

Boarding Program Purpose and Philosophy

Mountainview Christian School (MCS) operates a boarding program that is consistent with its primary purpose to support families in Christian ministry by providing a place for their child/children in 7th to 12th grades to live while attending Mountainview Christian School for secondary education training. Children of other workers may be admitted under guidelines established by Mountainview Christian School Board.

The Boarding program operates within the framework of the MCS statement of faith, mission statement, and policies and procedures. Although an extension of MCS, a separate application is necessary to enter the boarding program. The two dorms are single gender dorms; One dorm can accommodate a maximum of 16 students and the other a maximum of 17 students..

Consistent with our Christian ethos, we strive to provide a boarding service and program that reflects our Christ-centered foundation in all aspects of our guidelines, our modeled behavior as staff members, and intentional expressions of our Christian faith.

The overarching goal of the dorm team is to guide young people to reach their full potential in Christ (Phil. 3:13, 14) by following a holistic approach that in this context includes a collaborative effort between staff dorm parents, teachers, parents of boarding students and MCS' administrators. Staff dorm parents view their role as ministry in supporting the parents of our students, ministry to the students themselves, and in all their efforts, they strive to bring glory to God. (1 Tim 4:10)

MCS' boarding philosophy is built on three primary pillars:

- (I) An environment permeated by **GRACE**
- (II) An environment that is **SAFE**
- (III) An environment that **FEELS LIKE HOME/FAMILY**

I. An environment permeated by GRACE

Our boarding program strives to create an environment filled with grace in our guidelines, our words and deeds. The grace we refer to is that demonstrated by Jesus as in the Bible. We select staff dorm parents for their professional abilities as well as their Christian spiritual foundation necessary to be able to model the grace of Jesus (Col. 3:17).

Grace can be witnessed in multiple ways. Some examples are:

- ❖ How we respond when offended by others.
- ❖ How we handle ourselves following personal mistakes/failures.
- ❖ A process of forgiving others, restoring relationships once broken, and moving forward without a grudge.
- ❖ Discipline may not be seen as 'what one deserves,' although this does not mean there will be no consequences.
- ❖ Speaking to another in love when hurt, angry, or otherwise upset.
- ❖ Be willing to trust again after trust has been broken.

The concept of grace is taught through weekly devotions, personal mentoring opportunities, discussions about examples of grace when opportunities arise, and modeling by staff dorm parents, both with students and their own personal relationships.

Grace is exemplified through the 'Discipline That Restores' (DTR) program as a key component for handling everyday discipline issues. Grace is exemplified through a phrase adopted by staff dorm parents, the dorm supervisor, and other MCS leadership, "**Err on the side of grace**" and then they seek to **rejoice** anytime someone does not get what they deserve.

Through an environment of grace, dorm students will experience a non-judgmental community of Christian disciples, have the opportunity to learn and practice a grace-based lifestyle, going forth into the world (outside MCS) with a healthy, solid foundation. That foundation is Jesus Christ.

II. An environment that is SAFE

Safety is integral to our boarding environment. Our boarding program seeks to establish guidelines and a living structure that enables students to live in an environment that protects them from being harmed by others, abused in any way, harmed by avoidable injuries, and/or exploited as minors.

The boarding homes are maintained structurally to provide a dry and safe building to live in. They are equipped with fire exits; fire drills are scheduled on a quarterly basis. The dorm is equipped with the necessary items to clean clothes, cook, eat healthily, study, relax and sleep, etc. The structure is built for two students to share a room and 4 students share a bathroom with a toilet and shower. A system of checks and balances is in place for students to come and go from the dorm so staff dorm parents are able to assure their safety and offer necessary supervision.

The dorm kitchen is well equipped, and policies are in place to assure safe food handling. Policies are in place regarding students who are physically sick and preventing the spread of germs and illness. Universal precautions are posted at sinks in the dorm, taught and reinforced by staff dorm parents. Procedures are in place for emergencies and attending to needs for first aid care.

A common area for relaxation and interaction with friends and peers is provided. The common areas and hallways are monitored by CCTV cameras to increase the safety of the dorm environment and offer a means to check when something questionable arises (ie, accusation of theft, strangers in the dorm, etc.). The dorms are located on an enclosed campus with two entrances, both guarded 24 hours daily and monitored by CCTV cameras.

We have a '**Child Protection Policy**' as well as identified **DORM ADVOCATES** to assure the personal body safety of our students and a system to follow in the event of concerns in this area. We use a '**YOU HURT; WE TELL!**' phrase to assist in providing for a safe environment where bullying, harassment, mean-spirited behaviors and the like are less likely to take root by being addressed and stopped quickly, in the event such behaviors occur.

Staff dorm parents actively observe student interactions and how they use their personal/free time while watching for:

- Changes in behavior
- Changes in eating habits
- Changes in emotional moods
- Indications of drug use or self-harm
- Signs of illness or pain
- Excessive habits (ie, spending *excessive* time on hand phones, computer, electronic games, ipods, etc.)

An adult is physically available 24 hours a day. Staffing is set up for a staff dorm parent to be **visible** after school until 'lights out' time when students are to be in their rooms for the night. If a student is sick or has an emergency during the night, they have access to the staff dorm parents for assistance needed. A trained relief person is provided when both staff dorm parents are off duty or out of town.

III. An environment that FEELS LIKE HOME/FAMILY

Although all aspects of a dorm cannot feel like home, we strive to create a 'home away from home' environment as much as possible. Each dorm has a married couple committed to serving Jesus and committed to serving the parents of our dorm students by caring for their children as if they were their own. In a very real sense, staff dorm parents become second parents to our dorm students. They live within the same dorm structure, and are always available (or the trained relief person).

Our common area is decorated and set up to provide an area where students can relax, interact, and do things that 'feel like home.' All dorm students eat evening meals together in a 'family style' setting, sitting and chatting while they eat, building relationships and supporting one another. Special events and regular activities are planned to mimic a home/family environment. Students have access to the dorm kitchen and laundry facilities, allowing them to learn independence, participate in chores, help one another, etc.

Dorm students live together for 9 weeks at a time, nearly 24/7 over the course of a school year. They are encouraged to seek academic, emotional and spiritual support from one another and their staff dorm parents as well as have fun together in laughter, relaxation, games, etc. They learn practical skills like conflict management, time management, etc, as they would if they lived at home. It is common for dorm students to return after a break saying, "It feels good to be home!"

Through the concept of '**Co-Parenting**' we strive to link arms with the parents of our boarding students in a way that makes the separation less impactful by viewing our boarding program as an extension of the family unit as instituted by God. (Eph 6:1-4) The values, teachings and beliefs of our boarding students' parents are supported within the parameters of the Mountainview Statement of Faith, philosophy statement, and objectives. Staff dorm parents seek to work in close cooperation with the parents of boarding students through regular communication and availability by email and/or phone contact. In turn parents are asked to share in the responsibility of rearing their child by maintaining regular, open lines of communication with staff dorm parents and their child and responding quickly in times when they are needed. Through this partnership, we expect to see these students grow physically and spiritually, mature socially and emotionally, and increase in knowledge.