

# **SIGNAL HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK**

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Important school information for parents with children that attend  
Signal Hill Elementary School.

*Last Updated 7/30/25*



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**Marcie Fields, Principal**  
**Leah Sadare, Assistant Principal**

## Welcome!

This handbook contains the most essential information you may need during this school year. You can access our parent handbook from the “Our School” section on our webpage. The intent of this handbook is to inform you of some basic school procedures or policies. More information about the school division’s regulations and policies are found on the PWCS official website. If any changes are made throughout the year, we will let you know through our school “panda updates” and we will update the handbook online.

I want to thank you in advance for all that you will do this year to ensure that our students are successful, learning to their fullest potential and enjoy learning! We have a wonderful and important job, and I am glad that you chose to partner with us at Signal Hill Elementary.

Our focus every year is to continue to strive towards our school vision as ***We Go the Extra Mile, and we do what is RIGHT in our HEART!*** We do this through our Panda Essentials. These are available for view on our website and on our school improvement plan.

We can only be hugely successful if we work effectively in teams. All our decisions about what is best for students will be made in our school teams, as well as our Parent-Teacher Organization and Parent-Principal Advisory Council.

As a school we will remember to let our students know that we care for them, that we know they can meet the high expectations we set for them and that we will make sure they are safe and secure each day at school. When students know that we want only the best for them, they will strive to also do their best and make a positive difference.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Marcie Fields  
Principal

## GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION

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### SCHOOL HOURS

- Hours for students are 9:20am – 4:00pm for a full day.
- Half-day hours are 9:20am – 12:25pm. On a half day lunch is provided for all students.
- When the county is on a 2-hour delay, the school day begins at 11:20am and ends at the normal time.
- Front doors open for students at 9:10am. There will not be supervision provided by the school before 9:10am. Students are considered tardy after 9:20am.
- Office Hours: 8:00 am - 4:30 pm. During this time, the office is open to the public.

### ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

**Car Riders** – Our carpool drop-off is in the rear of the building. Please drive your car in a single line, one-way, along the yellow curb. Carpool drop-off begins at 8:55am. Our goal is to welcome students safely and quickly into the school so that all students are in the building by 9:10am. There will be a one-way loop to the back and around to the front to exit the parking lot.

If you need to get out of the vehicle for any reason, please park in our parking lot and walk yourself into the building. School begins at 9:20am.

**Buses** - Our buses drop off the students in the bus loop on the left side of the school facing Signal Hill Road and students enter the building through Door 18. Students enter the school at 9:10am, and school begins at 9:20am.

### DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

- Kindergarteners must have an authorized person present at the bus stop, with a valid ID matching their name on the student's authorization form, for a Kindergarten student to exit a bus. Please see the following website for more information and a copy of the kindergarten authorization form: [Kindergarten Authorization Form](#)
- ANY students that do not get off the bus will be returned to school. Parents, guardians and/or emergency contacts will be contacted by the front office and will need to come to school with a valid ID to pick up the student.
- Any parents, guardians and/or emergency contacts that are late to carpool will also be contacted by the front office and will need to come to school with a valid ID to pick up their student.
- All parents, guardians and emergency contacts **must present a government issued ID** when picking up your child. We will not release a student to anyone who does not present an ID and is cleared for pick up on the student's emergency card. We will accept PWCS employee ID cards. We cannot accept pictures of IDs on phones.
- If any students are still at school one hour after dismissal at 5:00pm, the proper police authorities will be contacted.

## BACKPACK TAGS

All students will have a tag placed on their backpack on the first day of school. This tag will show how the student gets home at dismissal: car rider, bus rider, or SACC. The bus number or car rider number for that student will also be written on the tag. Please leave the tag on the backpack for the entire school year.

## EARLY DISMISSAL

Instruction continues until students are dismissed at 4:00pm. Early dismissal is disruptive to teachers, other students, and the staff who are preparing for a quick and safe dismissal. ***If you need to pick your child up early because of an appointment, please send an email to [shes-dismissal@pwcs.edu](mailto:shes-dismissal@pwcs.edu) prior to 2:00pm.*** Students should not be picked up early on a daily or weekly basis. Please do not email teachers or send notes to teachers about early dismissals. All these requests need to come through the front office.

Please remember the following information when trying to pick your child up early from school:

- ***No students will be released after 3:00pm in the afternoon.*** This is when we begin preparing for dismissal, our buses begin arriving and our carpool lane needs to be clear. Picking up your student after 3:00pm interrupts this process as we try to make sure that all students get home properly and safely.
- All parents, guardians and emergency contacts ***must present a government issued ID*** when picking up your child. We will not release a student to anyone who does not present an ID and is cleared for pick up on the student's emergency card. We will accept PWCS employee ID cards. We cannot accept pictures of IDs on phones.
- Any information that needs to be changed on the emergency card can be completed through Parent Vue.
- As a school, we work off the last copy of court documentation that we have on file. If there are any questions about child custody and release of a child, we will first refer to the emergency card on file and then we will refer to the court documentation to ensure we are releasing to the proper authorized person.
- A parent/guardian's right to pick up their child cannot be taken away or removed on the emergency card by anyone other than the court system. Please be sure to bring to us the latest court documentation about custody that you may have, if necessary.

## CARPOOL TAGS

To pick up your child through our carpool lane, please come to the front office to be issued a carpool tag number. You will need to have a valid ID with you. Please remember the following information when receiving a carpool tag:

### CARPOOL TAGS IDENTIFY YOU

- Each family receives 2 carpool tags, regardless of the number of students registered.
- Every car taking part in carpool **MUST** have a Panda Carpool Tag clearly visible in the front window for our staff.
- ***If you forgot your pass, you will not be able to pick up your children from the carpool lane. You will have to park and come into the front office with a valid government-issued ID and your name must be on the emergency contact list for pick up after dismissal at 4:15pm.***
- If your tag gets lost, please report to the office as soon as possible with a valid government-issued

ID so we can remove it from the system and issue a new tag.

- If you are late picking up your child more than 3 times, your carpool tag will be revoked, and your student will ride the bus home.

#### CARPOOL TIMES

- Our morning carpool begins at 8:55am and ends at our second bell, which is 9:20am. After 9:20am you will have to park your vehicle and take your children to the front office. Please be mindful of our attendance policies, any child arriving after 9:20am without a valid excuse will be considered an unexcused tardy.
- Our afternoon carpool will begin at dismissal. Children will begin to exit the building for pick up around 4:05pm. Remember to have your carpool tag visible in the front window. Any children not picked up by 4:20pm will be taken to the front office.

#### CONTINUE TO PULL FORWARD AND DO NOT PASS

- Please continue to move forward and fill in empty spaces to keep the flow of traffic moving.
- Please do not pass the vehicle in front of you. Passing other vehicles becomes a safety hazard for our students.
- Please be patient and wait for the vehicle to move, they may still be helping children get in or out of their vehicle. Our carpool team will be directing traffic as quickly and efficiently as possible.

#### ENTERING/EXITING VEHICLES AND SEAT BELTS

- We ask that all children enter and exit the vehicle from the passenger side, for their safety. Please always remain in your vehicle, our carpool staff will assist your children in entering and exiting the vehicle.
- In the event you need to help your child get out of the car during drop off, we ask that you please pull into a parking space in the rear parking lot, assist your child from the car and walk your child to the carpool drop off door. This will allow us to keep traffic flowing smoothly.
- Make sure that all seat belts are fastened before pulling away in the carpool line at the end of the day.
- Please be patient with our carpool families, as some of our younger children will take more time to complete these processes.

#### BUS PASSES

Whenever it is necessary for a student to (1) ride a bus other than the one that is normally assigned, (2) or to ride the same bus, but get off at another stop, please send an email to [SHES-dismissal@pwcs.edu](mailto:SHES-dismissal@pwcs.edu) or call the front office prior to 2:00pm. A bus pass will be provided for the student with the changes; to inform the bus drivers that the change is approved by the parents and the school.

#### CARPOOL PASSES

Whenever it is necessary for a student to ride in a car other than the one that is normally assigned, please send an email to [SHES-dismissal@pwcs.edu](mailto:SHES-dismissal@pwcs.edu) or call the front office prior to 2:00pm. A carpool pass will be provided for the student with the changes; to inform the carpool staff that the change is approved by the parent and the school.

## **BUS AND CARPOOL BEHAVIOR**

Students are expected to walk through the hallways at dismissal at voice level zero. This means that they will be quiet, attentive and will not be disruptive to make sure all announcements are heard and everyone gets home safely. Students who are waiting in our cafeteria while carpool students arrive will continue to keep this behavior as they wait for the names to be called to exit the building. Our carpool staff will help them safely to their vehicles. All students riding the bus are expected to understand and adhere to the Code of Behavior, which is available on the [PWCS Code of Behavior](#) website.

## **INFORMATION FOR PARENTS**

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### **PARENTVUE**

ParentVUE is a tool that gives parents and guardians access to their child's bus information, class schedules, grades, immunization records, attendance information, and more.

ParentVUE accounts are unique to each school district. Families that have moved to Prince William County from another school district must create a PWCS ParentVUE account during the registration process.

Families with students attending a Prince William County Public School (PWCS) who do not have a ParentVUE account should contact our administrative assistant II/registrar to request a ParentVUE activation code.

Families new to PWCS must create a ParentVUE account to complete the online student registration process.

For more information, visit the [PWCS ParentVUE website](#).

### **TRANSPORTATION**

All bus assignments are available in ParentVUE. Transportation is a separate entity within Prince William County Schools. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's transportation to school, please contact them directly at 571-402-3940. We do not have any information about bus schedules or delays at the school level.

For more information about transportation, please visit the [PWCS Transportation website](#).

### **SAFETY**

All parents and visitors must report to the school office directly upon entering the school. Prince William County requires that all visitors sign in and leave a government issued ID with a photo and a valid expiration date. Visitors will then be issued a visitor pass, which they must wear the entire time they are in the school.

Teachers use a "buddy system" for when students move from one part of the school to another. Students

walk in groups of two or larger to ensure no student is alone.

Parents should keep their child's emergency information up to date, with valid phone numbers, emergency contact information, and people designated to pick them up from school through Parent Vue.

The school should be notified immediately of any potentially serious or unusual situations involving friends or relatives who may try to contact children at school. The school's only interest in knowing this very private type of information is for the protection of our students and staff.

The school does not allow older siblings in middle or high school to "drop-in" for an unannounced visit. Visitor privileges to older students during regular school hours will not be allowed except through administrative permission.

As a school, our staff is knowledgeable of the procedures that have been established by our Security and Crisis Readiness team. PWCS uses standard terms to communicate with families. We encourage families to familiarize themselves with the terms and information on our [PWCS Security and Crisis Readiness website](#).

The school must provide students with multiple opportunities to practice fire drills (monthly), lock down drills (three times per year), earthquake and tornado drills (once a year). When these drills have been completed, administration will inform parents through School Status, when required by the county.

## **MEDICATIONS**

Medication cannot be administered to any student without the proper authorization forms completed and on file. Medication must be provided in a new, sealed container with the completed authorization form. Students may **not** transport medication to and from school. Any medication not meeting the PWCS regulations will not be administered to your student. For immunization requirements, required health forms, medications at school and other information, please visit the [PWCS Student Health Services website](#).

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Field trips are arranged by the grade level team to provide a supplemental instructional lesson that aligns with the county and state curriculum. Please follow the grade level team's directions for these field trips. All students must travel to and from the location with the group and teachers. Parents should also be an assigned chaperone only if they are attending a field trip. No siblings of any age are allowed to attend.

***Parents that show up unannounced to field trips will be asked to remove their child from field trip and attend the event on their own.*** This is primarily due to the importance of a clear line of supervision and for the safety of the students. All chaperones are selected by lottery and are required to bring a valid ID with an expiration date to be processed through our visitor identification system (RAPTOR technologies).

If a parent is selected as a chaperone, they will be required to ride the bus to and from the field trip and they will stay with the student group assigned to them, for the duration of the field trip.

Field trips are paid for using our online payment processing system, [Student Quick Pay for PWCS](#). For step by step directions on how to open an account, visit the [Online Payment System for School Fees](#) website. 7

## OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES

Please help your children remember their coats, gloves, hats, etc. when they come to school. We watch the temperature and wind chill outside to decide whether students can go outside for recess or PE.

Temperature Limits: PWCS generally encourages students to play outside between 31°F and 91°F.

Wind Chill: When temperatures are below 31°F, wind chill is a significant factor to consider. Wind chill can make it feel much colder than the actual temperature.

Heat Index: Similarly, when temperatures are above 91°F, the heat index (which accounts for humidity) can make it feel hotter and more dangerous.

Additional Factors: Besides temperature, other factors like rain, snow, and high winds may also lead to decisions about whether to allow students outside.

## INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

PWCS provides information about closings and delays in many ways including:

- Email and text messages sent to parents/guardians using contact information provided in Parent VUE
- Alerts on the [PWCS homepage](#) and each school website
- PWCS-TV (channel 18 on Comcast and channel 36 on Fios)
- PWCS [Facebook](#)
- Area radio and television stations

For more information, please visit our [PWCS Inclement Weather](#) website.

## NUTRITION AND WELLNESS

Breakfast and lunch are free for all students who attend Signal Hill Elementary school. To access school menus, please visit the [PWCS school menus](#) website.

Please remember that there are several reasons why we need to be careful about what food is brought into school from home or the store. Many students have serious allergies to specific ingredients. Also, we should be mindful of instilling good habits of nutrition in our students at a young age. For birthdays and class parties, consider fruits and vegetables be brought instead of candy, cupcakes, or cookies. Also consider non-food items like pencils or goodie bags, instead of food for celebrations in school. Please check with the teacher as to what items can or cannot be brought into the classrooms, depending on allergies in your child's room. We greatly appreciate your support in keeping students safe and healthy!

## ITEMS FROM HOME

Students should not bring toys, games, gaming devices, tablets, comics, trading cards, sports equipment to school unless they have been asked or given permission to do so by their teachers (i.e., show and tell). The student will assume responsibility for any item brought to school. **Students should never bring anything that can be seen or used as a weapon to school.**

On July 9, 2024, Governor Glenn Youngkin issued [Executive Order 33](#) to establish cell phone-free education to promote the health and safety of Virginia’s K-12 students. Executive Order 33 directs the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to provide guidance to school boards on cell phone-free education policies and procedures.

The PWCS cell phone and wireless device policy intends to support students in their academic success by removing a major distraction. Cell phones on desks, in pockets, or in backpacks can be tempting distractions, even for conscientious students. Studies suggest that it can take up to 10 minutes for the brain to reengage after responding to cell phone distractions.

The policy aims to create an environment where focused learning thrives, interpersonal connections prosper, and safety and privacy are prioritized. By limiting distractions, promoting engaged classrooms, and encouraging proper technology use, schools can foster academic excellence and personal growth.

The policy will be implemented for the 2025-26 school year in all PWCS schools, effective August 18, 2025. For Elementary Schools, cell phones and wireless devices must be turned off and stored during the entire school day, including field trips. Devices may be used only on school transportation.

### **LOST AND FOUND**

Articles lost by students are kept in the lost and found where they can be claimed by students or parents. Periodically, articles will be displayed for identification purposes. Articles not claimed after a reasonable length of time will be donated to a charitable organization.

### **EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS**

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#### **CODE OF BEHAVIOR**

The [Code of Behavior](#) contains PWCS student expectations of behavior and conduct. There is also an option to report any bullying, discrimination and/or harassment. The Code of Behavior also includes the following information:

- Report Concerning Behavior
- Student Behavior Supports
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Student Rights and Expectations
- Acts for Which Students May Be Disciplined
- Consequences and Possible Responses to Student Behavior
- Disciplinary Policies, Regulations and Procedures
- Exclusionary Discipline (Long-Term Suspension, Expulsion and School Reassignment)
- Cell Phone and Wireless Communication Device Usage Guidelines

#### **ATTENDANCE**

Understanding the importance of attendance and knowing what resources are available when support is

needed is crucial to student success. When students attend school regularly, they actively take part in learning, build valuable life skills, and prepare for future responsibilities, such as work, college, and other commitments.

To report an absence, please email [SHES-attendance@pwcs.edu](mailto:SHES-attendance@pwcs.edu) or call the front office. Please do not email teachers or send notes to teachers about absences. All these requests need to come through the front office, so our staff can mark your student absent in the Hub. This will also reflect in Parent Vue, where you can view your child's absences at any time throughout the year.

## TYPES OF ABSENCES

### EXCUSED ABSENCES

Examples of an excused absence may include, but are not limited to, the following reasons:

- Illness, isolation, or medical exam or treatment
- Mental/behavioral health illness, disorder, or disturbance
- Death in the immediate family
- Religious, faith, or commemorative observances
- Family emergencies with student's home
- Hazardous conditions to get to school
- Postsecondary exploration (seniors)
- Court appearance
- Visiting active-duty parent/guardian
- Suspension
- Other reasons considered acceptable by the principal

### UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Examples of unexcused absences include but are not limited to the following reasons:

- All-day truancy
- Class truancy
- Missing a ride, a bus, or car trouble
- Prearranged absences without proper prior notification or justification and prior approval
- Failure to produce a timely and proper explanation for an absence or requested documentation

### PREARRANGED ABSENCES

Parents are encouraged to minimize absences during school hours and to plan any family trips and vacations when school is not in session. Visit the PWCS website to view the [PWCS school calendar](#).

Trips/travel are unexcused absences. Principals no longer have discretion to excuse absences for extenuating circumstances. Principals may request a doctor's note after:

- Three consecutive days of absence due to illness
- Nine days of absence due to illness during the school year

Absences that are beyond 15 consecutive school days will result in the withdrawal of the student from school (which is required under Virginia law).

Teachers shall have discretion to decide the type and amount of work and when students shall make up work for preapproved absences. Teachers do not have to provide assignments in advance of the absences

but may do so at their discretion. Parents and students are encouraged to work with teachers before the absence to develop a plan for making up missed work, including expected deadlines. Teacher discretion shall determine the type/amount of work and when students shall make up work for prearranged absences.

For more information, please visit the [PWCS Attendance webpage](#).

### **SCHOOL PROPERTY**

It is our expectation that students will treat school property properly, according to the [PWCS Code of Behavior](#). If items are lost or damaged, families will be responsible for reimbursing the school for purchases made to replace lost or damaged items. This includes, but is not limited to, technology and library books.

In the event you lost or have damage to a library book, you will be contacted by the library for replacement costs. To pay for lost or damaged library books, please visit [Student Quick Pay for PWCS](#). For step by step directions on how to open an account, visit [Online Payment System for School Fees](#).

All students will be issued an iPad to use in the classroom at the beginning of the school year and will be responsible for proper use, according to the [PWCS Parent/Student Digital Device Handbook](#).

In the event a device is damaged, you will be contacted by your child's teacher or the office team with the amount due to replace or repair the device. In the event a device is lost, parents will be responsible for replacement costs (up to \$308). All technology costs will also be paid for online using [Student Quick Pay for PWCS](#).

Parents/guardians have the option to purchase low-cost student device insurance through the PWCS-approved third-party vendor, [Securranty](#).

If purchased, the insurance covers unlimited repairs or replacements for everything from broken screens, lost chargers, and accidental damage, with a zero deductible for one year on a school-issued device. The insurance cost is \$29.95, which may be significantly less than repair or replacement costs without insurance.

Insurance must be purchased within 30 days of your student receiving their device (and before any failure, damage or loss occurs to the device).

Insurance does **NOT** cover the cost of damaged or lost headphones. The average cost of headphones is \$30 per pair. For more information, visit the [PWCS Device Insurance](#) website.

### **CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES**

During the year we have opportunities for students to take part in before or after school clubs and activities. Specific information about these groups will be sent home by teachers as they are formed throughout the year. Students are expected to follow the same code of conduct as they would during the school day, as described in the [PWCS Code of Behavior](#). Any behavior that is not acceptable may cause dismissal from the activity and/or club.

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

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### PARENT-TEACHER ORGANIZATION

We have a highly active Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) at Signal Hill Elementary School. Meetings are generally held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of every month while school is in session. Joining the PTO is a fantastic way to support our students and staff throughout the year. Any help is always appreciated! For information about PTO events, please visit the [PTO website](#).

You may also contact the PTO using their email: [signalhillpandapto@gmail.com](mailto:signalhillpandapto@gmail.com)

### PARENT-PRINCIPAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Parent-Principal Advisory Council (PPAC) is a parent-led group that works to address issues and concerns of parents and works directly with the Signal Hill Elementary School principal and staff. Every Signal Hill parent is already a member, because the PPAC exists for when you need or want to be involved in discussions about the day-to-day operations of your child's school. We have meetings once a month (in-person with a Zoom option) and keep the discussion going in-between meetings to hear concerns and solve problems. These meetings are generally held on the same day as the PTO meetings.

Contact the PPAC using their email: [signalhillppac@gmail.com](mailto:signalhillppac@gmail.com)

## COMMUNICATION

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### WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

School administration will send weekly School Status updates to parents. Your most current email address and phone number in ParentVUE will be used when these newsletters are electronically distributed. Please make sure you have updated ParentVUE accordingly to receive these updates.

### CONTACTING TEACHERS

Many teachers use email as a main point of contact throughout the year. Teachers will also use School Status to send out classroom communications. Please keep in mind that teachers are busy with instruction throughout the day and will have limited time during the day to check email. If there is something urgent, please call the office for them to send a message to the teacher.

During the year, parents may have questions or concerns about things happening in the classroom. It is important that parents contact the teacher first. Teachers have the right to address these concerns directly and our goal is to collaborate with parents to come to a positive solution that is in the best interest of all the children in the classroom. If you need further help, you may contact an administrator.

## **WEBSITE**

We keep our website updated with the most current information about our school.

Please visit us at: <https://signalhilles.pwcs.edu>

## **CONCERNS FOR SUPPLEMENTAL SERVICES**

There are additional services provided to students during the school day such as Special Education, Gifted, and ESOL. Each of these services requires specific eligibility procedures. If you feel that your child is not progressing like they should or needs further enrichment, please contact the teacher first. If you feel that we should look at more than just the classroom instruction, please contact school administration. We fully understand and appreciate that a parent is a child's number one advocate, and we are glad that you are involved. We also want to make sure each child is getting the services that they need.

## **REPORT CARDS**

Prince William County Schools has 4 quarters every school year. At the end of each quarter, students will receive a report card. Report cards are accessible online through ParentVUE only. For more information on report cards and PWCS grading policy, please visit the [Grading in Prince William County](#) website.

## **PARENT LIAISON**

School Parent Liaisons play a vital role in increasing family involvement within the schools and the division. Their primary focus is to empower families to become active participants in their child's education.

School Parent Liaisons also help schools:

- Create a welcoming school environment for families.
- Provide connections between families, community, and school staff.
- Direct families to appropriate PWCS and community resources for information and resolution of concerns.
- Collaborate with school administration to address family engagement issues and concerns at their school.
- Plan, schedule, organize, and participate in delivering a variety of school/community outreach programs and workshops for families, staff members, and the community.
- Coordinate communications for families.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact our Parent Liaison:

Delsin Chavez

Email: [chavezdd@pwcs.edu](mailto:chavezdd@pwcs.edu)

(703) 530-7541 office

*Information in this parent handbook is subject to change if the policies and regulations of the school division of Signal Hill Elementary change throughout the year.*