricular, athletic, and other programs or activities of the school, whether that program or activity is in a school facility, on school transportation or at a class or school training held elsewhere.

For purposes of this policy, sexual harassment means unwelcome conduct or communication of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment can occur adult to student, student to student or can be carried out by a group of students or adults and will be investigated by the District even if the alleged harasser is not a part of the school staff or student body. The district prohibits sexual harassment of students by other students, employees, or third parties involved in school district activities.

A "hostile environment" has been created for a student when sexual harassment is sufficiently serious to interfere with or limit the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the school's program. The more severe the conduct, the less need there is to demonstrate a repetitive series of incidents. In fact, a single or isolated incident of sexual harassment may create a hostile environment if the incident is sufficiently severe, violent, or egregious.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

STUDENT TELECOMMUNICATION DEVICES

Board [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) 3245

Student phones may be turned on and used only before school, after school, and during the student's lunch break.

Phones cannot be used to cheat or engage in academic dishonesty or violate the privacy rights of others. They also cannot be used to show explicit content while at school, on school district property, or in school district vehicles.

Phones may be confiscated if they violate the above or any school rule.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

STUDENT PRIVACY & SEARCHES

Board [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) 3230

All students possess the constitutional right to be secure in their persons, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures. Staff will take particular care to respect students' privacy.

School officials have authority to maintain order and discipline in the schools and to protect students from exposure to illegal drugs, weapons, and contraband. The superintendent, the principal, and other staff designated by the superintendent will have the authority to conduct reasonable searches on school property as provided by board policy.

Students may be assigned lockers for storing and securing their books, school supplies, and personal effects. Lockers, desks, and storage areas are the property of the school district. No right or expectation of privacy exists for any student as to the use of any space issued or assigned to a student by the school.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

EXCUSED & UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Board Policy and Procedure 3122

Regular school attendance is necessary for mastery of the educational program provided to students of the district. At times, students may be absent from class or not able to participate remotely. School staff will keep a record of absence and tardiness, including a record of excuse statements submitted by a parent/guardian, or in certain cases, students, to document a student's excused absences. The following principles will govern the development and administration of attendance procedures within the district:

The following are valid excuses for absences:

1. Illness, health condition or medical appointment;
2. Family emergency including, but not limited to, a death or illness in the family;
3. Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
4. Court, judicial proceeding, court-ordered activity, or jury service;
5. Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
6. State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW [28A.225.055](#);
7. Absence directly related to the student's homeless or foster care/dependency status;
8. Absences related to deployment activities of a parent or legal guardian who is an active duty member consistent with RCW [28A.705.010](#);
9. Absences due to suspensions, expulsions or emergency expulsions imposed pursuant to chapter [392-400](#) WAC if the student is not receiving educational services and is not enrolled in qualifying "course of study" activities as defined in WAC [392-121-107](#);
10. Absences due to student safety concerns, including absences related to threats, assaults, or bullying;
11. Absences due to a student's migrant status; and
12. An approved activity that is consistent with district policy and is mutually agreed upon by the principal or designee and a parent, guardian, or emancipated youth.
13. Absences related to the student's illness, health condition, or medical appointments due to COVID-19;
14. Absences related to caring for a family member who has an illness, health condition, or medical appointment due to COVID-19;
15. Absences related to the student's employment or other family obligations during regularly scheduled school hours that are temporarily necessary due to COVID-19 until other arrangements can be made, including placement in a more flexible education program;
16. Absences due to the student's parent's work schedule or other obligations during regularly scheduled school hours, until other arrangements can be made;
17. Absences due to the student's lack of necessary instructional tools, including internet broadband access or connectivity; and
18. Other COVID-19 related circumstances as determined between school and parent or emancipated youth.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Board Policy and Procedure 3220

The free expression of student opinion is an important part of education in a democratic society. The district encourages students' verbal and written expression of opinion on school premises so long as it does not substantially disrupt the operation of the school or otherwise violate this policy. Students are expressly prohibited from the use of vulgar and/or offensive terms in classroom or assembly settings.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

PROHIBITION OF HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, & BULLYING

Board [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) 3207

The board is committed to a safe and civil educational environment for all students, employees, parents/legal guardians, volunteers, and community members that is free from harassment, intimidation, or bullying. As defined in legislation, “Harassment, intimidation or bullying” means any intentionally written message or image — including those that are electronically transmitted — verbal, or physical act, including but not limited to one shown to be motivated by any characteristic in RCW 28A.640.010 and 28A 642.010, or other distinguishing characteristics, when an act:

1. Physically harms a student or damages the student’s property;
2. Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student’s education;
3. Is so severe, persistent or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or
4. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

This policy recognizes that ‘harassment,’ ‘imitation,’ and ‘bullying’ are separate but related behaviors. Each must be addressed appropriately.” Nothing in this section requires the affected student to actually possess a characteristic that is a basis for the harassment, intimidation or bullying.

Please review the full policy and procedure on the district website for more information.

USE OF TOBACCO AND NICOTINE SUBSTANCES

Board [Policy](#) 4215

The board of directors recognizes that to protect students from exposure to the addictive substance of nicotine, employees and officers of the school district, and all members of the community, have an obligation as role models to refrain from use of tobacco products and delivery devices on school property at all times. Tobacco products and delivery devices include, but are not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, snuff, smoking tobacco, smokeless tobacco, nicotine, electronic smoking/vapor devices, and vapor products, non-prescribed inhalers, nicotine delivery devices or chemicals that are not FDA-approved to help people quit using tobacco, devices that produce the same flavor or physical effect of nicotine substances and any other smoking equipment, device, material or innovation.

Any use of such products and delivery devices by staff, students, visitors and community members will be prohibited on all school district property, including all district buildings, grounds and district-owned vehicles, and within five hundred feet of schools. Possession by or distribution of tobacco products to any person under twenty-one years of age is prohibited.

Please review the full policy on the district website for more information.

*The full listing and text of all policies and procedures can be viewed [on the district website](#).

