



# APPLICATION PACKET


## *Welcome!*

Thank you for taking the time to explore PNS.

We know that choosing a new school means a lot of information and decisions - this Application Packet makes it easier for you to understand how PNS might be the right fit for your child and family by explaining:

- how children play, learn and thrive at PNS;
- how the PNS daily schedule runs, with flexible options for Extended Day and Summer Program;
- how PNS teachers and families work together through a cooperative structure;
- how the application and payment processes work;
- what we've adapted to keep things safe during Covid-19 circumstances, and how we're aiming to revert to normal.

## PNS at a glance...

|  |  |   |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| <p>PNS is a parent cooperative preschool</p>                                 | <p>"Playing since 1947"</p>                              | <p>Mixed age classroom of 2.9 - 5 yr olds (max 20 children per day)</p>             | <p>An emphasis on learning through play in the outdoor world</p>                   | <p>Children attend either 4 or 5 days per week</p>                           |
| <p>The standard school day is 8:30-12:30</p>                                 | <p>Children eat a snack &amp; packed lunch at school</p> |  | <p>Extended Day option until 3pm every day...</p>                                  | <p>...Book &amp; Pay in Advance = \$42/day<br/>Pay on the Day = \$47/day</p> |
| <p>Families from Arlington, Belmont, Cambridge, Somerville, Watertown...</p> | <p>Summer Program mid June to late July</p>              | <p>Yearly Tuition Costs for 2022-23:<br/>5 days \$12,680<br/>4 days \$10,675</p>    | <p>Fun PNS Traditions:<br/>Harvest Feast!<br/>Maple Sugaring!<br/>Butterflies!</p> | <p>Ask us about Financial Aid</p>  |

## Our PNS Mission

Founded in 1947, Parents' Nursery School in Cambridge, Massachusetts is one of the oldest cooperative nursery schools in the country. PNS helps children build the fundamental social and emotional skills necessary to become lifelong learners. At PNS learning is developmentally appropriate and meaningful to children's lives. We are committed to supporting families by providing a place where children can safely expand their boundaries from home to the outside world.

Children at Parents' Nursery School:

- engage in **self-directed free-play**, facilitated by teachers and parent helpers;
- have ready access to and can explore the **natural outdoor environment** and are guided through seasonally based explorations in art, storytelling, singing, movement, nature-study and cooking;
- extend their **physical, emotional, and developmental boundaries** while supported by a community that maintains a **strong connection between home and school**.

At PNS we trust a child's innate curiosity to be the springboard for learning. Within every activity, there are opportunities for problem solving, critical thinking, joy, and humor. Through play and engagement with others, children learn to identify their feelings, advocate for themselves, view problems from multiple perspectives, and resolve conflict.

Parents' Nursery School values the development of a diverse community of adults and children. Together, we emphasize learning rather than teaching, and process rather than product.

## Curriculum & Philosophy

*Some thoughts from our PNS teachers...*



***Kristen Patrice   Gretchen Fonda***

The program at Parents' Nursery School (PNS) takes a developmental approach to the education of young children, helping them master the basic learning and social skills that form the foundation for all future learning.

Children between the ages of three and five need a safe environment where they have the time, space and materials to explore and discover.

Studies have shown that children's language and intellectual skills develop best when they are playing games of their own invention, rather than participating in activities dictated by adults. Thus the curriculum at PNS is entirely child-centered – the day is spent on things the children find interesting, rather than in things we might think they "should" be learning.

When you visit the school, look at it from a child's point of view. Children walk in and see a world of limitless possibility. They look around and begin to wonder, to imagine, and to question. What if we drape cloths over the big block structure, and turn it into a tent? What if we spend the whole day – or the whole week – outside digging a system of trenches and then filling them with water? (And what if there are five of us and only three shovels? Can we take turns in a way that's fair to everybody? Are there other things we could use to dig with?)

Sometimes prospective parents ask why the day here is not more structured. The fact is that a young child's life is already pretty structured, with mealtimes, bath time, bedtime, being told it's time to go to the store or time to leave the playground. We believe that the function of a preschool is to provide them with a place where, for a few hours a day, they can set the agenda.

Our job, as teachers, is to keep them safe; to encourage and stimulate but not to control; to help them learn by doing rather than simply telling them what we think they should know.

Children change and develop over the course of their time at PNS. For younger children, the first challenges are generally social – learning to get along in a group, to speak up and assert one's own needs, to respect others' words and choices, to gain independence while knowing that adult support is there if needed. Older children get to experience leadership – they know the ropes and are often very solicitous of younger children – and they tend to explore projects and materials in greater depth.

For all PNS children, there is a strong sense of ownership and mastery. This is their place. They choose how to spend their time and what to do with the materials offered. They put away their own cups after snack time, and they tidy up the school at the end of the day. They are proud when their parent comes in to parent help, but also comfortable asking any adult in the school to tie their shoes, read a story, or help them get something down from a high shelf.

Overall, the children who go through PNS tend to develop independence, self-reliance, curiosity, and a joyful enthusiasm about school and learning. They learn to respect themselves and others, to make choices, and to solve disputes through negotiation. These, more than any others, are the skills that prepare them for kindergarten and for all the learning that follows.

## Cooperative Responsibilities and Benefits

Being a member of a cooperative is immensely rewarding and sociable, but it does also require time, effort and commitment. While our educational philosophy and curriculum are implemented and maintained by the director and the teachers, parents provide the labor and organization required to keep the school in a state of full enrollment, financial solvency, and physical repair.

That said, families' cooperative contribution is manageable - and compatible even with working parents' schedules. All families by definition have young children so everyone understands how hectic home-life can be, and families where both parents work appreciate the extra organization this requires, but PNS families make it all feasible through mutual support.

In order to help determine if our cooperative would work for you, please review the following summary of parent responsibilities.

### Parent Helping

One parent from each family comes into PNS approximately 10-12 times per school year to act as a parent helper from 8:30am-1pm. You take an active role in classroom activities, provide a simple snack for 20 children and clean up the school at the end of the morning session. It's also a great chance to get to know your child's favorite activities at school and meet their classmates more properly. Caregivers or other family members cannot be substituted for parent helpers - the one exception to this is if a designated grandparent commits to being the regular parent helper.

### Parent Job

Every family has a Parent Job and works cooperatively within our job system to make sure our school functions optimally on a daily and long term basis. Expect a time commitment of approximately two hours per week during the year and a significant increase at specific times during the year – Fall Festival, After Dark Fundraiser Party etc. Every attempt will be made to match parent skill sets and schedules to job descriptions. Some jobs will require schedule flexibility during the day. All jobs will require coordinating with other members of the cooperative and time will need to be set aside for planning meetings or other joint ventures.

### Community Meetings

One parent from each family attends mandatory evening community meetings once every six weeks. Typically meetings are 7:30-9:00pm at school. Children are not permitted. Expect to attend up to two additional orientation meetings in the first six weeks of school.

### School Events

Active participation in special all-school events is required of all cooperative members, e.g. the Fall Festival. Tasks could include baking for a bake sale, running a craft activity, soliciting local businesses for auction items, helping with set-up and clean-up of the event, spreading the word on social media etc. Attendance, while not mandatory, is encouraged at other school events such as bi-annual potluck dinners, After Dark fundraiser auction, and the Harvest Feast.

### Fall & Spring Work Days

Attend two work days to help keep our school looking beautiful and safe for the children. One person from each family works from 9am to 12pm depending on the amount of work. Children are not permitted at school on work days. Tasks might include: painting, gardening, cleaning or small carpentry projects.

### Co-op Communication

Information is shared via email, notices in family mailboxes and signs posted at school. In order to ensure the smooth running of the school parents must keep themselves up to date with the flow of communication in the cooperative and read messages daily.

## **Intermittent Community Support**

Occasionally, co-op members will be asked to help out above and beyond these requirements. In the case of teacher illness, family emergencies or school-wide admissions or fundraising endeavors, parents will be asked to volunteer their time and energy to fill in as needed.

### **Benefits**

- You get to be actively involved in your child's preschool experience.
- Your child's community also becomes yours. Wonderful (often lifelong) friendships are formed among children, parents, and families.
- You have a built-in support network of parents who are committed to the same ideals in the education of young children.
- There is deep satisfaction in knowing that you are an integral part of forming and supporting your child's school and his or her first educational experience.

## Admissions Policy & Process

We value diversity within our school community and do not discriminate on the basis of race, disability, sex, ethnic and national origin, religion, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, marital status, sexual orientation, or family lifestyle in the administration of admissions and educational policies and financial aid programs.

Our admissions goal at Parents' Nursery School is to maintain a balance of boys and girls, and of three and four year olds; and to increase the diversity of our school community. Whenever possible, priority is given to siblings of current and former students, and to children who will help diversify our student body.

**Tuition** for the 2021-22 school year is:

- \$12,680 (5 days)
- \$10,675 (4 days)

For **Extended Day** (until 3pm, available every weekday), there are 3 options for signing up:

- 1. Annual Advance:** After enrollment, schedule Extended Day on fixed day(s) to guarantee a space throughout the year (must be the same day(s) each week; payable as part of your tuition payment plan) @ \$42 /day
- 2. Advance Sign-Up:** In August & December, schedule & pay for Extended Day on whichever date(s) you choose via a Google Doc @ \$42 /day
- 3. Drop-In:** When dropping your child off at PNS, simply sign him/her up on a list for that same day and pay the total number of Extended Days at the end of the month @ \$47 /day

*(Each school year we expect an inflationary rise in Standard Day tuition and Extended Day tuition.)*

For the **Summer Program** (8:30-12:30 M-F from mid June to late July, plus a pilot Extended Day scheme), sign-up and payment for weekly places takes place in the Spring.

Admission to the school is open to children who will be **at least 2 yrs 9 mths old by Sept 1st** of their intake year. If places are available during the academic year, children may be admitted once they turn 2 yrs 9 mths. Toilet training status is not an eligibility requirement for enrollment.

Families interested in applying for admission to Parents' Nursery School **must tour the school** before submitting their application. *(Tours are given on weekdays - please contact [pnsadmissions@gmail.com](mailto:pnsadmissions@gmail.com) to schedule)*

**Financial Aid** is available *(to apply, please check the box on the Application Form or contact our Administrator Lynne Standish for more info: [parentsnurseryschool.director@gmail.com](mailto:parentsnurseryschool.director@gmail.com)).*

All applications received **by February 15** will be considered together. Applications received after that date will be reviewed as space allows.

We will let families know their admissions status in late February. Any children who we are unable to accept at that time will be placed on an active waiting list.

For successful applicants, the **next steps** in the enrollment process are:

- By March 1: Confirm your child will enroll at PNS and submit enrollment deposit (\$500)
- By May 1: Submit tuition deposit (cost of first two months' tuition)
- By mid June: Complete & submit PNS Summer Packet (includes standard requests for medical summary/proof of immunizations, descriptions of your child's preferences and needs, any allergies, emergency contact details etc)

# Application Form

Thank you for choosing Parents' Nursery School! For any questions about this application or the school in general, please just ask: [pnsadmissions@gmail.com](mailto:pnsadmissions@gmail.com)

A non-refundable, non-deductible application fee of \$50 must accompany the application form. If this is difficult for financial reasons, please check 'yes' below for a Financial Aid application.

Please return this form as soon as possible with your \$50 non-refundable application fee, either:

- Online by emailing the completed application to [pnsadmissions@gmail.com](mailto:pnsadmissions@gmail.com) and paying the application fee by Paypal at <http://www.parents-nursery-school.net/admissions>; or
- By mail with a check to: Parents' Nursery School, 117 Cushing Street, Cambridge MA 02138

|              |               |        |
|--------------|---------------|--------|
| Child's Name | Date of Birth | Gender |
|--------------|---------------|--------|

|                               |
|-------------------------------|
| Parent's Name                 |
| Address                       |
| City                      Zip |
| Phone                         |
| Email                         |

|                                    |
|------------------------------------|
| Parent's Name <i>(if relevant)</i> |
| Address                            |
| City                      Zip      |
| Phone                              |
| Email                              |

|                   |
|-------------------|
| Any PNS siblings? |
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| Our school is committed to having a diverse student population. Would you like to identify yourselves? |
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|--|
| Does your child have any allergies / medical conditions you'd like to discuss? |
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|   |
|---|
| Would you like to tell us about your child? |
|---|

As a parent cooperative, we rely heavily on the skills of our community. Are there any skills your family might like to offer?

Please indicate your enrollment preference(s):

- 4 days/week
- 5 days/week
- Either

What is your day off preference? Please indicate your top 3 choices in numbered order:

|      |       |      |        |      |          |
|------|-------|------|--------|------|----------|
| Mon. | Tues. | Wed. | Thurs. | Fri. | Flexible |
|------|-------|------|--------|------|----------|

Are you interested in the Extended Day option at PNS?

- Yes
- No

Would you like a Financial Aid application?

- Yes
- No

Parent's Signature

Parent's Signature

***Thank you!***

We will be sure to confirm that your application has been safely received. In the meantime, feel free to keep in touch with Parents' Nursery School and our children's learning activities by following us on social media and coming along to our School Events throughout the year:

[Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) (@parentsnurseryschool)



## What's Different During Covid-19

To keep our PNS community of families and teachers safe during Covid-19 we have adapted some aspects of PNS life. Nonetheless, we have kept intact the sense of fun and our nurturing sociable environment - things are already looking 'almost normal' again this year!

- **Masks:** No masks are required for children or teachers at outdoor play, or inside when the big garage door is open in good weather. This is because the big door ventilation effectively gives us 'outdoor air' inside - and it's great when everyone gets to show their smile :) We are asking children to wear masks indoors when the big door is closed, eg at pick-up time or in colder weather. Parents and caregivers entering the building are still required to wear a mask at all times. If a child is not used to wearing a mask, our teachers work with them at whatever stage they are at. Wearing masks has become second-nature to the children, and it means they can still have authentic play-based learning together with a better sense of safety. Hand-washing is also an integral part of the day.
- **Testing:** We're following best practice by accessing the excellent testing tools available: children are expected to participate in weekly PCR testing; and if there is an exposure at school, families can opt to take part in a Test & Stay program (a temporary period of daily rapid antigen tests) to enable continued attendance if symptom-free.
- **Vaccinations:** All teachers, parents and caregivers entering the school are required to submit proof of vaccination/booster at the start of the school year. This helps limit exposure risk to the unvaccinated PNS children and siblings during drop-off/pick-up, parent helping, music class, and at community events (such as the bi-monthly Community Meetings, which are now back in-person).
- **Outdoor Time:** We are lucky to have an open-plan, well-ventilated space, plus a garage door that creates a seamless indoor/outdoor experience - so while the weather allows, you'll mostly hear us out in the schoolyard, 'sailing' on our favorite wooden boat to make-believe destinations like Chocolate Island and beyond..!
- **Virtual Learning:** We aim to remain open, but *if* PNS has to close temporarily (e.g. State authorities require school closures for public health safety), tuition would switch to Virtual Learning with daily group Zoom calls. For the first two weeks of closure, tuition would remain payable at the full rate; thereafter tuition would be payable at a discounted flat rate for all students of \$700/month.

Like all schools, Parents' Nursery School followed the State order to close temporarily in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. During the closure we kept up the fun and community spirit with creative, interactive daily group Zoom calls, which really helped families keep a sense of routine and support, and stay connected.

While those virtual Zooms were brilliantly creative and our best alternative at the time during closure, we know that absolutely nothing beats children being with their teachers and friends for proper play-based learning and social/emotional development.

So PNS and our families are following the State and CDC guidelines carefully and showing a sense of mutual care that is helping us stay open and keep our children playing and growing together.