

Great Falls Public Schools

SUNNYSIDE ELEMENTARY

Student Handbook



2026-2027

Welcome to Sunnyside Elementary School! On behalf of the Sunnyside teachers and support staff, I want to welcome you to the 2026-2027 school year.

One of the reasons Sunnyside is such a strong learning community is because of your support. We look forward to working with you to make this a successful and exciting school year!

SCHOOL HOURS:

Kindergarten – 6th Grade	8:25 - 3:20	M, T, Th, F
Kindergarten – 6th Grade	8:25 - 2:45	W

We will have an early dismissal every Wednesday at 2:45 p.m. to allow time for staff professional development.

Children walking to school must NOT arrive at school before 8:10 in the morning, as **we are not prepared to supervise them earlier than this.** Children are expected to go directly home when dismissed. If you need before or after-school childcare, check with **HANDS (Heroes and Neighbors Down at the School - 406-268-6944)**. We are pleased to continue our partnership with this before and after-school childcare program.

Please do not call the school after 2:30 in the afternoon to arrange for transportation after school. Our office is very busy at the end of the day, and we are unable to get messages to students about after-school plans.

Please arrange with your child and communicate with the teacher (parent square/phone call) about after-school plans.

BEFORE SCHOOL RULES:

1. Students should not be on the playground until 8:10 a.m.
2. **Students need a note from a teacher or must be accompanied by a parent to enter the building earlier than 8:25.**
3. Students must enter and exit through proper and assigned doors.
4. Toys are not allowed at school.
5. Bikes ridden to school must be locked up securely to the bike racks. Helmets must be worn. Bikes may not be ridden on the playground. See more below regarding bikes etc.

AFTER SCHOOL RULES:

1. Bus students must ride the bus unless they have a note from a parent/guardian.
2. **Students must leave the building and grounds immediately and may not return to the playground until after 4:00.**
3. Bikes, skateboards, skates, and scooters can be ridden only when off school grounds.

***No pets on campus during school hours.

SECURE OUTSIDE ENTRANCES:

For safety reasons, all doors will be locked at all times. Identification will be needed to enter the building. Safety for our students and staff is non-negotiable for our Sunnyside Family.

PARENT VISITS:

Parents are always welcome at Sunnyside, but we want to preserve quality instruction time. **Please report to the office**, so that we know you are visiting and can document your participation through our office sign-in. **Please wait for your child at the office.** We do not want parents going to their child's classroom during the school day. It is important that parent volunteers plan with the teacher ahead of time when they will come in and what they will do during that time. This will keep disruptions to learning time to a minimum. Please do not drop in to volunteer at an unplanned time. If you plan to volunteer, please come to the office and speak to the principal. Further information will be given at that time.

REPORTING PUPIL ABSENCES:

Attendance matters to our school district and community. In order for your child to receive the maximum benefit of our education system, they are expected to attend school every day except for illness, medical appointments, or a family emergency. **If it is necessary for your child to miss school, please call the school office at 406-268-7115.** If an absence is necessary, parents or guardians must notify the school by 9:00 a.m. on the day of the absence. If parents or guardians do not call the school when a child is absent, calls will be made through our automated attendance system. You will be instructed to contact the school to verify the reason for your child's absence. If no contact is made, your child's absence will be marked as unexcused.

TARDIES / ATTENDANCE:

Students arriving after 8:30 a.m. must report to the office before joining their class. If students miss two hours or more of school in a day, they will be counted absent for ½ a day. **Arriving at school on time and staying until the end of the school day is key to the success of your child in school.** Please make every effort to ensure that your child arrives on time for school every day. **Please arrange appointments after the end of the school day, if possible.**

It is extremely important that students are in school for the entire day whenever possible. **After a period of excessive unexcused absences, the school may require a doctor's note for the absence to be excused.**

PICKING CHILDREN UP DURING THE SCHOOL DAY:

A parent wishing to pick up a child during the school day needs to stop at the office to sign the child out, rather than asking that the child be sent out to meet the parent. If you call just before coming, (s)he will be ready for you at the office. **Do not go to the classroom to pick your child up. The teachers' parking lot is not for student drop-off or pick-up (except HANDS parents outside of the 8:00-4:00 day). It is a delivery**

area for school lunch, mail, garbage pickup, etc., as well as a parking lot for employees. Please do not cause a traffic hazard. The parking lot becomes very congested at times, and almost all vehicles must back up to turn around. This becomes a safety issue for our students.

STUDENT DROP-OFF LOOP:

We are fortunate to have a student drop-off loop for parents to drop off and pick up students. This area is specifically designed for picking up and dropping off students and is much safer than the parking lot. The entrance to the loop is located by the reader board. Please use the drop-off loop rather than the parking lot when dropping off and picking up your child. *Do not stop and park in the loop, it disrupts the flow of traffic.*

PICKING UP CHILDREN AFTER THE SCHOOL DAY:

Use the drop-off loop, 19th Street S, 17th Street, 17th Ave, 18th Ave, or 19th Ave areas only. We have had several near misses in the parking lot with parents driving in to pick up their children. Students need to go home immediately after school, whether they are walking or someone is picking them up. Students may come back to the playground area after 4:00.

HANDS: (Heroes and Neighbors Down at the School - 406-268-6944) is available for parents who are unable to get to the school by dismissal time.

IMMUNIZATIONS:

The state of Montana and GFPS Board Policy 3413 require that all students receive and provide documentation of school required vaccinations (<https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/Immunization/childcareandschoolresources>). Medical or Religious exemptions are allowed with proper documentation. If you wish to file an exemption, please contact the school office or the school nurse.

STUDENT ACCIDENT INSURANCE:

Student accident insurance is available to the children. Forms will be sent home on the first day. **If you don't carry other insurance, you may want to consider this.** If you wish to purchase this insurance, send the insurance application form and money directly to the insurance company (not to the school).

GRADES:

Nine-week averages in each course are computed using test grades, exams, homework grades, and daily performance grades. Letter grades will be assigned on numeric averages as indicated below:

90-100%	A	Excellent
80-89%	B	Very Good
70-79%	C	Satisfactory
60-69%	D	Needs Improvement
0-59%	F	Failing

- K-2 (G, S, N)
 - G=Good
 - S=Satisfactory
 - N=Needs Improvement

Grades and attendance are computed and reported to parents at the end of each quarter.

POWERSCHOOL:

Parents can check student grades at any time on a website called PowerSchool. The address is: <http://ps.gfps.k12.mt.us> In order to access your child's grades, you will need to know their student ID number and a password, which is assigned by the school. We will be sending this information home during the "Open House" in the first couple of weeks of school. If you cannot attend, we will get it to you in a Wednesday Envelope. It stays the same throughout the time your child attends Great Falls Public Schools. If you lose this information, the secretary can look it up for you. Teachers will update grade information weekly.

LUNCH:

Reminder: Sunnyside has free breakfast and lunch for all students. We are a Community Eligible Program.

****Milk with cold lunch is \$.75.**

If students need special lunch arrangements, please contact the office before bringing lunch.

BREAKFAST:

Sunnyside offers a breakfast program called "**Breakfast-in-the-Classroom**". This option is provided FREE to ALL students arriving before 10:00. It is up to students whether they eat or not.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES:

A Sunnyside Supply List for the 2026-27 school year is available in the office, on the website, and at retailers, as usual. Teachers may ask for small exceptions for those who are willing (i.e. Clorox wipes). Thank you!

BRINGING TOYS TO SCHOOL:

Please do not send toys or outside play equipment to school with your child. They can be distracting in the classroom and cause problems if they get lost, stolen, or broken. Items like fidget spinners and jewelry will be considered to be a toy if it is played with in class and may be taken away by the teacher. **The school will not be responsible for items of this nature that students bring to school.**

LABEL CHILDREN'S BELONGINGS:

Please label your child's clothing, especially backpacks, gym shoes, jackets, snow boots, lunch boxes, etc., so items can be returned to the owner when found. **Lost and Found** items are located on a cart near the gym. Ask your child to check periodically for their missing items.

MEDICATION:

For any student who needs to take medicine at school, the office must have a form filled out and signed by the parents. For prescription medication, a doctor and a parent's signature are required. These forms are available at the doctor's office, at the school, and online at the GFPS website under the nursing department tab. The pharmacy label must be on the container with your child's name and indicate the dosage to be given at school. Parents need to bring any medication to the office. Please do not send medication with your child.

All medication, including inhalers, are to be stored in the office as per school district policy. Cough drops and Tums are medications and need to be kept in the office.

If your child has any health problems that require special attention, please inform the teacher and the school nurse.

APPROPRIATE DRESS:

The school district does not approve of clothing advertising tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs, or any clothing that the school may find disruptive to the educational process. Shirts with swear words or inappropriate language will not be allowed at school. **All undergarments need to be covered at all times. Body parts such as butt-cheeks, stomach, and chest need to be completely covered. Students should not wear clothing in which their underclothing is exposed.**

When the weather becomes cold, please send your child dressed for outside recess. Hats, gloves or mittens, warm coats, and boots all help keep recess an enjoyable experience in cold weather. **Please write your child's name inside coats or jackets in case they are misplaced at school.**

MONEY:

Students should **not** bring money to school except when necessary. Money sent to school should be put in an envelope and labeled with your child's name, room number, the amount, and who will be receiving the money.

BIRTHDAY PARTY INVITATIONS/TREATS:

Children may **not** pass out invitations on school grounds unless they are inviting everyone in their class. Hurt feelings develop otherwise and can affect social relationships with peers. Please only bring store-bought treats.

CELL PHONES/SMART WATCH:

If students have a phone/smart watch for convenience and/or safety, the phone needs to remain in their backpack/binder (**not to be seen or out**) and be turned off during the student's school hours and while inside the building. The risk remains that the phone may be stolen or lost.

Cell phones/smart watches are NOT to be out during recess or from 8:10-3:25 p.m. If students choose to be on campus before 8:25, they are NOT to have their cell phones out on campus.

For the first offense, students should receive a warning to power down and put away. For a second offense, cell phones will be taken from students and kept in the office until the end of the school day. For the third offense, the electronic device will remain in the office until the student's parents pick it up. Cell phones and watches need to be kept in a backpack in the assigned locker. Cameras are in the hallways, which allows us to monitor belongings that are placed there; we do not have cameras in the classrooms.

WEDNESDAY ENVELOPE:

You should expect your child to bring home his/her "Wednesday Envelope" each Wednesday. Enclosed in the envelope will be important announcements of coming events and your child's school work. We hope you will consider this a special opportunity to discuss with your child their work and upcoming events. Your attention to this information will help us stay in close touch throughout the year. Please initial the envelope and return it to school the next day.

COUNSELING LESSONS:

We are fortunate to have a full-time counselor in our building. The counselor will be in every classroom teaching general lessons about student safety, conflict resolution, making and keeping friends, and other topics of need. The counselor will also meet with small groups of students who are dealing with common issues. Parents will be notified if we think a small group would be beneficial for their child. Parents can contact the counselor at 406-268-7636.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE:

All disciplinary measures will be in accordance with the Great Falls Public Schools Student Code and applicable state statutes. Communication with parents regarding disciplinary action will be either verbal or written and possibly both.

One of the things that makes Sunnyside such a quality learning environment for students is the partnership between teachers and parents in teaching students the rules necessary to become responsible learners. I'm sure you will support us in our efforts to maintain an orderly learning environment. A school-wide discipline approach to teaching and learning is used at Sunnyside School. This involves a behavioral management plan of expectations we have for students in: 1) the classroom, 2) on the school grounds (recess), 3) in the lunchroom, and 4) while in restrooms and passing in halls.

Sunnyside Universals

Be a Safe, Responsible, Respectful, and an Engaged Learner

Excellence Begins Here!

There are times when each of us needs to be redirected or re-taught a rule. Examples might be running in the hall or chewing gum. When these things happen, there will be communication with guardians after the discussion with their child.

The principal will determine the consequences. (Often, the principal, teacher, and parent will work together to determine a fitting consequence.) Depending on the incident, a student/students may have to leave campus, for which transportation will be the guardian's responsibility. Students who chronically choose to ignore or disobey a rule may have a specific plan developed to deal with that behavior. If the infraction is deemed serious enough, such as a case of extreme disrespect to a staff member, it may require a more serious consequence. For severe or persistent infractions, a student may receive ISS (In-School Suspension) or OSS (Out-of-School Suspension).

Severe Clause:

This is reserved for major problems such as aggression/harassment, absolute and open defiance, or profanity towards an adult or other students. It also includes having any weapons at school, or significant and violent threats towards others. This results in an office referral and an immediate pink slip. Consequences will be assigned through the office, and parents will be contacted immediately.

Under the guidelines set forth by the GFPS District Student Handbook, a student must not engage in unwanted and unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature directed towards another student. A substantiated complaint against a student will result in appropriate disciplinary action according to the nature of the offense. Parents will be contacted immediately.

Sunnyside Playground Procedures

1. Students proceed to the playground upon arrival at school after 8:10.
2. No toys or cell phones on the playground.
3. Students stay in assigned areas.
4. Rough play (pushing, shoving, wrestling, kicking, throwing, and grabbing) is not allowed on the playground.
5. Students stay off hills of snow and away from puddles, trees, mud, and ice.
6. Students leave objects such as rocks, bark, sticks, and blacktop alone.
7. Students pick up and return playground equipment.
8. No bike riding, skateboarding, rollerblading, or roller skating on the playground.
9. When the bell rings, line up quickly.
10. Play after school, on weekends, and during vacations will be unsupervised.

BULLY PREVENTION:

Bullying is not allowed at Sunnyside. Staff (principal, teachers, secretary, aides, custodians, kitchen staff, and bus drivers) will intervene in bullying situations. Students will receive ongoing instruction regarding bullying. Our definition is “Bullying is when someone repeatedly and on purpose says or does mean or hurtful things to another person who has a hard time defending himself or herself.”

The following rules will be taught in the classroom and enforced throughout the school:

1. **We will not bully others.**
2. **We will try to help students who are bullied.**
3. **We will try to include students who are left out.**
4. **If we know that somebody is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.**

CHARACTER STRONG:

Character Strong is a social-emotional learning curriculum utilized in all of the classrooms at Sunnyside School. Please ask your child about the focus word of the month!

BIKES, ROLLERBLADES, SKATEBOARDS, & SCOOTERS:

For safety reasons, we recommend that kindergarten and first-grade students not ride bicycles to school. It is difficult for them to adequately care for their bikes. Parents may, however, make the final decision. **Helmets are strongly encouraged** as a safety precaution and will be stored in the student's locker during the school day. Students are required to walk their bikes/scooter while on campus. One rider per bike, please.

Students are to leave their mobile items at the bike rack. They are not to be stored in the building. Storage of such costly items is a problem, and the school cannot assume responsibility for them.

BUS RIDERS:

It is the responsibility of parents of bus students to become familiar with the policies governing the operation of school buses and the rules and regulations governing pupils' conduct on school buses. Riding the school bus is a privilege, not a right, and if abused, it will be denied. In the event a child is **not** to ride the school bus home on a given day, there **must be a note from the child's parent to his or her teacher.** Otherwise, the child **will be** sent home on the bus. Students who do not normally ride the bus may not ride home with friends.

DELIVERIES:

We do our best to avoid disruptions to instructional time. Flowers or balloons in the classroom tend to be disruptive. You may have flowers or other items delivered to the school for your child, but they will be held in the office until the last classroom break or until school is dismissed. Your child would be notified that there was a delivery in the

office, should it be held until after school. It would help if you could arrange to have deliveries made towards the end of the school day.

DOORDASH:

Students and parents cannot DoorDash to Sunnyside for lunch/snack. If a parent/guardian would like to drop off a meal for their child, that is acceptable.

HOMEWORK:

Homework is dependent on each teacher and may be assigned at the teacher's discretion. When assigned, homework should provide meaningful and intentional practice of skills taught in the classroom. Homework should reinforce learning, support student growth, and be work that students can complete independently.

QUESTIONS:

Any time you have a question that we may be able to answer or concerns with which you'd like help, don't hesitate to call us at **406-268-7115** or come and visit with us personally. We look forward to working with you to make Sunnyside a special learning environment.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

August 24	Sunnyside BBQ/Open House 4:30-6:30 pm
August 26	First Day of School
September 22	Fall Pictures
October 7	MTSS Begins (Wednesday) 8:00-8:45 am
October 12 & 13	Fall Parent Teacher Conferences (4:00-7:00)
October 13	Picture Retakes
October 15-16	Student Holiday (Teachers' PIR)
October 29	Trunk or Treat 6-7 pm
October 30	End of 1 ST Quarter- No Students (Staff Training)
November 2-November 20	Sunnyside CAT/GRIZ Food Drive
November 18	Donuts w/ Grown Ups 7:45 am
November 25-27	Thanksgiving Break
December 23-January 1	Holiday Break
January 4	Classes Resume
January 15	End of 2 nd Quarter- No Students (Staff Training)
January 18	Student Break (Teacher Training)
February 4	100th Day Celebration
February 15	Presidents' Day Holiday
March 18	Candlelight Lunch
March 22 & 23	Spring Parent Teacher Conferences (4:00-7:00)
March 25	End of 3 rd Quarter- No Students (Staff Training)
March 26-30	Spring Break
April 8	Literacy Night 5:00-6:00 pm
April 14th	Spring Pictures
April 16-19	No School
May 21	End of the Year Celebration 5:00-6:30 pm
May 31	Memorial Day Holiday
June 4	Last Day of School - Early Out (12:20)

Sunnyside School Staff: 2026-2027

Office: Durbin Thomsen, Principal; Lisa Wiley, Administrative Assistant; Melanie Knutson, School Nurse

Kindergarten: K1 Anna Horton; K2 Amanda Carreon; A6 Athena Hall
Grade One: A2 Tara Tyliniski; A3 Taylor Mathews; A5 Kimberly Shanahan
Grade Two: A1 Nicole O’Leary; A4 Trish Korman; B1 Trace Hart
Grade Three: C3 Airyanna McLane; C5 Dominique Jones; C6 Ralee Thornton
Grade Four: C4 Ryan Edwards; C2 Allison Stevens; C1 Casey Dignan
Grade Five: B2 Tori Girard; B3 Jill Gammill; B4 Brittany Shipman
Grade Six: B5 Julie Gibson; B6 Nicole Kojetin

Specialists: (Todd Currey, Counselor) (Ashley Munden, Library) (Lisa Moore-Intervention) (Jacquelyn Thomas, Special Ed.) (Kristen Ewing, Vocal Music; Andrea Borders, Grace Nall, Quinton Schauer, Instrumental Music) (Tyler Hurley, Health Enhancement) (Kelly Pisano, Art) (Tara Habel, ECS) (Tammy Pospisil & Brittanie O’Connell, Speech Therapists) (Stephanie Digiulio, School Psych)

Support Staff: Jerry Ruggirello - 1st Engineer, Jordan Kleinhans- 2nd Engineer, Rochelle Shadrick - Lead Kitchen, Annetta Bowman - Lead Aide