

# **Pender Hill School**

12401 Alder Woods Drive  
Fairfax, Virginia 22033  
(703) 352-6204

## **Religious Exempt Center**

Parent Handbook  
2025 – 2026

### **Our Philosophy**

Pender Hill School is an outreach ministry of Pender United Methodist Church. We believe that every child is a special gift from God that deserves to be loved, nurtured, and appreciated as a unique individual. We provide a welcoming and affectionate environment. Our goal with each child is to stimulate the child's growth spiritually, emotionally, socially, cognitively, and physically, in an atmosphere reflective of our Christian values.

Our program accepts all children without regard to  
race, color, creed, or religion.

Director: Leslie Whitacre

### **Pender Hill School Board**

The Pre-School Committee of Pender United Methodist Church administers The Pender Hill School Program. This Committee establishes the Operating Procedures of the School and hires the Director. The Director maintains the Staff of qualified Staff and oversees the day-to-day operations of the School.

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### **Pender Hill School / Public Disclosure Statement**

The code of Virginia, Section 63.2-1716, allows child day centers operated by religious institutions the opportunity to file for an exemption from licensure by meeting documentation and other requirements specified within the religious exemption law. The statements below have been prepared and distributed to meet the requirements of the religious exemption law.

#### **Religious Exemption**

In compliance with the Code of Virginia, Section 63.2-1716, this Center is religiously exempt from licensure and is classified as a “religiously exempt child day center”.

#### **Qualifications of Personal**

All Staff must have previous experience working with children in a school, church or home setting along with a love of working with children. All Staff will submit to criminal and central registry background checks every five years. All Staff will receive training in classroom, school policies and age-appropriate activities, as well as discipline techniques. All Staff are required to have CPR and First Aid Training every two years. Administrators and Lead Teachers are required to attend EMAT Training and keep current certificate on file in School Office. All Staff are required to participate in continuing education two times a year and provided certificate of completion for School Office. All Staff will agree to the teachings of the church while at work.

### **Health Requirements for Staff**

The exemption law requires that all Staff be certified annually by a practicing physician to be free from any disability, which would prevent them from caring for children. All Staff members will have verification of a negative TB test on file good for two years.

### **Enrollment Capacity**

The maximum number of children that the Center will enroll is 120. The maximum number of children to be in care at any one time (as dictated by the local building inspector) is 75.

### **Description of Facilities**

The Center location: **12401 Alder Woods Drive, Fairfax, Virginia 22033**

The size of the building: **38,000 Square Feet**

The number of rooms used for the Center: **12 rooms in the basement and subbasement.**

Use of kitchen facilities: **not available for use by Center.**

Playground equipment: **Adventure Play Climber, 4-seat Bouncer, 2 Merry-Go-round Bikes, and Ride-ons.**

### **Public Liability Insurance**

The center is covered by public liability insurance which provides coverage in the event that someone brings suit for personal or bodily harm suffered during the operation of the center as a result of negligence.

### **Immunizations & Health Form for Students**

All Students are required to turn in a current Health Form with current Immunizations at enrollment, and with Immunization updates.

### **Proof of Identity & Age of Student**

Section 63.2-1809 mandates that a regulated child day program shall require proof of a student's identity and age as well as information from the person enrolling the Student.

### **Supervision of Children**

All Staff are trained in procedures for appropriate supervision of all children in the school's program. This includes maintaining staff/child ratios and all procedures and policies to assure protection of children.

### **Daily Health Screening of All Students**

Daily observation will be made by all Staff in classrooms, to ensure health safety for all students in the classroom. Appropriate action will be taken both to protect the ill student and to prevent the spread of illness to other students.

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### **Age Requirements and Class Ratios**

#### **2-Year Class/3-Year-Old Class/4-Year-Old Class/Pre-K Class**

Children must be 2 years old by September 30 of the current school year. Maintain a ratio of 2 adults to 12 children for 2's and 2 adults to 16 children for 3's, 4's, and Pre-K..

Pender Hill School is "Religious Exempt", therefore, in the classes with children over the age of 2 ½, the Helping Parent is included in the ratio as a second adult.

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### **Pender Hill School Class Descriptions**

#### **3's: Room 125**

Our 3's Class is a place of fun and friendship, learning and love. At first, it is hard to say good-bye to Mommy and Daddy, but in time, we learn school is fun and Mommy and Daddy always come back after lunch. We learn to go potty by ourselves and wash our hands. We make new friends, learn to share, and take turns, help take care of toys, and put them away. We practice gentle hands and kind words. We have Circle Time for the very first time and assign classroom jobs, perform a welcome song, take class attendance, mark the calendar, and discuss the weather. We showcase the letter of the week to

coincide with a theme based on the seasons and Holidays. We reinforce the letter/ theme with crafts, stories, songs props and interactive activities. We go to the playground. We learn to walk in a line and go to different rooms and meet new teachers. At craft time we learn to cut, color and glue. At lunch time we learn to find our name, and to sit at the table open our own containers and feed ourselves. We even learn to clean up after ourselves. At the end of the day we build, sort, match, and play, then we go home to Mommy and Daddy.

#### **4 Day 4's Class: Room 119**

This class is intended to help build pre-kindergarten social and academic skills. Throughout the year, we work on social skills to get students ready for an elementary school classroom, such as following directions, sharing, building relationships, and resolving conflict. Academically, students work on letter and number recognition, phonics, and counting, as well as small motor skills, such as using pencils/crayons and cutting with scissors. The class has a topic and letter for each week, and participates in free play, circle time, craft, and recess daily.

#### **Pre-K: Room 121**

Our Pre-K Class is designed to prepare the children socially, emotionally, and academically for Kindergarten. Children start their day with free play where they can work on their social skills with classmates. We then move onto Circle Time where we assign Weekly Jobs and work on our "Letter of the Week". We also go over the Calendar, the Weather, and our Theme of the Week. Circle Time ends with a story related to the Letter of the Week. After Circle Time, the children work on a craft/project which is designed to help them follow directions. We often incorporate math fundamentals during this time with grafting, estimating, and counting. Of course, we have time for the children to play outside to get fresh air and exercise. We end our day with reviewing site words, as well as reading from a Chapter Book followed by content questions. Everyday our teachers love and encourage the children to be independent and proud of their accomplishments - all in preparation for Kindergarten.

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### **Behavior Management**

The goal of behavior management is to help children learn to modify their behavior as they grow. This is not something that can be taught in one day or one year. It is a developmental process. We expect to see developmentally appropriate behavior issues in every classroom and are prepared to meet with children and families to work through the behavior issues as they arise. Discipline and structure are important parts of our Program and each teacher is free to use their own method for helping children learn to control their emotions and make appropriate decisions. PHS has effective and positive techniques to handle inappropriate behavior. The most common include reminding the children, in positive terms, what is acceptable behavior, redirection, adult-led problem-solving guidance, and removal from the situation. PHS Teachers and Staff DO NOT use harsh language, corporal punishment, or raised voices in any situation at any time.

If a child's behavior becomes difficult to manage, the child's family will be notified and the issue will be discussed and handled between the Director, the Teacher, the Family, and the Child. Modifying behavior requires a team approach. We expect that Families and Staff will develop a satisfactory plan to assist the child with his/her self-control or any other problem that may occur.

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### **Birthdays**

Birthdays are a very special day for your child, and we know that. However, for now, we will not be able to allow any special treats from home. We will certainly recognize your child and their Special Day!

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### **Children with Special Needs**

Pender Hill School strives to be an inclusive Program for all members of the community. As such, we will make our best efforts to include children with Special Needs. Prior to enrollment, we ask families with children with Special

Needs to meet with the Director, Assistant Director, and Teachers to determine if PHS can adequately meet the needs of the child with our current staff and training levels. Progress Meetings will be held intermittently with the Director, Assistant Director, Teachers, and Families to follow the child's progress and make any necessary modifications.

Should the classroom situation become problematic (disruptions, physical violence, etc.), PHS reserves the right to ask the Family to leave the Program. Our hope is to avoid a situation such as this by promoting honest and open communication between all parties involved.

### **Child Find Therapists/Individualized Education Program**

Pender Hill School works closely with Fairfax County Therapists and Fairfax County Public Schools. We are happy to work with these therapists for IEP, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech, etc., who are providing services to our students. Should your child need to be observed for IEP purposes or if your child receives services from Child Find or any other source, please be sure to fill-out a Permission to Admit Form for the Office to have on file. This form simply allows PHS to admit the therapist and/or IEP Staff to your child's classroom. We also require a Confidentiality Release Form, which will allow Teachers and Staff to share observations with outside personal. These forms must be filed in the Office prior to any outside observations. Any Child Find, FCPS Staff, IEP Staff, etc. will not be allowed into Pender Hill School and classrooms without proper consent forms filled out by the families. PHS will do an ID check of your child's therapist on his/her first visit and keep a copy of the ID on file along with the Permission to Admit Form and Confidentiality Release Form.

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### **Class Placement**

The determination of where a child should be placed in a class is decided primarily by the child's birth date. In order for a child to enter Kindergarten in Fairfax County, the child needs to be five years of age by September 30, of the year the child will enroll in Kindergarten.

Spaces available in a class are given on a first come, first served, basis. Sometimes, special circumstances will circumvent this policy. These decisions are made after special consideration by the Director.

Class placement requests will be considered, as well as input from the teachers. However, definitive class placement decisions are at the sole discretion of the Director and are final.

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### **Clothing**

Each child should wear comfortable clothes to school each day. Clothes will get dirty from playing outside, art projects, creative free play choices, and/or snack/lunch. The clothes should be clothes that can get dirty. Always dress your child in weather/temperature appropriate clothes. Families are asked to bring a full change of clothes to school each day in the event that your child's clothes need to be changed. These clothes should be in a separate, plastic bag in your child's school bag. Families should pack underwear, socks, pants and shirt, or the equivalent of. Please keep in mind that as the seasons change, so should the change of clothes. All clothes, jackets, sweaters, coats, mittens, gloves, hats, should be clearly labeled with your child's name.

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### **Communication**

Pender Hill School strives to have open lines of communication between all the Families, Staff, and Children in our school. We all need to work together to make that happen. Families are always welcomed and encouraged to share their joys and concerns and every effort will be made to share the joys and ease the concerns.

Pender Hill School must always have the current contact information on file for all families. Teachers communicate quite often via e-mail. Please know that the contact information that you share with the school is for school use ONLY and will NOT be shared with anyone outside of Pender Hill School, nor will your information be allowed to be used for any kind of solicitation by other families in the school!



The Director will send home most School Information through your child's Teacher. At times there will be direct emails from the school.

Any confidential issues requiring in-depth conversations are best handled in person. Teachers and Administrative Staff will not address sensitive matters via e-mail. An appointment can be made to discuss these issues.

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### **Conferences**

Pender Hill School's 4-Year-Old Pre-School Families and our Pre-K Pre-School Families do have the option of a conference. These conferences will be scheduled during the month of May.

Teachers and parents of any child may request a meeting at any time if they feel a meeting is necessary.

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### **Curriculum**

Pender Hill School is a Christian school. We recognize the Holy Days of the Christian Faith and teach Bible Stories, Themes, Songs, and Verses in all of our classes.

Along with our Christian teachings, our curriculum is a Play Based Curriculum, which means we focus on learning through play. We seek to foster spiritual, emotional, social, cognitive, and physical development. We work with developmentally appropriate, child-centered, and hands-on activities. Our teachers develop their individual curriculums around a variety of themes. Activities include, but are not limited to: art, cooking, creative movement, health, large motor skill development, math readiness, music, prayer, pre-reading skills, science, and small motor skill development. We encourage independence and offer many opportunities for the children to make their own choices.

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## **Emergency Policies**

Pender Hill School requires that all emergency contact information for all children be kept current. PLEASE make every effort to keep PHS up to date with all your information!

Pender Hill School conducts fire drills for all classes. Maps marking the exit routes for each class are located in the classrooms.

Pender Hill School conducts monthly weather drills for both the Mother's Day Out and Pre-School Programs.

In the unlikely event that a "Lock Down" situation occurs at Pender Hill School, the following procedure will take place:

Pender Hill School will call 911 to report the incident. Pender Hill School will call Pender United Methodist Church Office and report the incident. Teachers and children will be locked in their classrooms. The doors to the hall are locked from the outside, meaning that you can exit the classroom, but you may not enter the classroom. The doors to the playground are always locked from the outside, which means that you can exit onto the playground from the classroom, but you cannot enter the classroom from the playground. The Administrative Staff and any Church Staff available will conduct a full perimeter security check. Families will receive a full explanation of the event and the outcome of the event within 24 hours of the conclusion of the event.

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## **Health/Illness/Injury**

**Health:** Each child must have a Physician's Certificate of Physical Examination and must be age appropriately immunized against communicable diseases. **Both the Physical Form and the Immunization Form MUST be on file in the Office by the first day of class!** This form can be obtained on the Fairfax County Schools website. An Emergency Authorization Form for treatment of your child in case of an emergency must be on file in the Office by the first day of school, as well.

**Illness:** **DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD TO PENDER HILL SCHOOL if your child shows signs of the following:**

1. Temperature of 100 degrees in combination with any other sign or symptom of illness
2. Diarrhea
3. Severe, continual, constant coughing
4. Difficult and/or shallow, rapid breathing
5. Pink or red, swollen, itchy, weeping eyes with or without discharge.
6. Unidentified rashes or spots
7. Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
8. Vomiting

If your child shows any signs of illness during the school day, the family will be contacted and asked to take your child home. Should a family member not be available, the next person on your Contact Form will be contacted. Your child will be isolated in the Office and made as comfortable as possible until he/she is picked up.

**Your child can return to school once:**

1. All signs of illness are gone.
2. A doctor has examined your child and given permission to return to school.
3. 24 hours have passed fever free and/or vomiting free and/or diarrhea free.

If your child becomes ill during the night, your child **SHOULD NOT** attend school the next day! Please do not give your child medicine to control/mask symptoms and then send your child to school! In most cases, your child will run a fever after the medicine has worn off and will be contagious. This leaves the other children and the entire PHS Staff vulnerable to whatever it is your child has. Be considerate of others and, most importantly, your child. Keep your child home where he/she can get the rest and tender, loving care that only family can give. Before you know it, your child will be well and ready to enjoy school again!

**Medication:** Due to the regulations set by The Commonwealth of Virginia, Pender Hill School is not able to administer any kind of medication to our students. Should your child need medications for emergency allergy situations, PHS will store these medications in the Office. If your child will need to keep any medications, topical creams, or an inhaler at school, your child's

doctor will need to fill out a form regarding these medications. PHS will keep the form on file. These forms can be obtained on the Fairfax County Schools website.

**Injury:** Pender Hill School is a very safe environment, but accidents can happen. Should an unfortunate incident occur, please be rest assured that our Teachers and Staff can handle any situation. Usually, these incidents require minor fixups, and your child will be sent on their way. Families will be notified at the end of the school day about what happened. Should the incident be more severe, families will be notified immediately, and the proper medical authorities will be notified immediately, as well.

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### **Important Daily Information**

Please check the bulletin board outside your child's classroom everyday for important information regarding your child's class, school activities, etc. All papers that are sent home should be read carefully and, if applicable, responded to promptly.

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### **Inclement Weather Policy**

Pender Hill School follows Fairfax County School's openings and closings. When Fairfax County Schools are closed due to inclement weather, PHS will be closed. When Fairfax County Schools have a delayed opening of one hour, PHS will open at 10:30 am. If Fairfax County Schools are released early due to inclement weather, Pender Hill School will close at 12:00 p.m.

Please feel free to call Pender Hill School if you are in doubt as to whether the school is open for the day, (703) 352-6204.

Please keep abreast of weather conditions and school closings by listening to the radio, watching TV, and/or logging on to the internet.

Of course, you are always welcome to make your own decision regarding the weather and road conditions and safety of your family. You can pick up your child at any time during the school day.

Should Pender Hill School be closed for an extended period due to weather related circumstances, the following is the “Snow Day Make-Up Policy” which was adopted by The Pender Hill School Board in May 2010: Snow days missed up to 5 days will not be made up. Snow days 6 – 10 will be made up at the discretion of The Board.

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### **Outside Play**

Students will play outside every day. The only time we will not send our students outside will be in cases of extreme cold or heat, rain, snow, etc. Please make sure your child comes to school each day ready for outdoor activity by being appropriately dressed for the temperature. If your child is too ill to play outside, please keep your child at home.

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### **Safety and Security**

Pender Hill School takes the safety of our Students and Staff very seriously. Children are always supervised by an adult and never allowed in the halls or other rooms by themselves. Please assist our Teachers and Staff by always supervising your children and always keeping them with you. PHS has implemented several practices and procedures to ensure the safety of our Students and Staff.

**Release of Children:** A Parent/Guardian Consent Form is kept on file in the Office. For a child to be released to anyone other than a parent or guardian, those people who are authorized by you to pick up your child must be listed on this form. Please notify the Office if anyone other than who is on your form will pick up your child from school. This form will also have a place on which to mention who is NOT allowed to pick up your child.

**Sign In/Sign Out:** Each classroom has a Sign-In/Sign-Out Sheet. This sheet is usually on a clipboard located near the front of the classroom. This sheet provides Pender Hill School with written proof of attendance. Families are required to escort their child to the classroom at the beginning of the school day and sign their child in. At the end of the school day, families will pick up their child from the classroom and sign their child out. If you are part of a carpool, the family that brings the children to school will be responsible for signing the children in. The family that picks the children up at the end of the day is responsible for signing the children out. Please let the teachers know of your carpooling plans so that they are aware of what family is dropping off your child and what family is picking up your child.

### **Transportation**

Transportation to and from Pender Hill School and the accompanying of children into School and out of School shall be the sole responsibility of the Family. For the safety of the children, please park in a designated parking place in the Church Parking Lot. PLEASE DO NOT PARK IN THE HANDICAP PARKING PLACES! It is unlawful to do so, and you will be asked to move your vehicle if you are parked there. No child will be released to anyone other than the parents, guardians, or designated persons as listed on the Parent/Guardian Consent Form unless prior arrangements have been made and the School, as well as the teacher, has been notified.

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### **School Calendar**

Pender Hill School follows the Fairfax County Schools Calendar, for the most part, regarding holidays, teacher workdays, and openings and closings. At the beginning of each new school year, families will receive a Pender Hill School Calendar for the current school year that will have a simple breakdown of important dates and special events happening each month at PHS.

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### **Tuition/Fees**

Pender Hill School Tuition is due by the 1st of each month, from October through May. If returning in September of the next school year, September tuition is due in June. Full tuition is expected every month regardless of the times your child attended school in that month. **Please write your child's name and class on the memo line of your check.**

### **Supply Fees**

For each class at Pender Hill School, a Supply Fee is assessed. This fee is due at the beginning of the School Year.

### **Late Fee**

Pender Hill School is non-profit and operates on a very narrow margin. We depend on everyone paying their tuition **in full** and **on time!** A Late Fee will automatically be assessed and applied to any balance on your account, on the 15th of the month. Payment received is applied to the oldest charge posted. Outstanding balances can cost your child missed class time and can lead to dismissal from the program.

### **Late Pick-Up Fee**

Pender Hill School expects punctuality when it comes to picking up your child at the end of the school day. It can be very distressing to a child when all their friends have been picked up from school and they are all alone wondering where you are. A fee will be charged for a late pick-up after 1:10 p.m. without notice to the Office. Picking up between 1:10 p.m. and 1:20 p.m. will cost **\$10.00**. Each additional five minutes after 1:20 p.m. will cost an additional **\$5.00**. This fee will be enforced and will be paid to the Teachers **in cash!** In addition, an "After Hours" Late Fee Report will be filled out and kept on file. If the lateness in picking up your child becomes habitual, you may be asked to leave the Program.

### **Returned Checks**

There is a Service Charge of \$25.00 for a returned check. A new check with the \$25.00 Service Fee added to the total (including the Late Fee) will be expected within five days upon notification that your check was returned due

to insufficient funds. After three checks have been returned in the same school year, only cash payments will be accepted.

### **Withdrawal of Student**

You will be responsible for your tuition payment until the last day your child is enrolled in the School. You **will not** receive a refund for your student until the spot left vacant by your withdrawal from the Program is filled. If you withdraw your child for the last two months of the school year, **full tuition is required for these two months**, as it is too late in the school year to fill your child's spot.

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### **Grievances**

An unhappy family who complains to a small group of peers can demoralize the entire group. If you have a concern, please voice your concerns to the appropriate people at the appropriate times.

- \* Research your concern. Is it covered in the Handbook?

- \* If you are concerned about your child's adjustment to Pre-School, their behavior at Pre-School, developing social bonds, or whatever your concern regarding your child may be, PLEASE talk to your child's Lead Teacher. They can ease your concerns. Remember that pick-up and drop-off times are very busy, so please ask the Lead Teacher when they would be available to discuss your concerns.

- \* If you are concerned about the Program, policies, procedures, etc., PLEASE talk to the Director. You can telephone, e-mail, or request a face-to-face meeting.

Please remember that the entire Staff at Pender Hill School is dedicated and committed to making your family's Pre-School Experience a positive one. By keeping the lines of communication open, we can achieve this goal together.



### **Support Your Teacher**

Pender Hill School has an extraordinary team of Teachers. They teach at PHS because they love children and enjoy working with children and families. They have a very challenging job planning the curriculum and teaching the children. When in the classroom, your job is to assist the Teacher(s) with the plans for the day and to help with ALL the children, not just your own child. It is imperative that families support the Teacher(s) and show that support to all the other families and children at PHS.