St. Peter's Episcopal School

Parent Handbook

2026-2027

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Philosophy

Facilitating children's learning through play
in a nurturing, Christian environment

St. Peter's Episcopal School is an intimate, play-based program where every teacher knows every student. Since 1973, we have created a community where everyone is part of our family: parents, children, teachers, and dedicated volunteers. Everyone can belong at St. Peter's.

We value social-emotional development with an emphasis on helping kids learn self-regulation and self-help skills. We play outside every day, both on our playground and in our beautiful Nature Center, because physical activity enhances academic learning, and the beauty of the outdoors soothes our souls. We want every child to feel valued and seen for who they are and who they are becoming as we help equip them for their journey toward kindergarten and beyond!

Curriculum

Our program nurtures the whole child through research-backed practices aligned with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). We believe that a strong, supportive relationship between a child and their teacher is the foundation for all learning. When children feel safe and securely rooted, they gain the confidence to take creative risks, explore their world, and form a positive self-identity. Our teachers set developmentally appropriate expectations and provide each child with the right mix of challenge, support, sensitivity, and stimulation.

Instruction at St. Peter's is guided by *Frog Street*, and we emphasize learning through play. Teachers are intentional facilitators who create environments that fosters children's learning, creativity, and self-expression through both child-selected and teacher-directed activities. All curricula used are approved by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

Language Arts

Teachers present fingerplays, songs, and stories to teach literacy skills, including phonological skills like rhyming and letter sounds. We read books throughout the day in whole and small group gatherings, and books are always available for independent reading. We encourage children to express themselves using words. Teachers may help children write their ideas down to help them understand the relationship between speaking, reading, and writing.

Mathematics

There are daily opportunities for children to discover mathematical concepts using a variety of materials like Magnatiles, Legos, counting objects, etc. Other manipulatives provide the opportunity to sort, sequence, solve problems, create patterns, compare quantities, and experience one-to-one correspondence.

Science

We encourage children to use their senses to explore their environment. Through cooking, teachers lead children in following recipes and noticing physical and chemical changes. Children also conduct experiments with materials such as vinegar, baking soda, soap, and milk. In addition, children explore the natural world around them, e.g. hatching butterflies from caterpillars, planting flowers and seeds, and investigating insects and seeds/pinecones.

Social Studies

Children engage in role play (vet clinic, grocery store, dental office, etc.) as they develop an understanding of people's jobs in the community. We invite community workers like police officers and firefighters to visit and share their occupations. We cultivate a culture of kindness and respect, exploring how our unique differences blend together to strengthen the world.

Art

For preschool children, process is more important than product. We provide access to a variety of art materials and experiences such as easel painting, finger painting, collage, glitter glue, stamps, and clay. Art materials are available daily, and children are encouraged to create freely. In addition to traditional paintbrushes, children may paint with Q-tips, toothbrushes, spaghetti, or sponges. We believe children's art should be an expression of their unique interests and ideas.

Music

Children enjoy listening to and participating in a variety of musical activities. Rhymes, fingerplays, games, and songs are integral parts of our day. The children love to sing and dance to music. They have opportunities to engage with premade instruments like drums and rhythm sticks to create music, as well as create their own musical instruments.

Physical Development

We go outside to play for at least an hour every day (weather permitting). Research has shown that gross motor skills such as running, jumping, climbing, throwing, and balancing have positive impacts on children's academic performance, emotional well-being, and peer interaction. We are fortunate to have a Nature Center adjacent to our playground where children can play in the beauty of nature, from climbing trees and jumping off logs to digging in the sandbox and cooking mudpies in the mud kitchen. In addition to large body movement, we also engage in fine motor development. Handling playdough, small building materials, manipulatives, and puzzles develop the fine muscles important for writing skills.

Social and Emotional Development

The school day affords many opportunities for the children to talk, play, and work cooperatively with one another and to develop a sense of trust and security. Teachers model respectful interactions, as well as provide direct instruction in appropriate ways to use words to convey feelings. We believe that "misbehaviors" are not malicious, but rather, attempts at communication. Our job is to teach more appropriate and effective ways to communicate using language. Like a baby learning to walk, learning to communicate effectively takes practice. Stretches of free playtime throughout the day give children the opportunity to engage in this practice.

Spiritual Development

Although young children operate on a concrete level, we believe they are capable of being aware of God's love. Through our acceptance and love of the children, we hope to reflect God's acceptance and love. Each class meets weekly in the Chapel to learn bible stories and sing songs. Since St. Peter's Preschool serves families from many religious faiths, our focus for Chapel time is on universal values like kindness, respect, and tolerance.

Enrollment, Tuition, and Fees

Age Requirement
Children entering our classes must be the appropriate age by September 1st of that program year.

Registration Fee
A $150 registration fee (one fee per family) is required when families apply for a spot at St. Peter's. This fee is non-refundable and does not count toward tuition or other fees.

Programs

• 2 year-old program	T, Th	9:30-1:00	$470/month
• 3 year-old program	M, W, F	9:30-1:00	$520/month
• 4 year-old Pre-K program	M-F	9:30-1:00	$710/month
• Extended Day for 3's/4's	M, W, F	1:00-3:00	$260/month
• Enrichment Program for 4's	T, Th	1:00-3:00	$260/month

Other Fees (once per year, due by 8/1/26)

• 2's Activity Fee	$100
• 3's Activity Fee	$125
• 4's Activity Fee	$150
• Extended Day mat fee	$30 (required for Extended Day/Enrichment)

Tuition Payment Options
All payments will be invoiced and paid through the Brightwheel app.
Credit Card fees (2.95%) and ACH fees (0.6%, $0.25 min, $1 max) will be paid by the families.
A late fee of $20 will be applied if a payment is more than 5 days late.

Tuition (2 payment options):
- **Pay-in-full** (due 8/1/26, 5% discount)
- **9 monthly payments** (due on the 1st of the month, August through April)

Extended Day/Enrichment (2 payment options):
- **Pay-in-full** (due 9/1/26, receive 5% discount)
- **8 monthly payments** (due on the 1st of the month, September through April)

If the first tuition payment that is due 8/1/26 is not received by 8/15/26, your child may lose his/her spot in the class. Accounts more than 30 days past due may result in suspension or expulsion. If your family has a unique situation, please contact the Director to discuss a confidential arrangement.

If a family registers after the start of the school year, the first payment will consist of two tuition installments as well as the Activity Fee.

Discounts Offered
- 5% discount to pledging members of St. Peter's Church
- 5% sibling discount (applied toward younger sibling)
- 5% discount for families paying the entire tuition prior to the beginning of the school year
- Discounts can be combined but are not to exceed 10% total

Brenda Brewington Memorial Scholarship

Financial assistance may be available. If you would like an application for the *Brenda Brewington Memorial Scholarship*, please download the application from our website or contact the Director.

Referral Policy

The highest compliment families can pay us is the referral of family or friends to our school. In appreciation of your trust in us, you will receive a $50 tuition credit for every new enrollment as a result of your referral.

Withdrawal from St. Peter's

Withdrawals require 30 days' written notice to the Director. Full monthly tuition will be due for the last month of enrollment regardless of departure date. If fewer than 30 days' notice is provided, the family is responsible for the last month of enrollment, plus the following month's tuition.

Policies and Procedures

Arrival/Dismissal

***ALWAYS* escort your child to school, and SIGN HIM/HER IN DAILY in the Brightwheel app.** If a non-parent (like a grandparent) is dropping off and needs assistance, please see the Director. **Please inform us of any changes in pick-up. For your child's safety, this person must be listed on your child's Emergency Form and may be required to show identification at the time of pick up.**

In the case of an emergency where your child will need to be picked up by someone not on the Emergency Card, we require written notice (email, text, or written note) from the child's parent/legal guardian. We DO NOT allow children to go home with people who are not on their Emergency Form without written parental consent. Without proper notification, your child will be required to stay at school until a parent/legal guardian can come to pick him/her up.

School starts at 9:30am through the double red doors next to the playground. For security reasons, the doors will be locked after 9:45. Please be punctual as late arrivals can be anxiety-provoking for your child and disruptive to the class.

Dismissal for the regular school day is at 1:00. Teachers will escort children out through the playground or the upstairs double red doors. Please be prompt when picking up your child at the end of the school day.

If habitual tardiness becomes an issue, you will be charged $1 per minute, per child, after the first 5 minutes. Habitual tardiness may result in termination of services.

Emergency Cards

Emergency cards must be on file before a child can start school. Please inform us of any changes in address or phone numbers.

Class Sizes

Each class has 2 teaching staff. Enrollment for our classes average:

2 year old classes:	12 children
3 year old classes:	12 children
4 year old classes:	14 children

In the event we have additional children, additional staff will be added to maintain ratios.

Dress

Please dress your child in comfortable play clothes in accordance with the weather. We do get messy despite our best efforts to cover up, so save fancy clothing for special occasions. A pair of sneakers or closed-toe shoes help to maintain your child's safety when playing outdoors. NO CROCS or FLIP-FLOPS. These do not allow children stability when running and climbing.

We play outside every day unless it is pouring or extremely cold/windy, so be sure to send appropriate clothing including boots, mittens, and hats when warranted. Please provide a complete change of clothing, including underwear and socks, in a labeled Ziplock bag to leave at school in case of a spill or a bathroom accident. Please update clothing as sizes and seasons change. LABEL AS MANY OF YOUR CHILD'S GARMENTS AS POSSIBLE.

Toys From home

Please do not allow your child to bring toys from home. This can cause unneeded sadness from a broken/lost toy or other children vying for the toy. Should your child have a toy in his/her bag, the toy will stay in his/her bag during the duration of the school day. There may be times when your child's teacher will have *Show and Tell*, but during a regular school day, toys from home are discouraged.

Field Trips

Field trips are an integral part of our program. The classes take several trips a year, for ex. visits to a farm or a children's theater. We depend upon parents to provide transportation and require that each child be belted into a carseat while in the vehicle. Costs for field trips are covered by the yearly Activity Fee. Written permission must be granted prior to each trip.

In addition to traditional field trips, we also have in-school field trips. Examples include Yoga instruction, Science shows, or visits from Naturalists.

Parent Participation

At St. Peter's, we have an open door policy. Parents are welcome to observe their child's classroom at any time. Parents may also volunteer in the classroom or share cultural, occupational, or other special skills with the class. In addition, we have multiple family events throughout the year. Please sign up on the Parent Volunteer Form if you are interested in volunteering or joining the Social Committee, Nature Center Committee, or the Fundraising Committee.

Communication

Parents will receive a monthly newsletter from the Director. In addition, other important notifications will be conducted via email or Brightwheel. Your child's teacher will communicate class-specific information on a weekly basis, usually through email or Brightwheel.

In addition, we maintain a St. Peter's Preschool Facebook page, on which we will post information applicable to the entire school. We will share photos and videos of each class through Brightwheel. No photos of your child will be posted without your written consent.

Information about our school can also be found on our website www.stpeterspreschool.org. School newsletters, calendars, and most forms are also available for download on our website.

Developmental Assessments and Parent/Teacher Conferences

Development Assessments will be completed for each child once midway through the year and again at the end of the year. You will have the opportunity to conference with your child's teacher if you have any questions or concerns after receiving the Assessment.

One formal conference is scheduled midway through the year. There is no planned childcare for conferences; however, parents often take turns watching each other's children. These conferences are optional. You do not need to attend if you do not have any questions/concerns.

Please feel free to schedule additional conferences with the teacher as needed. Talking at length with teachers immediately before or after class is discouraged, as they need to attend to all the children in the group. One exception is if any unusual events have occurred which might influence your child (the loss of a pet, death in the family, or parent out of town). Please alert the teacher of this immediately. Please keep all conversations and information about children and their families confidential.

Lunch

Lunch will be served around 11:30am. **Parents are responsible for providing a lunch and prefilled water bottle**. St. Peter's will provide milk and water refills. Juice is not allowed. Please send lunch to school in a bento box or large ziplock bag. You may also send lunch in a thermos designed to keep food warm. Unfortunately, we do not have the ability to heat up student lunches.

Birthday Snacks

Parents are welcome to send in a special snack to celebrate birthdays. Please confirm dates with your child's teacher beforehand. Special snacks should be in single serving portions, for ex. cupcakes rather than a sheet cake. **All foods must be store bought.** Examples of appropriate snacks include donut holes, popsicles, fruit kebabs, or mini cupcakes. Please keep in mind that this special snack is meant to be a small birthday celebration, not a full birthday party. Please also check with your child's teacher about allergies present in the class.

Illness Policy

Illness Policy

If your child is not feeling well enough to participate fully in school, please keep them at home. We play hard when we're in school, and if kids aren't sleeping/eating well or can't breathe because they're congested/coughing, they would benefit from a rest day at home.

Regulations require that a child be free from fever, vomiting or diarrhea without the use of medications for 24 hours before he/she can return to school. The Maryland State Department of Education classifies a fever as anything over 100.4°F.

Please notify us if your child is sick and will be absent from school. If your child contracts a communicable disease (pink-eye, strep throat, hand-foot-mouth disease, lice, etc.) please alert us as soon as you know so that other families can be notified and we can contact the Howard County Health Department if needed. This also allows us to fully disinfect the classroom and materials, be on alert for symptoms in the other children, and inform staff members who may have been exposed.

Health Regulations

Prior to starting school, each child must submit a Health Inventory and Immunization Record. The school provides these forms. This documentation must be completed on a yearly basis.

If your child needs medication during school hours, a *Medication Administration Authorization Form* completed by the pediatrician and signed by parents is required. If your child require medication at school for allergies or asthma, an *Allergy Action Plan* or *Asthma Medication Administration Form* must be completed as well. Please make sure all medications come to school in their original unopened containers, labeled with your child's name. When your child takes a medication for the first time, the first dose must be taken at home. Forms can be obtained from the Director or downloaded from our website.

Discipline Policy

At St. Peter's, we seek to provide an environment that is loving, predictable, and developmentally appropriate. Each child is encouraged to freely choose his/her level of participation within the limits of safety for everyone in the class.

Most of the time, "misbehavior" is a child attempting to communicate using the only method available to him/her. Our goal is to teach more appropriate and effective methods of communication using words.

If difficulties do occur, every effort will be made to divert negative behavior, remove the child from the situation, and apply reasonable and understandable limits in a firm and fair manner. It is our policy to work with children who have challenging behaviors unless their behavior poses a threat to the safety of other children, themselves, or the staff.

If a student requires additional behavioral or developmental support, we will collaborate with parents and may recommend professional intervention. In cases where a child's needs exceed the specialized resources of our staff, we reserve the right to recommend a more suitable setting and terminate the enrollment contract.

Incident Reports

An *Incident Report* will be completed for more serious situations (for ex. biting or injuries). After the report has been signed by both a staff member and the child's parent/guardian, a copy will be sent home, and the original will be filed at school. We will always contact the parent if there is a head injury, for ex. a collision in which two children bang heads. If a parent would prefer to be the one to sign the report instead of a grandparent/nanny, please notify the Director.

Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

Maryland law requires that every educator, employee, and volunteer working in a school report suspected abuse of children attending that school. Staff are required to report any suspected abuse or neglect directly to Child Protective Services.

Suspension and Expulsion

At St. Peter's our goal is to promote children's social-emotional development. Because of the long-term benefits of participation in a high-quality early childhood program, suspension or expulsion is only used as a last resort. Instead, we collaborate with parents to bring the needed resources and strategies to a situation. Our hope is that these efforts will result in suspensions and expulsions only being used when there are extraordinary circumstances or serious safety threats. We reserve the right to suspend or expel a student if St. Peter's is unable to provide the support the student needs.

Responding to Concerns

We hope our program meets the needs of your child and family. In the event that you are dissatisfied, we ask that you take the following steps. First, visit the class to see if the situation is as frequent or as severe as you suspect. Second, talk with your child's teacher or Director. We ask that you are direct in addressing your concerns with the parties involved. If a teacher cannot alleviate your concern, please contact the Director or Church Rector.

School Closings/Inclement Weather Policy

Please consult the school calendar for vacation dates, staff development days, and other scheduled closings. For consistency and to help parents with school-aged children in Howard County Public Schools (HCPSS), St. Peter's follows the HCPSS calendar for most major closings.

During inclement weather, we follow Howard County Public Schools' closing/delay policy.

- **If Howard County Schools are closed, St. Peter's will be closed.**
- **If Howard County Schools has a two-hour delay, St. Peter's will open at 11:30.**
- **If Howard County Schools has a one-hour delay, St. Peter's will open at 10:30.**

If worsening weather causes HCPSS to close early, St. Peter's may also close early. We will notify parents of any changes due to inclement weather via email, text, Brightwheel, or phone call. If you would feel more comfortable picking your child up early or not bringing him/her to school at all due to weather concerns, we completely understand. The safety of your children is our highest priority.

St. Peter's will follow HCPSS closures as it applies to inclement weather, public health initiatives, and other widespread events that result in school closures. St. Peter's may have additional closures due to power or water outages or natural disasters.

St. Peter's does not refund missed days due to illness, vacation, inclement weather, or other unavoidable closings. The knowledge that we will most likely miss school days due to inclement weather is taken into consideration when our calendar is planned. The decision whether to make up school days is a decision made by the Director and School Board on a case-by-case basis. Exceptions to the guidelines above will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

If the situation results in an extended school closure of over 2 months, no tuition will be required during this time. Donations would be greatly appreciated, however, as St. Peter's Preschool is a non-profit organization which endeavors to pay its staff regardless of school closures.

If school is unable to begin in September, tuition paid for September will be credited for the first month that school resumes. Please keep in mind that guidelines put in place by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) may necessitate changes in class sizes, meeting days, configurations, and teacher:student ratios.

Screen Time Policy

Screen time usage is an intentional and deliberate decision at St. Peter's. Overuse of screen time can interfere with play, physical activity, and building relationships. We typically utilize screens only a few times a month.

The following is a list of potential ways we may use screen time during the school day:

- Watching a short movie of a book or the Bible story of the week
- Dancing or doing other movement activities following a website
- Doing yoga by following a virtual yoga instructor
- Watching a short movie that complements or enhances the theme we are learning about, for ex. insects going through metamorphosis, astronauts in space, etc.

Emergency Preparedness

St. Peter's highest priority is the safety of our students. Emergency preparedness plans are reviewed annually, and staff are trained in the appropriate response. All exterior doors are kept locked throughout the day.

Fire Drills

We practice Fire Drills with each class once a month.

Shelter in Place

This plan would be put in place in the event of weather emergency or unsafe outside conditions/threats. Children will be cared for indoors, and our center will be secured to restrict entry. Parents will be notified if they need to pick up their child outside of regular dismissal time.

Shelter in place drills are conducted by each class twice yearly.

Off-site Evacuation

This plan would be put in place in the event that it is unsafe for us to remain at St. Peter's. We have predetermined off-site evacuation sites. One site we would drive to is Miller Library (9421 Frederick Rd, Ellicott City, MD 21042). If necessary, children will be transported by the staff in their personal vehicles, which is permitted by law and covered by our insurance in emergency situations.

We have two sites we can walk to that are adjacent to the church. One is the St. Peter's rectory, which is on church property (3691 Rogers Ave, Ellicott City, MD 21043). The other is the light blue house on the other side of the parking lot (8672 Frederick Rd, Ellicott City, MD 21043). We are friendly with the residents of both houses.

Communication During Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, families will receive an email, text, Brightwheel message, or phone call. If an immediate evacuation is necessary, parents will be contacted from our alternate site.

During an actual emergency, please do not call the school as it will be important to keep our phone line open to communicate with the appropriate authorities. We will contact you as soon as we have updated information.

When the emergency ends, parents will be informed and reunited with their children as soon as possible.