

Hopatcong Middle School

Main Office 973-398-8804
Attendance Office 973-770-8877
Nurse's Office 973-770-8874

Student/Parent Handbook 2026 - 2027

Lewis Benfatti
Principal

Melissa Kennedy
Coordinator of Student Support

ATTENDANCE & ABSENCE

Regular attendance is essential for good schoolwork and is expected of all students. Since excessive absence from school may result in failure in school subjects, every effort should be made to maintain the best possible attendance record. *According to New Jersey school law, personal illness, death in the immediate family, and state approved religious holidays are the only legal reasons for school absences.*

Whenever a student is absent from school, parents should phone the **ATTENDANCE OFFICE** at **(973)770-8877** before 7:45 a.m. on the day of the absence. Students must bring a written note from their parents the day they return. This note should include the student's full name, date(s) of the absence, reason, and parent's signature. When a doctor requires that your child remain home from school, please obtain a doctor's note. The above note must be submitted to the attendance office.

This attendance procedure is in accordance with State Law (NJAC6:20-1.3, NJSA-18A:38-25 et. Seq), State Department of Education recommendations, and Board of Education Policy/Regulation (#5200). It is designed to guarantee the maximum educational opportunity for all students.

1. Attendance will be taken/recorded on a daily basis and all parent/school contacts regarding attendance will be recorded accordingly.
2. Parents of absent students will be called if a phone call has not been received by 8:30 a.m.
3. Parents will receive written notification of a possible attendance problem.
4. When applicable, a meeting will be scheduled between the school (Administration, Guidance, etc.) and the parent.
5. Continued failure to improve negative attendance patterns will result in the formal filing of charges in Municipal Court by the attendance officer.

TRUANCY (REGULATION #5200)

Truancy is defined by the NJ Department of Education as 10 or more cumulative unexcused absences (N.J.A.C.6A:16-1.3). For cumulative unexcused absences of ten or more, a student between the ages of six and sixteen is truant, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25 as determined by the Board's Attendance Policy and Regulation pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6(a)4.iii.

The following list counts as excused absences. The first four listed are state excused absences, and don't count as a student's day "in membership" (meaning that the absences won't count against credit loss in a course / class).

- Religious observance (N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3(h))
- Visits to post-secondary educational institutions (limited to three (3)).
- Take Your Children to Work Day
- Participation in observance of Veterans Day (N.J.S.A. 18A: 36-13.2) or district board of election membership activities (N.J.S.A. 18A: 36-33)
- Illness that is supported by notification to the school by the student's parent.
- Required attendance in court.
- Out of school suspension from school
- Family illness or death supported by a written letter from the parent upon the student's return to school.
- Necessary and unavoidable medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled at a time other than the school day. This would require medical documentation submission.

BICYCLES

Students in Grades 4-7 are permitted to ride bicycles to school. Bicycle helmets must be worn at all times. If your child is in need of a helmet, please contact your child's School Counselor. Thank you for your cooperation.

BUS REGULATIONS

Students who are assigned a bus to and from school must ride that bus. If you wish your child to walk home, we ask that you put this request in writing. Bus students are to go immediately to the buses as soon as they are dismissed from school and walkers are to report to the gym.

Listed below are the bus procedures and regulations for the Hopatcong Middle School:

1. Students must remain in their assigned seat and wear a seatbelt at all times.
2. Only scheduled bus students are permitted to ride the bus. No bus passes permitted.
3. Be at your bus stop five minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive.
4. Students must remain seated at all times.
5. Inappropriate language and physical contact and/or fighting is not permitted.
6. Eating or drinking on the bus is not permitted.
7. Any garbage (papers, etc.) must be placed in the trash receptacle.
8. Vandalism or tampering with any bus equipment is strictly prohibited. Liability rests with your parent(s) if you are found to be responsible for any damage.
9. Submitted bus conduct discipline reports may be subject to bus suspension.
10. Students are not permitted to videotape or play music loudly from their cell phones while riding on the school bus.

RIDING THE SCHOOL BUS IS A PRIVILEGE. IMPROPER CONDUCT ON THE BUS MAY RESULT IN THAT PRIVILEGE BEING DENIED.

CAFETERIA BEHAVIOR

While in the cafeteria students are expected to:

1. Follow the directions of the teachers and cafeteria staff.
2. Remain in the assigned seat with the exception of buying food or throwing away garbage.
3. Use good table manners and clean up the table and floor area before leaving.
4. Obtain a pass from a teacher and/or sign out before going to the lavatory, office or nurse.

DELAYED OPENINGS

Middle School will begin classes at 9:55 AM with drop off supervision at 9:45 AM on a delayed opening day. We dismiss at the regular time (2:25 PM) Lunch will be served, but no recess for Grades 4/5 will take place on a delayed opening day.

DETENTION POLICY

***Refer to Code of Conduct**

The classroom teacher may find it necessary to issue a teacher detention to students who exhibit inappropriate behavior or who fail to meet class requirements. The following procedures will be initiated when a detention is assigned.

1. Students and their parents may be given at least one day's notice.
2. Students should return the signed detention slip to the main office to indicate that his/her parent is aware of the detention.
3. Students who do not report to teacher assigned detentions will be referred to the administration.

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

Sometimes it is necessary for school to be closed because of snow or other emergency conditions. You will be alerted through our District's automated notification system via telephone and/or email system of school closings.

You may also check our website: www.hopatcongschools.org/ms/

In the event it becomes necessary to close school once the students have arrived, we will attempt to make contact with each parent via telephone through our District's automated notification system using telephone numbers you supply in your Parent PowerSchool account. You can help us further protect your child in two ways:

1. Be sure to update any relevant contact information (email, phone number, home address) in PowerSchool.
2. Be sure your child knows of a neighbor and/or a friend's house that he/she can go to should he/she not find you at home.

FIRE DRILLS AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Emergency evacuation drills are designed to provide an orderly and safe mass exit of people from the building. In order to facilitate a rapid exit during fire drills and other emergencies, it is imperative that students adhere to the following regulations:

1. Listen to the directions given. **TALKING IS NOT PERMITTED.**
2. Move into the hallway/corridor in single file. Walk rapidly but do not run.
3. Leave the building through the nearest primary exit. If this exit is blocked, the secondary exit will be used to evacuate the building.
4. Once your class is outside the building you must stay together at a distance of approximately fifty feet from the building.
5. In all fire drills, activities in progress outside the building should be immediately terminated and students should assemble in class groups.
6. Do not re-enter the building until directed to do so.
7. Re-entry into the building must be quiet and orderly.

GRADING POLICY

Alpha/Numeric Grades will be used for all courses in Grades 4-7.

NUMERICAL EQUIVALENT GRADES 4-7	GRADE
98-100	A+
94-97	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
68-69	D+
65-67	D
0-64	F

In Grades 4-7, the final mark for the year is obtained by averaging the letter grades of all the marking periods: MP1, MP2, MP3, MP4 are 25% of the final grade.

(Grades 4-7 will continue the alpha grade (F) being worth a minimum of 50 to a maximum of 64 for marking period 1.)

HONOR ROLL

Middle School recognizes student performance with both a High Honor Roll and an Honor Roll.

High Honor Roll = All A's in every subject area.

Honor Roll = Combination of A's and B's in all subject areas.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION

The Board of Education's Policy # 5410 and # 5411 regarding promotion and retention are available for your review on the district's website at www.hopatcongschools.org.

SUMMER SCHOOL

(Please refer to Board of Education Policy / Regulations 5410)

Students in Grades 4 - 7 who fail core academic courses (English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies) for the school year will be required to attend Hopatcong Middle School Summer School and pass the course(s) that were not passed in order to be promoted to the next grade. Students who fail multiple core courses will be reviewed for retention. Parents/guardians will be responsible for transportation to and from summer school.

GUIDANCE

The purpose of the guidance program is to help each individual student achieve his/her highest potential academically, emotionally and socially. We try to do this in several ways:

1. The counselors will help a new student adjust to the school.
2. Individual conferences will be scheduled whenever a student, a teacher, or the counselor deems it necessary.
3. Schedule and academic problems/questions are to be referred to the counselor if the teacher is not available or unable to help.
4. The counselors welcome the opportunity to talk with any student, parent or teacher.

HALLWAY BEHAVIOR

While in the hallways students are expected to:

1. Keep to the right and refrain from running.
2. Keep moving and not congregate during passing time.
3. Display courteous, orderly behavior (public displays of affection are not permitted).

INAPPROPRIATE ITEMS

In order to provide a strong and safe academic environment, the following items are **not permitted** in the Hopatcong Middle School:

1. Any type of weapons or electronic devices
2. Cell phones are permitted in school; however, cell phones must be turned off and put away upon entering the school building for the entire school day. They cannot be used at all while students are in the school building. If a student needs to call home he/she must go to the main office or to guidance.
3. ***NO CANDY / NO GUM CHEWING:*** Candy and/or gum chewing is not allowed on school property and/or school buses.

Students who are using these items will have them taken away and returned at the end of the day or picked up by a parent/guardian, in addition to disciplinary actions.

IDENTIFICATION BADGES

Student Identification cards are necessary for student lunch purchase. Parents may establish lunch debit accounts for their children by supplying cash or writing a check payable to Hopatcong Board of Education. Your child should submit this check to the cafeteria. Parents can also add funds through the PowerSchool parent portal under the balance tab.

INTERNET AND NETWORK COMPUTER ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

Acceptable Use – The purpose of the internet is to support research and education in and among academic institutions by providing access to unique resources and the opportunity for collaborative work. Transmission of any material in violation of any national or state regulation is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to: copyrighted material, threatening or obscene material, or material protected by trade secret.

Privileges – The use of the internet is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use may result in a cancellation of those privileges.

Network Etiquette – You are expected to abide by the generally accepted rules of network etiquette. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

1. Be polite. Do not be abusive in your messages to others.
2. Use appropriate language. No vulgarities, threats or any other inappropriate language allowed. Illegal activities are strictly forbidden.
3. Do not reveal your personal information (i.e. address, phone number) or that of other students. Note that electronic mail (e-mail) is not guaranteed to be private. People that operate the system do have access to all mail. Messages relating to or in support of illegal activities may be reported to the authorities.
4. All district issued chromebooks can only be used for academic purposes only.
5. All communications and information accessible via the network should be assumed to be private property.

LOCKERS

Students in grade 6 and 7 will be assigned a locker with a combination on it. Students are not permitted to share lockers and locker combinations. Lockers are the property of the Board of Education and periodic locker inspections may take place at any time during the school year. Students in Grades 4 and 5 will have either lockers or hooks in their classrooms. The lockers will remain unlocked and not require a combination.

Hopatcong Middle School students must assume full responsibility for all their personal possessions. Money and other valuables should not be left in the lockers or unguarded. If you find it necessary to bring money or valuables to school, bring them to the main office at the beginning of the day for safekeeping. Valuable jewelry, cameras and electronic items should not be brought to school. Backpacks may only be used to transport materials to and from school and must be stored in the lockers during the school day.

SCHOOL NURSE

The nurse's office is always available for those students who are sick or injured.

We may require a doctor's note for students who are constantly in need of the nurse's services in order to ensure that all students are receiving the proper attention. If a student is required to take medicine during the school day, the parents must provide a doctor's note to the nurse, and the parent must deliver the medicine to the school in person. The school nurse will also dispense the medicine, which must be stored in the nurse's office. You may contact the school nurse at (973)770-8874.

Please visit HMS Nurse's website (<https://www.hopatcongschools.org/ms/p/nurse>)

SCHOOL FUNCTIONS/ASSEMBLY BEHAVIOR

While at a school assembly or function students are expected to:

1. Follow the directions of staff members at all times.
2. Sit in designated or assigned areas.
3. Give full attention to the speaker/performer.
4. Demonstrate respect by remaining quiet during the performance.

SIGN OUT PROCEDURES

If you need to pick up your child before dismissal, please go to the front lobby entrance area and use the Intercom System to communicate with the main office. Your child will be brought to you and you will have to sign him/her out for the school day.

TARDINESS TO SCHOOL

Whenever a student arrives after the 7:55 AM bell (warning bell rings at 7:50 AM) he/she is to report directly to the attendance clerk for a late slip in order to be admitted to period 1 class. All work missed because of tardiness must be completed.

1. Unexcused lateness (tardy) will result in disciplinary action(s) being assigned by the administration.
2. Continued excessive tardiness will be subject to review by the administration for possible suspension and/or the filing of truancy charges in Municipal Court

TARDINESS TO CLASS

The office will not issue passes for unexcused tardiness to class. Any student detained by a teacher between classes should ask that teacher for a pass to the next class. The classroom teacher handles tardiness to class, but excessive tardiness will be handled by the administration.

TEXTBOOKS

Students are responsible for the care of all books and materials loaned to them. Hardcover books must be covered and the student's name should be written on the inside cover of each textbook that they are assigned. Fines will be assessed for all lost or damaged books. PLEASE TAKE CARE OF OUR SCHOOL MATERIALS SO THAT WE CAN PASS THEM ALONG IN GOOD CONDITION.

CHROMEBOOKS

Students are responsible for the care of the student chromebook and charger. The chromebook should always be kept in its case. Students should not eat or drink on top of the chromebook or close anything inside of the chromebook. Students are responsible for bringing a fully charged chromebook to school each day.

VANDALISM AND PROPERTY DAMAGE

Students who destroy or vandalize school property will be responsible for the cost damages, in addition the student may be suspended, and/or have formal charges filed against them. Damage should be reported to a teacher or administration immediately.

SCHOOL BUS PROTOCOL

In order to ensure the safety of all children we expect all students to behave appropriately at **ALL** times. ***Bus transportation is a privilege.*** The bus driver is responsible for order and behavior on the school bus. All behavior problems will be immediately reported to the Principal and Transportation Department. Depending on the infraction, disciplinary measures will be taken in accordance with Board Policies 5600 and 8600, the Code of Student Conduct, and transportation regulations. Consequences may include, but are not limited to, the following: a verbal/written warning, parent conference, bus privileges being suspended (one, five, thirty-day, or indefinite suspensions). During this period, the student's parent/guardian is liable and shall provide transportation to/from School. Students are not permitted to videotape or play music loudly from their cell phones while riding on the school bus.

VISITORS*

According to Board Policy #9150.1, all visitors who enter the building must use the main entrance. Visitors must be "buzzed" into the building using the intercom. Visitors must report directly to the Main Office to sign in and

obtain a Visitor's Badge which must be worn at all times while in the building. Parents or any other visitor coming to school to meet with a teacher, bringing items to a student must report to the Main Office, not directly to the classroom. This procedure will assist in providing the most secure environment for all students and staff. When leaving the building, please sign out in the Main Office and return your visitor badge.

- **Please do not open the door for any other visitors. All visitors should be buzzed in by the Main Office.**

HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION & BULLYING POLICY

The Board of Education's Policies #5500, #5512, and #5600 prohibit acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying. A safe and civil environment in school is necessary for pupils to learn and achieve high standards. Harassment, intimidation, or bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a pupil's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its pupils in a safe environment. Effective August, 2022, a complete copy of the District's policy on Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying is available to parents on the District's website: www.hopatcong.schools.org.

SMOKING POLICY

The Board of Education's Policies #5533 and #7434 prohibits any student from smoking, vaping, chewing tobacco, or using snuff (or any variation of the above) in the school or on the school grounds, at events sponsored by the Board of Education away from school and on any transportation vehicle supplied by the Board of Education.

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY POLICY

The Hopatcong Board of Education's Educational Equity Policies, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:7-14, are available on the District website at www.hopatcong.schools.org for your review.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The school's main concern is the education and safety of the students. For any school to be successful, it is imperative that all students have a stake in that success. In order to ensure that this takes place, all students must obey the rules and regulations that have been established by the teacher and the school. Each teacher will provide specific discipline guidelines, which include behavioral expectations, consequences, and rewards. In addition, the school also has a set of rules that are to be followed.

Level 1

The first three incidents of Level One behaviors are handled at the teacher level. Documentation utilizing the Discipline Report Form will be filed by the teacher and then forwarded to the office on the fourth offense. Interventions for the first three incidents will include some combination of the following: warning, student-teacher conference, parent contact, and/or a teacher consequence. The teacher consequence might be a lunch/recess detention, loss of a class privilege or an after school detention. If necessary, teachers may initiate cooperative efforts to assist students with behavioral contracts and refer students to Peer Mediation. The fourth and subsequent incidents of Level One behaviors are referred to the administration.

Types of Level One Behaviors	1st – 3rd Offense Action	4th Offense Action	5th Offense Action	6th and Subsequent Action
General misconduct (classroom)	Refer to the Level 1 paragraph above for actions. These include teacher interventions and student consequences	Detention (lunch or recess) after school detention	After school detention or in-school suspension and Development of Behavior Contract	Mandatory Parent Conference, after school detention, in-school suspension
General misconduct (school) inappropriate behavior hallway, café, assembly, etc.	Refer to the Level 1 paragraph above for actions. These include teacher interventions and student consequences	Detention (lunch or recess) after school detention	After school detention or in-school suspension and Development of Behavior Contract	Mandatory Parent Conference, after school detention, in-school suspension

Level 2

Behaviors categorized as Level Two are immediately referred to the office. They will be investigated and handled by the building administration.

Types of Level 2 Behaviors	1st Offense Action	2nd Offense Action	3rd and Subsequent Action
Leaving Class Without Permission	Detention (lunch or recess), or after school detention	Detention (lunch or recess) or 1 hour after school detention (contact parent)	1 day in-school suspension
Obscene or vulgar language directed toward an adult	Detention (lunch or recess), or 1 hour after school detention	After school detention, or 1 day in-school suspension, parent notification	1 hour after school detention, or 1 day in-school suspension; parent meeting
Destroying or defacing the property of an individual in the school	Detention (lunch or recess), or 1 hour after school detention	After school detention, or 1 day in-school suspension, parent notification	1 hour after school detention, or 1 day in-school suspension, parent meeting
Harassment Verbal abuse, threatening comments, repeated putdowns, etc.	30 minute detention (lunch or recess), or 1 hour after school detention, refer to Resource Officer	After school detention, in-school suspension, or out of school suspension. Possible referral to local authorities	After school detention, in-school suspension, or out of school suspension. Possible referral to local authorities
Endangering the safety of others; scuffling, pushing; shoving (intent to do harm)	Detention, in-school suspension, or out of school suspension	After school detention, in-school suspension, or out of school suspension	After school detention, in-school suspension, or out of school suspension
Possession of inappropriate materials (lighters, matches, stink bombs, caps, cigarettes or tobacco products, etc.)	Detention, in-school suspension, or out of school suspension. Possible referral to local authorities	After school detention, in-school suspension, or out of school suspension. Possible referral to local authorities	After school detention, in-school suspension, or out of school suspension. Possible referral to local authorities
Stealing – taking possession of school property and or of another person without permission	Detention, in-school suspension, or out of school suspension. Possible referral to local authorities	After school detention, in-school suspension, or out of school suspension. Possible referral to local authorities	After school detention, in-school suspension, or out of school suspension. Possible referral to local authorities
Vandalism – Destroying or defacing school property or the building	Detention, in-school suspension, or out of school suspension. Possible referral to local authorities	After school detention, in-school suspension, or out of school suspension. Possible referral to local authorities	After school detention, in-school suspension, or out of school suspension. Possible referral to local authorities

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES PARTICIPATION POLICY

Consequence	Point Value (per infraction)
Out of School Suspension	4 points
In-School Suspension	3 points
School Bus Suspension	2 points
After-School Detention	2 points
Lunch Detention	1 point
Recess Detention (4th-5th grade only)	1 point
Late to School / Tardy (Arrival after 7:55 AM)	1 point for every 5 tardies
<i>A student who accumulates the total number of infraction points listed on the chart below during the course of the each marking period within the school year will be reviewed for eligibility to participate in selected school activities. These events may include, but not limited to, academic/non academic field trips, field days, class parties, school dances, etc. Students who lose eligibility based upon behavioral infractions will not be entitled to refunds if payment has already been submitted toward the cost of the activity/event.</i>	

2026-2027 HMS cumulative marking period points.

Marking Period	Can Not Exceed
1	5 points
2	10 points
3	15 points
4	20 points

Dress Guide For Students

The key to maintaining suitable and healthy dress and grooming practices is the exercise of sound judgment and good taste. Parents are requested to work with their child so that they are dressed, groomed neatly and cleanly and wear clothing that is suitable for the weather conditions. This dress guide pertains to field trips, field days, extra-curricular activities, school dances and at all school related activities in addition to the normal school day. *Please refer to the Hopatcong Board of Education District Policy 5511*

1. *Students may not wear clothing or engage in grooming practices that present a health or safety hazard to the individual student or to others.*
2. *Students may not wear clothing or engage in grooming practices that materially interfere with school work, create disorder or disrupt the educational program.*
3. *Students may not wear clothing or engage in grooming practices that cause excessive wear or damage to school property.*
4. *Students may not wear clothing or engage in grooming practices that prevent the student from achieving their own educational objectives because of blocked vision or restricted movement.*

Clothing and other articles which are distracting, revealing or may draw undue negative attention to the wearer are not permitted. These might include, but are not limited to, clothing that is extremely tight or form fitting, clothing that is excessively short, or inappropriately revealing. Clothing must fully cover shoulders and the midriff. Shirts must not contain any inappropriate or offensive sayings or graphics. Shorts and dresses must be of acceptable length.

Specific items that are not acceptable in a school setting include the wearing of hats and the wearing of a hood. All shoes must have a back or a strap to them. No crocs, slippers, flip flops, or open toe shoes are permitted.

Violation of the dress guide may result in disciplinary action from the administration.

