



MILLS POND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

246 Moriches Road
St. James, NY 11780
631.382.4305

Printed: 2026

WELCOME

TO MILLS POND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK
KNOW THE RULES

Education is not preparation
for life; education is life itself.

~JOHN DEWEY





SMITHTOWN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
MILLS POND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
246 Moriches Road, St. James, NY 11780
Ph 631.382.4305 Fax 631.382.4304



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IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact	Person to Call/email	Phone Number
Principal	Mrs. Ireen Westrack iwestrack@smithtown.k12.ny.us	631.382.4303
Nurse	Mrs. Corinne Murphy cmurphy@smithtown.k12.ny.us	631.382.4307
Health Clerk	Mrs. Jill Moccia jmoccia@smithtown.k12.ny.us	631.382.4306
School Psychologist	Mrs. Colleen Amari camari@smithtown.k12.ny.us	631.382.4309
Social Worker	Ms. Leia Dieterich ldieterich@smithtown.k12.ny.us	631.382.4308
Speech/Language	Mrs. Lauren Tomasic ltomasic@smithtown.k12.ny.us	631.382.4329
Main Office	Mrs. Mickey Rigrod mrigrod@smithtown.k12.ny.us	631.382.4302
	Mrs. Tara Buono tbuono@smithtown.k12.ny.us	631.382.4301
Classroom Teachers		631.382.4305
PTA Presidents	Refer to the District Calendar	



Mills Pond Elementary
Dear Students and Parents,

Welcome Back to School!



This handbook was designed to answer questions that you might have about our school. It is important for students and parents to read and discuss this guide together. One of our goals is to foster a partnership in education by increasing communication between home and school. Another goal is to emphasize the importance of learning and the value of instructional time. When a student is late to school or pulled out early, it impacts their learning and disrupts learning for their classmates as well.

Our Shared Decision Team worked cooperatively to create this handbook. We hope you will find this handbook to be a useful tool to access information and to answer many of your questions. When you have a question about school, before picking up the telephone or sending an email, you can check this handbook for the answer. As a means for students to be successful in school, they should read this handbook to review school regulations. Our school staff believes in cultivating self-motivated students who continually perform to their fullest potentials.

Please keep your handbook in an accessible place. You will find it useful for years to come. This will be the only hard copy you will receive during your time at Mills Pond.

More information about our school and district is available on the district website at smithtown.k12.ny.us. We will also post a copy of this handbook on our website.

Sincerely,
Ireen Westrack
Principal



Join the PTA!



MILLS POND PTA



The Mills Pond Elementary Parent Teacher Association (MPE PTA) is a powerful voice for all of our children, a relevant resource for our families and our community, and a strong advocate for the education and well-being of every student and educator. The MPE PTA does a great deal of fundraising to support Cultural Arts Programs and other educational programs to enrich the school curriculum. The PTA also supplements educational supplies and materials, offers support for teachers, as well as organizes various school and community events throughout the school year for families and students to enhance their educational experience.

Please join us by supporting our efforts to make a measurable difference in the lives of our children. A strong PTA needs the support of parents, caregivers, family members, teachers, school staff, and community members. If you want to be involved, we welcome you to be part of the PTA. If you are unable to volunteer your time, please consider becoming a member of the PTA and give your financial support. You will have the satisfaction of knowing that your support helps fund events and activities for the children throughout the school year.



VISITOR GUIDELINES

Our school doors are locked from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. except during student arrival and dismissal times. If you need to visit our school at any time between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., please understand that in the interest of safety the following procedures are necessary:

- Never leave a vehicle running, keys in your vehicle, children or pets in the vehicle.
- Park only in designated parking spaces and have your photo ID available. Do not park in the blue handicapped parking spots without displaying the necessary permit.
- Ring the doorbell.
- State your first and last name.
- State your purpose for visiting MPE.
- Please be patient while the greeter checks with staff.
- After entering the building, the greeter will verify your ID and give you a visitor badge.
- Wear your name tag while in school.
- Only visit the specific area you are designating as the “reason for your visit”. For example, if volunteering at the Holiday Boutique, the volunteer should remain in that area only.
- Sign out and return your visitor’s badge when you leave the building.

NOTE: Our greeter leaves at 4:00. Parents picking up After Care students should walk to the cafeteria doors for entrance. All other clubs and groups using our school are required to assign a person to assist with the front door entries.



DATES AND HOURS/ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL

The official hours for the school day are 9:30 a.m. – 3:35 p.m. Children may begin to enter the building at 9:20 a.m. Children who arrive after 9:30 a.m. should enter through the front doors and report to the Greeter. It is important that students arrive on time for the start of instruction. When students arrive late, not only do they miss important information regarding instruction and plans for the day, it is also disruptive to the teacher and students, causing a loss of instructional time for everyone.

All children, whether they ride the bus, walk, or are brought to school, are not to arrive prior to the times stated above and must not linger past the stated dismissal time. For the safety of the children, our doors will be locked from 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Our greeter will be on duty from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. At 4:00, the front doors will remain locked until 6 p.m. when the After Care Program ends. If you are picking up your child from Aftercare after 4:00, please use the doors at the side of the building nearest our cafeteria. If you are entering the building from the front doors for any other reason, you must ring the bell and one of our custodians will open the door. There is no adult supervision before or after school hours.

UPK Students: The Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) is held in our building. These UPK students will arrive at 9:45am. Dismissal for UPK students will take place at 2:45pm. UPK parents will park their vehicles while they drop off and pick up their children at our kindergarten entrance. If you are an MPE parent driving or picking up your child and you arrive during these times, please be courteous and allow the UPK parent the right of way for drop off and pick up.

After Care Program: Parents requiring before and after school care may arrange for this through the School Age Child Care Program (631.360.7517). Unless children are participating in an activity under a teacher’s supervision or are registered in the Morning Care Program, they should not arrive at school prior to 9:20 a.m. Parents who drop children off at school early will be called and asked to come and pick up their child until the designated arrival time. Your cooperation in helping us provide a safe and supervised environment is greatly appreciated.



Children may not be signed out for early dismissal after 3:10 p.m. because it interferes with dismissal procedures. When requesting an early pickup, please be mindful of the times your child is scheduled for lunch and specials. A written note, email, and phone call to the teacher and Mrs. Moccia in the health office are the appropriate ways to notify the school that a child will be picked up early. This information should be received no later than 12:30 on the day of the request. The teacher will then forward the note to the health office. Please understand that the last 25 minutes of instruction is critical for giving closure to the day's activities. Parents are advised that verbal or telephone requests to alter the normal dismissal procedures cannot be granted except in emergency situations. Please do not call the school to request such changes except for emergencies.

AUTHORIZATION FOR STUDENT RELEASE

A student can only be released to parents, legal guardians, or persons who have been authorized by the parent or legal guardian to assume responsibility for the student. If a designated person is under the age of 18 and is taking a student from school in a vehicle, that designated person must produce a valid *Senior Driver's License*.

Students will be released to either parent unless a court order or decree indicates otherwise. The school must be given a copy of any such court order or decree. Your child will not be released to anyone whose name does not appear on the *Emergency Information section of the Parent Portal*. Please make sure the Parent Portal information is up to date with all emergency information. Written permission from the parent is required for student release. *Additionally, the person picking up your child must present photo ID and will complete a form with the time and reason for the release.*

DISMISSAL PROCEDURES (Non-bus)

Parents picking up children at dismissal *must show photo ID* to sign out children. Pick-up is at the kindergarten entrance at 3:35pm. Once you have signed your child out of school please do not linger on school grounds. *For safety purposes, children should not be playing in the front of our building during student dismissal.* No child will be permitted to be taken from a bus during arrival or dismissal times.



SCHOOL BUS REGULATIONS

The following directions explain what is expected of each student related to behavior on the school buses. This is reinforced at school on a regular basis. Please reinforce expected school bus conduct at home. Failure to comply with the following directions can result in the suspension of a child's bus privileges.

- All students on a school bus are under the authority of its driver and are required to follow the driver's instructions.
- Order must be maintained within the bus at all times so that the driver is not distracted from his or her primary duty of safely operating the bus.
- Students approaching the bus from the opposite side of the road are not to cross the road until the bus has come to a complete stop and the driver signals them, at which time they are to immediately cross in front of the bus.
- Musical instruments must be stored under the bus seat if possible.
- Students should place their backpack on their laps.
- *Use of Cell Phone, ChromeBooks and/or other electronic devices are **not** to be used while riding the bus.*
- Students are to sit down quickly and to remain in that seat until the bus has come to a complete stop and it is time to disembark.
- Saving seats is not permitted.
- Students should keep themselves and their belongings inside the bus and aisles at all times.
- Objects are not to be thrown on, from, or at the bus.
- Students are to help keep the bus clean and free of any damage.
- Students are expected to be reasonably quiet and courteous at all times.
- Students should not be consuming any food or beverages while riding to and from school.
- Parents are reminded that it is illegal to pass a stopped school bus and buses are equipped with cameras.



TRANSPORTATION

- Problems or questions concerning school busing should be directed to the school office at 631.382.4305. or directly to the Transportation office at 631.382.4100.
- Bicycle Riders(grades 4 & 5 only)A note must be sent to school giving your child permission to ride a bike to and from school. This note must be in ink, dated, and signed by the parent or legal guardian. Parents are advised that NYS Law requires all students to wear helmets when riding their bikes. It is the parent’s responsibility to ensure that children wear helmets when riding bicycles. In the interest of safety, if a member of our staff observes that a student rides a bike to school without a helmet, this student will not be permitted to ride the bike home from school. Students should also have a lock to secure their bicycle in the bike racks. Bicycle riders will be dismissed from the walker line.
- Bus passes will be issued for child care purposes ONLY. In the event an emergency exists and a bus pass is requested, please be certain to send in all pertinent information, including the full names of all children involved. The bus number and bus stop requested are also appreciated. If a change in bus is due to a childcare issue, please contact transportation for a “Baby Sitter Stop Request” form. We cannot issue bus passes to students for brownies/boy scout troops or for play dates.
- All children are assigned to a bus route. If you would like your child to be considered a walker for the school year, please submit a note stating your request and send it to the health office at the beginning of each school year.

IDENTIFICATION TAGS - KINDERGARTEN & FIRST GRADES ONLY

- Identification tags will be given out on “School Supply Drop Off Day” and should be worn by youngsters who are entering Kindergarten and First Grade. Please continue to have your child wear his/her tag for the first week or two of school. Tags should be returned to the teacher at the end of the week.
- Parent should print either their child’s bus stop location, walker, or car transport on the the tags.

EMERGENCY CLOSING, LATE ARRIVAL, EARLY DISMISSAL

It is important that all parents understand our school’s procedures for advising you of school closings and/or early dismissal due to inclement weather conditions or other emergency situations.



If schools are closed or there is a delayed arrival because of bad weather, a School Messenger call will be made by the District Office. Announcements will also be made over the local radio stations between 7:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. It is of utmost importance that parents have the Parent Portal information(phone numbers and emergency contacts)current. Parents are also advised to review an alternative plan with their child in the event that proper adult supervision is unavailable at home for an emergency dismissal. Parents are advised to review this on the mornings when inclement weather is predicted and an early dismissal might occur. Any anticipated change in the usual dismissal procedure should be sent to the teacher in writing. This information should also be emailed to the classroom teacher and to Jill Moccia at jmoccia@smithtown.k12.ny.us in our health office. This is particularly important if a child is to go home with another parent or if there is a change to their usual routine. Parents are also advised to listen to the local radio stations for announcements of early school closings. This is recommended instead of calling the school and tying up telephone lines.

ATTENDANCE

- Parents are asked to call the Health Office, 631.382.4306, before the start of the school day to report an absence. If a call is not received, the attendance clerk will call the home to verify the absence. This is done for the safety of each child. Please call the Health Office as early as possible to report your child’s absence.
- Upon returning to school, a written, signed note or email must be submitted stating the dates of and reason for the absence. Tardiness should be handled in the same manner.
- A child arriving after the official school day begins must be accompanied by a parent to the greeter’s desk to sign in the child. Children must see the greeter to be issued a late pass prior to going to their classrooms.
- Each trimester, the District will send home a letter to parents of students who have excessive absent/tardy records.

YEARLY HEALTH SURVEY

Parents are urged to update the Yearly Health Survey via the Parent Portal as soon as possible. The information listed is used to contact parents in the event of an emergency. If there are no changes, you must click the SUBMIT button on the bottom of the page in order to activate the information. If the information listed has to be revised during the school year, you can access the Parent Portal and update the information. Please remember to click the SUBMIT button.



HEALTH OFFICE POLICIES/ILLNESS

You will receive a separate Health Office Booklet in the beginning of the school year. Please refer to it for further information on policies and illnesses. Please keep our school nurse, Mrs. Murphy, informed of any health concerns that may arise during the year. If a student is taking medication during the school day, medication should be dropped off to our Health Office by the parent, not the student. The contact information for Mrs. Murphy is 631.382.4307 or cmurphy@smithtown.k12.ny.us.

SCHOOL LUNCH

- This year, our lunch and breakfast is free for all students. If this changes prior to this publication being updated, information will be available on the District Website under the Child Nutrition tab. Students can purchase milk for \$.60 and snacks are also available.
- Parents are encouraged to open a lunch account on the district website allowing students to charge miscellaneous food items. If you choose not to open an account, please limit the amount of money your child brings to school or write a check payable to *Child Nutrition Program*. You can access LINQ CONNECT at <https://linqconnect.com/main>.
- In order to meet Federal and State regulations with regard to Dietary Guidelines, children may not order just one “a la carte” item (such as pizza or hamburger). Students must choose food items from at least three to the five food groups in order to receive lunch. Further questions about this should be directed to Jeannette Frabizio, Director of the School Lunch Program, at 631.382.5500
- If your child has food allergies, please contact the school nurse. We will set a plan in place and review protocols with you.
- Parents should not have student lunches delivered to school from fast food restaurants.

CAFETERIA RULES AND BEHAVIOR

We want every student to enjoy lunch. Here is the appropriate cafeteria behavior checklist:

- Be sure to remember your money and lunch before leaving your classroom.
- Remain quiet and listen when you are signaled to do so.
- Walk quietly to and from the cafeteria.
- Remain at the table with your class.
- Use indoor voices and be respectful to other students and staff.
- Eat your lunch before buying a snack.
- Clean up when you finish your lunch.
- Open containers or bags of snacks should not be taken from the cafeteria.
- Tables and floor areas are to be left neat and clean. Any food left on trays is to be put in the trash pail when your table is called. Trays are to be stacked neatly.



Playground safety rules Please share/review with your child

- One person should be on the slide at a time. Go down the slide feet first only. Never walk back up the slide.
- Do not let go of a bar until your feet are on the ground. Never touch a person on a bar, and do not walk on top of parallel bars.
- Keep your fingers out of chain links.
- When jumping off a platform or piece of equipment, land feet first only.
- Do not crawl on or jump off the tops of beams.
- Benches are for sitting only.
- Do not wear loose clothing, cords around the neck, or carry objects in hands when playing on the playground. Do not run while playing around playground equipment.
- Use the equipment only for the purpose it is intended.
- Do not stand in the way of someone swinging on equipment.
- Take turns when waiting to use a specific piece of equipment.
- Do not throw sand, gravel or wood chips.
- Share the playground equipment.
- Tell an adult immediately if someone is hurt.
- Consider the safety of yourself and others at all times.
- Students will not be permitted on the playground equipment if they are wearing the following footwear: *platform sneakers, slip-on sneakers, roller sneakers, high heels, flip flops, ballet slippers, or any backless sandal*.
- Hockey sticks, hockey equipment, and footballs cannot be brought to school.
- Our PTA and PE teachers will supply an assortment of playground balls for use during recess.

SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY

We have initiated a successful security system for our school. Our building doors are locked during school hours. All visitors must access the building at the main entrance by ringing the bell and identifying themselves and the purpose of their visit. Once admitted, please stop at the greeter’s desk in the main lobby vestibule to show your photo identity and obtain a visitor’s sticker. We have an electronic system where all visitors to the building will have to present and scan their driver’s license prior to gaining access. The sticker must be worn when visiting school. Please do not compromise the security of our building by not following these rules. Visitors will not be permitted to go directly to the classrooms without stopping at the greeter’s desk.



REQUEST FOR SCHOOL WORK

If your child is absent for an extended period of time, please notify your child’s teacher. Every effort will be made to inform you and your child of the topics that will be studied during an absence. During a child’s extended absence, please check the GoogleClassroom for assignments. Children should also read and write in a journal every day during their absence. Important assignments can be made up upon your child’s return.

NIGHTLY HOMEWORK

Students are required to complete all nightly homework assignments and to return them to their teachers.

The District has assigned dates for “Family Connect Nights”. On these dates, there will be no homework assignments in order to encourage families to connect by participating in family activities together. These dates are listed on the District calendar.

MEET THE TEACHER NIGHTS

Meet the Teacher Nights are scheduled for early fall. Details about the evening will be sent home with students after school begins. Meet the Teacher Night provides a wonderful opportunity to meet your child’s teacher and visit the classroom. Information will be presented regarding plans for the year, classroom procedures, homework expectations, and the grade level curriculum. This is an informational meeting for you and other parents, therefore, we ask that you make arrangements to attend this program without your children.

GRADE LEVEL EVENTS

When grade level events take place during the academic school day, siblings are not permitted to be pulled from their classes to be part of the audience. These programs are presented to parents and extended families. Most of these events will be performed for our student body during the school day.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Students K-5 will receive a District ChromeBook for educational use only. New York State's cell phone policy requires K-12 public schools to implement restrictions on personal internet-enabled devices (smartphones, tablets, smartwatches) for the 2025-26 school year. Exceptions: educational use (teacher-directed), medical needs, IEP/504 plans, emergencies.



IN SCHOOL BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Birthday Cupcakes or Goodie Bags with candy or other food items will NOT be accepted. Birthdays will be celebrated as per classroom protocols, e.g. guest reader, craft, etc. Bagels (individually wrapped and pre-buttered or cream cheesed) and pizza parties will be considered for holidays (NOT BIRTHDAYS) provided they can be shared safely and accommodations have been made for our children with allergies.

HEALTHY SNACKS

If your child's teacher schedules snack time, please select nut free products that are healthy and easy to eat. Please do not send in candy to celebrate holidays as our district follows a healthy snack policy. Please refer to our allergy safe snack list that is sent home.

PARTY INVITATIONS

It is school practice that absolutely no party invitations are to be distributed unless the following rules are adhered to:

- Every child receives an invite (or)
- Every boy receives and invite (or)
- Every girl receives an invite

If this is not possible, then parents are asked to distribute invitations outside of school. This practice is in place to avoid hurt feelings among students who are not included. Invitations are to be given to the classroom teacher for distribution.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mills Pond Physical Education is a program that focuses on fitness, individual skills, cooperation, team concepts and knowledge of sports activities. The students are encouraged to practice all activities at home to foster fitness and skill development. We have a list of expectations for our students to understand and follow.

- Sneakers must be on and tied
- Gum or candy is not permitted in school
- Hats, watches, or dangling jewelry is not permitted in class
- Practice good sportsmanship

STUDENT BELONGINGS

New York State Phone Free Schools Law: No unsanctioned use of smartphones and other internet-enabled personal devices are allowed on school grounds in K-12 schools for the entire school day.

Expensive toys, as well as any trading cards or sports equipment (footballs, hockey sticks) that could pose a hazard to other students on the playground will not be permitted in school. If a child brings such an item to school, it will be confiscated. The School District is not responsible for the loss, damage or theft of personal property.

