



Park Forest Preschool Family Handbook



Welcome to Park Forest Preschool

Dear Family,

Thank you for choosing to share your child and family with Park Forest Preschool. The teachers and I are excited to get to know you and your child/ren. We are here to support you in every way we are able. Park Forest Preschool has been in existence for over 50 years, and we hope it will continue for 50 more.

In this Handbook, you will learn about our policies and procedures, as well as the regulations we follow to be a state-certified program. Please feel free to ask if you have any questions.

We look forward to providing your child with a caring and enriching environment.

Sincerely,

Sue Yearick
Center Director
1833 Park Forest Ave
State College, PA 16803
(814) 231-8492
directorpfp@gmail.com

Table of Contents

Welcome to Park Forest Preschool

Table of Contents

About Us

- Vision Statement
- Mission Statement
- Goals
- Certification
- Definition of Family
- Family Engagement
- Confidentiality
- Staff Qualifications
- Child to Staff Ratios

Admission & Enrollment

- Weeks and Hours of Operation
- Eligibility
- Forms
- Extended Day Option
- Closures
- Waiting List

Welcoming All Children: Inclusion and Cultural Responsiveness

- Celebrations
- Inclusion
- Non-Discrimination

Attendance/Drop-off and Pick-up

- General Procedures
- Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up
- Absences
- Closing Due to Extreme Weather
- Withdrawal

Personal Belongings

- What to Bring
- Cubbies
- Toys from Home

Communication & Family Partnership

Open Door Policy
Photos & Publicity

Curricula & Learning

Learning Environment
Curricula & Assessment
Outings and Field Trips
Developmental Screening

Nutrition

Foods from Home
Food Prepared At the Center
Food Allergies
Meals

Guidance

General Procedure
Positive and Preventive Guidance
Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families

Health

Immunizations
Illness
Medications
Communicable Diseases

Safety

Clothing
Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play
Injuries
Biting
Respectful Behavior
Prohibited Substances
Dangerous Weapons
Child Custody
Suspected Child Abuse

Emergencies

Lost or Missing Child
Emergency Safety

Family Handbook Acknowledgement

About Us

Vision Statement

Our dream is that every child has access to a high quality, positive early childhood educational experience, so that they are prepared for success in their future.

Mission Statement

The Park Forest Preschool is a state-certified, nonprofit, tuition-free program for qualifying families that prepares children for life-long educational success by promoting cognitive, social-emotional, and physical growth in a diverse and nurturing environment. Parent programs are offered to support our families.

Goals

- To provide a healthy, nurturing, and safe environment
- To accept, respect, and appreciate each child and family
- To provide age-appropriate materials and equipment that support children's learning in a fun and interesting way
- To encourage the physical development of large motor skills through outdoor and indoor play as well as fine motor development through manipulative toys, blocks, and puzzles.
- To encourage creativity by offering experiences in music, art, and literature
- To encourage interest in language through games, stories, and conversation
- To partner with parents in the care and teaching of their children

Certification

Park Forest Preschool is certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL).

Family Engagement

Each family is a child's first teacher. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage families to be involved in the program by visiting children's classrooms, participating in weekly parent meetings, participating in field trips (when allowable), attending special programs, and providing feedback on the program.

Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released except for what is required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children in our program are confidential.

Staff Qualifications

Our teachers are hired in compliance with a minimum of the certification requirements and qualifications.

Teachers participate in orientation and ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

We strongly discourage families from entering into employment arrangements with staff (i.e. babysitting). Any arrangement between families and our teachers outside the programs and services we offer is a private matter, not connected to or sanctioned by Park Forest Preschool.

Child to Staff Ratios

Children are supervised at all times to ensure the following child to staff ratios:

Age	Children to Staff	Maximum Groups Size
24 - 36 months	6 to 1	8
3 0 5 years	10 to 1	18

Admission & Enrollment

Weeks and Hours of Operation

Park Forest Preschool is open for approximately 32 weeks, September through May. Regular hours are 8:45 – 12:15, Monday through Friday. The two classes for 2- and young 3-year- olds operate Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Tuesday, Thursday.

Eligibility

Children who are 2 years - 5 years old by August 31, who reside in Centre County, and whose family qualifies based on total household income are eligible to apply for open spaces.

Forms

The following forms must be completed and submitted to the director prior to your child's first day of attendance.

1. Enrollment Form
2. Emergency Contact / Permission Form
3. Agreement Form
4. Income Verification
5. Health Appraisal / Immunization record
6. Handbook Acknowledgement Signature Form

The emergency contact form must be updated every six months or if there are any changes to your information. If your information changes between updates, you must notify us.

Extended Day Option

When funding and staffing allow, a limited number of preschool children have the option to stay until 2:00 pm in the Extended Day Program.

Priority for the extended day program is given to:

1. Children who are age-eligible for Kindergarten in the following year
2. Children who have a sibling that is priority one AND enrolled in a preschool classroom
3. Children who are enrolled in a preschool classroom
4. Children who are 3 years old

Closures

PFP follows the State College Area School District calendar, with additional closed days due to the needs of the church. Every family receives a calendar in August, and the calendar is posted on our webpage.

Waiting List

If there is not a space available for a child who qualifies, the child is placed on a waiting list and can enroll if a space becomes available. Families with a child already enrolled are given priority.

Welcoming All Children: Inclusion and Cultural Responsiveness

PFP utilizes books, music, games, and a wide range of activities to teach our children respect for our world and the diversity of life in it.

Celebrations

Our holiday policy reflects the different cultures and beliefs of families and staff in our program. We would be happy to include the celebrations that are important to your family. Due to possible dietary restrictions, Park Forest Preschool will provide any special foods, including birthday cupcakes.

Inclusion

Park Forest Preschool is committed to providing all children with reasonable learning and behavior support accommodations, and we strive to promote OCDEL's position that children with disabilities participate and succeed in the same learning environments as their same-age peers.

- We comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) [28], which provides for equal access to public accommodations for children with disabilities, by making reasonable modifications to policies, practices and services.
- All families are treated with dignity and respect for their individual needs and/or differences.
- We assist all children to succeed with same-age peers. With parental consent, we may coordinate with other agencies and/or health care providers as needed to accomplish this. When possible, our staff participate in IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) and IEP (Individualized Educational Program) meetings to ensure that we provide the most supportive, natural environment.
- All health forms and other important information regarding the individualized needs of the child are to be completed by their health care provider and/or other providers.
- It is important that parents keep us apprised of any changes or needs of their child.

Non-Discrimination

At Park Forest Preschool, equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

Attendance/Drop-off and Pick-up

General Procedures

- Drop off begins at 8:45. We ask that children arrive no later than 9:00, as we start our preschool day at that time. If your child is to arrive later than 9:00, please notify the Director through Brightwheel.
- Parents/guardians are required to sign children in and out each day.
- For your child's protection, only persons authorized by the parent/guardian are permitted to take the child from the facility.

Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up

- Parents/guardians must list the names of anyone allowed to pick up the child as well as the names of anyone denied permission on the Emergency Contact Form.
- Names of anyone denied permission must be officially documented in writing and on file.
- Individuals listed in the child's file will be asked for photo identification to confirm their identity.
- If someone other than the listed individuals will be picking up your child, you must notify the Director. Photo identification will be required at pick up.
- In the case of court-ordered custody decisions that would affect drop off or pickup, documentation must be on file.
- Please notify PFP if, due to some emergency, you are unable to pick up your child on time.
- In the event that a pick-up person appears to be intoxicated or otherwise unable to safely supervise a child, staff will express concern and offer to call an emergency contact person. If the pick-up person insists on taking the child, staff will call the police and follow their instructions.
- If a child has not been picked up by 15 minutes after their scheduled pick-up time, if we have been unable to contact a parent/guardian, we will attempt to contact emergency pick-up people. After 45 minutes of no contact we will call local police for assistance.

Absences

If your child will not be attending, please call or text 814-231-8492, use the Brightwheel app, or email directorpfp@gmail.com to communicate with the Director. We will be concerned about your child if we do not hear from you.

Closing Due to Extreme Weather

- PFP follows the State College Area School District for weather related decisions and will close when the district closes or delays opening.
- Families will be contacted through Brightwheel and text message, and the information will be posted on the PFP Facebook page.
- If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to arrange your child's early pick-up.

Withdrawal

As a courtesy, a written notice is requested by the center when a child is being withdrawn.

Personal Belongings

What to Bring

Please provide a backpack or bookbag and a change of clothing labeled with your child's name. Soiled clothing will be sent home, please return clothing that PFP loans to your child.

Cubbies

Upon enrollment, each child will be assigned a cubby labeled with their name. Please check your child's cubby on a daily basis for items that need to be taken home.

Toys from Home

We request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home into the center unless they are part of a show-and-tell activity. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items belonging to you or your child.

Communication & Family Partnership

- Bulletin Board. Located next to the Director's office - provides center news, upcoming events, faculty changes, announcements, etc.
- Newsletters. Each classroom provides a newsletter at least monthly. The Board of Directors provide a newsletter annually.
- Brightwheel. PFP has an online management app that you are required to download. This is the primary method of daily communication between families and PFP.
- Family Visits. Family participation is encouraged. Please schedule with the Director to visit our classrooms, volunteer, come along on a field trip, or eat a meal with your child.
- Conferences. Family & teacher conferences offered twice a year. During these conferences, we will discuss your child's strengths, likes and dislikes, and styles of learning. We will work together to set goals for your child's growth and development. You may request additional conferences regarding your child's progress at any time. We encourage you to communicate any concerns.

Open Door Policy

Open Door Policy means parents are always welcome. It does not mean the doors will be unlocked. For the safety and protection of the children, perimeter doors will be kept locked at all times.

Our team will always do their best to speak with parents/guardians. Since teachers are caring for children, it is usually not feasible to have a long discussion during regular program hours. If a situation requires a longer discussion, please request an appointment.

Photos & Publicity

Photos will be taken of the children at the center for use within the center, on our website, Facebook, for community presentations or our annual newsletter. A written release form will be obtained at the beginning of the school year prior to the use of photographs.

Curricula & Learning

Learning Environment

We provide a rich learning environment with curricula that are developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. We have a flexible day routine that allows children to advance at their own pace. We strongly believe that learning happens through play. Learning and exploring are hands-on and are facilitated through interest areas. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning. We encourage openness to that which is different from us, and the ability to work and play with others.

Curricula & Assessment

Park Forest Preschool uses the PA Early Learning Standards to guide classroom planning. Activities are individualized for each child according to their developmental needs.

Outings and Field Trips

We incorporate supervised outdoor play and/or walking trips around the neighborhood daily for all children. Children are accounted for at all times.

For field trips, please dress your child appropriately for the season. Please send walking shoes; sandals and flip-flops can make it difficult for a child to keep up.

On some field trips, when allowed by the site, we may encourage you to join your child.

Families will be required to provide a phone number for an adult who is available for emergency contact while on a field trip.

Developmental Screening

Park Forest Preschool uses the use Ages and Stages Questionnaire – 3, to assess developmental performance in the areas of communication, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, problem-solving, and personal-social skills. We use Ages and Stages Questionnaire - SE to screen and assess social-emotional development, self-regulation, compliance, social-communication, adaptive functioning, autonomy, as well as affect and interaction with people.

Nutrition

Foods from Home

We request that you do not bring food from home into our center.

Food Prepared At the Center

Food will be planned, prepared, and portioned according to the recommendations of the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Food Allergies

If your child has a food allergy, you must notify us in writing so that we can make appropriate substitutions. Written documentation is required from a physician that also lists appropriate food substitutions and an action plan for emergency care. This information will be reviewed and renewed annually.

Meals

Weekly menus are posted for viewing by parents/caregivers. Children sit at a dining table with their classroom group and receive meal trays. Good table manners are modeled and encouraged. Children are encouraged, but not forced, to eat a variety of foods.

Guidance

General Procedure

Thoughtful and intentional planning along with good communication are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating clear rules consistently and involving children in problem-solving help children develop their ability to self-regulate and interact with one another. We encourage children to be fair and respect others and property. We guide children to understand how their actions impact others and the consequences that may occur.

Positive and Preventive Guidance

Each student at Park Forest Preschool has a right to:

- Learn in a safe and friendly place
- Be treated with respect
- Receive the help and support of caring adults

We provide a safe, supportive environment that fosters nurturing relationships. We work to increase safe behavior of all children. If a child has difficulty regulating their behavior, particularly use of aggression, we intervene immediately to protect all of the children. We create a supportive environment to make all children feel safe to be able to express their emotions appropriately.

There are rare instances when in order to ensure a child's safety or that of others, we may restrain a child by gently holding them only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation.

Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families

If a child's behavior is of concern, staff will communicate with the family in an attempt to understand the child's individual needs and challenges. We will partner with the family to determine the next steps and request consultation from an outside agency or support program, as needed.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PAExpulsionHelp>

Unfortunately, if these attempts to support the success of a child in our setting are unsuccessful, on very rare occasions, we may assist the family to find a more suitable setting for care. Examples of such instances include:

- A child appears to be a danger to others.
- Continued care could be harmful to, or not in the best interest of the child as determined by a medical, psychological, or social service personnel.
- Undue burden on our resources and finances for the child's accommodations for success and participation.

Health

Immunizations

Immunization records, or a written waiver due to religious or medical reasons, are required to be kept in each child's file.

Physicals

A copy of your child's physical should be received before their first day, but must be received no later than 30 days after your child begins the program. Families are responsible for ensuring that their child's physicals are renewed annually and that a copy of the results of the child's health assessment is given to the program.

Illness

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but, to protect other children, you may not bring a sick child to the center. The center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. You will be called and asked to pick up your child if your child exhibits any of the following symptoms. We will try to keep your child comfortable, but they might be excluded from activities until you arrive.

PA Dept of Human Services recommends, and PFP uses, the resource [Caring For Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards, Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs](#) as guidance for health and safety decisions.

Communicable disease list as updated by PA Department of Health that prevents your child from attending PFP: .

- Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.
- Illness that poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Fever (100°F or higher under the arm, 101°F or higher in the mouth, 102°F or higher in the ear) accompanied by other symptoms.
- Diarrhea – stools with blood or mucus, and/or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet.
- Vomiting – more than 2 times during the previous 24 hours.
- Mouth sores caused by drooling.
- Rash with fever, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, until on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Head lice, if untreated and until all live nits and bugs are removed.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.

- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of antibiotics.
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after immune globulin has been administered.
- Tuberculosis, until a health professional indicates the child is not infectious.
- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears.
- Mumps, until 5 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash.
- Has a physician or other health professional's written documentation that child be separated from other children.

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever without medication, vomiting, and diarrhea for 24 hours.
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless:
 - The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious, and;
 - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.
- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

Medications

PFP does not administer prescription or over the counter medication to children other than emergency medications, such as an epi-pen or inhaler, with a detailed Care Plan written and signed by a physician and written permission from the family. A Care Plan must include medication in its original container printed with the child's name and dosage, medication expiration date, instructions for use, possible complications or reactions with treatment instructions, and contact information for all parties.

Communicable Diseases

When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a (suspected) reportable disease, we are required to notify the local Board of Health or Department of Public Health. We will notify families about exposure so children can receive preventive treatments.

Safety

Clothing

Park Forest Preschool will provide a classroom T-shirt for each child. Please dress your child in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Your child will be involved in a variety of activities including: painting, outdoor play, sand, weather, and other sensory activities. Our playground is used as an extension of the center; we go outdoors daily, unless prohibited by weather extremes. Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for center play and make it difficult for your child to participate in some activities.

Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play

Extreme weather guidelines are posted on the bulletin board outside the Director's office.

Injuries

All PFP employees are required to be certified in First Aid as well as Infant and Child CPR.

In the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee), you will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event that your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called for transportation. A proper escort will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

Biting

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants, toddlers, and sometimes even preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

We will work to prevent incidents from occurring by observing and interacting with the children to anticipate what might happen. We will work together to respond and distract the child in efforts to prevent any occurrence. When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten. We will also care for the biter and redirect more appropriate behavior and communicate that biting is not permitted.

If a bite breaks the skin, you will be notified immediately and encouraged to contact your child's doctor.

Families of the child who was bitten and of the biter will be informed of the incident to keep them informed and develop strategies for change.

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/understanding-and-responding-children-who-bite>

Respectful Behavior

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all of our families. If hostility occurs, we will ask you to control your behavior or remove your children from our care.

Prohibited Substances

The indoor and outdoor center environments are non-smoking areas at all times. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the premises, The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the center's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Dangerous Weapons

A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object, which by the manner it is used or intended to be used, is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.

In cases that clearly involve a gun, or any other weapon on our premises, the police will be called and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the premises. This policy applies to visible and concealed weapons.

Child Custody

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

Suspected Child Abuse

We are required by law to report child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may conduct an investigation.

Emergencies

Our full emergency plan is available in the director's office. Our public emergency plan is posted on the bulletin board outside the Director's office.

Lost or Missing Child

In the unlikely event that a child becomes lost or separated from a group, all available staff will search for the child. If the child is not located, the family and the police will be notified.

Emergency Safety

Our center is equipped with a comprehensive fire alarm system. Our emergency evacuation plan is submitted annually to local emergency services and is practiced with the children and staff monthly.

Family Handbook Acknowledgement

Please sign this acknowledgement, detach it from the handbook, and return it to the center prior to enrollment.

This handbook may be updated from time-to-time, and notice will be provided when updates are implemented.

Thank you for acknowledging the policies and procedures we have established for the safety and welfare of all children in our care. We look forward to getting to know you and your family.

I have received the Park Forest Preschool Family Handbook, and I have reviewed the family handbook with a member of the Park Forest Preschool staff. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself with the Family Handbook and to ask the Director for clarification of any policy, procedure, or information that I do not understand.

Recipient Signature

Date

Center Staff Signature

Date